NAMES IN SCRIPTURE

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NAMES HAVE MEANING

Names are important. Names have meaning and associations, and are sometimes hints for better understanding Scripture. Consider the account of Samson and Delilah:

> Samson: light

> Delilah: darkness

The meaning of these names is probably not just coincidence. They have significant relevance to the lessons of Scripture being taught to us.

> *Zechariah 1:1* (ESV)
> [1] In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying,

> English *Zechariah* = Hebrew **Zekaryah** = Zekar+Yah = "Yah remembers"

The same name is also found written slightly differently in the Hebrew Scriptures:

> *1 Chronicles 27:21* (ESV)
> [21] for the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo the son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner;

> English *Zechariah* = Hebrew **Zekaryahu** = Zekar+yahu = "YHWH remembers"

There are hundreds of names in Scripture which end in either –yah or –yahu. A number can be written both ways, like Zekaryahu / Zekaryah:

YHWH יהוה

> *Exodus 3:15*
> "Say this to the people of Israel, '**YHWH**, **Elohey** of your fathers, **Elohey** of Abraham, **Elohey** of Isaac, and **Elohey** of Jacob, has sent me to you.' **This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**

It is to our loss, shame and embarrassment, that we have not remembered His Name as He commanded. We no longer know with certainty how to pronounce the name YHWH. This is a result of God's people "*adding to Torah*", and instituting prohibitions on pronouncing His personal name. Fences meant to keep people from breaking Torah, have resulted in "*leaving the commandments of God and holding to the traditions of men.*" (Mark 7:8-13).

YHWH told Moses to speak His name to the people, and that this is how we are to remember Him for all generations. Thus, we break Torah when we no longer remember Him that way. If we are not sure how to pronounce His personal name, we are obligated to do our best. As in the rest of Torah, there is much that we do not fully understand. But YHWH is blessed through our efforts to do all we can to obey Him. In this case, we are to remember His name, YHWH, as He has commanded, to the best of ability.

YHWH is used over 6800 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, as the personal name of the **Elohim** of Israel. The only hint of its meaning comes from Exodus 3:14-15, discussed above. If YHWH is actually a verb form of the root HYH / HWH, it be a 3rd person form since that would result in the Y prefix to the root, with the meaning "*He is, He exists, He causes to exist*". A few examples of the use of YHWH are shown below:

Genesis 2:4
> These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that **YHWH Elohim** made the earth and the heavens.

Exodus 3:15
> **Elohim** also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, '**YHWH**, **Elohey** of your fathers, **Elohey** of Abraham, **Elohey** of Isaac, and **Elohey** of Jacob, has sent me to you.

Leviticus 18:2
> "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, I am **YHWH** your **Elohey**.

Deuteronomy 6:4
> "Hear, O Israel: **YHWH** is our **Elohey**, **YHWH** is one.

YHWH is not used with the definite article **ha**, so it clearly functions only as a proper name. There is only one instance of the more than 6800 occurrences where YHWH occurs with **ha**:

Deuteronomy 32:6
> Do you thus repay to **ha YHWH**, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Since there is much debate over the vowel pointing associated with YHWH, the pronunciation cannot be known for certain. The majority opinion of scholars today is that YHWH is pronounced "Yahweh", however this is clearly not a settled issue.   After studying all the evidence, I personally think there is a stronger argument for the pronunciation of "Yahuah".

YAH יָה

Yah is only used 49 times in Scriptures, and always in poetic passages– Psalms, Exodus (2x), and Isaiah (4x). Because the consonants of **Yah** are the same as the first half of YHWH, and the context in which it is uses, it seems that **Yah** is an abbreviated form YHWH. **Yah** also appears as a theophoric element in many Hebrew names. The high frequency of this usage in names, given the relative scarcity of the stand-alone usage of **Yah** in Scripture, is a strong indication that **Yah** is a part of the name of YHWH, the **Elohim** of Israel. Like YHWH, the definite article **ha** never occurs with **Yah**; it clearly functions solely as a proper name. Examples are:

Psalm 106:1
> Praise **Yah**! Oh give thanks YHWH, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 118:14
> **Yah** is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

Psalm 118:18
> **Yah** has disciplined me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

Isaiah 38:11
> I said, I shall not see **Yah**, **Yah** in the land of the living; I shall look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world.

There are two interesting examples in Isaiah where the phrase **Yah YHWH** occurs. This seem odds if **Yah** is truly just a short form of YHWH, but it may be that at some point in time, both were considered as separate names even though the one originated from the other. And again, it should be emphasized that this is poetry, so poetic license allows structures and usage that is outside the bounds of ordinary speech.

