Should We Use "Jehovah"?

Our investigation now takes us to the ofttimes used name "Jehovah," which is used in many English translations including the *King James Version.* A number of present-day theologians, because the term Jehovah was made popular by its use in the KJV, have claimed that the sacred name is "Jehovah." If there is a requirement for a sacred name, they reason, we should use Jehovah. Those people who put forth this logic are generally unaware of the historical origin of this term and are not cognizant of the fact that it is impossible to vocalize the name ⴼⴼⴼⴼ as "Jehovah."

The substitute "Jehovah" was invented by Christian scholars of the Middle Ages who were ignorant of Jewish laws, traditions, and customs. The Jews had since the sixth century C.E. been accustomed to placing the vowel symbols or points for the words *adonai* and *eloahim* around the Hebrew-Aramaic letters (יהוה) for the sacred name. Their intention—believing that the sacred name was far too sacred to utter—was to inform their Jewish readers NOT to read or speak the sacred name. Instead, the reader was to think and say *adonai* or *eloahim*.[1] For example, the Jerusalem Talmud states, "It is written by יה but it is spoken by אֲדֹ," i.e. Yah (Yahweh) was substituted with רא (*adonai*).[2] J. Weingreen, in his *A Practical Grammar For Classical Hebrew,* informs us:[3]

> The Divine name was considered too sacred to be pronounced; so the consonants of this word were written in the text (Kethibh), but the word read (Qere) was אֲדֹנָי (meaning 'Lord'). The consonants of the (Kethibh) יהוה were given the vowels of the (Qere) אֲדֹנָי namely ֲ ֹ , producing the impossible form יְהֹוָה (Yᵉhōwāh). Since, however, the Divine name occurs so often in the Bible, the printed editions do not put the reading required (Qere) in the margin or footnote; the reader is expected to substitute the Qere for Kethibh, without having his attention drawn to it every time it occurs. For this reason it has been called *Qere Perpetuum,* i.e. permanent Qere.

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[1] For a list of verses where Yahweh is vowel pointed to read "*eloahim*" see YAC, p. 418f, s.v. "God," no. 6; read "*adonai*," p. 617–619, s.v. "Lord," no. 5. Also see above Chap. II, n. 4, and below n. 2.

[2] J. Sanh., 10:1. Also see J. Sanh., 28b; J. Meg., 71d; B. Pes., 50a; JBL, 59, p. 260; Freedman, Pes., p. 241, ns. 8, 9.

[3] PGCH, p. 23.

Unfortunately, when Christian scholars of the Middle Ages saw these vowel points placed around the sacred name they assumed that the sacred letters were consonants and that the vowels properly belonged with them. In Old English translations of the Hebrew, for example, ﬠ became "J" and the ﬠ became "v," issues that we have already dealt with.[4] When these scholars combined the assumed consonants and vowels together they created the hybrid word Jehovah.

The Fabrication "Jehovah"

The origin of the corrupt name Jehovah has never been a secret. Indeed, despite the prevalent use of this word, the history of the name Jehovah has been well-published for years. The best way to demonstrate this point is to quote from a wide range of theological scholars representing various Judaeo-Christian views. Our effort will fully demonstrate the fraudulent origin of the hybrid name Jehovah and reveal the inappropriateness of using it in lieu of the sacred name ⅄ㅋⅎↄ. From Jewish sources, for example, we read the following. The *Jewish Encyclopedia,* published in 1901, makes these remarks:[5]

> This name (יהוה) is commonly represented in modern translations by the form "Jehovah," which, however, is a philological impossibility.

In another place it states:[6]

> The reading Jehovah is comparatively a recent invention. Jehovah is generally held to have been the invention of Pope Leo the 10th's confessor, Peter Galatin (de Arcanis Catholic Veritates 1518, Folio XLIII) who was followed in the use of this hybrid form by Fagius Drusius Van de Driesche. Van de Driesche lived between 1550 and 1616. He was the first to ascribe to Peter Galatin the use of Jehovah. The use of Jehovah has been accepted since his day.

In 1941 The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* stated:[7]

> During the Middle Ages, Christian students of Hebrew mistakenly read the four consonants of the Tetragrammaton with the vowels indicating the pronunciation *'Adonai*; they thereby arrived at the form YeHoVaH, which has produced the name Jehovah for God. This name Jehovah, which still survives in Christian Bible translations and Christian prayer-

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[4] See Chap. IX.
[5] JE, 9, p. 161.
[6] JE, 7, p. 88.
[7] UJE, 5, p. 7, s.v. "God, names of."

books, is actually a mistransliteration, and the word itself meaningless.

