

THE ONGOING NAME DEBATE

This article was written in response to the public claim made by Nehemia Gordon (and others) that the discovery of more than a thousand Hebrew Bible manuscripts, vowelized according to the Masoretic system, should be seen as sufficient proof that the Name YHWH or YHVH should be pronounced as “Yehováh”, with emphasis on the last syllable. This article should be read together with an introductory post that may be found on the website of Elim Ministries in Fish Hoek, South Africa. In [this introductory post](#) we have made the following preliminary remarks:

1. Despite the great number of scholarly books, articles and studies available on the subject, it is up to this day virtually impossible to know the original pronunciation of the Name, YHWH or YHVH.
2. The words of the Creator in Ex 3:15 “ze shemi l’olam” (This is my Name for ever!) should be taken seriously, and the irrational proposal by some that this verse is to read as “ze shemi l’allem” (This is my Name to be kept secret!), should be rejected.¹ For this reason, it is much better to call on the Name, even if it is done in a humanly imperfect manner, than NOT calling on the Name at all.
3. The renewed thrust to “prove” that the Creator’s Name should be pronounced as “Yehovah”, with “more than 1000 Hebrew Bible manuscripts” to support this claim, is not without its problems and this study is an effort to elaborate on some of these.
4. The above-mentioned proposal places a huge emphasis on finding more and more documents, all of which originated in the Post-Masoretic era, when all the creators of these manuscripts have already been exposed to the Masoretic system whereby the Tetragrammaton is vowelized in a way that PREVENTS the Name to be pronounced and NOT in a way that REVEALS how the Name should be pronounced².
5. In some respects it also goes directly against the general consensus among the globally recognized scholars and experts on this subject – especially with regards to the grammatical principles and the related linguistic patterns, underlying the Hebrew language of the Tanakh (or “Old Testament”).
6. In this study the form “Yehovah” will be referred to phonetically as the ə-ō-ā vowel combination.

The majority of the advocates of the (ə-ō-ā) vowel-combination base their view on the vowel combination that is generally followed in the Masoretic Text of the Tanakh. Hebrew vowel points as we know them today, have not been used before this time³. If one takes a closer look at the Masoretic text of the BIBLIA HEBRAICA STUTTARTENSIS (BHS), which is based on the LENINGRAD CODEX,⁴ it becomes clear that a great variety of vowel patterns have been used in combination with the 6828 occurrences of the Tetragrammaton⁵ in the text of the 39

¹ See, for example, Kohler K. “THE TETRAGRAMMATON AND ITS USES”, Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy, Vol. 1, No. 1, p.19 (1919).

² The following assessment proves that Jewish writers and scholars of the post-Masoretic period were profoundly influenced by the work of the Masoretes: “Textual evidence in the Middle Ages unequivocally shows the spread and adoption of the Masoretic tradition throughout the Jewish world, and Masorah-codices became the accepted transmission model everywhere. The Masorah’s prestige as the decisive authority in textual matters was never questioned in any Jewish community” (Cohen M, “THE IDEA OF THE SANCTITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT AND THE SCIENCE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM”, 1979).

³ Despite the ancient Karaite view, expressed in Judah b. Elijah Hadassi’s “ESHKOL HA-KOFER” (written in 1149) that “the writing of our God was ‘graven upon the tablets’ (Ex. 32: 16) ... full with vowel and accent signs and not lacking in vowel and accent signs” (see “MASORAH” in Encyclopedia.com), no one has ever found a Hebrew manuscript, written with certainty before the Masoretic period, with vowels and accents, similar to the system introduced by the Masoretes.

⁴ Dated 1008CE, the oldest available complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible, containing the Masoretic Text and Tiberian vocalization. Another important manuscript that once contained the most accurate Masoretic Text with Tiberian vocalization, the ALEPPO CODEX (sometimes called “Haketer” or “the crown” and originating back to a few decades before the Leningrad Codex), has been severely damaged in a 1947 fire in Aleppo and today only about two thirds of the original manuscript is in tact and available for research.

