

## What's in a name?

### The start of a relationship...

Everything has a name. Absolutely everything. From humans to plants, from animals to machines, from microscopic organisms to planets - everything is named, and each name describes what that thing, person or animal is all about. I'm currently typing on what's called a "Computer Keyboard" whilst staring at a "Monitor" which is attached to a "Graphics Card" inside my "Computer Case." But the problem with these is that technically, they're not "names". These are merely generic titles that describe an entire range of computer products. The actual name of my keyboard is the "KeySonic 2.4Ghz Wireless Compact Keyboard." The actual name of my Monitor is the "Philips 170S." The actual name of my Graphics card is the "Nvidia 7900GT," and the actual name of my computer case is the "Antec P180." Using the actual names of my computer parts, rather than just generic titles, I have narrowed down just exactly what I'm talking about. Humans aren't so different. We each have a specific name so that we know just which person we're talking about. When I mention "Brad Pitt," nearly everyone will know that I'm talking about the well known actor of The Ocean's 11, 12 and 13 Trilogy, and of many other films.

This is the same principle with *God*. "God" in itself is merely a generic title that in English means "The Supreme One." It's the English equivalent of the Hebrew 'el (אל), the Greek *theos* (θεός), the Spanish *dios*, and the Arabic *ilah* (إله). These are all merely titles and *not* names.

So, obviously, in order to distinguish between the different "gods," each has a specific name. Allah is the specific name of the Muslim god, which is actually the name of a polytheistic moon-god from the Arabic city of Mecca, no matter how many Islamic apologists try to assert that that isn't the case. There are literally thousands upon thousands of "god's" - now, don't get me wrong. I'm definitely not saying that these other "gods" like Zeus, Ishtar, Allah, Adonis, Amen-Ra, Lord Baal, Bel or any other false god you want to name exists. They only exist in the sense that they are false idols - gods made up by the strange thoughts of mankind, who many thousands of years ago decided they weren't going to worship the only god that actually existed but instead would counterfeit His title and make up idols for themselves to worship. There is but one god, and He too has a specific name which I have mentioned several times already. Yahuweh told us His name around 7000 times in what's commonly known as the "Old Testament," but I prefer to call it the *Tanakh* which is a Jewish Acronym for the Torah (Ta), Prophets, from the Hebrew *Nevi'im*, (na) and Writings, from the Hebrew *Ketuvim* (Kh).

Of course, Yahuweh's name is written in Hebrew in the Tanakh, and it is made up of three letters. First comes the *Yod* (י), next the *Hey* (ה), then the *Vav* or *Waw* (ו), and following the *vav/waw* is the *Hey* again. Therefore, *Yahuweh*, spelt in Hebrew, reading right to left, is יהוה. One of the things about Hebrew is that it doesn't really contain any vowels. It actually contains two types of letters - *consonants*, and what's known as *vowel consonants*. A *vowel consonant* is a consonant that in many cases functions as a vowel. There are several vowel consonants in Hebrew. These are the *Aleph* (א), the *Yod*, (י), the *Hey*, (ה), the *Waw/Vav*, (ו), and the *Ayin*, (ע). As you've probably noticed, the three letters that make up Yahuweh's name in Hebrew, the *Yod*, (י), the *Hey*, (ה), and the *Waw/Vav*, (ו) are all vowel consonants. The fact that the 4 letters of Yahuweh's name are vowel consonants is proved by a Jewish Historian of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE. Writing near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century CE, the Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus wrote in his book, *The Wars Of The Jews, Book Five* (a book about the destruction of the Temple in "Jerusalem" (I'll explain why "Jerusalem" is in quotation marks a bit later on) in 70 CE), concerning the special garments that the High Priest usually wore, ... *a mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue ribbon, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraved the sacred name [of God]: it consists of four vowels.*

It is quite clear - the name of God - Yahuweh - consists of four vowel consonants.

Now several people, especially Biblical scholars, will know that Yahuweh is commonly spelt as *Yahweh* - without the "u" before the "w". The reason why I spell Yahuweh with a "u" as well as a "w" is because in Paleo-Hebrew, the *waw* or *vav* functioned as a vowel and was vocalised with an "oo" sound. For this reason, what you're actually saying when saying *Yahuweh* or *Yahweh* is *Yah-oo-eh*, but because we don't stop when stringing syllables together but instead vocalise them all together we get the usual *Ya - way* sound of Yahuweh/Yahweh. So I spell it with a *uw* in order to represent the "oo" sound of *Yah-oo-eh*. From now on I will spell God's name as either *Yahuweh* or *Yahweh* so that everyone can see that they might be transliterated from Hebrew slightly differently, yet they are both said exactly the same way. It's pretty much the same thing as my name - Stephen - which can also be spelt as *Steven*, yet both *Stephen* and *Steven* are said the exact same way - just like *Yahweh* and *Yahuweh* are also said the exact same way.

