

# *The magnificent and most lovely Name of the God Who was there, Who is there and Who will be there*

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## **Preface and overview**

In the Spring of 2009 I was confronted with the great relevance of God's recurring promise: **"I am with you!"** In pastoral care the presence of God in our life is a crucial and most hopeful element that clearly distinguishes the pastoral approach from any secular psychotherapeutic approach. Further contemplating that presence of God, it was as if He brought me to see how He revealed Himself to various people and especially to His people from the first moments of history. He does so, using a unique, holy and magnificent Personal **Name**; in the old (Paleo-) Hebrew:  or cursive handwriting: , or in the better known post-Babylonian-exile Hebrew: . That glorious Name is closely linked to the promise **"I am with you!"** God uses this wonderful and most lovely Name many, many times throughout the entire Old Testament to reveal Himself.

In this study I want to share with you some findings that I encountered as pastoral researcher, studying this **magnificent and most lovely Name of God**. This great Name appears to reveal to us a great depth about Who God is and about the relationship He desires to have with us. Welcomed into God's family we in fact now carry God's wonderful Name already because we are His children, and as His Bride we will live by God's wonderful Name in all eternity.

In a first introductory chapter with the heading **What's in a name?** (p. 3), I show the significance of names. In the Bible someone's name means a lot. We will not soon become very close with someone whose name we don't even know. So, God's magnificent Name is important if we want to get to know Him.

Under the heading **Early beginnings: the start of the Genesis account** follows a brief piece about God's Name in the beginning of Genesis (p. 6).

A somewhat longer piece discusses the time of the patriarchs, under the title: **Stage 1. The Patriarchs: a first unfolding of God's great plan with mankind** (p. 7) In the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we see that God's wonderful Name was closely connected to His promise: **"I am with you!"** Others saw how the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob really was with them and in a unique way guided them, blessed and protected them like no other god (idol) did. The consequence was that The Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob became very well renowned under various surrounding tribes and nations.

The propagation of His wonderful Name is observed even more clearly in the period of the Exodus of the people of Israel from the slavery in Egypt. In the entire world around the eastern Mediterranean the great Name of God was called with much reverence because of what people heard about

<sup>1</sup> The author is grateful for encouraging and valuable feedback from the Hebraist Pieter A. Siebesma, his friend and linguist Werner Horlings, and an anonymous reviewer on an earlier version of this article (or the Dutch version of it), a very inspiring discussion on the subject with Jan Pieter van de Giessen, Werner Horlings, Hans Dercksen, Leni Kruijs and Barbara Klika (of [Set Apart Ministries](#)) and valuable assistance in his research, by Werner Horlings. The presented view is that of the author.

the way He went with His people Israel. In the beginning of this period God gave more insight on what His lovely Name stands for. I discuss this, under the heading: **Stage two: God's Name proclaimed to the Nations, via His people Israel** (p. 10).

**God as the One Always Present – in past, present and future** (p. 13) is a larger chapter where I discuss in more detail the meaning of the wonderful Name of God. The presence of God with His people and His involvement with them and in their welfare stands out in that.

The spreading of God's glorious Name enters a new phase with the change of Israel to Kingdom: **Stage three. The Kingdom Israel** (p. 24).

Under the heading **אֱלֹהֵינוּ (יהוה) / YHWH / IAUA** – a most resourceful God (p. 29) I present mainly a number of Bible texts that speak clearly for themselves already.

**The usage and striking omission of God's significant Name** (p. 32) appears to be strongly tied to the spiritual state of God's people. In moments or periods in which the lovely Name of God was used a lot, we see people flourish. The reverse is valid as well.

**The Aaronic blessing** says a lot in relation to the wonderful Name of God (p. 34).

**The frequently used expression 'the Word of אֱלֹהֵינוּ'** (p. 36) is studied in the small chapter by that title.

The chapter: **Something about God's glorious Name in the New Testament** (p. 37) shows that also the New Testament refers regularly to the honorable Name of God. And we can learn a lot from that as well.

**God lives up to His significant Name** (p. 40) is a small chapter with a title that speaks for itself.

Generally, little is known about God's beautiful Name. Even in many Bible-translations God's wonderful and lovely Name has been 'translated away' – replaced by a rather insignificant designation. Some background of this very pitiful situation is given in: **Where did things go wrong? Why was the greatest Name forgotten?** (p. 41). There I also discuss the pronunciation of the glorious Name and mention some Biblical prophecies that announce the renewed usage of the wonderful godly Name.

In **Some implications of the magnificent Name of God** (p. 57) I briefly discuss what this all can mean to us.

The connection between the wonderful Name of God and the Name and Identity of Jesus is the subject of: **Jesus – Yeshu'a, Immanu'el and I am – further revelation of אֱלֹהֵינוּ** (p. 58).

On an earlier version of this document I got the reaction: "Is there really a need to know something about the Name of God? Through Jesus, we can call God our heavenly Father, can't we?" This issue I treat in the chapter: **The heavenly Fatherhood of God** (p. 61).

I started this study from a pastoral-theological interest. The last chapter therefore deals briefly with **the practical and pastoral relevance of this all** (p. 62).

In an appendix I give **some examples of verbs that denote what the Bible calls us to do with regard to אֱלֹהֵינוּ and His great Name** (p. 66). Though this is only a first and rather arbitrary selection, it speaks clearly. Another appendix gives **some arguments for the pronunciation of the glorious Name** (p. 67)

The next appendix deals with **The problems of the transliteration and pronunciation Yahweh** (p.69)

Yet another appendix discusses the relevance of the Jewish concepts of **Chillul HaShem** and **Kiddush HaShem**, while changing their direction (p. 70).

This document is a 'living' document, which is about yearly updated and added to.

I remain especially fascinated by **אֱלֹהֵינוּ (יהוה) / YHWH / IAUA** and His wonderful and lovely Name, and regularly discover additional facets!

**"What I believe about God is the most important thing about me."**

Aiden Wilson Tozer  
in: [The Divine Conquest](#), Ch. 6

## What's in a name?

May I start this book with a question: do you generally have a very close relationship and very personal interactions with people of whom you do not know a name, whom you only address by a rather distant functional title or designation?

