Chapter II

The Personal Name Yahweh

Many English speaking Christians will contend that there is no, singular, personal name for our heavenly father because the pages of the King James Bible and many other English translations do not contain the name Yahweh, let alone directly state that this is the personal name of our heavenly father. "If there was an important personal name," their argument goes, "then our translations would surely reflect it."

One will be faced with a great deal of difficulty if he tries to discover the personal name of our heavenly father in the pages of most English and other translations of the Scriptures. These translations encumber the reader by deliberately stripping the personal name Yahweh out of their text and then replacing it with either the title "the LORD," by the deity class "GOD," or the hybrid "Jehovah" (see figure 1). Nevertheless, that men, through their own human reasonings, found it necessary to substitute the sacred name with other words does not negate the fact that in the original Hebrew texts the personal name "Yahweh" was boldly set forth. Neither does it diminish the importance of the sacred name. Indeed, the very fact that the sacred name has been substituted, thereby altering the original text, should be viewed as suspicious by Christians, not as a justification for not using it.

That so many would go to such great lengths to change the original meaning of the text may at first seem illogical. Nevertheless, this alteration of the original Hebrew text has been built upon the false and unscriptural premise that the sacred name is too sacred for any common man to speak. Because of this interpretation the "ineffable name doctrine" was born. Scribes and translators holding to this dogma felt it necessary to conceal the sacred name from their readers. Their motives, justifications and reasons for this deception will be fully dealt with in our second volume.[1] In this chapter we must concentrate on the evidence that the name Yahweh does appear in the original texts and that there is indeed only one important personal name for our heavenly father, the name Yahweh.

Yahweh Testifies to His Name

The person who seeks to know and abide with what the original manuscripts actually state should check the forward or preface and the footnotes to his Bible. In most cases he will come across a notation that the personal name "Yahweh" (𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 in palaeo-Hebrew and יהוה in Aramaic script) has been

1 See Vol. II, Chaps., XII–XVIII.

substituted out by the translators (cf. Fig. 1).[2] A quick check with a Hebrew concordance will also give you easy access to which word-substitutions represent the name Yahweh.[3] These sources will confirm that the sacred name Yahweh is preserved to us nearly 7,000 times in the Holy Writ.[4]

The most effective way of bringing the truth to the forefront is to examine the original Hebrew verse. In these documents one finds that only one word is said to be the שם (*shem*), or name, of the almighty, the name 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 (Yahweh). Even more importantly, it is Yahweh himself who proclaims his name. The following examples demonstrate this fact:

> And said again eloahim to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 (Yahweh), the eloahi of your fathers, the eloahi of Abraham, the eloahi of Isaak, and the eloahi of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my שם (shem, name) to forever, and this is my memorial to generation upon generation. (Exod., 3:15)

Two important points are made in this passage:

• His name is 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 (Yahweh). You will find in modern versions of the Hebrew text that the letter form יהוה (Y-H-W-H) is found, the so-called Tetragrammaton. This represents a much later letter style (also called Aramaic and Assurith).[5] We will instead use the lettering 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 (Y-H-W-H), which is the original and is commonly referred to as palaeo-Hebrew or archaic Hebrew.[6] Our reasons for following the original ancient style will become apparent later on in our study.[7] (Also, for those unfamiliar with Hebrew, keep in mind that you read Hebrew from right to left.)

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2 For example, see NEB, Intro., p. xvi; RSV, Pref., p. v–vi, Exod., 3:15, n. f; NASB, p. ix; BAT, pref., xvi; SRB, Gen., 2:4, n. 2; CT, ns. Gen., 4:26, 22:14, Exod., 3:14. Also see comments in NTB, Intro., pp. xx–xxi.

3 For a list of these substitutions see YAC, pp. 418f, under "God," no. 6, "*Jehovah,* יהוה [read by Jews *elohim,* prob. *Yahweh*]"; p. 536, under "Jehovah"; p. 617–619, s.v. "LORD," no. 5. "*He* (*who*) is יהוה *yahweh* (read *adonai*)." Also see SEC, pp. 398–406, under "God," no. 3068, 3069; p. 538, s.v. "Jehovah"; pp. 613–634, under "Lord," nos. 3068, 3069.

