

NAMES OF YHWH AND THE MESSIAH

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INTRODUCTION

Names are important. Names have meaning and associations. We should indeed consider what names and titles we use to refer to the Father and the Messiah. Our conclusions should not be based upon opinions, thoughts, or feelings, but rather on the Holy Scriptures. My premise is that both the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the Apostolic Scriptures (New Testament) are YHWH's communication to us. Therefore we look to these Scriptures as the basis for our direction. Our thoughts and opinions must be formed by Scripture. So in an attempt to answer the question of how to refer to YHWH and the Messiah, we should closely examine the examples we have from Scripture.

To put this paper into context, we begin with:

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.

In this paper, the most common names and titles of YHWH and the Messiah, both in the Hebrew Scriptures and Apostolic Scriptures, are examined. When attempting to discern the actual pronunciation of YHWH, as well as Hebrew name of the Messiah, other relevant non-Biblical historical data are also considered. By way of summary, the final section provides a number of brief concluding statements.

EL אֱלֹהִים

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?

Psalms 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?

Psalms 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** אֱלִים 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.

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 with 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 without 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 Adonijah 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**!

Psalms 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.

ELOHEY אֱלֹהֵי

Elohey is the construct form of **Elohim**. It is used ~1540 times:

Genesis 26:24

And YHWH appeared to him the same night and said, "I am **Elohey** of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."

Genesis 32:9

And Jacob said, "**Elohey** of my father Abraham and **Elohey** of my father Isaac, YHWH who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, that I may do you good,'

Psalms 79:9

Help us, **Elohey** of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!

Psalms 145:1

I will extol you, my **Elohey** and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

As with **elohim**, **elohey** is also used in pagan contexts, since it can refer in a general sense to the gods of other nations:

Genesis 35:2

So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign **elohey** that are among you and purify yourselves and change your garments.

Exodus 20:23

You shall not make **elohey** of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves **elohey** of gold.

1 Kings 11:33

because they have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth **elohey** of the Sidonians, Chemosh **elohey** of Moab, and Milcom **elohey** of the Ammonites

ELOAH אֱלֹהַ

Eloah occurs 57 times in Hebrew Scriptures, mostly in Job where it functions as a proper name. Its Aramaic cognate form **elah** occurs nearly 100 times in Aramaic portions of Scripture (Ezra and Daniel; I will not quote from those passages, since this discussion will be limited to the Hebrew text). Most likely **eloah** comes from a root which means "to *adore or worship*". Some conclude that **eloah** is an expanded form for **el**, as well as the singular form of **elohim**, although neither of these is certain.

Job 35:10

But none says, 'Where is **Eloah** my Maker, who gives songs in the night,

Psalms 50:22

“Mark this, then, you who forget **Eloah**, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!

Psalms 114:7

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of YHWH, at the presence of **Eloah** of Jacob,

Proverbs 30:5

Every word of **Eloah** proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Eloah can also refer to a pagan god:

Deuteronomy 32:17

They sacrificed to demons that were no **eloah**, to **elohim** they had never known

Habakkuk 1:11

Then they sweep by like the wind and go on, guilty men, whose own might is their **eloah**!”

Eloah has a cognate form in Ugaritic **ilh**, where it is found in ritual texts as being the recipient of pagan sacrifices.

ADONAY אֲדֹנָי

Adonay is used ~770 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and is usually translated “*Lord / lord*”. **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 **Adona**. 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.

ADON אֲדֹן

Adon as an unsuffixed form is used only about 15 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Like **adonay** it can refer to YHWH as well as to men. Examples of references to YHWH are:

Psalms 114:7

Tremble, O earth, at the presence of **Adon**, at the presence of the **Eloah** of Jacob,

Isaiah 1:24

Therefore the **Adon** declares, YHWH of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: “Ah, I will get relief from my enemies and avenge myself on my foes.

The following show usage of the singular form **adon**, when referring to man:

Genesis 45:8

So it was not you who sent me here, but **Elohim**. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and **adon** of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Psalms 105:21

he made him **adon** of his house and ruler of all his possessions

The word **adon** is known to refer to a god in other Canaanite languages, the most relevant parallels being in Ugaritic. For example, the Ugaritic god **El** is referred to as “**adon** of the gods”

SHADDAY שַׁדַּי

Shadday probably means “*strong, mighty, almighty*”, coming from a root which meant “mountain”. **Shadday** is used 48 times to refer to YHWH, either as a descriptive immediately following **El**, or “standing alone” as a proper name. **Shadday** occurs with **El** 7 times, as illustrated in the examples:

Genesis 17:1

When Abram was ninety-nine years old YHWH appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am **El Shadday**; walk before me, and be blameless”

Exodus 6:3

I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as **El Shadday**, but by my name **YHWH** I did not make myself known to them.