Personally, I don't. I know the name of each friend and family member with whom I have a close relationship and/or very personal interactions.

I take part in a big church, where I do not know everybody by name. In our church we sometimes pray with people after a church service or so. But even if I pray with people whose name I do not know, I will ask their name. Knowing their name makes it easier for me to feel love for them and pray in a personally involved, and not distant, way.

For a long time I have wondered why many of us have difficulty engaging in a close relationship with God. The situation became clear to me when I understood that we have made God name-less, by using mainly quite distant designations for Him like 'Lord', 'God', 'Almighty One', 'Creator', etc., and forgetting all about His magnificent and most lovely Personal Name.

**"To forget God's name  
is to depart from Him."**

*Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*

In the Bible, names are even more important, as in Bible-times somebody's name was closely tied to or representative of their identity and character.<sup>2</sup> In our days and culture we sometimes use names merely as a tag or designation. A file in my computer has a name, so that I can identify it. That's pretty distant and cold. Not so in the Bible, where we really get to know somebody personally by his or her personal name.

So, too, with God. The God of the Bible chose to reveal Himself extensively by a most wonderful and most precious Personal Name. In the Hebrew square script (since about 400 BC) that Name is written as: יהוה. In the older Paleo-Hebrew script (1000-400 BC), יהוה, יהוה, יהוה or יהוה; in old (West-)Semitic, the oldest 'Hebrew' script known today (before 1000 BC): יהוה. When I say that God chose to reveal Himself *extensively* by or through this great Name, I am not exaggerating. This most significant Name appears more than 6 800 times in the original Hebrew First Testament of the Bible!<sup>3</sup> This most precious Name can be transliterated to our western script as **YHWH** or **IAUA**.<sup>4</sup> I often just simply maintain one of the versions of the Hebrew characters (I

<sup>2</sup> *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (1964) says at p. 571: "In the Scriptures there is the closest possible relationship between a person and his name, the two being practically equivalent, so that to remove the name is to extinguish the person (Numb. 27:4; Deut. 7:24) **To forget God's name is to depart from Him.**"

<sup>3</sup> In the Ethiopian variant of the Bible, encompassing also the very interesting book of Enoch as canonical, more than 7000 times.

The name or designation for God that appears second in frequency (just over 2500 times), is אלהים - *Elohim* – literally: 'God(s)' or 'Higher One(s)', in grammatical form plural but often used as singular (cf. 'majestic plural'). The enormous difference in frequency between the personal יהוה / יהוה and the more distant *Elohim* denotes in my view that God has a clear preference for the use of His more intimate personal Name יהוה.

Apart from that, יהוה is, formally spoken, the unique Name of the God of the Bible. There are many other designations, like: God, Lord, heavenly Father, Almighty, etc., that all denote an aspect of God's Being or Character; after the letter they are not names (compare: my name is André H. Roosma; apart from that, I am a.o. a man, researcher, counselor; but those are designations, not my name). This simple given is often neglected. It emphasizes the relevance and significance of the glorious Name יהוה Himself.

<sup>4</sup> Depending on the transliteration of the Hebrew letter ך, as 'yod' or 'jod' or 'iod', and of the Hebrew letter ם, as 'waw' or 'vav' or as vowel 'u', other transliterations are possible as well, such as **IHVH**. In Dutch and other continental European languages we often use **JHWH**. The transliteration **IAUA** follows when seeing all Hebrew characters of the glorious Name as vowels or 'matres lectiones', for which very good arguments exist, such that this should actually be the preferred transliteration.

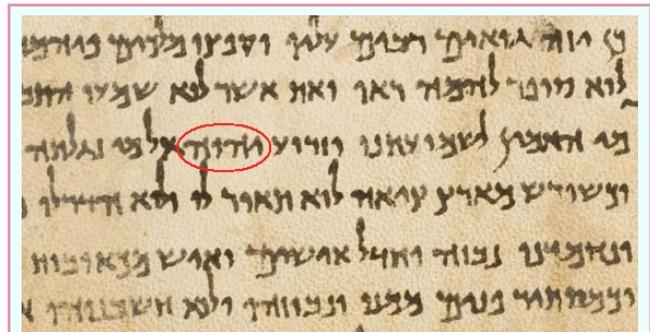
In my analysis I especially studied the original Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, as e.g. available via [theWord](#) and [The Online Bible](#), the [Tanach](#) (the Westminster Leningrad Codex), [the Q-Bible](#) and [Mechon-Mamre](#), (esp. the majority text), [The Blue Letter Bible](#) and [Biblos](#) (both also show some variants) and [Aantekeningen bij de Bijbel](#) (Notes to the Bible; a Dutch site with a lot of documentation on the Bible).

Additionally, I consulted a lot of other writings, and various encyclopedical works, like the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. The following books deserve special mention here:



translate the precious Name of God, 'Eternal One', 'The Forever Present One', 'The Highest' (the latter in parallel with the Greek replacement *Kurios*) are some alternative translations that would represent the original much better.<sup>7</sup> However, and this is most important, in Bible translations it is otherwise not at all common to translate or replace personal names and I really see no viable reason whatsoever to divert from this rule when the widely used, most precious, magnificent and lovely Name of God Himself is concerned. More about all this, including something about the pronunciation of the lovely Name, later in this article.

There are many, many passages and verses in the Bible that highlight and describe various aspects of God's most precious Name and character, giving us insight into Who God really is, and how He wants to engage with us. So I can indeed speak of God revealing Himself by and through His most precious Name. And by studying some of these passages and verses, we get a most beautiful and most precious image of Who God is, and how He wants to be involved in our lives. God also explicitly tells us in His Word that He wants all people to know His precious Name and worship Him by that glorious Name.



The glorious Name (red encircled) as written in the [Great Isaiah scroll \(Is.53:1\) from Qumran](#)  
This script from about 125 BC – predecessor of the now better known Hebrew script from the Middle Ages – is similar to the Imperial Aramaic of about 500 BC.

My first aim is not to enforce a radical change in the use of words and translations. My first aim is, that we get some insight in what the most precious Name used by the Almighty One to describe Himself reveals to us about Who He actually is, whatever translations or words we use in our daily life and Bible translations.