Isaiah 26:4
> Trust in YHWH forever, for **Yah** YHWH is an everlasting rock.

Isaiah 12:2
> "Behold, **El** is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for **Yah** YHWH is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation."

In summary, because the name **Yah** only occurs in poetry, it is likely a poetic form that has been shortened for literary purposes, and not truly used as the name of YHWH in ordinary speech. This would also fit with

the specialized usage of **Yah** as a theophoric element in Hebrew names. All the evidence we have points to **Yah** being used in only specialized speech domains, rather than in common speech.

ELOHIM אֱלֹהִים

Elohim probably means "*might or power*". It is a grammatically plural form but often functions as a singular in sentences, especially when referring to YHWH. **Elohim** is used <u>with</u> the definite article **ha** "*the*" ~366 times:

Genesis 6:11
Now the earth was corrupt in **Ha-Elohim**'s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.

Deuteronomy 4:35
To you it was shown, that you might know that the YHWH is **Ha-Elohim**; there is no other besides him.

Elohim is used <u>without</u> the article **ha** "*the*" ~1060 times:

Genesis 1:1
In the beginning, **Elohim** created the heavens and the earth.

1 Kings 2:23
Then King Solomon swore by YHWH, saying, "**Elohim** do so to me and more also if this word does not cost Adoniyah his life!

1 Chronicles 17:17
And this was a small thing in your eyes, **Elohim**. You have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come, and have shown me future generations, YHWH **Elohim**!

Psalm 48:10
As your name, **Elohim**, so your praise reaches to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is filled with righteousness.

Nehemiah 13:25
And I confronted them and cursed them and beat some of them and pulled out their hair. And I made them take an oath in the name of **Elohim**, saying, "You shall not give your daughters to their sons, or take their daughters for your sons or for yourselves.

In Hebrew **Elohim** can also be used to refer to pagan gods as well as to YHWH, much like in English we can refer to a pagan god or to the God of Israel with the same word. Even the Hebrew Scriptures occasionally use **elohim** to refer to pagan gods:

Deuteronomy 4:34
Or has any **elohim** ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which YHWH your **Elohey** did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Judges 8:33
As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and whored after the Baals and made Baal-berith their **elohim**.

Elohim also occurs as a designation of deity in other languages, such as Assyrian and Ugaritic.

EL אֵל

El most likely comes from a Semitic root meaning "*to be strong, to dominate*". It is used as a general term in a number of Semitic languages for "god". In the Hebrew Scriptures, **El** is used ~230 times, both as a title and as a proper name for YHWH:

Numbers 12:13
And Moses cried to YHWH, "**El**, please heal her—please."

Job 27:9

> Will **El** hear his cry when distress comes upon him?

Genesis 46:3

> Then he said, "I am **El**, **Eloah** of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.

Exodus 34:6

> YHWH passed before him and proclaimed, "YHWH, YHWH, **El** merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

Scripture also uses **el** as a generic reference to a pagan deity:

Isaiah 44:10

> Who fashions an **el** or casts an idol that is profitable for nothing?

Psalm 44:20-21

> If we had forgotten the name of our **Elohey** or spread out our hands to a foreign **el**, would not **Elohim** discover this?

Psalm 81:9

> There shall be no strange **el** among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign **el**.

El is also used in the plural form, **elim** אֵלִם to refer to pagan deities:

Exodus 15:11

> "Who is like you, YHWH, among the **elim**? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

El is well attested as an Ugaritic and Canaanite god, where the word is used to refer to a specific god named **El,** as well as being a more general reference to a deity.

> The most extensive source about El comes from Late Bronze Age Ugarit. In the Ugaritic mythological narratives El is the divine patriarch par excellence. He is the divine progenitor, "father" to the pantheon, which is his royal family and a royal assembly over which he exercises authority. His authority is expressed in his title, "king" (mlk), the same notion which seems to underlie his epithet, "bull"; like the chief and most powerful of animals, El is chief of the deities. Asherah is El's wife, with whom he has produced the pantheon (generically, but not all-inclusively, called "Asherah's 70 sons"). Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible.