⁵ The four letters of the Divine Name, “yod-he-vav-he” or in English: YHWH or YHVH.

books of the Tanakh⁶. For those who are interested, there is an extensive analyses of the various vocalizations of the Tetragrammaton in the BHS, posted elsewhere⁷. Hebrew scholars over a very wide spectrum agree that these different vowel patterns are basically all aimed at “forcing” the reader NOT to pronounce the name “as it is written”⁸ but instead, replace it with “Adonai”, in all but 306 cases. The remaining 306 cases in the Masoretic Text where the Tetragrammaton appears, are “special cases” in the sense that they are all preceded or followed (within the original text) by the word “Adonai”. In these cases the general vocalization is prompting one to replace the Name with “Elohim”, and not “Adonai”, so that reading the text will not result in having two “adonai’s” next to each other.

The vowel combination used in the 306 cases referred to above, is sometimes the exact vowel combination of “Elohim” (ě-ō-i)⁹ and more frequently, a slightly different but similar combination, always with the characteristic “i” vowel in the last syllable of the word, which clearly points toward reading the word as “Elohim”. Of these 306 vowel combinations suggesting the reading “Elohim”, 33 include the vowel “ō”¹⁰ which represents the second syllable of the word “Elohim”. The remaining 273 vowel combinations have all omitted the vowel “ō”¹¹ but the remaining vowel points, together with the “vav”, the third of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton (which in itself, when not vowelized, is an indicator of an “o” or “u” sound), are still a fair enough indication that the reading “Elohim” is intended.

What about the remaining 6522 instances of the Tetragrammaton where it seems that the suggested reading is “Adonai”? Here we have a very similar pattern to the one explained above. In 52 cases¹² we find the vowel combination (ə-ō-ā) which corresponds to the vowel combination of “Adonai”¹³. The remaining 6470 instances of the Tetragrammaton correspond roughly to the (ə-ō-ā) vowel combination, except for the fact that the second vowel, “ō”, has been omitted¹⁴ and the expected vowel change has taken place in cases where prefixes like Ve-, Le-, Be-, Ke- or She- have been attached to the four letters of the Tetragrammaton. The majority of Grammatical Handbooks, Encyclopedias, other academic works and articles and recognized experts on this subject, upholds the opinion that with or without the “ō”, the choice of vowels in all of these cases, was aimed at “forcing” the reader to pronounce the Name as “Adonai”. There is a slightly lesser known view that the missing “ō” and the remaining (ə-ā) vowel combination used in thousands of occurrences of the Tetragrammaton in the Masoretic text, may have been an attempt to encourage the reading, “Shemâ”, which is Aramaic for “the Name” (similar to the Hebrew “Hashem”) and appears to have the exact same vowel

⁶ The full Name does not appear in the books of Esther, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, however the form “Yah” is found in Song of Songs 8:6.

⁷ See the details in [The Tetragrammaton in the Masoretic Text of the Tanakh](#).

⁸ This is in line with the long-standing Jewish notion, included in the BABYLONIAN TALMUD, that “he who pronounces the name as it is written has no portion in the world to come”. In the more recent MISHNAH BERURAH this view is repeated, with the additional note: “Therefore (the Tetragrammaton) must be read as if it were written (as) Adonai”.

⁹ For example יהוה in Judges 16:28.

¹⁰ For example יהוה in 1 Kings 2:26.

¹¹ For example יהוה in Deut 3:24.

¹² For example יהוה in Gen 3:14. Six of the 52 instances are vocalized slightly differently, due to the fact that they are combined with a prefix like Ve-(meaning “and”), Le-(meaning “to”), or Be-(meaning “in”).