When I said, that in the Bible name and identity are closely tied together, that immediately implies a limitation of this study. We, small creatures, can never fully comprehend or describe God's identity – by far not. A study of God's most great Name will always be very limited and provisional. Yet there is so much beauty and wonder to discover in what the Bible reveals to us about God and His wonderful Name, that I love to share with you what I discovered in the course of studying this most precious Name of God for over a year.

At the end, I will also discuss some implications of the study of God's holy Name for practical theology, growing in spiritual maturity and – especially – for pastoral counselling.

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Even clearer this appears from what Genesis says: "God created man in His Own image, male and female He created them". This implies to my opinion that God Himself includes both the male and the female (cf. also Isaiah 66; esp. verse 13). The replacement **LORD** definitely does not do this. Also in that respect it is a reduction and impoverishment when we replace the lovely Name **יהוה** / **יהוה** by **LORD**.

<sup>7</sup> The grammatical objection that has been made, that these are not names but verbal forms, adjectives or so, I consider rather irrelevant: even the original Name is possibly a verbal form, and the word Lord is not a name either. Other translations have '**The Eternal**' (like the French *Louis Segond*, 1910: '**L'Eternel**'). In Jewish literature we also find the much more respectful replacement: **הַקְדוֹשׁ הַגָּדוֹל הַיָּהוּב** - '**The Holy One – blessed be He**'. Note that we can learn a lot from the dedication of many Jewish 'brothers' – a.o. in respect for God and His wonderful Name and in sanctifying time and daily things.

## Early beginnings: the start of the Genesis account

The Bible has two accounts of the creation. The first one – depicted in Genesis 1 – gives the chronology. There God is described in the original Hebrew text by a general designation, meaning ‘God’ or ‘Higher One’: אֱלֹהִים - *’Elohim* (kind of a majestic plural of אֱלֹהִים - *’Eloha/’Elah*, the full form of *’Ei*). One could speak here of a functional designation for God the Creator.

The second account – in Genesis 2 – is a much more personal story and deals with the relationship between God and man. There, *’Elohim* is coupled to the Personal Name of God: יהוה in Paleo-Hebrew.

From the fact that the Bible uses this magnificent Name of God only in association to the creation of man and God’s relating to the first humans, seems already to imply that this Name has something to do with *God’s relationship to mankind*. As we will see in the sequel, this appears to be true indeed.

To resume: from the beginning of Genesis 2 we find God’s wonderful Name יהוה (*JHWH / IAUA*) very frequently in the Bible. Genesis 4: 26 notes the following with regard to a certain time period. (Out of reverence I will – as a rule – render the Name of God here in Paleo-Hebrew characters, or transliterated in bold italic. More generally I will use boldface in the text – also in citations of Bible verses – to highlight some specific details or add extra emphasis.<sup>8</sup>)

At that time men began to call upon the Name of יהוה (the LORD).

People called God by His wonderful Name יהוה (*YHWH / IAUA*) and the Bible does not disapprove, on the contrary. This is a first important point against the false Jewish doctrine that the Name of God should not be mentioned.<sup>9</sup> John J. Parsons says about it in his study on [The Seed of Abraham, in the Parashat Lekh Lekha](#) at the website *Hebrew for Christians*:

The murder of Abel necessitated that the coming seed would descend through another child, and therefore the Torah describes the birth of Seth (שֵׁט, lit. ‘appointed’), the third son of Adam and Eve. The Scriptures further state that it was the descendants of Seth who ‘began to call upon the Name of the LORD’ (לְקַרְא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה), indicating that they had faith in God (אֱלֹהִים) as the Compassionate Covenant Keeper (יְהוָה) who would redeem humanity by means of the coming seed. Seth called his firstborn son Enosh (‘man’), perhaps in the hope that his child would be the promised Savior (interestingly, *bar enosh* (בֶּרֶךְ אֲנוֹשׁ), or ‘Son of Man’, is the Name for the Savior (Dan 7:13).

However, in the long term many people forgot about God. The world became a mess. God finished the majority of it, and started anew with one man and his family: Noah. He had remained faithful.

The Jewish Rabbi Harold S. Kushner says from a very ‘human’ point of view that this time it went wrong again, and that God then thought of a different approach.<sup>10</sup> He did not start again with one person or one family, but founded a big community – a whole nation – of people who could help each other, to keep their relationship with God and each other in shape and to live together as God had meant it to be. They, in turn, would be a model / example for the rest of the world. That happened in two phases, that I will study in the sequel. In these, we see an ever-increasing Self-revelation of God.

<sup>8</sup> All the **boldface** in Bible quotations and main text in this exposé is added by me for clarity / personal emphasis / highlighting, unless otherwise stated. The holy Name of God is set in Hebrew signs or, when transliterated, in boldface italic, with extra spacing, out of reverence. For maximum clarity, Bible quotations are set in the Times New Roman font (with *serifs*), the main text in Arial (without). All other citations are set in a dark blue Arial font.

<sup>9</sup> Curt Chanda, in his outstanding article [‘His Name Is Wonderful... The Significance Of God's Name In The Old Testament For Mission’](#) (Int’l J of Frontier Missions, Vol. 9, 4 Oct 1992) illustrates and documents very clearly that it was God’s intention that His Name יהוה would be made known all over the world to all people and that all would call Him by His Name יהוה. His way with the patriarchs and with the people of Israel had to care for that. Unfortunately Israel failed severely in that, by concealing in stead of proclaiming the Name.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 2 in: Harold S. Kushner, *To life! – A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*, Little, Brown & Company, Boston, 1993. Though theologically we know of course that God already had this in mind long before, I am often surprised by how Kushner highlights some aspect in a refreshingly new way.