4 JE, 9, p. 160, "6,823 times"; HBD, p. 685. YDBN, p. 5. To this figure we must add 134 times where Jewish copyists (Sopherim) of the Masoretic text, believing that certain passages were too often quoted that used the sacred name, changed the primitive Hebrew text to read adonai or eloahim instead of Yahweh (MCM, I, pp. 24–26, §107–115, IV, pp. 27–29, §107–115; CB, 1, app. 32). When the Qumran documents and the LXX are compared with the Masoretic text, we have further evidence that the Jewish scribes altered a few names in the more primitive text to read adonai and eloahim instead of Yahweh. Parallel passages in 2 Sam. and 1 Chron., relying on the same source documents and even using the same wording, also demonstrate that later scribes altered the original wording, replacing Yahweh with eloahim (MCE, pp. 367f). For other various alterations see MCE., pp. 367-404.

Yet even if these earliest changes are not considered, the 6,823 Yahwehs in our present Masoretic text and the 134 confirmed alterations gives us a total of 6,957 times that the name Yahweh appears in the OT alone. It is also now known that the NT originally used the sacred name (see Vol. II, Chaps. IX–XI). If we include these into our number it would raise the use to nearly 8,000 times!

5 EJ, 2, pp. 685–689. For a discussion of these letter styles see Vol. II, Chaps. I–III.

6 EJ, 2, pp. 681–685.

7 See Vol. II.

Figure 1.

Examples of substitutions in the Authorized King James Version.

Hebrew Masoretic Text | Authorized King James Version

יהוה (Yahweh) translated as "the LORD."

Notice the small caps in LORD.

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1 הַלְלוּ יָהּ | הַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם
יְהוָה הַלְלוּ עַבְדֵי יְהוָה׃

PRAISE ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of **the LORD**; praise him, O ye servants of **the LORD**.

2 שֶׁעֹמְדִים בְּבֵית יְהוָה
בְּחַצְרוֹת בֵּית אֱלֹהֵינוּ׃

2 Ye that stand in the house of **the LORD**, in the courts of the house of our God,

3 הַלְלוּ־יָהּ כִּי־טוֹב יְהוָה
זַמְּרוּ לִשְׁמוֹ כִּי נָעִים׃

3 Praise the LORD; for **the LORD** is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

4 כִּי־יַעֲקֹב בָּחַר לוֹ יָהּ
יִשְׂרָאֵל לִסְגֻלָּתוֹ׃

4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

5 כִּי אֲנִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־גָדוֹל יְהוָה
וַאֲדֹנֵינוּ מִכָּל־אֱלֹהִים׃

5 For I know that **the LORD** is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

יהוה (Yahweh) translated as "GOD."

While adonai (אדני) is translated as Lord.

AMOS 7

4 כֹּה הִרְאַנִי אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה וְהִנֵּה
קֹרֵא לָרִב בָּאֵשׁ אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה
וַתֹּאכַל אֶת־תְּהוֹם רַבָּה וְאָכְלָה
4-5 אֶת־הַחֵלֶק׃ וָאֹמַר אֲדֹנָי
יֱהוִה חֲדַל־נָא מִי יָקוּם
יַעֲקֹב כִּי קָטֹן הוּא׃

4 Thus hath the Lord **GOD** shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord **GOD** called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part.

5 Then said I, O Lord **GOD**, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small.

6 נִחַם יְהוָה עַל־זֹאת גַּם־הִיא לֹא
תִהְיֶה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה׃

6 The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord **GOD**.

יהוה (Yahweh) translated as "Jehovah."

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18 וְיֵדְעוּ כִּי־אַתָּה שִׁמְךָ
יְהוָה לְבַדֶּךָ עֶלְיוֹן
עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ׃

18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is **JĚ-HŌ- VĂH**, art the most high over all the earth.

• Yahweh himself specifically states that, "This is my shem (name)." He does not say, "This is one of my names," or "This is your name for me," an important difference. Here is one of the many clear and concise statements made in the Scriptures that Yahweh was the name applied by the eloahi to himself. This point is further enhanced in the above cited passage because Yahweh's answer was made in direct response to the following question from Moses:[8]

> And Moses said to ha-eloahim, "Behold, I shall come to the sons of Israel and say to them, The eloahi of your fathers has sent me to you. And they will say to me, What is his שם (shem; name)? What shall I say to them?" (Exod., 3:15)

Besides the verse cited above from Exodus 3:15, we also have these other examples quoting Yahweh:

> And he (𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄) said: "If you will diligently hearken to the voice of 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 your eloahi, and will do that which is right in his eyes, and listen to his command, and keep all his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will not put upon you all the diseases which I have put upon Egypt; for I am 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄, your healer." (Exod., 15:26)