¹³ It will be noticed that there is a slight difference between the vowel combination (ə-ō-ā) and (ă-ō-ā), the vowels of “Adonai”, but Hebrew grammatical practice dictates that the “reduced vowel” for a “yod” (the first letter of the Tetragrammaton) is a “sheva” (pronounced like the “e” in “menorah”), while the “reduced vowel” for an “alef” (the first letter of “Adonai”) is a “khateph-patakh” (pronounced like the short “a” in the English word “spa”). Therefore, when normal Hebrew grammatical rules are taken into account, the (ə-ō-ā) combination that appears with the 4 letters (יהוה) of the Tetragrammaton, corresponds exactly with the (ă-ō-ā) combination that appears with the 4 letters (אדני) of the word “Adonai”.

¹⁴ For example יהוה in Gen 2:4.

combination (ə-ā)¹⁵. To me this sounds unlikely¹⁶, but even if this was the case, it still supports the generally accepted view that the Masoretes deliberately chose vowels that would “reroute” the reader into using substitutes for the Name like “Adonai”, “Elohim” or “Shemâ”.

The recent advocates of the (ə-ō-ā) pronunciation of the Name appear to be taking a different stance. They do not share the view that the Masoretic scribes attempted to attach the vowels of “Adonai” to the Tetragrammaton consonants within the Hebrew text of the Tanakh. In their view the vowels in the Masoretic text are not the same as the vowels of “Adonai”. They believe that the Masoretic scribes only tried to obscure the pronunciation of the Name by omitting one vowel, the “kholam” or the “ō”, while retaining the remaining vowels that constitute the original pronunciation. Nehemia Gordon places much emphasis on the 7 or 8 times in (what is left of) the Aleppo Codex where the “kholam” has indeed NOT been omitted and ascribes this to “accidental oversight” on the part of the Masoretic scribes, because their very plan was to obscure or conceal the full pronunciation of the Name. These 7 or 8 instances of the full vowel set of (ə-ō-ā), together with the thousands of instances of the (ə-ā) combination, in his view, serve as a confirmation that “Yehovah” is the proper pronunciation of the Creator’s Name – the very pronunciation that the Masoretic scribes tried to hide from the eyes of the reader. When he subsequently found more than a 1000 manuscripts containing the (ə-ō-ā) vowel combination with the Creator’s Name, he was ecstatic and regarded this find as irrefutable proof that this was indeed the secret that the Masoretes tried to hide – even though not a single one of these manuscripts can be dated back (with certainty) to a period before the introduction of the Masoretic vowel system.

Due to the fact that for quite a long time now, I have personally not been actively involved in the academic environment and, more specifically, the study of Biblical Hebrew and Ancient Biblical Texts, I have recently approached approximately 30 of the world’s leading authorities in these fields¹⁷ and asked for their views on the question: “Do you think that it is possible that the (ə-ō-ā) vocalization of the Tetragrammaton in the Masoretic Text may be a reflection of the way the Name of the Creator has always been pronounced or do you agree with the view that the pronunciation has deliberately been obscured by specifically using the vowels of “Adonai” or “Elohim”, and that the slight difference between the vowels that are used with the Tetragrammaton and the vowels of “Adonai” can be accounted for by certain rules of the Hebrew Grammar?” Not a single one of these modern-day experts, who responded to my question, is of the opinion that the vowels combined with the Name in the Masoretic text is a reflection of the way the Name has always been pronounced. More than 20 of them reiterated the view that, taking into account certain universally accepted Hebrew grammatical rules, the vowel combination with every single instance of the Tetragrammaton in the Masoretic Text, can be traced back either to the word “Adonai” or the word “Elohim”.

Globally recognized scholars with a hands-on experience of the Hebrew Language and the study of the Masoretic Text of the Tanakh seem to be unanimous in their view that both the (ə-ā) and the (ə-ō-ā) vocalization of the Tetragrammaton in the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia were inserted into the text as a cue that the Name should be read as “Adonai”. To imply that the very few (i.e. 7 or 8) instances of the (ə-ō-ā) vocalization in the Aleppo Codex clearly indicates that this was the actual pronunciation of the Name that the Masoretic scribes, in fact, tried to hide, is on more than one level not convincing at all. What is available of the Aleppo Codex today, is no more than about 65% of the original, complete manuscript. Except for a few chapters towards

¹⁵ See Wikipedia on “TETRAGRAMMATON”; the book by Steven Ortlepp, “PRONUNCIATION OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON: A HISTORICO-LINGUISTIC APPROACH” (2010) and De Troyer, THE NAMES OF GOD, THEIR PRONUNCIATION AND THEIR TRANSLATION, 2005.