## Stage 1. The Patriarchs: the start of the propagation of God's great Name

### God's wonderful Name **יְהוָה** matched to His promise: "I am with you!"

With the patriarchs we see the first unfolding of God's great plan with mankind. We also encounter a frequent use of God's wonderful Name **יְהוָה** (יהוה / *YHWH* / *IAUA*). In Genesis 12: 1-4 it is **יְהוָה** Who tells Abram, to go on an adventurous journey with Him to the land that God would show him. Again I leave the holy Name of God in the original form **יְהוָה**:

<sup>1</sup> Now **יְהוָה** said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." <sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as **יְהוָה** had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Here we see that God **יְהוָה** is a God Who speaks, and a God Who blesses and leads in a personally involved and 'close' fashion. In verse 8 as well as further on, e.g. in Genesis 15: 1-7 (esp. vs. 2), 18: 30, 21:33 and 22:14, we see that Abram, too, calls God by His wonderful Name **יְהוָה**. The fact that Abram believes in **יְהוָה**, is counted him as righteousness (Genesis 15: 6). God sets up a personal covenant with Abram and his descendants (Genesis 15: 18; and 17: 2 ff.). And Abram experiences vividly that **יְהוָה** provides when the need is there (Genesis 22: 8, 14 - **יְהוָה** Yireh).

At some moment we see that God changes Abram's name. He begets an additional H (Hebrew: **ה** / *ah/hey*), and his wife Sarai also gets an additional H, which implies a remarkable change in the meaning of both of their names, as we know. Notice however, that they had both received an important letter of the Name of God and a letter that sounds like the life-bringing breath of God; a letter whose first known form signifies worship and celebration of life: **ה**. God was with them, you could say, and He had connected Himself with them in this way. He was so close – they could feel His breadth. And His breath brings life. The result is indeed that more life emerges and at high age Sarah becomes pregnant against all odds.<sup>11</sup> As a consequence, God's glorious Name is honored.

When Sarah has already passed away and Abraham is becoming old, he sends his oldest servant to find a good wife for his son Isaac (Yitschaq). Then, too, Abraham places the presence and leading of **יְהוָה** at the center (Genesis 24: 7):

"**יְהוָה**, the God of heaven, Who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and Who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there."

The servant does the same, repeatedly speaking the wonderful Name of God with boldness (see verses. 12, 21, 26, 27, 35, 40, 42, 44, 48, 56), such that even Laban, the coming brother-in-law, is very much impressed about **יְהוָה** (one could say, he is perplexed) and speaks His lovely Name with great reverence as well (verses 50-51). Open praise to **יְהוָה** works contagious!

Isaac also prays to **יְהוָה** (a.o. Genesis 25: 21) and has a personal encounter with God **יְהוָה** Himself (26: 2-3).

And **יְהוָה** appeared to him, and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and **I will be with you**, and **will bless you**; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

Here **יְהוָה** confirms to Isaac that **He will be with him** (Hebrew: **אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ** – *'Ehjeħ 'immekħa* – *I will be with you*), and protect and bless him and his descendants: In Genesis 26: 24 God repeats His promise **to be with him** and bless him and multiply his descendants. Even other people observe clearly that **יְהוָה** is with him (verse 28).

Isaac gets two sons: Esau and Jacob (*Ya'aqobħ*). Esau is rather loose (if not rebellious) with regard to God and His counsel. Jacob is more diligent. On his way to far relatives, to find a suitable wife, he receives a vision in which he has a personal encounter with **יְהוָה** (Genesis 28: 12-15):

<sup>11</sup> Some Jewish scholars say that by the more feminine ending *~ah* to her new name, Sarah's femininity also had increased!

And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! And behold, **עֵלֹהִים** stood above it and said, “I am **עֵלֹהִים**, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants; and your descendants shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves. Behold, **I am with you and will keep you wherever you go**, and will bring you back to this land; for **I will not leave you** until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.”

Jacob's conclusion in the next verses (Genesis 28: 16-17) is very significant:

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, “Surely **עֵלֹהִים** is in this place; and I was not aware of it.” And he was filled with great reverence and said, “How fearful is this place; this is nothing but a house of God, and this is a gate of the heavens.”

Jacob then calls the place Beith-'El, that is literally: house of God.

This is the first time the Bible records that Jacob mentions the wonderful Name. The remarkable thing is: (1) here, too, it is all about the *active presence* of **עֵלֹהִים**, (2) first Jacob did not realize that **עֵלֹהִים** was present with him, which is very recognizable, and (3) it says that *the presence* of **עֵלֹהִים** had a profound effect on Jacob: *the presence* of **עֵלֹהִים** filled him with great reverence/ fear/ respect/ awe (Hebrew: אָרַע - jare). As a consequence, Jacob starts to commit himself to God, as the sequel of the story tells us (vs 18-22).

However, the story does not end there. **This encounter with God**, and **God's promise “I am with you!”**, has a tremendous impact on the rest of Jacob's life. Though his scheming still continues, he is blessed in finding a wife (even though he is not glad with the wife he gets; as his father-in-law betrays him too; after which Jacob still wants his chosen one as well, much to his misfortune) and much prosperity. We see that also his wife Le'ah – the first one – and his father-in-law (Laban) acknowledge God and know His Name and attribute blessings to Him. In 29: 31-35 Leah says: “**עֵלֹהִים has seen** my misery ... **עֵלֹהִים has heard** ... now **I will praise עֵלֹהִים** ...” – the latter at the birth of Judah - *Yehudah* whose name indeed stands for: **עֵלֹהִים wada** - praising **YHWH / IAUA**. In 30: 27, 30 we see that Laban also acknowledges **עֵלֹהִים**'s blessing Jacob and being blessed by **עֵלֹהִים** himself, because of Jacob. Later Jacob receives and listens to **עֵלֹהִים**'s advice to leave Laban (31: 3 ff; note vs 12-13 where God sees the injustice done to him and reminds him of Beith-'El; God further protects him against the anger of his father-in-law – 31: 29, 42). Also towards Esau Jacob is generous because of the way God has blessed him (33: 11).

Most remarkable is what happens later, when **עֵלֹהִים** calls Jacob to revisit Beith-'El (told in Genesis 35). Is this the 'old' Jacob the liar? See the grace of **עֵלֹהִים** in action here! Observe the profound effect that being reminded of Beith-'El and his encounter with **עֵלֹהִים** there has on Jacob. He (for the first time!) removes all idols from his house. He calls all his household to cleanse themselves and put on fresh cloths:

And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Beith-'El, and live there. And make an altar there to God, **Who appeared to you** when you fled from the face of Esau your brother. Then Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him, **Put away the strange gods among you, and be clean, and change your garments**. And let us arise and go up to Beith-'El, and I will make an altar there to **God, Who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went**. And they gave all the strange gods which were in their hands to Jacob, and the earrings in their ears. And Jacob hid them under the oak which was by Shechem. And they moved. And **the fear of God** was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

Genesis 35: 1-5

What a chain reaction **that one intimate encounter with עֵלֹהִים**, and **being reminded of it**, had! First in Jacob himself, and then also in the dedication/cleansing of his total household and then even reverence for **עֵלֹהִים** in the cities around, whom Jacob still feared in the preceding chapter because of awful misdeeds of some of his sons!