The other 41 instances of **Shadday** occur as a proper name for YHWH, that is, not in a context adjacent to **El** or another title for YHWH, and also without the definite article:

Job 22:23

If you return to **Shadday** you will be built up; if you remove injustice far from your tents,

Job 8:5

If you will seek **El** and plead with **Shadday** for mercy,

Joel 1:15

Alas for the day! For the day of YHWH is near, and as destruction from **Shadday** it comes.

Ezekiel 1:24

I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters, like the sound of the **Shadday**, a sound of tumult like the sound of an army.

There are no Scriptural uses of **Shadday** to refer pagan gods. Similar terms have been found in bronze-age Egyptian and Ugaritic texts, such as Ugaritic “*El Shadi is hunting*”, but there is also no clear evidence that **Shadday** was ever used to refer to deity other than YHWH.

TSUR צֹר

Tsur means Rock. **Tsur** is used either as a literal “*rock, stone*” or as a name for YHWH at least 77 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of the times there is a double meaning, or at least a suggestion that a physical rock is some way connected with or picturing YHWH. Approximately 34 times, especially in poetic passages, **Tsur** is clearly used as a name for YHWH. In those cases the definite article is never used. Below are a few examples:

Deuteronomy 32:31

For their **tsur** is not as our **Tsur**; our enemies are by themselves.

2 Samuel 22:32

“For who is **El**, but YHWH? And who is **Tsur**, except our **Elohey**?”

Isaiah 51:1

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the YHWH: look to **Tsur** from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

2 Samuel 22:47

“YHWH lives, and blessed be my **Tsur**, and exalted be my **Elohey, Tsur** of my salvation.

Tsur has no pagan associations in Scripture.

ELYON עֶלְיוֹן

Elyon is used 22 times in the Hebrew Scriptures as “*top, upper, uppermost*”. It is also used 26 times as a title or name for YHWH, and as such is usually translated “*the Most High*”, even though the definite article does not appear in the Hebrew. A better translation would be “*Most High*”, since **Elyon** is functioning as a name rather than a title:

2 Samuel 22:14

YHWH thundered from heaven, and **Elyon** uttered his voice.

Psalms 18:13

YHWH also thundered in the heavens, and **Elyon** uttered his voice, hailstones and coals of fire.

Psalms 50:14

Offer to **Elohim** a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to **Elyon**,

Lamentations 3:38

Is it not from the mouth of **Elyon** that good and bad come?

Elyon has no pagan associations in Scripture.

BAAL בַּעַל

Baal means “*master, owner, husband, married one*”. It can refer to a person or a deity. In the case of a deity it can be used in general or can be used as a proper name of a specific deity.

Baal, in the singular form, seems to be used to refer to a pagan deity ~56 times in the Hebrew Scriptures, and always occurs with the definite article. In most if not all cases it could be argued that the term is used as the name of a specific pagan deity. However there are some cases when it is ambiguous, and could be read either as a name as or a general reference to a pagan deity. Below are some examples that indicate the term is used as a name for a pagan deity:

2 Kings 10:20

And Jehu ordered, “Sanctify a solemn assembly for **Baal**.” So they proclaimed it.

2 Kings 10:25

So when they put them to the sword, the guard and the officers cast them out and went into the inner room of the house of **Baal**.

Jeremiah 12:16

even as they taught my people to swear by **Baal**, then they shall be built up in the midst of my people.

Zephaniah 1:4

and I will cut off from this place the remnant of **Baal** and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests

There are ~18 times in the Hebrew Scriptures that the plural form, **baalim**, is used as a general reference to pagan deities:

Judges 2:11

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of YHWH and served the **baalim**.

2 Chronicles 28:2

but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made metal images for the **baalim**.

Hosea 2:13

And I will punish her for the feast days of the **baalim** when she burned offerings to them and

adorned herself with her ring and jewelry, and went after her lovers and forgot me, declares YHWH.