¹⁶ “It can be demonstrated that even the oldest Masoretic vocalization as preserved, among others, in codex L must refer to adonai (the Lord) rather than shema (the Name)” - Martin Rösel, “THE READING AND TRANSLATION OF THE DIVINE NAME IN THE MASORETIC TRADITION AND THE GREEK PENTATEUCH” (2007).

¹⁷ The majority of these are lecturers at leading Universities in Israel, the United States and Europe, some of them coming from a Jewish background, some from a Christian background and others with no formal connection to any of these two religions.

the end of Deuteronomy, the entire Pentateuch (the 5 books of the Torah) is missing from the Aleppo Codex, plus various pages from other books of the Tanakh. The relatively “few” instances could have been substantially more, had the Aleppo Codex not been damaged and significantly reduced. The question begs: How realistic is it that the Masoretic scribes would have made that many mistakes? These scribes are known to have been meticulously accurate in their methods and their schools “developed such prestige for the accuracy and error-control of their copying techniques that their texts established an authority beyond all others”.¹⁸

The Leningrad Codex¹⁹, which is the oldest complete manuscript of the Hebrew Bible containing the Masoretic Text available to us, contains significantly more instances (52, to be precise) of the (ə-ō-ā) vocalization combined with the Tetragrammaton. It is almost impossible to believe that these should also be attributed to scribal “oversights”! In what appears to be even more compelling evidence that the occasional “ō” in the various vocalization patterns of the Tetragrammaton was no “slip-up”, the Leningrad Codex presents us with an additional 33 instances of the Tetragrammaton with an (ě-ō-i) vowel pattern, when the Name appears before or after the word “Adonai”. But then again, we have 273 instances where the Name appears next to the word “Adonai” and is portrayed with the characteristic “i” under the last syllable, but lacks the “ō” that is found in 33 other places! Thus we find the same pattern in both the (ə-ō-ā) and the (ě-ō-i) vocalizations of the Name: in the majority of instances the “ō” has been omitted, but in a total of 85 instances (52 plus 33) the “ō” has NOT been omitted. Some people are insisting that the “ō” has been omitted from the (ə-ō-ā) vowel combination, in order to obscure the proper pronunciation of the Name. But what about the (ě-ō-i) vocalization of the Name when it appears next to the word “Adonai”? Surely these vowels have no connection to the pronunciation “Yehovah” and are simply pointing towards reading the Name as “Elohim”! And what about the fact that in the majority of these instances the “ō” has ALSO been omitted? Was it to prevent the reader from using (or saying out loud) the word “Elohim”? Surely this cannot be the case, since the word “Elohim”, together with the full set of vowels (ě-ō-i), appear elsewhere in hundreds of places in all known versions of the Masoretic Text of the Tanakh.

Nehemia Gordon states that “the only reason the Masoretic scribes would have left the form Yehovih without dropping the vowel after the he ך (or “h”) is because they knew this was not the true pronunciation of the divine name”.²⁰ This argument is very hard to take seriously if one keeps in mind that the form Yehovih (with the “ō”) appears 32 times in the Masoretic text, while the form Yeh?vih (without the “ō”) appears no less than 273 times! If the scribes have dropped the “ō” numerous from both forms, Yehovah and Yehovih, the most logical explanation is that there were other reasons altogether for these omissions – NOT because they wanted to hide the true pronunciation of the Name which, according to Nehemia, can only be given away by one of the two forms, not both.