There in Beith-'El Jacob again has a close encounter with God, where God again confirms His covenant to Jacob and also the change of Jacob's name into 'Israel' (actually: Isra-'El - 'God prevails'),

re-assuring him again of God's victorious protection.

Much later we observe a similar reaction of king Asa' of Judah to the fact **אִתּוֹ אֱלֹהִים** **was with him**; he, too, devotes himself to **אֱלֹהִים**, puts away all abominable idols etc. from the land of Judah and Benjamin (2 Chronicles 14-15; especially 15: 2, 7-8). When we realize that **אִתּוֹ אֱלֹהִים** **is with us**, it doesn't leave us untouched! It is also contagious: many from the 10- (actually: 9-) tribed Israel joined Asa in those days, as they saw that **אִתּוֹ אֱלֹהִים** **was with him** (2 Chronicles 15: 9 ff). Striking is, among others, that there was peace (*shalom*; 2 Chronicles 14: 6, 7, 13; 15: 15), and great joy (2 Chronicles 15: 14-15).

## Stage two: God's Name proclaimed to the Nations, via His people Israel

### God reveals more of the meaning of His unique Name to Moses

Above, we saw that God was already known by His awesome Name **יְהוָה** from the time of Adam and Eve and with the patriarchs – even those imperfect patriarchs –, and that the patriarchs also used the Name, especially in relationship with their experiencing the presence of God, and His protection and guidance on their life journey. By their use of the great Name of God and by what **יְהוָה** did among them, also many others revered and praised **יְהוָה**, using His wonderful Name.

However, one of the most telling stories about God's holy Name we find in Exodus, where God re-confirms His covenant with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as His people, liberating them from Egyptian slavery and uniting them with Himself in a well-defined covenant. Again, it was not God's intention that knowing His wonderful Name would remain confined to the people of Israel, but that **through His walk with them** (and theirs with Him!), **the whole world would know and magnify His wonderful Name יְהוָה (יהוה) / YHWH / IAUA**. Even Jews who – by their religious teachings – are not entitled to pronounce the holy Name, say: "**The Holy One – blessed be He!**" (הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא). **The Holy One** He is indeed! And **blessed be He**, surely! Let all the earth know!

We start here in Exodus 3: 4-16 (in particular: 13-15) – the story of Moses receiving his calling from God. The context is that the people of Israel has been suppressed very heavily for more than 80 year in Egypt and that God looks after them. Therefore, He had saved Moses already as a baby and given him an 80-year training – first 4 years with his faithful parents, than 36 years at the Egyptian court and finally 40 years as shepherd serving under a Midianitic priest. Now God speaks to Moses from a big fire. That happens in or east of the Sinai desert close to mount Horeb, in those days known as the 'mountain of the gods'. (Simon J. Stamhuis gives a probable location east of the Gulf of Akabah in his Dutch study [Exodus en de berg Gods](#) (Exodus and the mountain of God))

4 When **יְהוָה** saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush,<sup>12</sup> "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." 5 Then He said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." 6 And He said, "**I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**" And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. 7 Then **יְהוָה** said, "**I have seen** the affliction of **My people** who are in Egypt, **and have heard** their cry because of their taskmasters; **I know** their sufferings, 8 and **I have come down to deliver** them out of the hand of the Egyptians, **and to bring** them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to Me, and I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, **I will send you** to Pharaoh that you may bring forth My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt." 11 But Moses said to God, "**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" 12 He said, "**But I will be with you**; and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought forth the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God upon this mountain." 13 Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, '**The God of your fathers** has sent me to you,' and they ask me, '**What is his name?**' what shall I say to them?" 14 God said to Moses, "**I AM WHO I AM.**" And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.' "

Moses, in the name of the Israelites, asks God about His Name. That is not so strange: after more than 80 years of praying for deliverance they were not sure whether God was still there **with them**. His Name was probably still known, but no longer Who the God behind that Name really was, and what The Name stood for. In this context, God's first answer to Moses in the Hebrew original is quite notable: **אֲנִי הוּא אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי** – 'Ehyeh 'asher Ehyeh, commonly translated in English as: '**I AM**

<sup>12</sup> Probably this was not a thorn bush but the crown of a palm tree; see: '[The Palm tree in the Bible \(4\) Moses and the Big Fire in the Palm-Top](#)', [Hallelu-YaH](#) web-article, 3 Feb. 2012 (NL original 18 Jan 2012).

**WHO I AM** or **I WILL BE WHO I WILL BE**.<sup>13</sup> In the next sentence, God revealed Himself in Hebrew briefly as: יהיִהְיֶה *'Ehyeh - I AM* or **I WILL BE**. *'Ehyeh* derives from the verb יהיִהְיֶה - *hayah* (or the older form of this: הוּוָה / הוּוָה - *hawah*<sup>14</sup>): 'to be', 'to exist', 'to be there', 'to be (helpfully) present', 'to become', 'to live', 'to breathe' or in the causative *hiph'il* form: 'to create into being'.

What I see expressed in this *'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh - I AM WHO I AM* is, firstly, God's transcendence. As humans we characterize and describe ourselves and each other by our ancestors ("he is a son of John") or descendants ("she is Julie's grandmother"), by our work ("he is the CEO of company X"), our physical appearance ("she is a beautiful lady"), our education ("a graduate of Harvard"), or our friends ("a good friend of JFK"). All these things 'define' us in some way; our circumstances influenced who we became to be. But God is in a way far beyond such description and beyond such being influenced by circumstances. He was before anything else was created. He was the creator of everything that exists. **He is Who He is**. He is utterly self-existent. We owe Him – in His transcendent greatness – our most sincere praise and worship. ***The Eternal*** could be a good way to express this aspect of the meaning of *'Ehyeh* in English.