YESHUA יֵשׁוּעַ

Yeshua was a common name in the 1st Century. Three of the 72 who translated the LXX had the name, and Josephus lists 20 persons by this name in his writings. The name is found in inscriptions and burial texts. 5 A pre- exilic example is found in Luke's genealogy (Lk 3:29), and in Matt 27:16, one manuscript has Barabbas called "Yesous Barabbas." In Acts 13:6 the sorcerer in Cyprus is called Bar-Yesous, and in Col 4:11, Paul's helper is "Yesous who is called Youstos. (Hegg, Matthew Commentary)

All we know for sure about the Messiah's name is that in the Apostolic Scriptures his name is given to us in the Greek as **Iesous**. **Iesous** is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew **Yeshua**. Since Greek does not have a [sh], that sound becomes [s]. Furthermore the ending [s] is added as a usual marking of Greek masculine nouns. For example John transliterates the Hebrew **mashiach** "*Messiah*" into Greek Μεσσίας (**Messias)** by converting the [sh] to [s] and also by ending in the word with the usual final [s] for masculine nouns:

John 1:41

> He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the **Messias**" (which means **Christos**).

It is important to realize that the Apostolic Scriptures also uses the **Iesous** to translate **Joshua**. Joshua is referred to three times in the Apostolic Scriptures: Luke 3:29, Acts 7:45, and Hebrews 4:8. Each time Joshua's name is given to us in the Greek as **Iesous**. In the LXX, Joshua's name is always give to us as **Iesous** as well.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, Joshua is given to us in three forms:

Deuteronomy 32:44	הוֹשֵׁעַ	Hoshea	(3 times)
Nehemiah 8:17	יֵשׁוּעַ	Yeshua	(26 times)
Exodus 17:10	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	Yəhoshua	(166 times)

The name Hoshea seems to be his given name, but Moses renames him in Numbers 13:16:

Numbers 13:16
These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun **Yəhoshua**).

So it seems clear that at least in the days of Nehemiah, **Yeshua** was a contracted form of **Yəhoshua.**

The name **Yeshua** means "salvation". The Hebrew lemma (main dictionary form) for the word salvation is

יְשׁוּעָה **yəshua**. So the name **Yeshua** simply means "salvation". The name **Yəhoshua** combines the YHWH prefix yahu-/yaho- with **yeshua** to mean "YHWH is salvation".

There are at least five other men in the Hebrew Scriptures named **Yeshua**:

Ezra 3:2	Yeshua, son of Jozadak
Nehemiah 7:11	Yeshua, descendent of Pahath-moab
Nehemiah 7:11	Yeshua, descendent of Jedaiah
Nehemiah 7:24	Yeshua, son of Kadmiel
Nehemiah 10:9	Yeshua, son of Azaniah

These occurrences of Yeshua, and most others as well, occur in Ezra and Nehemiah (24 of the 26 times in the Hebrew Scriptures are in Ezra and Nehemiah, not counting the references to **Yeshua**, son of Nun). **Yəhoshua**, on the other hand, is only used for one other person: **Yəhoshua**, son of Jehozadak, the high priest, referred to in Haggai and Zechariah. This would suggest that by the time the exile was over, **Yeshua** was a more commonly used name than **Yəhoshua**.

It is interesting that the LXX always translates both Hebrew names, **Yəhoshua** and **Yeshua,** into the Greek as **Iesous.** So there is no Scriptural evidence to argue between the choice of **Yəhoshua** and **Yeshua.** Both are translated into Greek as **Iesous.**

Note, however, that there is no support in Hebrew Scriptures for alternatives such as **Yahshua**.

It is exciting to read all the Hebrew Scriptures where **yeshua** occurs, not as a proper name, but with the primary meaning of "salvation". However, there is often clearly a double meaning also pointing to the Messiah. For example:

Genesis 49:18
I wait for your **Yeshua**, YHWH.

Isaiah 12:3
With joy you will draw water from the wells of **Yeshua**.

Deuteronomy 32:15
"But Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked; you grew fat, stout, and sleek; then he forsook **Eloah** who made him and scoffed at the Rock of his **Yeshua**.

Psalm 119:123
My eyes long for your **Yeshua** and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.

Psalm 119:174
I long for your **Yeshua**, YHWH, and your Torah is my delight.

Isaiah 56:1

Thus says YHWH: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my **Yeshua** will come, and my righteousness be revealed.

Isaiah 51:8

For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool; but my righteousness will be forever, and my **Yeshua** to all generations."

Isaiah 49:6

he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my **Yeshua** may reach to the end of the earth."

Yeshua "*salvation*" is used 78 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of those times, as above, seem to suggest a double meaning, pointing toward the Messiah.

There is also much extra-Biblical evidence that the name **Yeshua** was in common use in the first century. For example it is often found inscribed on ossuaries (bone boxes) of that period. It is often found in the abbreviated from **Yeshu**. One box has both **Yeshua** and **Yeshu** on it, referring to the same person.

Given all the above data, it seems most likely that **Yeshua** was the commonly spoken Hebrew name of the Messiah. The longer form of the name, **Yəhoshua**, may have also been used for him. Likewise, the shortened form of his name **Yeshu**, could also have been used.