Furthermore, based on the fact that none of the 6828 instances of YHVH have been marked and supplemented with a marginal reading, as is the case with other Qere-Ketiv²¹ instances in the Masoretic text, Nehemia rejects the view that the vocalization of YHVH in the Masoretic text is a case of Qere-Ketiv. If the Masoretes wanted the reader to read YHVH as “Adonai”, he says, they would have marked the word (at least some of the times) and added a note in the margin saying something like: “Read as Adonai”. He admits, though, that “when YHVH appears next to Adonai the “a” (kamats) is changed to an “i” (chiriq) **to remind the reader to read it Elohim**”

¹⁸ See Menachem Cohen, “THE IDEA OF THE SANCTITY OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT AND THE SCIENCE OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM” (1979) and Wikipedia’s article on “MASORETIC TEXT”.

¹⁹ The vocalization system used in the Leningrad Codex is considered by scholars to be “the most faithful representation” of the tradition used in the compilation of the earlier Aleppo Codex.

²⁰ Gordon N, “THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE NAME” (2011).

²¹ Qere (a Hebrew term meaning: “What is read”) is a masoretic device used to suggest the pronunciation of certain words (or word groups) in the Masoretic text, while Ketiv (“What is written”) indicates the written form, as inherited from tradition. The Qere usually appeared in the text of the original manuscripts as a marginal note. This scribal technique of Qere-Ketiv was used in cases where they had reason to believe that the text in question was to be read differently from the way it was written.

and elsewhere he says, “It seems that the “i” (chiriq) in Yehovih is **a reminder to the reader to read this word as Elohim**”. So when there is an “i” in the word, it has the exact same function as a Qere-Ketiv (even though it doesn’t appear with a marginal note) and serves as a reminder to read the word as Elohim. But are we now to believe that when there is an “a” in the word, it is NOT a reminder to read the word as Adonai, because the usual Qere-Ketiv indicators are missing? And, to lift the bar of confusion even higher, Nehemia provides the (correct!) reason for using the (ě-ō-i) vocalization in cases where there is an “Adonai” in the text: “... since **reading it (i.e. the word YHVH) Adonai** would result in Adonai twice in a row!” He puts in all the effort to prove that we never find a Qere-Ketiv-type marginal note with YHVH (saying “Read as Adonai”) and that the vowels of YHVH are “not the same” as the vowels of Adonai (implying that the Masoretic scribes simply tried to hide the “original” vowels) and then, after all of this, he admits that in cases where the word Adonai appears in the text, the Masoretes had to come up with a technique to ensure that YHVH would NOT be read as Adonai, resulting in having two “adonai’s” in a row! Why would it be read that way, if what he was saying otherwise, were true? At the very least, this line of reasoning is nothing less than repeated inconsistency and not convincing at all, especially in the light of the fact that substituting the Tetragrammaton with Adonai is an age-old practice that originated around the second century BCE, at least 700 years before the Masoretic era.²²

In his article, “THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE NAME”, Nehemia Gordon quotes THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY (1992) as saying: “The pronunciation of yhwh as Yahweh is a scholarly guess.” In the very next sentence he asks the question, “If Yahweh is a wild guess, what do we really know about how the name was pronounced?” The leap from “scholarly guess”²³ to “wild guess” can only be regarded as unfortunate. So also, the way in which he sometimes casts a cloud of suspicion over the pronunciation of the Name as “Yahweh”, calling it a “misguided pronunciation”, connecting it with Jupiter²⁴, attributing this way of pronouncing the Name to the Samaritans whom he believes had a “Babylonian ecumenical spirit” and using a verse like Exodus 23:13 (“Make no mention of the names of other gods; they shall not be heard on your lips”) to discredit its usage. Nehemia Gordon took a snippet from the Anchor Bible Dictionary’s treatment of the subject “Yahweh” (“the pronunciation ... Yahweh is a scholarly guess”) to support his own rejection of this form and conveniently neglected to tell the reader what the Anchor Bible Dictionary is saying in conclusion, in the very same article: “The generally acknowledged vocalization – Yahweh – is a reconstruction that draws on several lines of evidence.”