*'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh* also expresses God's unchanging nature. **He is who He is and was, and He will not change**. We can rely on Him and worship Him for His utter stability and trustworthiness.

The Hebrew is not as linear as the Greek or our modern languages. Often, multiple meanings are included.<sup>15</sup> Some see in *'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh* the meaning: 'He Who brings into existence whatever exists' – referring to His work in creation and re-creation and His transcendence over all that is created; above all *reality*.

Still another meaning – and maybe the most important here – derives directly from the verb *hayah* and says that *'Ehyeh* had better be translated: **I will be there**, in the sense of 'being there with you'. The formulation יהיִהְיֶה - *'Ehyeh - I Am* or **I Will Be** is used 51 times in the Old Testament, and many of them (especially in combination with עִמָּךְ - *'immakh / im kha*: with you) in the sense of 'being there with someone', as an attachment figure providing security (e.g. Genesis 26: 3; Joshua 1: 5; 3: 7). *'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh* could then be translated: **I will be there as** (it is in My character that) **I will be there** (with you) or just as: **I am the One Who will be there with you**.<sup>16</sup>

"From the translation "I am that I am," Buber moved to "I am there as I am there," and finally to "I shall be there as I who will always be there." This is the reality of the "being" of YHWH; the promise of his unfailing presence with his people. God belongs not so much to the realm of ideas as to the realm of relationships."

**Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor,**

*Yahweh – The Divine Name in the Bible*, Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, Waterloo, Ont, 1975. p.99.

<sup>13</sup> The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, says the following about the common translation "I am Who I am" (Vol. II, p. 1254, 1267; boldface mine): In Exodus 3:14 Jehovah is explained as the equivalent to 'ehyeh, which is a short form of 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh, translated in RV "I am that I am."... the imperfect 'ehyeh is more accurately translated "I will be what I will be," a Sem. idiom meaning **I will be all that is necessary as the occasion will arise,** a familiar OT idea (cf Is 7 4.9; Ps 23) ... Then God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM... The optional reading in ARVm is much to be preferred: **I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE,** indicating **His covenant pledge to be with and for Israel in all the ages to follow.**

And on page 507: 'I will be who/what I will be'...is preferable because the verb *hayah* [to be] has a more dynamic sense of being- not pure existence, but becoming, happening, being present – and because the historical and theological context of these early chapters of Exodus shows that God is revealing to Moses, and subsequently to the whole people, not the inner nature of His being [or existence], but **his active, redemptive intentions on their behalf.** He 'will be' to them 'what' His deeds will show Him 'to be.'

<sup>14</sup> Also the possibly even older form הוּוָה / הוּוָה - *hawa'*, or the very rare form: הוּוָה / הוּוָה - *hwy* have been mentioned in this context.

<sup>15</sup> The reformed theologian J.C. Sikkela (1855-1920) said the following about God's *'Ehjeħ asjer 'Ehjeħ* (in: [Mozes](#) (📖), serie: *Uit den schat des Woords*, deel III (Moses, serie: *From the treasure of the Word*, part III; in Dutch; my translation), A Verleer, Schoten (Haarlem, NL), 1926; p.26-27): "Then the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jakob mentioned for Moses his highly glorious Name: *'I will be, the One that I will be,* that is, the Eternally Unchanging Faithful One, who does what Pleases Me, who carries out My Counsel, who keeps My Covenant." In this, the multidimensional aspect of the glorious Name of God is perceived as well.

<sup>16</sup> In a context of the theology of Martin Buber, it has also – and quite significantly – been translated into German as: **"Ich werde dasein, als der ich dasein werde"**; or, in English: **"I will be there as the one I will be there"**. Source: Andreas Schmidt, ["Vertrauen und Dialog – Das religiöse Denken Martin Bubers"](#) / ["Of dialogue and trust – Religious thought of Martin Buber"](#), web-article on [www.buber.de](#) 1995-2007.

Throughout the entire Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – we see this theme of God expressing His desire to **be with us, personally**. How encouraging this will have been for the Israelites suffering in slavery in Egypt! Here, the great God steps out of His transcendence into a personal relationship with us, fragile human creatures. He wants to be involved. He hates the distrust and distance to which the enemy seduced Adam and Eve, and all of us since then to some extent. He did all He could to bridge that gap and restore us into fellowship with Him. He welcomes us even into the intimacy of His divine Family, as His own sons and daughters. He gives us His Spirit to help us here on earth and as a security for our inheritance in a new world to come. In response, we owe Him no less than our openness and transparency and trust, in short: our heart, vulnerably.

Note that both the reverence we owe God and the intimacy to which He welcomes us, are reflected in the question by God to Moses, to take off his shoes. In those days, dirty shoes (think of all the animal droppings on the roads) were taken off at the entrance of a house. Not to do so, was a sign of disrespect and offense but of taking personal distance (not wanting to respect and honor and become a part of the personal space of the other) and of filth as well. Besides, removing one's shoe could denote abstaining from any further claims and surrender them to the other (cf. Ruth 4: 7); and Moses could do nothing here but submit himself to God.

## God as *the One Always Present* – in past, present and future

So far we saw that, in the Bible, God reveals Himself as the One Always Present – in past, present and future. As utterly transcendent and closely intimate at the same time. He does so, amongst others, via the one holy and wonderful Name by which He presents Himself time and again. In the following small sections I suggest to have a closer look at this.

### God's impressive and significant Name **יְהוָה** (/יהוה / *IAUA* / *JHWH*)

The above 'Ehyeh is used by God as a closer explanation to His holy and wonderful Name: in Hebrew **יְהוָה** / יהוה. Like 'Ehyeh, the meaning of **יְהוָה** is illustrated with the Hebrew verb **הָיָה** *hayah*, or the in essence more or less equal older verb **הָוָה** / יהוה *hawah* (particularly in the qal imperf. 3<sup>rd</sup> pers. mascul. of one of these verbs). Some regard 'Ehyeh and **יְהוָה** even as parallel derivatives from two of these verbs ('Ehyeh in the first person form, **יְהוָה** in the third). Others do acknowledge a relationship of The Name with *hawah*, but seriously doubt whether this relationship really is etymological.<sup>17</sup> I have doubts also, if only already on the basis of age. At the time of Adam and Eva and the first generations after them (Genesis 2 – 5) and at the time of the patriarchs they possibly did not speak the later version of historic Hebrew as we know it, while the Name of God was already known. When the Name of God is later illustrated within the Hebrew language culture with a Hebrew verb, we cannot conclude that that verb stood at the basis of the impressive Name of God. To what extent the reverse might be true, that a very early form of a Semitic or Hebrew verb for 'to be' was formed from the Name of God, I cannot establish, but does not seem unlikely.