In a more general sense, **baal** (or **baalim**) can refer to a person, and is often translated as “owner, master, leader, or husband”. It occurs ~100 times in Scriptures in this way. For example:

Exodus 22:8

If the thief is not found, the **baal** of the house shall come near to **Elohim** to show whether or not he has put his hand to his neighbor’s property.

Judges 9:6

And all the **baalim** of Shechem came together, and all Beth-millo, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar at Shechem.

2 Samuel 11:26

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she lamented over her **baal**.

Joel 1:8

Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the **baal** of her youth.

In addition to Scriptures, where Baal is used as the name of a specific Canaanite god, the use of Baal is also attested in Ugaritic and Sumerian as the name of a specific name of pagan deity in those languages. One Sumerian text from mid-third millennium BC lists Baal among a number of other gods, all clearly listed by their proper names.

There are also a very few times in Scripture where the word **Baal** is used to refer to YHWH:

Nahum 1:2

YHWH is a jealous and avenging **El**; YHWH is an avenging and wrathful **Baal**.

Hosea 2:16

“And in that day, declares YHWH, you will call me ‘My Husband,’ and no longer will you call me ‘My **Baal**.’

Jeremiah 3:14

Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your **Baal**.

Isaiah 54:5

For your Maker is your **Baal**, YHWH of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the **Elohey** of the whole earth he is called.

Therefore, **Baal** is primarily used in the sense of “owner / master” as well as to refer to a pagan deity. In the few instances where **Baal** refers to YHWH, it seems that what is being communicated is that YHWH is the true **Baal** (the true Master), in contrast with the pagan **baals** that the people have been people.

EHYEH “I AM” **אֲנִי־אֶהְיֶה**

Exodus 3:13–14

Then Moses said to **Elohim**, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘**Elohey** of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”

Elohim said to Moses, “**Ehyeh asher Ehyeh**.” [“*I am who I am*.”] And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘**Ehyeh** has sent me to you.’”

Some suggest that **Ehyeh** may be a personal name of YHWH, but it is more likely to be a statement of His fundamental nature. **Ehyeh** is a verb, in the first person, meaning “*I am, I exist, or I cause to exist*”.

When Moses was asking “*What is his name?*” he was wanting to know more than just a title or name. He was asking about the power, authority, and credibility to accomplish what was being promised. The answer “*I am who I am*.” was not His name, but rather a statement about who He is. In Hebrew, and to a Hebrew, **ehyeh** “*I am*” does not just mean “*to be, or to exist*”. As with other Hebrew conceptual verbs, it includes action associated with the concept. It carries with it the meaning of “*I am the One who is and does; the One who acts*.” So YHWH was first answering Moses’ true question, which was primarily about His

character and Being. After He addresses that, He continues by giving His personal name YHWH, as well as referring to Himself as being the same One worshipped by Moses' forefathers.

Because of the connection of Ehyeh and YHWH in the this passage, and fluid nature of the semivowels Y and W in Hebrew, it is suggested that the root of **ehyeh**, HYH, could alternate with HWH, and form the base of the personal name YHWH.

YHWH יהוה

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?

There is evidence that at various times in history YHWH was also worshipped by nations other than Israel. Texts show that YHWH was known to the Edomites and Midianites in 14th Century BC. Also inscriptions from Egypt show the knowledge of YHWH there from an even earlier date. Of course, all that makes sense when one understands that YHWH made himself known to Abraham at the very beginning. In that case, it would be expected that knowledge of YHWH would exist wherever Abraham and his descendants settled. This would cover Egypt, and also the Edomites and Midianites.

Furthermore, it is not surprising that neighboring nations would, over time, tend toward some form of worship toward YHWH, given the eclectic nature of their religion. It would have been desirable, with no apparent downside, for nations to add the god of the Israel to their pantheon. However, it should be stated that no nation has ever claimed YHWH as their national God except for Israel. And YHWH commanded Israel to be monotheistic, unlike their polytheistic neighbors.

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. The vocalization of YHWH as Yahweh, along with several alternatives, are considered in a separate section.

YAH יה

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 used, 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 seems odd 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.