The first words of the Ten Commandments are:

> I am 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 your eloahi, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the land of bondage. You will have no other eloahim before my face. (Exod., 20:2–3)

In Isaiah we read:

> I am 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄, and none else (exist); except (for) me there is no other eloahim. I will clothe you, though you do not know me, that they may know from the rising of the sun and to the sunset that none else (exist) besides me; I am 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄 and none else (exist)! Forming light and creating darkness; making peace and creating evil; I, 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄, do all these things. (Isa., 45:5–7)

> I am 𐤉𐤄𐤅𐤄; that is my שם (shem; name) and I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to engraved images. (Isa., 42:8)

8 Exod., 3:13.

The prophet Jeremiah quotes Yahweh as follows:

> Can adam (mankind) make eloahim for himself? And they are not eloahim. Therefore, behold, I will make them know; this time I will make them know my hand and my might; and they will know that my שם (shem; name) is יהוה (Jer., 16:20–21)

> Thus says יהוה of hosts: "The sons of Israel and the sons of Judah are oppressed together; and all who captured them hold them fast; they refused to let them go. Their redeemer is strong, יהוה of hosts is his שם (shem; name). He shall surely plead their cause, so that they may give rest to the land, and give turmoil to the inhabitants of Babylon." (Jer., 50:33–34)

Yahweh does not say, "You can call me Yahweh" or that, "This is one of my names." He clearly and unequivocally states, "I am יהוה; that is my name." At no time does Yahweh state that his name is eloah (eloahi, eloahim), el, adonai, or any other such word. He is the "eloahi of hosts" and the "eloahi of ha-eloahim" but his shem is יהוה.

The Prophets Testify

Yahweh was by no means the only voice proclaiming his name. The prophets also fully acknowledged that the shem (name) of the almighty is יהוה (Yahweh). This next verse comes from the song of Moses:

> יהוה is my strength and song, and he is my salvation. This is my el, and I will glorify him; my father's eloahi, and I will exalt him. יהוה is his שם (shem; name). (Exod., 15:2–3)

Many scriptural verses written by prophets other than Moses also plainly state that the name (shem) of the almighty is Yahweh.

> And David rose up and went, and all the people who were with him from Baal-Judah, to bring up from there the ark of ha-eloahim, that is called by the honored name, יהוה of hosts,[9] who dwells over the cherubim. (2 Sam., 6:2)

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9 In this passage the words שם שם (shem shem) are used. These words are often mistranslated to mean "name name," which results in the awkward translation, "is called (by) the name, the name Yahweh." But shem also holds as one of its meanings "honored" (SEC, Heb. #8034) and "fame, reputation" (HEL, p. 270). Therefore, we have rendered the phrase, "the honored name Yahweh," which is a more sensible understanding.

In the following song the psalmist asks Yahweh to condemn the enemies of the almighty, who are also the enemies of Israel.

> Fill their faces with shame, and they will seek your name יהוה. Let them be ashamed and terrified forever, and let them be pale and perish. And let them know that you, your name being יהוה, you alone are the most high over all the earth. (Ps., 83:16–19)

The prophets Jeremiah and Amos have the following to say:

> Thus says יהוה its (the earth's) maker, יהוה who formed it in order to establish it; יהוה is his name. Call to me and I will answer you and will tell you great and inscrutable things you do not know. (Jer., 33:2–3)

> (As) I live, says the king whose name is יהוה of hosts, surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel is by the sea, he (Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon) shall come (against Egypt). (Jer., 46:18)

> Moab is plundered and her cities have come up, and his chosen young men have gone to the slaughter, says the king whose name is יהוה of hosts. (Jer., 48:15)

> For behold, he who forms mountains and creates the wind and declares to adam (mankind) what is his thought; he who makes dawn (into) darkness, and treads upon the high places of the earth, יהוה, the eloahi of hosts, is his name. (Amos, 4:13)

> He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns the deep darkness into morning, and made the day (into) dark night; who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out upon the face of the earth; יהוה is his name. (Amos, 5:8)

> Therefore, I will take you (the Israelites) into exile beyond Damascus, says יהוה, the eloahi of hosts, being his name. (Amos, 5:27)

> He who builds in the heavens his staircase and his firmament over the earth, he has founded it (the earth), יהוה is his name. (Amos, 9:6)

Scholars Testify

Whatever many popular religions might claim, the fact that Yahweh is the only personal name of our heavenly father has not gone unnoticed by scholars. To demonstrate, G. T. Manley, comments:[10]

> Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only "name" of God . . .Yahweh, therefore, in contrast with Elohim, is a proper noun, the name of a Person, though that Person is divine.