Let us continue to read about God's conversation with Moses:

15 God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'יְהוָה, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': **this is My Name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.** 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, 'יְהוָה, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying, "I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt; ... Exodus 3: 15-16

In this passage of His conversation with Moses, God says that **יְהוָה** (partly illustrated by the former 'Ehyeh and 'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh) is **His proper personal Name, by which He wants to be called and remembered forever.** In my view, we cannot afford to ignore God's explicit wish on this!

So, let us continue to investigate this personal and most revealing Name of the God of the Bible.

<sup>17</sup> See Barry J. Beitzel, '[Exodus 3:14 and The Divine Name: A Case of Biblical Paronomasia](#)', *Trinity Journal*, 1 NS, 1980, p.5-20. His conclusion ends with: "... neither the gospel nor the proclamation of Exodus is attempting to supply us with the etymology of the tetragrammaton. Exodus 3:14 becomes, therefore, yet another instance of paronomasia in the Bible." Personally I do not know whether the possibility can be excluded that if there is an etymological relationship between The Name and one of these verbs, it is that the verb derives from the Name of God instead of the other way around... However, see also note 23.

Note that the etymology and explanation of names is a difficult matter. Take for example the name of Moses. From the Hebrew form his name has been related to the verb 'to pull out'. This could have a very ordinary connotation to what happened at his birth (the midwife pulling him out of his mother's womb). Also the explanation 'He who pulls out'; his name would then be prophetic. Another explanation is given by the observation that possibly not his father or mother, but the Egyptian princess gave him his name. However, she will have spoken Egyptian, and not Hebrew. The Egyptian word *Mose* for boy/son sounds like the Hebrew *Moshe* - Moses. In the little baby in the ark in the water she would have seen a son, given to her by the gods. Miriam – the Biblical witness of this – would have overheard how the princess called him and interpreted this as 'pulled out of the water'. Is the Hebrew verb 'to pull out' at the basis of the name Moses, or has the – especially striking – match been made later? Something else on this name Moses: Purely etymologically there is no relationship between *Mosheh* (מֹשֶׁה) – the name of Moses, *Moshi'a* (מוֹשִׁיעַ) - redeemer, and *Mashiach* (מָשִׁיחַ) - Messiah (Anointed One): *Mosheh* derives from *mashah* – to pull out, *Moshi'a* from *jasha'* – to set free, and *Mashiach* from *mashach* – to anoint. However, at a more intuitive level, based on word-image, sound and meaning, an association is easily made that will quickly 'color' the meaning of the associated words. If we already have so much difficulty establishing the details with the simple name of a man, how much more where the great Name of the Eternal is involved?

## אֲנִי ה' is God liberatingly acting from Who He is, to our benefit

God's holy Name appears in the Old Testament of the Bible many times in lines like the following – a brief piece of text that became very significant to me, when I started to study the Hebrew original:

**I am the LORD your God, ...**

e.g. Genesis 15: 7; Exodus 6: 6; 20: 2; Leviticus 11: 45<sup>18</sup>

In Hebrew, the above text reads אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – 'Anokhiy אֱלֹהֵיכֶם 'Eloheykha (the basic form is: אֲנִי ה' – 'Aniy אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – for 'I (am) the LORD').<sup>19</sup> Hence, the text might also be rendered:

**I am אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, your God, ...**

Or even more literally – the verbal 'am' actually being absent or implied in the Hebrew text:

**I, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, your God, ...**

Often, the brief sentence is followed by something אֱלֹהֵיכֶם did, as in (Exodus 20: 2):

**I, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ...**

אֱלֹהֵיכֶם reveals Himself as the God Who actively liberates and leads people out; Who sets us free and leads us to a place where we can thrive and flourish. Furthermore, it is remarkable that this portion of text often precedes a commandment or other advice or directive by God. Apparently, God wanted Israel to know that He, אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, was there, personally present with them in His everlasting power and trustworthiness, to help them and work in them what they could not achieve by human power alone. He was and is the One that maintained the relationship and would see them through any difficulty that might arise.

## God and Moses himself

God's revelation about His wonderful Name אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, expressing itself in His merciful, liberating actions, started already with Moses himself, in the big episode in Exodus 3 which I described earlier in this article. May I recall that Moses said to God: "Who am I, that I would go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" Moses had good reasons to doubt about himself. He knew how God had saved him as a baby, where many of his masculine contemporaries were slaughtered, and had given him the significant name Moses – he who pulls out (is pulled out, or makes to pull out). He knew that he had received a unique education at the Egyptian court. We know that at least at his 40<sup>th</sup> year of age he already knew that God wanted to redeem his people by his hand; but his 'brethern' did not want to recognize that then. And he, Moses, had ruined it by self-willingly murdering an Egyptian (see the speech of Stephanus, in Acts 7: 23-25 "...He supposed that his brothers understood that God was giving them deliverance by his hand..."<sup>20</sup>). Led by fear, he had fled to the country of a hostile descendant of Abraham: Midian (= *battle!*). When a well to do man persuaded him to stay and marry his daughter Zipporah, he had –not wisely– agreed,<sup>21</sup> thereby forfeiting his Israeli and even purely-Levite (!) descent. Forty years he had served his father-in-law as a "... stranger in a strange land ..." (Exodus 2: 22). No, he had little respect to expect from his people, nor from Pharaoh, and also in Moses himself there was little anymore that proved him worthy to be God's leader for His people.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also: Leviticus 25: 38, 55; 26: 13; Numbers 15: 41; Yechezqel (Ezekiel) 20: 19; Hoshe'a (Hosea) 12: 9. By the way, this is quite common phrasing in the Bible; it appears almost 200 times in the First Testament!