ADONAY אֲדֹנָי

Adonay means "my lord" and is used ~770 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. For some reason it is often translated "*Lord / lord*" or "*the Lord*" without the "*my*" which unfortunately detracts from the personal intimacy of the phrase. **Adonay** is related to **adon**, which means "*lord*" but without the possessive suffix. **Adon** "*lord*" tends to denote authority, in contrast with **baal** "*master*", which tends to designate ownership. **Adonay** can either refer to YHWH or to men. About 450 times **Adonay** refers to YHWH, for example:

Genesis 18:31

He said, "Behold, I have undertaken to speak to **Adonay**. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

Exodus 4:10

But Moses said to the YHWH, "Oh, **Adonay**, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

1 Kings 3:10

It pleased **Adonay** that Solomon had asked this.

Adonay can also be used to refer to men in Scripture:

Exodus 21:4

If his **adonay** gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the wife and her children shall be her **adonay**'s, and he shall go out alone.

1 Samuel 1:15

But Hannah answered, "No, **adonay**, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD.

YAHUAH יָהוּהַ

The Unspeakable Name

The vocalization of YHWH has been a subject of much debate. Jewish tradition, which according to most scholars dates back to the 6th Century BC, forbids the speaking of the name YHWH. This was a "fence" established to make sure that the command in Torah not be broken:

Deuteronomy 5:11
> 'You shall not take the name of YHWH your **Elohey** in vain, for YHWH will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

So it was deemed better to never pronounce His name, than risk doing it "in vain".   As a result, circumlocutions developed; terms such as **HaShem** (the Name), our Father (**Avinu**), Heaven (**Shamayim**), and Lord (**Adonay**) were used as substitutes for the personal name of YHWH.

The Babylonian Talmud states: "*The Holy One, blessed be He said, 'I am not pronounced as I am written; I am written with [the letters] yod he, but I am pronounced by alef daleth'*" (Kiddushin 71a).   In other words, although the name was written as YHWH (starting with **yod he**), it was to be pronounced as **Adonay** (starting with **alef daleth**).

Even some of the Dead Sea Scroll fragments show a series of dots in place of YHWH, indicating the prohibition from speaking this name during the second temple period.

This tradition, however, has led to the breaking of another command of Torah:

Exodus 3:15
> "Say this to the people of Israel, '**YHWH**, **Elohey** of your fathers, **Elohey** of Abraham, **Elohey** of Isaac, and **Elohey** of Jacob, has sent me to you.' **This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.**

It is an unfortunate consequence of this tradition that today no one knows for certain how to pronounce His personal name, and that He is no longer remember as He commanded.

Teaching in Apostolic Scriptures

It is worth noting, that nowhere in the Apostolic Scriptures is the personal name of YHWH used. In its place is normally found **Adonay**, or one of the other circumlocutions. There is no Scriptural teaching on the use of the name YHWH. This is interesting given that the prohibition for speaking the name of YHWH had already been in practice long before that time. Scripture does not indicate that the Messiah, Paul, or any authors of Scripture ever pronounced the name of YHWH. Nor was there any hint of corrective teaching regarding the pronunciation of the name, or regarding which names to use or not to use. Perhaps this should be considered in weighing the relative importance of this topic.

Masoretic Vowel Pointing

Sometime around the 7th Century AD, the Masoretic scribes added vowel points and various marginal notes to the Hebrew Scriptures, in an effort to pass on their knowledge at a time when fluency in Hebrew was sharply declining. Since the original Scriptures were written in consonants only, it should be remembered that the vowel points represent vocalizations that have been passed down by oral tradition for many generations. For the most part they are accurate, but they are added by man and not original, so the possibility of occasional human error must be considered.

One of the methods employed by the Masoretic scribes was called **Qere/Ketib** (Written/Read). They would make a notation to indicate that although the Text is written one way, it should be read another way. They were bound to preserve the written consonants of the Text, but where their tradition required an alternate understanding, they made marginal notations to change the way it was read. There were a few words that were intended to be read differently throughout the entire Bible. This is called "perpetual **Qere**". So there are clear cases when the Masoretes intended certain words to be read differently than they are written. In the case of YHWH, there are actually *four different* ways that the Masoretes added vowel pointing:

יְהוָֹה	**Yəhuah**(?)*	as in Exodus 3:4
יְהֹוָֹה	**Yəhowah**(?)+	as in Exodus 3:2
יֱהוִֹה	**Yehwih**(?)*	as in Genesis 15:2
יֱהֹוִֹה	**Yehowih**(?)+	as in Judges 16:28

* These pointings do not form correct Hebrew words since they do not result in accepted syllable structures. The **vav** cannot function as a [**u**] vowel and at the same time be pointed with a qamets [**a**] vowel underneath. It is therefore unclear how to syllabify and pronounce these words.

