

# Doctrine of the Pronunciation of God's Name

1. The Hebrew was originally written without vowels (the vowel points being added actually quite a bit after the incarnation of Jesus Christ).
2. The Jews did not pronounce the name of God, as that was considered too sacred for their tongues, so they, in reading, substituted in the name *Adonai*. Our English Bibles do much the same thing by substituting in LORD (in small capitals), rather than the English version *Jehovah* (which is definitely not the way God's name was ever pronounced in Old Testament times). We came upon the pronunciation *Jehovah* by interspersing the sacred Tetragrammaton (YHWH) with the vowel points from *Adonai* (or, so is my understanding).
3. The hidden pronunciation of God's proper Name was the influence of legalistic religion. Man was obviously not to use God's name in vain—for empty, cheapening phrases, such as language punctuation and emphasis (as we see constantly today). So religion essentially banned the use of His name under any circumstance, until His name was lost to history.
4. Now this is not quite as bad as you would think, as the God of the Old Testament and Jesus Christ are one and the same Person and our God is more important to us as the one who paid for our sins and thus brought us to Himself.
5. There was no reason to lose this name except legalism. However, we can make a reasonable guess as to how God's name was pronounced.
6. His name is often called the sacred Tetragrammaton—which means *four letters*—because what we have are the letters YHWH or YHVH. The trick is the insertion of which vowels and the pronunciation of the third letter.
7. The first letter is י (yôwd), pronounced like a *y*. There is no *j* in Hebrew, so there is no way God's name was pronounced *Jehovah* (as you may have noticed, many Hebrew names which begin with a *j* were transliterated from names beginning with the Hebrew *y* (or, with the yôwd)).
8. There are twenty or more names in the Old Testament based upon God's Old Testament name. If these names and their translations were as lost to history as was our Lord's name, then what I am about to propose is untenable. However, if their pronunciations remained accurate, then the pronunciation of our Lord's proper Name can be ascertained.
9. This is followed by a sh<sup>va</sup> [pronounced *sh'VAW* or *shi-VAW*]. This letter is a vowel point, often indicating that actually no vowel goes there. At other times, it represents a very short *e*. I have represented this with <sup>o</sup> or with an apostrophe to indicate a quick movement from one syllable to the next, almost a slurring together of the syllables. There are rules to differentiate between the silent sh<sup>va</sup> and the short-*e* sh<sup>va</sup>, however, throughout most of my translations of words, I have personally inserted a very short *e* slurring of the syllables just for the sake of consistency. Properly speaking, we have a very short *e* and not a silent sh<sup>va</sup> in God's name. Now you may be wondering at this point, how do we know the second vowel point is a sh<sup>va</sup> and not, for instance, a pattach? After all, there were no vowel points inserted until well into the first millennium AD. Simple: we have over twenty names which mean *Jehovah* saves or *Jehovah* followed by another verb; and all of those names have this short *e*.
10. The second letter is an *h* followed by a chôwlem over a wâw (i.e., a dot placed above the Hebrew *w*). Together, these form a long *o* sound and often the *w* is silent (it is a part of the long *o* sound). Again, this is based upon over twenty other proper names found in the Old Testament.
11. The third letter is vâv [pronounced *vaww*] or wâw. This, in modern Hebrew, is pronounced like our letter *v* and in Biblical Hebrew like our letter *w*. As was said, this can be a silent letter also. In the half-dozen names beginning in this way, the wâw is silent.
12. In the Hebrew, the emphasis generally falls upon the last syllable, and, on occasion, on the second to the last syllable.
13. The last vowel is the only really missing vowel. In all of the Hebrew proper names, the last vowel and consonant are left off to attach to the verb. So, here, we must take an educated guess: When a word in the Hebrew ends in an *h*, the preceding vowel is often a long *a* (I use â) and the vowel point is called qâmêts [pronounced *kaw-MATES*]. This ending either indicates a perfect tense (completed action) or a feminine noun. A long *a* in Hebrew is pronounced like the *a* in *all*. For pronunciation purposes, I have been using an *aw*.
14. Therefore, we have several possible pronunciations: Y<sup>o</sup>ho-AWH, Y<sup>e</sup>ho-AWH, Y<sup>o</sup>ho-WAWH, Y<sup>e</sup>ho-WAWH, Y<sup>o</sup>ho-VAWH or Y<sup>e</sup>ho-VAWH. In examining hundreds of Hebrew words, we often have a consonant beginning the last syllable when the consonant previous has a silent *e* vowel point below it or when the consonant has been doubled with a dâgêsh (a vowel point placed in the middle of the letter). In other words, this is not too

far removed from our enunciation *Jehovah*, yet we came upon this by doing more than simply inserting the vowel points taken from Adonai. I particularly like the first and third pronunciations because they are onomatopoeic—they sound like breathing out, which is significant to us in two ways. God breathed out into our nostrils to give us human life, and, when our Lord had paid for our sins on the cross, He breathed out, because His work was finished, and gave up His Spirit. His breathing up signified our the giving of our spiritual life.

15. This differs, of course, from the opinion expressed by Rotherham in *The Emphasized Bible*. Rotherham builds the name of Y'howâh upon the verb hâwâh (an old form of hâyâh) and ends with the name Yahweh (which I have used until now) and an interpretation from Ex. 3:14. You will find a fuller and rather verbose explanation of his opinion in *The Emphasized Bible*, pp. 22–29. If these names which I used were also totally lost to history, then my viewpoint does not have any foundation.
16. Certainly God's name should mean something, as Rotherham asserts, and it appears as though it would be a combination of the participle and the perfect tense of hâwâh, meaning something along the lines of *in becoming, I have become; in being, I have become or in being, I am*. (however, since this name is used by man, it would be in the third person masculine (*in becoming, He is; in being, He is; or in becoming, He has become*). This makes perfect sense when God dramatically steps into history as a man and removes us from our sins and from the punishment we deserve.
17. Knowing this information is helpful in several ways:
  - a. The pronunciation of God's name means something.
  - b. The meaning of His name is significant.
  - c. This cuts through the claptrap which is portrayed by the cult, the Jehovah's witnesses. Not only do they mispronounce God's name (no matter how you slice it, there is no *j* in Hebrew), but they have the same problem as the unregenerate Jew: they do not know the Lord Who bought them—they do not recognize the Jesus Christ is Y<sup>e</sup>howah, God of the Universe.