THEOS θεός

The Greek word **theos** is used over 1300 times in the Apostolic Scriptures, and almost always translated “*God*” or “*god*” in our English Bibles. The LXX typically translates the Hebrew words **El**, **Elohim**, **Elohey**, and **Eloah** as **Theos**. **Theos** almost always occurs with the definite article, although the definite article is not always translated into English since it sometimes results in grammatically awkward sentence structures. Examples of the use of **Theos** in reference to YHWH are as follows:

Matthew 15:4

For [the] **Theos** commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see [the] **Theos**.”

Romans 3:29

Or is [the] **Theos** the **Theos** of Jews only? Is he not the **Theos** of Gentiles also?

2 Corinthians 1:4

who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by [the] **Theos**.

Theos almost always occurs with the definite article, although the definite article is rarely translated into English since it would result in a grammatically awkward sentence structure. I show it in brackets in the following examples.

Although common in the Apostolic Scriptures, there are some examples where the definite article is not used, and therefore the usage of **Theos** is more like that of a proper name. For example:

John 9:16

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from **Theos**, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

John 10:33

The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself **Theos**.”

Titus 1:16

They profess to know **Theos**, but they deny him by their works.

Titus 3:8

The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed **Theos** may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

Theos, like Hebrew **el** is also a generic term for “*god*”, and is used in Scripture to pagan deities:

Acts 7:43

You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your **theos** Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

Acts 12:22

And the people were shouting, “The voice of a **theos**, and not of a man!”

Philippians 3:19

Their end is destruction, their **theos** is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

KYRIOS κύριος

The basic meaning of the Greek **kyrios** designates someone of superior status, who has authority and control over things or people. It can function as a common noun, as well as a title or a proper name. **Kyrios** is used over 700 times in the Apostolic Scriptures, with ~580 times referring to either YHWH or the Messiah. Usually **kyrios** is translated either as “*Lord or Master*”. There are many instances of its use both with and without the definite article. Examples where **kyrios** refers to YHWH with the definite article are:

Luke 1:28

And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the **Kyrios** is with you!”

Luke 1:46

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the **Kyrios**,

Acts 18:9

And the **Kyrios** said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent”

Examples where **kyrios** refers to YHWH without the definite article are:

Matthew 1:22

All this took place to fulfill what **Kyrios** had spoken by the prophet

Matthew 4:7

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put **Kyrios** your **Theos** to the test.’

Luke 1:68

“Blessed be **Kyrios**, the **Theos** of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people

Romans 12:19

for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says **Kyrios**.”

There are also uses of **Kyrios** that are clearly used to refer to the Messiah:

Matthew 7:21

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘**Kyrios, Kyrios,**’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 8:25

And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, **Kyrios**; we are perishing.”

Luke 2:11

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is **Christos Kyrios**.

1 Corinthians 12:3

no one can say “**Iesous** is **Kyrios**” except in the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:57

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through the **Kyrios** our **Iesous Christos**.

There are ~130 times that kyrios does not refer to either YHWH or the Messiah. Usually this is a respectful term for a man, or an angel, or even a pagan deity.

1 Peter 3:6

as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him **kyrios**.

Acts 25:26

But I have nothing definite to write to the **kyrios** about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa

Luke 12:46

the **kyrios** of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know

While Scriptures do not use the word **kyrios** to refer to a pagan deity, nevertheless there are literally hundreds of ancient texts that do use kyrios to refer to pagan gods, from Egypt through Mesopotamia. In the 5th Century BC, Zeus is referred to as “*the kyrios of all things*”. And at Epidaurus in Greece, perhaps the largest pagan healing center in the world (a temple complex of the god Asclepius), they found an ancient hymn invoking the “*father of the gods*” as **Kyrios**.

CHRISTOS Χριστός

Christos means “*anointed one*”. In Hebrew the word would be **mashiach**, which is transliterated into English as “*Messiah*”. The LXX uses **christos** 48 times to translate **mashiach** in connection with kings, priests and prophets, when they are referred to as “*anointed*.” In the Apostolic Scriptures **Christos** occurs ~530 times. It is often found with the definite article, as “*the Anointed One*”:

Matthew 2:4

and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the **Christos** was to be born.

John 1:41

He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the **Messias**” (which means **Christos**). [Note: Here John uses the Hebrew term **Mashiach** transliterated into Greek as **Messias**, and then explains to his readers that it is the same as **Christos**.]

John 7:41 yes

Others said, “This is the **Christos**.” But some said, “Is the **Christos** to come from Galilee?”