Perhaps a fuller explanation of the Hebrew Language is in order. Hebrew is probably one of the oldest Alphabet's known to mankind, with Hebrew pictographs being discovered dating to at least 3,500 years ago (that's 1,500 BCE). Of course, these Hebrew pictographs are very similar to the Ugarit pictographs and very similar to the Egyptian Hieroglyphs, where pictures of things represented different letters. These pictographs later developed into the 22 letter Paleo-Hebrew Script, which we have evidence of from old coins, stone tablets and from many manuscripts that were discovered in the caves surrounding the Dead Sea, with even full books of the Tanakh being written in the Paleo-Hebrew Script, such as the manuscript known as 4QpaleoGen-Exod, which, I think you can gather from the name, contains the Books of Genesis (Hebrew *Beresheet*) and Exodus (Hebrew *Shemot*) in Paleo-Hebrew. The other books of the Tanakh found at the Dead Sea that are written in Paleo-Hebrew include the books of Leviticus (Hebrew *Vayiqra*), Deuteronomy (Hebrew *Bemidbar*) and Job (Hebrew *Yob*). Paleo-Hebrew was the Hebrew Script for at least 500 years until the Jews were driven out of their land and forced to go to the Kingdom of Babylon as slaves, where, after spending 70 years in captivity, they started to adopt the Square Phoenician, or Babylonian, Script of writing the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet which has been in use now for 2,500 years. This Script is actually quite different in the way it is written compared to the Paleo-Hebrew Script. I actually find the Paleo-Hebrew Script far easier to read than the Square Babylonian Script, because in the Paleo-Hebrew Script, every letter looks different, from the *Aleph* (א) to the *Shin* (ש) and to the *Tet* (ט). It's very easy to distinguish from ancient manuscripts written in Paleo-Hebrew which letters are which, but due to several letters of the Square Babylonian Script looking very much alike, such as the *Yod* (י) and the *Vav* (ו), and the *Hey* (ה) and the *Tav* (ת), which obviously, especially in ancient manuscripts, can be quite hard to distinguish if the scribe is a bit of a messy hand-writer.

Another difficulty arises with Hebrew. Apart from the vowel consonants, just how do we know which vowels go in between the other consonants? Such as with the word *Bemidbar*, the Hebrew name of the book of Numbers, that when written in Hebrew looks like this: במדבר which, reading right to left is spelt in the Hebrew letters *Bet*, *Mem*, *Dalet*, *Bet* and *Resh*. Not a single one of these is a vowel consonant, so how do we know what vowels are supposed to be between the consonants (you can't have a word without a single vowel - it's impossible to vocalise) ? During a time when Hebrew was starting to go out of the Jews normal everyday speech, throughout the 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> Centuries CE, a group of Jewish scribes known as the *Masorettes* developed a series of pronunciation diacritical notes, or vowel points, that were to be placed either above, in the middle or below each Hebrew letter in order to tell the reader of the Hebrew text what vowels were to be said between each of the Hebrew consonants in order to vocalise the word. The Masorettes also produced two of the biggest manuscripts of the entire Tanakh, known as the *Ben-Asher Codex* and the *Aleppo Codex*, both of which contain the Masorettes vowel pointing system.

But just how did the Masorettes vocalise Yahuweh's name in their Manuscripts? Well, they didn't vocalise it as either Yahuweh or Yahweh, but they vocalised it a very different way, which when transliterated into English becomes *Yehovah*. People will immediately notice the connection between *Yehovah* and *Jehovah*. The reason it's spelt "Jehovah" in seven passages in today's editions of the King James Version (KJV) of the Tanakh is because in the 1629 edition of the KJV, nearly everything that had originally begun with an *I* was then changed to begin with a *J*, when actually, everything that begins with an *I* or a *J* in today's Bibles should all actually begin with a *Y*. Hebrew does not contain the letter *J* in its Alphabet, so how or why the KJV editors of the 1629 version decided to use a *J* at the beginning of names when they should have constantly used a *Y* instead is still a bit of a mystery, but I'm sure we will discover the reason for their decision in the near future. So, yes, "Jehovah" is very much a made up name and it most certainly isn't the name of God at all. What the Masorettes actually did was to remove Yahuweh's name from His own Scripture, and instead of putting the vowels *a*, *e* and *u* above and/or below the four Hebrew letters of Yahuweh's name, יהוה, they instead put the vowels of 'adonai over it instead. This is because of a strange belief that developed after the Jews had been slaves in the Kingdom of Babylon, a belief that people are not allowed to utter Yahweh's name (despite Scriptures assertion of the contrary), and so, instead of saying *Yahuweh* when they came to Yahweh's name in the Tanakh, they instead would say 'adonai in order to never say the name of God. The Masorettes, following this exact same belief, continued it on in their manuscripts and in their vowel points, making sure that the reader knew that when he or she came to the name of God, they would say 'adonai instead. Another problem arose from this: what happens when the word 'adonai and Yahweh's name appear in juxtaposition? Do people say and read 'adonai, 'adonai, or do they say something different? The Masorettes went with the latter, and this time, instead of putting the vowel points of 'adonai over Yahuweh's name, they instead put the vowel points of 'elohim, the Hebrew for *God*, over it instead, so the reader would then say 'adonai 'elohim whenever they would come to 'adonai *Yahuweh* in the Tanakh.