Manley also comments:[11]

> To interchange 'Yahweh' and 'Elohim' would not make sense. Yahweh is the name by which his [Jacob's] father worships the supreme God (Elohim).

Gerhard von Rad concludes:[12]

> But Jahweh [Yahweh] had one name, and this is one known throughout all his people.

T. Rees writes in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* that Yahweh, "is the personal proper name *par excellence* of Israel's God," and that, "It is the personal name of God, as distinguished from such generic or essential names as 'El, 'Elohim, Shadday, etc."[13] *Harper's Bible Dictionary* notes that the almighty was known by "the individual and personal name 'Yahweh,' translated *kyrios* (Gk. 'Lord') in the LXX [Septuagint] and 'the LORD' by several English versions."[14] A. B. Davidson, in *A Dictionary of the Bible,* similarly states that Yahweh "is a personal name."[15] The authors of *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* were compelled by the evidence to admit, "Probably, only Yahweh, the name revealed to Moses, is the personal name of God (*YHWH;* Exod. 3:14); later regarded as too sacred for utterance, it is generally represented in English texts as 'the LORD.'" They also add, "This is a personal, not magical name, publicly known, guarded against vain misuse."[16]

The introduction to *The New English Bible* reports, "This personal proper name, written with the consonants YHWH, was considered too sacred to be uttered (by the Jews)."[17] The Editorial Board for the *New American Standard Bible* likewise confesses:[18]

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10 NBD, p. 478.
11 NBD, p. 479.
12 OTT, p. 185.
13 ISBE, 2, p. 1254, 1266.
14 HBD, p. 684.
15 ADB, 2, p. 197.
16 EBD, p. 425.
17 NEB, p. xiv.
18 NASB, p. ix.

> There is yet another name which is particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH. . . . This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name.

The Catholic *Confraternity Text* acknowledges that "the word Yahweh" is, "the proper personal name of the God of Israel."[19] *The Interpreter's Dictionary Of The Bible* states that the "personal name is Yahweh."[20]

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* makes "YHWH [יהוה], the distinctive personal name of the God of Israel."[21] The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* reports:[22]

> YHWH. The personal name of the God of Israel is written in the Hebrew Bible with the four consonants YHWH and is referred to as the "Tetragrammaton."

Samuel Sandmel, in his explanation of why he prefers to use the name Yahve (Yahweh) rather than the substitute Lord, writes:[23]

> As to my use of Yahve, the issue is a complicated one. If Yahve is a *name,* then The Lord is wrong; if Yahve is, rather, a *title,* then The Lord is correct, and the rendering Yahve ill advised. The fact is that Yahve was originally the name of Israel's special deity.

Conclusion

The word "Yahweh" is not someone's made-up name for our heavenly father, an utterance which he permits men to use, but rather he has informed us that this is his name. He has given this name to himself and has revealed that circumstance to us. Add to this point the fact that the Scriptures strongly pronounce that Yahweh does not change:

> For I, יהוה, change not! Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not destroyed. (Mal., 3:6)

If Yahweh does not change, why are religious groups so quick to change his personal name, even encouraging people to forget its existence? Why do they count Yahweh's words as something with which they need not concern themselves? We are plainly told in Scriptures that Yahweh "is not the author of confusion."[24] But Satan is! Whenever Satan "speaks falsehood, from his

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19 CT, n. to Exod., 3:14.
20 IDB, 2, p. 407.
21 JE, 9, p. 160.
22 EJ, 7, p. 680.
23 HS, pref. IX.
24 1 Cor., 14:33.

own he speaks; for a liar he is and the father of it."[25] It is Satan—not Yahweh—that is known and worshipped by the world under numerous personal names.[26]

On the other hand, the Scriptures prove, and scholars admit, that though there are many "names" for our heavenly father which can be classed either as a generic term or a title, our heavenly father has only one personal name. As the ancient Israelites proclaimed, "the el of eloahim is יהוה (Yahweh)."[27] The evidence also proves that this personal name was declared to men by Yahweh himself and was not the invention of men.

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25 John, 8:44.
26 Vol. II, Chaps. XII and XIII.
27 Josh., 22:22.