Throughout the Apostolic Scriptures, and especially apparent outside of the Gospels, **Christos** occurs frequently without the definite article, as if it were used as a proper name:

John 9:22

for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess him as **Christos**, he was to be put out of the synagogue.

Romans 5:6

For while we were still weak, at the right time **Christos** died for the ungodly.

Romans 6:8

Now if we have died with **Christos**, we believe that we will also live with him.

1 Corinthians 5:7

For **Christos**, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Outside of Scripture, the word **Christos** was also used to describe pagan deities. The Greek god of wine Dionysus, celebrated with drunkenness and orgies, was referred to as “*The Anointed One*”, among other titles similar to that of the Messiah.

IESOUS Ἰησοῦς

The name of the Messiah in the Apostolic Scriptures is **Iesous**, transliterated as “Jesus” in English Bibles. **Iesous** is used ~920 times in the Apostolic Scriptures. As with other proper names in Greek, it may occur with or without the definite article “the”. In English the article is not translated since it results in grammatically awkward sentence structures. Examples of usage with the definite article are:

Matthew 8:20

And [the] **Iesous** said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

Matthew 4:7

[The] **Iesous** said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the **kyrios** your **theos** to the test.’ ”

Matthew 14:29

He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to [the] **Iesous**.

Examples without the definite article are:

John 20:16

Iesous said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

Acts 22:8

And I answered, ‘Who are you, **Kyrios**?’ And he said to me, ‘I am **Iesous** of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’

Hebrews 13:12

So **Iesous** also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

All the writers of the Apostolic Scripture, whether writing to a Greek audience or Hebrew audience, use the name **Iesous** when using the personal name of the Messiah. While he most certainly had a Hebrew name, the only personal name Scripture gives us is the Greek **Iesous**.

Iesous is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name **Yeshua**. The name **Yeshua**, and its alternate forms, are examined in a separate section.

YAHUAH יהוה**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:

יהוה	Yəhuah(?)*	as in Exodus 3:4
יהוה	Yəhowah(?)+	as in Exodus 3:2
יהוה	Yehwih(?)*	as in Genesis 15:2
יהוה	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 **יהוה** and **יהוה** 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 **יהוה** and **יהוה** 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 **יהוה** and **יהוה** 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 **יהוה** and **יהוה** 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 **יה** 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:

הוֹשָׁעְיָהּ	Hosha'yah	Hoshiah	יה	-yah	Jeremiah 43:2
צְפַנְיָהּ	Tsafanyah	Zephaniah	יה	-yah	Jeremiah 29:29
אֲדֹנִיָּהּ	Adoniyah	Adonijah	יה	-yah	2 Samuel 3:4
שְׁפַטְיָהּ	Shəfatyah	Shephatiah	יה	-yah	2 Samuel 3:4
יֵשָׁעְיָהּ	Yəsha'yah	Jeshaiah	יה	-yah	Ezra 8:7
אַתְלִיָּהּ	Athalyah	Athaliah	יה	-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:

אַחַזְיָהוּ	Ahazyahu	Ahaziah	יְהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 22:51
צִדְקִיָּהוּ	Tsidkiyahu	Zedekiah	יְהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:21
שְׁמַעְיָהוּ	Shōma'yahu	Shemaiah	יְהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:24
יִרְמְיָהוּ	Yirməyahu	Jeremiah	יְהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 29:29
גִּדְיָהוּ	Gedalyahu	Gedaliah	יְהוּ	-yahu	Jeremiah 43:6
נַרְיָהוּ	Nariyyahu	Neriaah	יְהוּ	-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	יְהִי	-yah	1 Chronicles 3:21
עֹבַדְיָהוּ	Obadyahu	Obadiah	יְהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 18:16
אֵלִיָּה	Eliyyah	Elijah	יְהִי	-yah	2 Kings 1:3
אֵלִיָּהוּ	Eliyyahu	Elijah	יְהוּ	-yahu	1 Kings 18:16
מַתִּיתְיָה	Mattithyah	Mattithiah	יְהִי	-yah	Ezra 10:43
מַתִּיתְיָהוּ	Mattithyahu	Mattithiah	יְהוּ	-yahu	1 Chronicles 15:18
יֵשַׁעְיָה	Yəsha'yah	Jeshaiah	יְהִי	-yah	Ezra 8:7
יֵשַׁעְיָהוּ	Yəsha'yahu	Isaiah	יְהוּ	-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	יְהוּ	yəho-	1 Kings 22:44
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	Yəhoshua	Joshua	יְהוּ	yəho-	Joshua 1:1
יְהוֹיָדָע	Yəhoyada	Jehoiada	יְהוּ	yəho-	Joshua 1:1
יְהוֹאָחָז	Yəho'ahaz	Jehoahaz	יְהוּ	yəho-	2 Kings 14:8
יְהוֹצָדָק	Yəhotsadak	Jehozadak	יְהוּ	yəho-	Haggai 1:1
יְהוֹזָבָד	Yəhozavad	Jehozabad	יְהוּ	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
יְהוּכָל	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:

יהונתן	Yəhonathan	Jonathan	יהו	yəho-	2 Samuel 1:12
יונתן	Yonathan	Jonathan	יו	yo-	I Samuel 13:16
יהוסף	Yəhosef	Joseph	יהו	yəho-	Psalms 81:6
יוסף	Yosef	Joseph	יו	yo-	Genesis 30:24

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

Given that Yah is the shortened form of the name, and therefore defines the initial vowel, it seems plausible that **yahu** is the underlying form for both the prefixes and suffix. With the prefixed forms we have standard proretonic 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:

חַוְוָה	Hawwah	Eve	וָה	Genesis 4:1
תִּקְוָה	Tikwah	Tikvah	וָה	Ezra 10:15
עֲלֻוָה	`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:

נִנְוֶה	Ninəweh	Neneveh	וֶה	Genesis 10:11
שָׁוֶה	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:

יְהוֹה	yihweh	III-יְ 3ms imperfect Qal
יְהוֹהֻ	yahâwoh	I-Guttural Type 2, 3ms imperfect Qal
יְהוֹהֻ	yahêwah	I-Guttural Type 1, 3ms imperfect Qal
יְהוֹהֻ	yahweh	III-יְ 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 **Iaovia**. 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: 'āšiyrah la Yahweh kiy gā'ōh gā'āh.
 Exodus 15:1: 'āšiyrah la Yahōwah kiy gā'ōh gā'āh.
I will sing to YHWH for he has triumphed gloriously

Exodus 15:6: Yəmiynəkā, Yahweh, ne'dāriy bakkoah;
 yəmiynəkā, Yahweh, tir'aš 'ōyēb.
 Exodus 15:6: Yəmiynəkā, Yahōwah, ne'dāriy bakkoah;
 yəmiynəkā, Yahōwāh, tir'aš 'ōyēb
Your right hand, YHWH, glorious in power
Your right hand, YHWH, shatters the enemy

Exodus 15:17: Mākōn ləšibṭəkā pā'altā, Yahweh.
 Exodus 15:17: Mākōn ləšibṭəkā pā'altā, Yahōwah.
The place you have made for your abode, 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:

Psalms 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 יהוּ as in most of the theonyms. **Yahu** is always pointed יהוּ and never יהו.

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 ה, ך, ם or ן (-hi, -he, -hē or -ha). There is, however, one form that is possible. Hebrew words can end in a final ה 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, ך and ם). For example, word final ה (-ah) occurs in one of the names for YHWH considered above:

אלוה Eloah “God”

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

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

In summary, this solution is preferred because:

- **Yahuah** preserves the **Yahu** form exactly as it is pointed in Hebrew, as יהוּ
- **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 הָ -- the [u] vowel under the initial H (Forms such as **Yahuwah** would require יהוהָ which is problematic since **yahu** is always pointed יהוּ and never יהוָּ)
- The meter of **Yahuah** fits the poetic pattern required in Exodus 15
- **Yahuah** fits the Greek data as well as any other option (Origen uses the form **Iaoia** which ends in the [a] sound.)

YESHUA יֵשׁוּעַ

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 given 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**.

Psalms 119:123

My eyes long for your **Yeshua** and for the fulfillment of your righteous promise.

Psalms 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 form **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.

ENGLISH & OTHER LANGUAGES

The most common Greek and Hebrew names are translated into English follows:

Hebrew	Greek	English
El, Eloah, Elohim	Theos	God
Adon, Adonay	Kyrios	Lord
YHWH, Yah	Kyrios	the LORD, GOD
Mashiah	Christos	Christ, Messiah
Yeshua, Yəhoshua	Iesous	Jesus

Some would argue that these English names are to be avoided, either because in some contexts they have pagan associations, or because they do not represent the true identity of the One who holds the name.