+ These pointings do not form correct Hebrew words since the **vav** has vowel points both above and below. The only way to get pronunciations of **Yəhowah** and **Yəhowih** is to move the upper vowel point slightly to the right, off the **vav** and onto the **heh**, to result in יְהֹוָה and

יֱהֹוִה however this would be a distinct change from the way the Masoretes had pointed them.

Since there are four different pointings for YHWH, and since none of the four ways fit Hebrew word patterns, it seems clear that something unusual is happening here. Apparently the Masoretes chose to add vowel pointings that could not be pronounced. The choice to pronounce YHWH as **Yəhowah** (Jehovah) is really an arbitrary choice between four possibilities, none of which follow proper patterns of Hebrew pointing.

This problem, combined with the known tradition of using circumlocutions for the name YHWH, and further supported by the known traditions of the Masoretes to use **Qere/Ketib** (Written/Read) substitutions, leads scholars to believe that the Masoretes were marking YHWH for perpetual **Qere**. The thinking is that יְהֹוָה and יְהוָה are marked with vowels of **Adonay**, a common circumlocution of YHWH, indicating that YHWH is to be read **Adonay** at those locations. (Note that in the first form, only the first and last vowels of **Adonay** are marked, while in the last form all three vowels are marked.) The forms יֱהוִה and יֱהֹוִה are marked by the vowels of **Elohim**, another common circumlocution of YHWH, indicating YHWH is to be read **Elohim** at those locations. (Likewise, in the first form, only the first and last vowels of Elohim are marked, while in the last form all three vowels are marked.) This conclusion is justified not only from Jewish writings such as the previous quote from the Talmud, but also because of the distribution of the two sets of forms. The forms יֱהוִה and יֱהֹוִה are nearly always used when immediately preceding **Adonay**, so that the combination **YHWH Adonay** is read **Elohim Adonay** to avoid the redundant **Adonay Adonay**. There are no other satisfactory explanations of this distribution pattern.

In view of the evidence, it seems hard to justify choosing any one of the vowel-pointed forms from the Masoretic Texts as an indication of the true pointing and pronunciation of YHWH. Likewise, the Masoretic pointing of YHWH really provides no help in determining the pronunciation.

Yah as Shortened Name

As noted in the section discussing **Yah**, this short form of YHWH is used 49 times Hebrew Scriptures.

There is no question about the pointing of **Yah**, as it always written יָה with the qamets vowel.

This is strongest indicator that the first vowel in YHWH is a qamats ָ and therefore that the vocalization of the **YH**- in YHWH would be **yah**-.

Theophoric Elements in Names

Since we know with some certainty that **Yah** was a short form of YHWH, it is not surprising to find this form occurring as a theophoric element in a large number of Hebrew names. Just a few of the hundreds of occurrences are shown here. Below are examples of –**yah** as a suffix:

הוֹשַׁעְיָה	Hosha'yah	Hoshiah	יָה	-yah	Jeremiah 43:2
צְפַנְיָה	Tsəfanyah	Zephaniah	יָה	-yah	Jeremiah 29:29
אֲדֹנִיָה	Adoniyah	Adonijah	יָה	-yah	2 Samuel 3:4
שְׁפַטְיָה	Shəfatyah	Shephatiah	יָה	-yah	2 Samuel 3:4

יְשַׁעְיָה	Yəsha'yah	Jeshaiah	יָה	-yah	Ezra 8:7
עֲתַלְיָה	Athalyah	Athaliah	יָה	-yah	Ezra 8:7

This is further evidence of the YH in YHWH being pronounced as **yah**. It is even more interesting to observe that a longer form, -**yahu**, including first three consonants of YHWH is extremely common in Hebrew names:

אֲחַזְיָהוּ	Ahazyahu	Ahaziah	יָהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 22:51
צִדְקִיָּהוּ	Tsidkiyahu	Zedekiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:21
שְׁמַעְיָהוּ	Shəma'yahu	Shemaiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:24
יִרְמְיָהוּ	Yirməyahu	Jeremiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:29
גְּדַלְיָהוּ	Gedalyahu	Gedaliah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 43:6
נֵרִיָּהוּ	Nariyyahu	Neriah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 43:6

Furthermore, there are some names which can take either the longer form –**yahu** or the shorter form -**yah**, indicating at they were synonyms and could be used interchangeably at least in some cases:

עֹבַדְיָה	Obadyah	Obadiah	יָה	-yah	1 Chronicles 3:21
עֹבַדְיָהוּ	Obadyahu	Obadiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 18:16
אֵלִיָּה	Eliyyah	Elijah	יָה	-yah	2 Kings 1:3
אֵלִיָּהוּ	Eliyyahu	Elijah	יָהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 18:16
מַתִּתְיָה	Mattithyah	Mattithiah	יָה	-yah	Ezra 10:43
מַתִּתְיָהוּ	Mattithyahu	Mattithiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	1 Chronicles 15:18
יְשַׁעְיָה	Yəsha'yah	Jeshaiah	יָה	-yah	Ezra 8:7
יְשַׁעְיָהוּ	Yəsha'yahu	Isaiah	יָהוּ	-yahu	Isaiah 1:1

So from the above data, it would seem plausible that first part of YHWH could have pronounced as **yahu**.

The problem is that the **W** [ו] in Hebrew can function either as a consonant or a vowel, and that can change depending on what is attached to it. The Hebrew rules of syllabification could result in that **W** functioning either way, depending what happens with the addition of the [ה] **H** and whatever vowel (if any) may be associated with it.

Although the suffixed forms are by far the most common, there are also examples of prefixed forms that should be considered. Representative examples of the prefix **yəho-** are:

יְהוֹשָׁפָט	Yəhoshafat	Jehosophat	יְהוֹ	yəho-	1 Kings 22:44
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	Yəhoshua	Joshua	יְהוֹ	yəho-	Joshua 1:1
יְהוֹיָדָע	Yəhoyada	Jehoiada	יְהוֹ	yəho-	Joshua 1:1
יְהוֹאָחָז	Yəho'ahaz	Jehoahaz	יְהוֹ	yəho-	2 Kings 14:8
יְהוֹצָדָק	Yəhotsadak	Jehozadak	יְהוֹ	yəho-	Haggai 1:1
יְהוֹזָבָד	Yəhozavad	Jehozabad	יְהוֹ	yəho-	1 Chronicles 26:4

Note however that in some cases the prefix **yəhu-** is found:

יְהוּדִית	Yəhudit	Judith	יְהוּ	yəhu-	Gen 26:34

יְהוּדִי	Yəhudi	Jehudi	יְהוּ	yəhu-	Jeremiah 36:14
יְהוּכַל	Yəhukhal	Juhucal	יְהוּ	yəhu-	Jeremiah 37:3
יְהוּדָה	Yəhudah	Judah	יְהוּ	yəhu-	Gen 29:35

And in at least two instances, there is a variation between **yəho**- and **yo**-, indicating that the **H** of the YHW- prefix can sometimes be dropped as a shortened form:

יְהוֹנָתָן	Yəhonathan	Jonathan	יְהוֹ	yəho-	2 Samuel 1:12
יוֹנָתָן	Yonathan	Jonathan	יוֹ	yo-	I Samuel 13:16
יהוֹסֵף	Yəhosef	Joseph	יְהוֹ	yəho-	Psalm 81:6
יוֹסֵף	Yosef	Joseph	יוֹ	yo-	Genesis 30:24

An examination of all the data shows that **yəhu**- and **yəho**- occur in complimentary distribution. The prefix **yəhu**- occurs before [ד , כ] while **yəho**- occurs before consonants [י , א , שׁ , צ , ז , נ , ס].

Since **Yah** is the shortened "stand alone" name used for YHWH in poetic books, and since the suffixes –**yahu** and –**yah** are found in all phonetic environments, it is reasonable to postulate that **yahu** is the underlying form for both the prefixes and suffixes. With the prefixed forms we have standard propretonic reduction of the [a] to [e], and in specified morphophonetic environments we have a lowering of [u] to [o].

The conclusion from this dataset would seem to be that **yahu** is a likely vocalization for the YHW portion of YHWH.

The Final Vowel

Determining the last vowel in the vocalization YHWH is difficult. No theophoric elements exist which clearly shed light on this problem. There are, at most, 7 occurrences of –**wah** in Hebrew names, examples of which follow:

חַוָּה	Hawwah	Eve	וָה	Genesis 4:1
תִּקְוָה	Tikwah	Tikvah	וָה	Ezra 10:15
עַלְוָה	`Alwah	Alvah	וָה	Genesis 36:40

Most of the examples are two syllable names, and some are of questionable Hebrew origin. Also, there are examples with the -**wah** ending that have no connection with the name of YHWH, such as Hattavah (Num 11:34) and Ivvah (2 Kings 18:34). This, together with the scarcity of examples of -**wah** would suggest that it is unlikely that a connection exists between –**wah** in these names and the name YHWH.