According to the Anchor Bible Dictionary these “several lines of evidence” include much more than just the Samaritan viewpoint, contrary to Nehemia’s claim²⁵ that the statement of Theodoret of Cyrus (a church father of the 5th century CE) that the Samaritans pronounced the Name as IABE, is “the ONLY solid proof, of any kind, for Yahweh”. Besides the Samaritan evidence, according to the Anchor Bible Dictionary, scholars have also come up with evidence from the Amorite language (13th century BCE: yahwī), from Aramaic letters from Elephantine in Egypt (5th century BCE: yahû), from certain early Greek writers (2nd – 3rd century CE: iao and iae) and from the writings of Clement of Alexandria (3rd century CE: laoue, laouai) – all of which “favor the form Yahweh”. When looking at other sources, there are even more “lines of evidence”. These “lines of evidence” are NOT presented here as infallible proofs that the Name should be pronounced as “Yahweh”. We have already conceded that complete certainty with

²² This fact is recognized on a very wide scale and is discussed, for example, in the article by Martin Rösel referred to earlier and in “THE NAMES OF GOD. THEIR PRONUNCIATION AND THEIR TRANSLATION”, by Kristin De Troyer (2005).

²³ Several scholars prefer the term “scholarly consensus” and in his article, “A NAG HAMMADI CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON” (2014), Antti Marjanen has no hesitation in describing “other possible suggestions to pronounce the divine name of the Israelite God, such as Yahwô, Yahwâ, or the traditional Y’hōwâ” as “less likely alternatives”.

²⁴ See “HAVE YOU BEEN PRAYING TO JUPITER?” Nehemia’s Wall, February 24, 2015.

²⁵ This claim was made in ‘n a 2018 video production featuring Nehemia Gordon and Michael Rood, under the heading “THE NAME OF GOD IS...YAHWEH?”

regards to the pronunciation of YHWH is out of the question. What is presented here, is simply to establish (1) that the “Yehovah” argument is clustered with inaccuracies and by no means irrefutable and (2) that the “Yahweh” argument cannot be ignored as a reasonably strong possibility. The following additional pieces of evidence will hopefully serve this purpose.

- The Semitic tribes from whom the family of Hammurabi came, and who entered Babylon 2500 B.C., knew and worshiped the god Ya've, Ya'u.²⁶
- Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the 1st Century CE, wrote these words: “Among the Jews Moses referred his laws to the god who is invoked as Iao.”²⁷
- The form Yahweh has been established as primitive by its appearance in epigraphic sources.²⁸
- An amulet from Emesa in Syria, to be dated to the first century BCE, begins with the words: IAO IAO IAO SABAOTH ADONAI.²⁹
- Like the final *æ* (spelled segol) of final weak nouns, the final vowel of the reconstructed name form Yahwæ reflects a contraction of two vowels, a stem vowel and a case vowel.³⁰
- It is generally held that the spelling Jehovah occurred first about 1100 A.D. but the [earlier] Greek forms “Iaoue” and “Iaouai” [transliteration mine] may represent the pronunciation of YHWH with the vowels of Adonai at a much earlier date.³¹
- The way in which the divine name is presented in the Greek versions of Aquila and Symmachus is an indication that “Adonai” may have been read as a substitute for the divine name as early as the time that the Hebrew Bible was being translated into Greek, i.e., from the third century B.C. onward.³²
- The opinion ... that Yahwe was originally the name of the god of the Kenites, a member of the Midianites, has no proof whatever for itself.³³
- The matter of any (especially single) ‘original’ form of the divine name in the LXX is too complex, the evidence is too scattered and indefinite, and the various approaches offered for the issue are too simplistic...³⁴

The factors that lead to the change of form between YH (Yah) – YHW (Yahu) – YHWH (Yahweh, or similar) – or vice versa – over a time span of over 3000 years, are extremely

²⁶ Jewish Encyclopedia (1906).