It cannot be denied that “*god*” and “*lord*” have been commonly used throughout history to refer to pagan deities. They are general terms for a deity, and thus, in English, we use an initial capital to distinguish the true God and the true Lord from among the many pagan gods and lords. However, as we have noted above, nearly all of the Greek and Hebrew names under discussion have also been used in association with pagan deities. Even in Scriptures themselves, most of these names have at times referred to pagan deities. Yet, YHWH chose to communicate Himself to us, through His Word, using all of these names and titles, both in Hebrew and in Greek. The English translations carry much the same semantic content as their Greek counterparts, and in most cases the same can be said of the Hebrew. Therefore the argument that the English terms should not be used because of pagan associations is not valid. YHWH gave us names in Scripture, both Hebrew and Greek, where the situation was the same.

Likewise, in response to those who would argue that the non-Hebrew names do not represent the true identity of the One who holds the name, the fact is that the Apostolic Scriptures present names that are translations or transliteration of the original Hebrew names. The majority of the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written Greek, even though the Messiah and his apostles would have spoken and taught primarily in Hebrew (or Aramaic). The LXX was in common use at the time, and Greek was the lingua franca of the entire region. Messiah and his followers no doubt spoke Greek, since they traveled to the Greek-speaking world of the Decapolis and taught and ministered there to non-Jewish Greek speakers. If these Greek names were not adequate to represent the identity of YHWH, surely the Messiah would have instructed his disciples clearly on this matter, and the Apostolic Scriptures would have reflected that teaching. And if these Greek names were not adequate to represent YHWH or the Messiah, surely YHWH Himself would not have allowed his Word, His inspired communication to us, to communicate in such a faulty manner.

So while it may be true that translated and transliterate names do not fully communicate all the meaning that was associated with the original Hebrew, the fact remains that the inspired YHWH-breathed Apostolic Scriptures use these names. If these Greek transliterations and translations are acceptable to YHWH, the conclusion would be that our translations and transcriptions into English, as well as other languages, are also acceptable.

It is also argued by some that the “*power in His name*” referred to in Scripture comes from correctly pronouncing His original Hebrew name, and when we use Greek or English translations, that power is not there (at best) or that power is of demonic origin (at worst). That would be true if we were dealing with a book of sorcery with spells and chants that must be pronounced correctly and spoken in correct sequence to invoke magic or evil spirits. But Scriptures are not a book of sorcery, and the power in His name is not that of magic that comes from correctly pronouncing His Hebrew name. If that were true, YHWH would have communicated His Scriptures to make that clear. Yet, nowhere are we even given his Hebrew name. The “*power in His name*” is always given to us in the name of **Iesous**, rather than **Yeshua**. But that should be of no concern, because the real power is not in the pronunciation but in the power and substance of the One that the name represents.

It is interesting that countless testimonies of spiritual warfare encounters tell of people of who are under the influence of demonic spirit who cannot say or pray the name of Jesus until they released from that demonic influence. Regardless of the country or language spoken, the name that cannot be prayed is the translated or transliterated name of the Messiah in that language (in English, that would be Jesus, but in other languages something different). The same hold true for miraculous prayers of healing prayed in the name of the Messiah. Amazingly enough, the language a person speaks does not matter. The “*power of the name*” is active and effective even though they use the translated name in their own language rather than Hebrew (or Greek). This is because we are not chanting a magic spell, but rather calling by name on the power of the Messiah. The phonetics of a name are not as important as the One it represents. We have been blessed with a multilingual Father who understands His name regardless of the language it has been translated into.

However, while there is nothing wrong with using translated or transliterated names of the Father and the Son, there are some very good reasons to use their original Hebrew names. The present-day convention of substituting “the LORD” for the personal name of YHWH has the result of depersonalizing our Father. The use of the definite article “the” makes “the LORD” a formal title, rather than a personal name. There

is something very personal about using a person's name. A formal title implies a distance or lack of personal closeness and intimacy. Our Father gave us His personal name, YHWH to be remembered and used. He is our Father, and desires an intimate personal relationship with His. That is why He gave us His name, and why we honor Him when we use it. And while we cannot know for sure how to pronounce that name, like with all Torah, we honor Him when we try our very best to keep His commandments, even when we don't understand fully how to do it, or what is expected of us.