The Possible –weh Ending

There are no clear instances of –**weh** ever being used in Hebrew names. A few occurrences exist but they are place names and usually clearly names from non-Israelite territory:

נִינְוֶה	Ninəweh	Neneveh	וֶה	Genesis 10:11
שָׁוֵה	Shaveh	Shaveh	וֶה	Genesis 14:17

Thus, there is no evidence from theonyms that –**weh** is a part of the vocalization of YHWH.

Parsing of "to be, to exist"

The verb **Ehyeh** "I am" is linked in Exodus 3:14-15 to the name of YHWH. The root of **ehyah** is HYH "*to be, to exist*". However in Hebrew the semivowels Y and W are very fluid, and can result in alternating forms where the W and Y seem to interchange. So it is possible that due to the Y/W alternation the HYH root could also have been rendered HWH. If so, then either the 3rd person Qal imperfect form or the 3rd

person causative (Hiphil) imperfect form of HWH would have resulted in a word-initial Y to form YHWH, with the meaning "*He is, He exists*", or in the causative "*He causes to be, He causes to exist*".

One would think that the correct pointing of YHWH could be determined from parsing the verb, however roots with a guttural or semivowel present irregular patterns. And the irregularity is different depending on positive (first, medial, last) of the guttural or semivowel. The situation is even more complicated with roots that have two gutturals or semivowels. In this case HWH has a guttural or semivowel in all three positions, making it impossible to predict the pointing. Since we have no examples of pointed forms of HWH, there is no way to know for sure what the pointing would be.

One could argue that any of the following forms could be possible:

יִהְוֶה	**yihweh**	III-ה 3ms imperfect Qal
יַהֲוֹה	**yahâwoh**	I-Guttural Type 2, 3ms imperfect Qal
יֶהֱוַה	**yahêwah**	I-Gutteral Type 1, 3ms imperfect Qal
יַהְוֶה	**yahweh**	III-ה 3ms imperfect Hiphil

However, it cannot be stated with any certainty that any of the above forms are correct, because the parsing above assumes that root does not have gutturals in other positions, which is not the case. So the above forms may or may not be valid.

Nevertheless, they provide possibilities for consideration, from the standpoint that there may be a semantic connection based upon the Exodus 3:14-15 passage. It is important to remember that this requires the unattested assumption that the HYH root "**to be**" was at one time also realized as HWH.

Extra-Biblical Inscriptions and Texts

Other evidence for vocalization of YHWH can be found in ancient extra-Biblical texts.

The Elephantine papyri are 5th Century BC Jewish documents from the Jewish community on Elephantine Island, Egypt to officials in Jerusalem and Samaria. It is interesting that in these documents the Name can be found written in three ways: as YH, YHW, and YHWH.   Given the theophoric elements pronounced as yah and yahu, it would seem likely that the forms YH and YHW were probably vocalized as Yah and Yahu, respectively.

Other evidence comes from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In a Leviticus scroll written in Greek (4QpapLXXLev), the name is YHWH is written with only three Greek letters as **ΙΑω** (Iota-Alpha-Omega). This transcription seems to emphasize the vowels (pronunciation) rather than the consonants, and may be another indication that at least the short form of the name corresponding to YHW was pronounced **yahu.**

Most interesting are Greek texts on papyri from the first several centuries AD, which have magic incantations invoking the names of deities. Included in these texts are the names **Iaoue, Iaouai, Iabe, Iabai** and **Iaue**. Since there are likely transliterated forms of YHWH, some scholars suggest this as the strongest evidence for the pronunciation Yahweh. ,The problem is that there are MANY Greek forms for YHWH in the Greek texts of the early Centuries -- not just **Iaoue, Iaouai, Iabe, Iabai** and **Iaue,** but also **Iaoue, Iaou** and **Ieuw, Iaoth**, and **Iaoia.** So if one were to base a choice of the final vowel on the Greek texts, there would be many choices from which to arbitrarily pick.

The other evidence used to support Yahweh is that of Amorite texts using cognate forms such as **Yahwi-ila** and **Yawi-Dagan**, which show the YHWH form with [i] vowel at the end. The problem here is twofold: first, Amorite is not Hebrew, and second Amorite is far less understood than Hebrew. So this data is inconclusive. It would likely be erroneous to deduce anything about vowel quality in a Hebrew word from looking at the cognate in Amorite without having access to detailed comparative data, which is not possible at this time.