²⁷ Wikipedia 2018. The Greek spelling “Iao” can also be transliterated as “Yahu”. Scholars have proven beyond any doubt that in ancient times – long before the time of the Greeks – the forms “Yah” and “Yahu” have also been used as names for the Almighty – sometimes in compound names like Yahu-natan and Yerme-Yah, and sometimes completely independently from the longer form YHWH. See, for example, Raymond Abba, “THE DIVINE NAME YAHWEH”, in the Journal of Biblical Literature, Vol. 80, No. 4 (1961).

²⁸ Cross FM, “YAHWEH AND THE GOD OF THE PATRIARCHS”, Harvard Theological Review, Volume 55, Issue 04 (1962).

²⁹ McDonough SM, “YHWH AT PATMOS: REV. 1:4 IN ITS HELLENISTIC AND EARLY JEWISH SETTING” (2011). Notice the now familiar “IAO” (“Yahu”) in the quote below and, especially, the combination “IAO SABAOTH” which corresponds with “YHWH TSEVAOT” in texts like 1 Sam 1:3; Isa 3:1, etc.

³⁰ Knudzen E, “AMORITE NAMES AND OLD TESTAMENT ONOMASTICS”, in the Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament (2008).

³¹ McLaurin ECB, “YHWH, THE ORIGIN OF THE TETRAGRAMMATON”, Vetus Testamentum, Vol 12 (1962). The significance of this observation is that, even if more and earlier manuscripts be found, containing the Tetragrammaton with the (ə-ō-ā) vowel combination, it will only confirm the established fact that YHWH had been pronounced with the vowels of Adonai, since a very early time.

³² Park-Taylor GH, “(YEHOUAH) YAHWEH : THE DIVINE NAME IN THE BIBLE” (1975). This view may be seen as an additional commentary on the “much earlier date” spoken of in the previous point.

³³ König E, “DIE HAUPTPROBLEME DER ALTISRAELITISCHEN RELIGIONSGESCHICHT” (1884) – English translation in Hebraica Vol. 1, No. 4, April 1885. This view is supported by a number of other scholars and brings the perspective that despite the fact there had always been some degree of cross-pollination between the religious customs and language of the Israelites, and their neighbors, the Name YHWH is applied first and foremost to the Elohim of Israel. This does not exclude the possibility that the Name may have been pronounced and/or written differently during different periods of their history.

³⁴ Shaw F, “EARLIEST NON-MYSTICAL JEWISH USE OF IAO” (2014). This is said with reference to the LXX in particular, but is equally true when looking at the bigger picture of the evolution of the Tetragrammaton over thousands of years.

complex and by no means certain. The majority of scholars – past and present – are in agreement, however, that the form “Yehovah” does not fit grammatically into this ancient pattern and can only be regarded as a relatively late invention, brought about by the age-old tradition³⁵ of Jewish scribes to hide the “unspeakable Name” by combining it with the vowels of the word “Adonai”. In conclusion, therefore, even though it is quite clear that scientific certainty with regards to the “original” pronunciation of the Name YHVH or YHWH is virtually out of the question – in the light of all the evidence that is available and despite the ever increasing number of new suggestions or “revelations” in this regard, I do believe that it is quite possible that the Name of the Almighty that people like Mosheh, Dawid, Yeshayahu and Y’shua of Nazareth knew, and called upon, was something pretty close to “Yahweh”.

³⁵ See, for example, Andrade N, “THE JEWISH TETRAGRAMMATON: SECRECY, COMMUNITY, AND PRESTIGE AMONG GREEK-WRITING JEWS OF THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE” (2015): “Qumran in fact contain instances in which the Tetragrammaton was consistently replaced with El or Adonai in scriptural passages ... It also corresponds with the testimony of Origen, who stressed that whenever the Jews encountered the written Hebrew Tetragrammaton or one of its Greek variants, they pronounced them as “Adonai” and not by their actual characters.”