This same sort of thing happens with English Bibles today. A great example is what the translators of the New Living Translation (NLT for short) say in their introduction under the heading, *The Rendering of Divine Names*. They say this (the words in the brackets are my commentary): *We have rendered the Tetragrammaton [a Greek word meaning, "the four letters"] (YHWH) consistently as "the LORD," utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name [actually, it's a title, not a name] 'adonai, which we render "Lord." When 'adonai and YHWH appear in conjunction, we have rendered it "Sovereign LORD." This also distinguishes 'adonai YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with 'elohim, which is rendered "LORD God."* Basically - instead of just rendering 'adonai as "Lord" and actually putting Yahweh's name back in His own Scripture, English translations, for at least 400 years, have been constantly confusing everyone and instead have to do some fancy translating in

order to get the difference of 'adonai, Yahuweh and 'elohim across, when all they needed to have done was to put Yahweh's name back into Scripture and then the differences between 'adonai, Yahuweh and 'elohim would be clear.

Luckily for us, the Masorettes didn't completely remove Yahuweh's name from Scripture. In 50 places in Scripture, what's usually known as the "shorter form" of Yahuweh's name appears as יהי which is transliterated as *Yah*. This name, *Yah*, is composed of the first two letters of Yahuweh's name, the *Yod* (י) and the *Hey* (ה). The *Yod* and the *Hey* together are also vocalised as *Yah* when appearing at the end of other names in Scripture. Isaiah's actual name in Hebrew is *Yasha'Yah* and means "Yahuweh is Salvation". *Yasha'Yah* is a contraction of the Hebrew *yasha* which means "to save" and of the shorter version of Yahuweh's name, *Yah*. There are many names that end in *Yah* such as Jeremiah, "YirmeYah" which means "Yahuweh has appointed," Zechariah, "ZakarYah" which means "Yahuweh remembers," Elijah, "EliYah" which means "Yahuweh is God," and many other such names. These four names that I've mentioned are actually written two different way's in Hebrew. In several places in Scripture, the end of each of these names is completed with the addition of a *vav/waw*, which would then bring the ending of their names to be the exact same letters that compose the first three letters of Yahuweh's name. This is great, because the vocalisation that the Masorettes gave these three Hebrew letters ends up being *Yahuw* - יהו - All that is missing is the *Hey* of *Yahuweh* and we've pretty much got the vocalisation of Yahuweh's name.

All of this is key to the relationship that we have with our Maker. What's the first thing you usually ask when you meet someone in a social setting, or if you're introducing someone to your friends? Do we not ask "What's your name?" or say "This is ..." in order to start the relationship that we all have with each other? Then the same is true when it comes to Yahweh. He introduces Himself by name 7000 times in the Tanakh. He wants us to use His name, call Him *by* His name, and to have a relationship with every one of us whilst using our names. In the Tanakh, whenever He calls someone to do some sort of service, He always calls them by their own name. Yet, why don't we do the same? Why do English translators remove God's own name from His own Scripture and instead replace it with a meaningless title, "the LORD"? In Isaiah (more accurately, *Yasha'Yah*) chapter 42:8, He definitely answers what His name is:

**"I am** ('*aniy* - I, me) **Yahuweh** (*YHWH*) - **That is** (*hiy'* - this is, this exists as) **My name** (*shem* - name, reputation, authority, memorial, fame, glory, renown, honour, character and report) . . . "

Yahuweh's *shem* is His glory. It is His Honour. It is His Authority. His name is what His reputation is based on.

It is the key to the relationship between God and mankind.