Another language for comparison is Ugaritic, a Semitic language from a port in present day Syria. This site was discovered in 1928, and many clay tablets have been unearthed dating to 1300 BC. Analyses of these tablets show they are alphabetic, written in cuneiform, and share relatively close linguistic ties with Hebrew. There are some interesting cognate forms such /**yw**/ for a divine name. The problem, course, is

that as much as one studies written tablets, there is no way to be certain about pronunciation. It is especially difficult in Ugaritic, since it is like Hebrew in that only consonants are written. Thus Ugaritic, like Amorite and Greek, really offers no help in determining the proper pronunciation of YHWH.

Poetic Meter in Scripture

Although there is much to disagree with in Greg Stafford's book *Jehovah's Witnesses Defended*, he makes an interesting argument that the name YHWH should be pronounced as three syllables rather than two. He looks at the meter in the poetic lines of Exodus 15 here YHWH is used, and concludes that the lines sound rough and unrhythmical when pronounced as **Yahweh**, but smooth and poetic when pronounced with three syllables (as in his choice in support of the Jehovah's Witnesses vocalization **Yahowah**). The lines he uses are below:

Exodus 15:1:	'āšiyrāh la Yahweh, kiy gā'ōh gā'āh.
Exodus 15:1:	'āšiyrāh la Yahōwah, kiy gā'ōh gā'āh.

I will sing to YHWH, for he is highly exalted

Exodus 15:6:	Yəmiynəḵā Yahweh, ne'dāriy bakkoaḥ;
	yəmiynəḵā Yahweh, tir'aṣ 'ôyêb.
Exodus 15:6:	Yəmiynəḵā Yahōwah, ne'dāriy bakkoaḥ;
	yəmiynəḵā Yahōwâh, tir'aṣ 'ôyêb

Your right hand YHWH, glorious in power
Your right hand YHWH, shatters the enemy

Exodus 15:17:	Mākôn ləšiḇtəḵā, pā'altā Yahweh.
Exodus 15:17:	Mākôn ləšiḇtəḵā, pā'altā Yahōwah.

The place for your abode, you have made YHWH

While the choice of **Yahowah** is not justified on other linguistic grounds (as discussed in previous sections), the argument of using poetic meter has validity. The passages above would then indicate that the preferred choice for the pointing of YHWH would be pronounced as three syllables and have a word-final /ah/ or /a/, suggesting **Yahuah** as the possible vocalization of YHWH.

There are other poetic Scriptures that similarly support this argument, for example:

Psalm 3:8	la-Yahuah ha-Yeshuah.

Salvation belongs to YHWH.

This is the chant of the great multitude in Rev 7:10. The three syllable **Yahuah** makes the meter fit well for a chant, as does the similar pronunciation of **Yahuah** and **Yeshuah**.. Clearly, the use of **Yahweh** in place of **Yahuah** has neither the same rhythm nor rhyme.

Summary

The best evidence seems to be that YHW is pronounced **Yahu**. For that to be the case the Hebrew would most likely be pointed יְהוֹ as in most of the theonyms. **Yahu** is always pointed יְהוֹ and never יְַָ.

Because of the poetic evidence, it seems that the YHWH was most likely pronounced as three syllables. Therefore we must attach the final ה (H) with an associated vowel. From the Greek transliterations either [a], [e] or [i] would be suggested. The problem is that Hebrew words do not end in הִ, הֶ, הֵ or הָ (-hi, -he, -hē or -ha). There is, however, one form that is possible. Hebrew words can end in a final הַ the vowel is what is called a "furtive patach", meaning it is pronounced –**ah** rather than –**ha**. This only happens for the patach [a] vowel when occurring in word final position under certain guttural consonants (ה, ח and ע). For example, word final הַ (-ah) occurs in one of the names for YHWH considered above:

אֱלוֹהַ	Eloah	"God"

Thus, there is a solution for YHWH which fits the required Hebrew word structure:

יְהוָה pronounced **Yahuah** with a furtive patach.

In summary, this solution is preferred because:

- **Yahuah** preserves the -**yahu** form exactly as it is pointed in most Hebrew names, as יְהוּ

- **Yahuah** results in a word that follows standard syllabification rules
  (unlike the forms resulting from YHWH with Masoretic pointing)

- **Yahuah** results in a word that follows accepted phonological patterns
  (patach vowel commonly occurs with ה, and can occur word finally)

- **Yahuah** does not require הֻ -- the [u] vowel under the initial H
  (Forms such as **Yahuwah** would require יְהֻוָה which is problematic
  since **yahu** is always pointed יְהוּ and never יְהֻ)

- The meter of **Yahuah** best fits the poetic pattern (eg, Exodus 15 and Psalm 3)

- **Yahuah** fits the Greek data as well as any other option
  (Origen uses the form **Iaoia** which ends in the [a] sound.)