Similarly, with the name of the Messiah, while the use of **Iesous** in Greek or **Jesus** in English is entirely acceptable, we can also use His Hebrew name **Yeshua** (or possibly **Yəhoshua**). Just as we show respect and honor to a person from another country when we use their original name rather than a translation, we can also show respect and honor to the Messiah by using His original Hebrew name. Furthermore, because our culture today has developed such a skewed, Western, non-Jewish perspective of the Messiah and his teachings, the use of His Hebrew name becomes a reminder to all who hear that this Messiah is indeed Jewish. As the son of YHWH, he was without sin, meaning that He followed Torah perfectly and completely, not just outwardly, but also in His heart. And since He was our example, we are to be like Him. We do well to remind ourselves and others of His Jewishness and the Jewish context of His teaching. To that end, the use of his Hebrew name is to be encouraged.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, brief statements of conclusion are listed below:

1. YHWH commands us to remember His name, so we should not refrain from pronouncing it, albeit with awe and reverence. One could argue that to refrain from speaking His name is to break Torah.
2. Hebrew Scriptures use each of the titles **El**, **Eloah**, **Elohey**, **Elohim**, **Adon**, and **Adonay** to refer to YHWH. Each of these terms is used not just as a title, but also as a name for YHWH. This is in spite of the fact that each of these terms can refer in a general sense to pagan deities as well. The fact that Scripture uses these terms so frequently for YHWH means that we can and should use them as well.
3. Hebrew Scriptures also use numerous other names for YHWH, including **Shaddai** "*Almighty*", **Tsur** "*Rock*" and **Elyon** "*Most High*".
4. In only a few instances Hebrew Scriptures uses **Baal** to refer to YHWH. This has especially strong pagan connections, and it seems that in Scriptures this term is used when YHWH is saying "*I am the real Baal / Master*" – as opposed to the false baals the people serve. Baal does not seem to be a normal term used as a title or name of YHWH.
5. **Yah** is a shortened form of YHWH used in Scripture, but is used only in poetic passages of Scripture, and never in other speech domains. There is nothing wrong with using this name, however there is no evidence it was ever used in normal speech.
6. In the Apostolic Scriptures, **Theos** and **Kyrios** to refer to YHWH, both as a title and as a name, even though these terms also have pagan associations. Theos translates El, Eloah, Elohey, and Elohim, while **Kyrios** translated **Adon** and **Adonay**. The fact that Scripture uses these terms so frequently for YHWH means that we can and should as well.
7. In the Apostolic Scriptures, **Iesous**, **Kyrios** and **Christos** all used to refer to the name of the Messiah. In the case of **Iesous**, this is ONLY personal name we are given in Scriptures. The fact that Scripture uses these names so frequently for the Messiah means that we can and should do so as well.
8. YHWH is His personal name. There are many theonyms with **-yahu** as a suffix, and a few **yəho-** and **yəhu-** as a prefix. The complimentary distribution together the frequency of the [u] forms suggests that yahu is the favored pronunciation of **YHW**. To add an **H** to this form and still satisfy rules of Hebrew word structure, the most likely result (and I would suggest the only plausible result) is **Yahuah**. Therefore I believe there is strong evidence that this is the **Yahuah** is the proper pronunciation of YHWH. The commonly suggested form **Yahweh** does not have convincing support, the strongest being cognate forms in Ugaritic or Amorite and/or the possible but uncertain parsing of the unattested root HWH.

9. There is clear evidence that **Yeshua** was the commonly spoken name of the Messiah. **Yeshua** is transliterated into Greek to result in **Iesous**, following standard Greek phonological word patterns. Historically, **Yeshua** was a contracted form of **Yəhoshua**. There is no evidence that this was the real name of the Messiah, although it certainly could have been. We can however, with a fair degree of confidence, use the name **Yeshua** for the Messiah, since that would have been his commonly used name.
 10. It is totally acceptable to use the names of YHWH and the Messiah that have been translated or transliterated into other languages. This includes English names and titles such as God, Lord, Jesus, and Christ. That being said, there are good reasons to encourage the use of the original Hebrew names.
- May we use the names of YHWH and His Son **Yeshua** with all honor and respect.