Similarly, the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* comments:[8]

> In the early Middle Ages, when the consonantal text of the Bible was supplied with vowel points to facilitate its correct traditional reading, the vowel points for *'Adonai* with one variation—a *sheva* with the first *yod* of YHWH instead of the *ḥataf-pataḥ* under the *aleph of 'Adonai*—were used for YHWH, thus producing the form YeHoWaH. When Christian scholars of Europe first began to study Hebrew, they did not understand what this really meant, and they introduced the hybrid name "Jehovah."

This knowledge is also wide-spread among Christian scholars. To demonstrate, in 1936 *A New Standard Bible Dictionary* reveals that Presbyterian and other Christian scholars were aware of how the name Jehovah came into existence:[9]

> The form 'Jehovah' is impossible, according to the strict principles of Heb. vocalization. It is due to the arbitrary transference of the vowels of *'adhōnāy*, 'lord,' to the sacred name יהוה after the Jews became overscrupulous as to the pronunciation of the Name.

In another place this same texts adds:[10]

> As time went on, the sacredness of the name Jehovah (*Yahweh*) was increasingly emphasized until at least it was considered profanation to pronounce it even in religious exercises. This avoidance of the name had probably become common usage in NT times. In reading the Scriptures, for Yahweh was substituted either *'Adhōnāy* ('Lord') or *'Elōhīm* (God), and at last even in writing the text the vowels of *'Adhōnāy* were attached to *Yahweh*, making it appear as if it were pronounced *Yᵉhōwāh*, whence the Eng. 'Jehovah.'

In the preface of *The Bible, An American Translation*, by Smith-Goodspeed (1931), we read:[11]

> In the course of time they (the Jews) came to regard this name as too sacred for utterance. They therefore

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[8] EJ, 7, p. 680.
[9] NSBD, p. 418.
[10] Ibid., p. 606.
[11] BAT, pref., xvi.

substituted for it the Hebrew word for 'Lord.' When vowels were added to the text, the consonants of 'Yahweh' were given the vowels of 'Lord.' Somewhere in the fourteenth century A.D. Christian scholars, not understanding this usage, took the vowels and consonants exactly as they were written and produced the artificial name 'Jehovah' which has persisted ever since.

In 1962 *The New Bible Dictionary* published an article by G. T. Manley from Christ's College which stated:[12]

> The Heb. word *Yahweh* is in ᴇᴠᴠ usually translated 'the Lᴏʀᴅ' (note the capitals) and sometimes 'Jehovah.' The latter name originated as follows. The original Heb. text was not vocalized; in time the 'tetragrammaton' YHWH was considered too sacred to pronounce; so *ᵃdōnāy* ('my Lord') was substituted in reading, and the vowels of this word were combined with the consonants YHWH to give 'Jehovah,' a form first attested at the beginning of the 12th century A.D.

Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings, tells its readers:[13]

> The pronunciation *Jehovah* has no authority at all and appeared only in late mediaeval times; it is an attempt to vocalize the Tetragrammaton using the vowels written under it by the scribes, which vowels however were never intended to be combined with the four consonants of this word.

Joseph Kaster's *Putnam's Concise Mythological Dictionary* (1964), under the word "Jehovah," states:[14]

> Jehovah: the name has been used to designate the Deity as named in the Old Testament. This name is a misreading of the Hebrew Text, as found with the vowel points added, and never existed as such. For the correct name, see Yᴀʜᴡᴇʜ; also Tᴇᴛʀᴀɢʀᴀᴍᴍᴀᴛᴏɴ.

Under "Yahweh" this same publication adds:[15]

> The name [Yahweh] was later considered too sacred to pronounce, and at every occurrence of the name,

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[12] NBD, p. 478.
[13] DTB, p. 334.
[14] PCMD, p. 90.
[15] Ibid., p. 176.

the word *Adonai* ("my lord") was read instead. The Hebrew alphabet, like that of the other Semitic languages, consists of consonants only, and when during the early Middle Ages vowel points were added to the texts of the Old Testament manuscripts by the copyists, they inserted the vowels for *Adonai* under the four consonants of YHWH, indicating that instead of *Yahweh,* the word *Adonai* was to be read aloud. The reason for this had been forgotten by modern times, and early translators of the Bible read the name of the Deity with the vowels of *Adonai,* giving the nonexistent name "Jehovah." The term is never used by anyone with the slightest knowledge of Biblical scholarship.

The Catholic publication entitled, *New Catholic Encyclopedia,* published in 1967, also recalls the facts:[16]

JEHOVAH, false form of the divine name Yahweh. The name Jehovah first appeared in manuscripts in the 13th century A.D., but had probably been in use for some time. The form arose from a misunderstanding of the precautions taken by pious Jewish scribes to prevent the profanation of the divine name. About the 3d century B.C., the practice arose of reading the word Adonai "Lord" or Elohim "God" instead of Yahweh. After the invention of vowel signs, the vowels of the word Adonai were written beneath the consonants of the sacred name YHWH. With the passage of time the correct pronunciation of Yahweh was forgotten. The hybrid form of Jehovah, resulting from reading the consonants of Yahweh with the vowels of Adonai, the first "a" being changed to a short "e," became widespread in English-speaking circles because of its use in Ex. 6.3 of the King James Version. In modern versions either Lord in capital letters or Yahweh is used for the sacred Tetragrammeton.

On the opposite end of the Christian spectrum, the *Aid to Bible Understanding,* produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, comments:[17]

By combining the vowel signs of *'Adho·nay'* and *'Elo·him'* with the four consonants of the

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[16] NCE, 7, p. 863.
[17] ABU, p. 884f.

Tetragrammaton the pronunciations *Y^eho.wah'* and *Yeho·wih'* were formed. The first of these provided the basis for the Latinized form "Jehova(h)." The first recorded use of this form dates from the thirteenth century C.E. Raymundus Martini, a Spanish monk of the Dominican Order, used it in his book *Pugeo Fidei* of the year 1270.

This group, which has labeled itself by this hybrid name, even admits that this word is a "wrong spelling" and offers evidence proving that Yahweh "is the more correct way."[18]

To these various examples we must also add the stinging attack on the use of the name Jehovah that we find in the *Emphasized Bible,* Dr. Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel Edition, 1959). In explaining why he refused to use the hybrid name Jehovah in his translation, Rotherham argues:[19]

Why not in the form "*Jehovah*"? Is that not euphonious? It is, without question. Is it not widely used? It is, and may still be freely employed to assist through a period of transition. But is it not hallowed and endeared by many a beautiful hymn and many a pious memory? Without a doubt; and therefore it is with reluctance that it is here declined. But why is it not accepted? There it is—familiar, acceptable, ready for adoption. The reason is, that it is too heavily burdened with merited critical condemnation—as modern, as a compromise, as a "mongrel" word, "hybrid," "fantastic," "monstrous." The facts have only to be known to justify this verdict, and to vindicate the propriety of not employing it in a new and independent translation. What are the facts? And first as to age. "The pronunciation *Jehovah* as unknown until 1520, when it was introduced by Galatinus; but was contested by Le Mercier, J. Drusius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety." Next, as to formation. "Erroneously written and pronounced *Jehovah,* which is merely a combination of the sacred *Tetragrammaton* and the vowels in the Hebrew word for Lord, substituted by the Jews for JHVH, because they shrank from pronouncing The Name, owing to an old misconception of the two passages, Ex. 10:7 and Lev. 24:16. . . . To give the name JHVH the vowels of the word for Lord (Heb. Adonai)

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[18] ABU, pp. 882–885; LNS, pp. 16–20; CGS, p. 25.
[19] REB, p. 24f.

and pronounce it *Jehovah,* is about as hybrid a combination as it would be to spell the name *Germany* with the vowels in the name *Portugal*—viz. *Gormuna.* The monstrous combination *Jehovah* is not older than about 1520 A.D." From this we may gather that the Jewish scribes are not responsible for the "hybrid" combination. They intentionally wrote alien vowels— not for combination with the sacred consonants, but for the purpose of cautioning the Jewish reader to enunciate a totally different word, viz., some other familiar name of the Most High.

Conclusion

It is clear from the above evidence and testimony, as well as from other numerous well-known authors representing a broad spectrum of Judaeo-Christian scholarship, that the name Jehovah is of recent origin. It arose out of error and ignorance—a "monstrous combination" of alien vowels with the sacred letters of the sacred name. "The term is never used by anyone with the slightest knowledge of Biblical scholarship." Despite the fact that most of these experts failed to consider the words of Josephus, that the four letters making up the sacred name were vowels and not consonants, it is beyond any doubt that the pronunciation of the sacred name was not "Jehovah." As the late G. T. Manley of Christ's College states:[20]

> Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only 'name' of God.

In the Preface of *A New Translation of the Bible* by James Moffatt we read:[21]

> Strictly speaking, this (name) ought to be rendered "Yahweh," which is familiar to modern readers in the erroneous form "Jehovah." Were this version intended for students of the original there would be no hesitation whatever in printing "Yahweh."

With a basic knowledge of the ancient Hebrew language, and the support of ancient records, the pronunciation of ᴈᵞᴈᴢ as "ee-ah-oo-ay" is readily attainable. One does not need substitutes like Lord or God, or hybrid forms like Jehovah, for there is no need of a substitute when the original stands so forthrightly available.

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[20] NBD, p. 478.
[21] NTB, p. xxi.