<sup>19</sup> The term 'anokhiy is more powerful than the term 'aniy. 'Anokhiy contains the letter *kaph* – in the old Semitic script: a blessing hand of authority. For another beautiful comparison of the usage of these two forms in the First Testament, see also: Jeffrey M. Cohen, '[Which Anokhi Did Jacob not Know?](#)', *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVII, No.4 (148) Oct-Dec 2009, p. 223-230.

<sup>20</sup> See also: Jeffrey M. Cohen, 'The call of Moses', *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol. XX, No.4, Summer 1992, ISSN 0792-3910, p.256-261.

<sup>21</sup> The word אֵלֵךְ 'ya'al that is used, has, apart from the meaning 'to assent', also a variant with the meaning 'being foolish'. In one of my Dutch sermons I dig deeper into this: '[3 x 40 jaar... – Lessen uit het leven van Mozes](#)' (3 x 40 years – Lessons from the life of Moses) 🎧 (mp3 soundfile), recorded 9 November 2008, Mijdrecht NL, with [associated presentation-sheets](#) 📄.

<sup>22</sup> Wim Rietkerk, Dutch Reformed pastor in Utrecht and international president of l'Abri (the network of study-fellowships, founded in 1955 by Dr. Francis Schaeffer) sees in Moses' behavior his trouble with intimacy, self-confidence, initiative and dignity, possibly caused by the fact that he was separated from his mother at an

Even one of his sons he hadn't circumcised yet (possibly because of disagreement about it from his Midianitic wife Zipporah). Before he entered Egypt we see that God found him guilty to death because of this negligence / self-conceit (Exodus 4: 24-26). Hence Moses' question: **"Who am I, that I..."** And yet... And yet God searches him and chooses him once more, there in the wilderness of his forty-year 'exile'. For it is the character of the God with the Name **אֱיִיָּהּ** to do so. God's objection against Moses' view on his own shortcomings is: **"Anyhow, I will be with you!"** (כִּי־אֲהִי־עִמָּךְ - *kiy 'Ehyeh 'immakh*).

**אֱיִיָּהּ** is **the God Who calls and Who accompanies till completion**. Everything is created into being and erected by Him – by His presence, by His acting. That notion, that is perpendicular to our western idea in which man fulfills the central role, appears very clearly from the story of the encounter between God and Moses. Miraculously Mozes later receives special honor, e.g. when he is referred to as "Moses, the man of God", "Moses, the servant of **אֱיִיָּהּ**" (Deuteronomy 33: 1; 34: 5) and it is told about him "Like Moses, who knew **אֱיִיָּהּ face to face**, no other prophet has emerged in Israel anymore" (Deuteronomy 34: 10). Note that God does not call and honor Moses because of his marvelous education or performance. The evolutionistic worldview, which we see around us, puts the human performance at the centre: you are what you perform. What God depicts about Moses is that **what distinguished him** was that **God Himself was with him**. With Abraham it started already with this, and this permeates and determines everything, in all times.

## The significance and rich meaning of God's glorious Name

Some of the significance to us of the glorious Name of the God Who is with us, is given, amongst others, in Psalm 9: 10:

And they that know **Thy Name** will put their trust in Thee:  
for Thou, **אֱיִיָּהּ**, **hast not forsaken them** that seek Thee.

The holy Name of the Almighty represents His *active presence* with us. Therefore, *knowing* God's Name, that is His presence, will do something with us. If we know God's lovely Name, we will put our trust in Him, says this Psalm. So, let us dig a bit deeper into the meaning of this great Name and its usage in the First Testament.

The deepest meaning of God's holy Name **אֱיִיָּהּ** remains a mystery to us. We cannot fully comprehend or 'contain' God's Identity. Many theologians have searched for a meaning of The Name. And the various meanings that they found, though each very rich and significant, show by their enormous variation also that The Name fundamentally remains a mystery to us. Yet I want to give you some highlights that I encountered. For in spite of the fact that we as little humans fundamentally cannot fully know God, it is such that **אֱיִיָּהּ** reveals Himself to us, like He already did to Moses and His people Israel. The encounter that Moses had with God, like briefly described above, and how God revealed Himself there to Moses as both *'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh* and **אֱיִיָּהּ**, tells us in fact already a lot about the meaning of this holy Name of God. As K.J. Cronin says: **"I would instead suggest that YHWH should be considered to be the untranslatable proper name of God, and that it should be understood to bear the same meaning as ... Ehyeh."**<sup>23</sup>

Parallel to *'Ehyeh*, **אֱיִיָּהּ** has been regarded as derived from or related to the verb **אָהַיָּהּ / הָיָה** *hayah* or **הָוָה / אָוָה** *hawah* (or a related older form; see above) and translated as **He will be there**.

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early age. In the "I am with you" God meets him in all of these issues. The repetition in the *'Ehje asjer 'Ehje* Rietkerk sees also as a Hebrew figure of speech by which God strongly emphasises His **BEING THERE**. See: Wim Rietkerk (Ed. Marleen Hengelaar-Rookmaaker), *Die ver is, is nabij – In de relatie met God komt de mens tot zijn recht* (*Who is far, is close by – in the relationship with God, man finds his destiny*; in Dutch), Kok, Kampen, 2005; ISBN 90 435 1095 5; p.16-17.

He also observes that in the encounter with God as described here, Moses changed from principal figure (potential leader of *his* people) into servant, while God became the Principal Figure (Moses called to serve God's people). See: Wim Rietkerk, **"Hier ben ik" – de sleutel tot vernieuwing**  ("Here I am" – the key to renewal', in Dutch), l'Abri, Lev 11-3, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> K.J. Cronin, **'The Name of God as revealed in Exodus 3:14 – An explanation of its meaning'**, web-document. This document contains an extensive historical overview of the various opinions and visions with regard to the meanings of both *'Ehyeh* and **אֱיִיָּהּ**.

This underlines the coherence or unity with the 'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh that we looked at above and with God's promise "I will be with you!"<sup>24</sup>

Related to this is an old Jewish vision (a.o. Rashi – Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>25</sup>) that gives the meaning: 'He will always be there'. Coherent with this, people have recognized in The Name **אֵיִךְ** also a blend or contraction of three forms of the active verb **אֵיִךְ** / **הָיָה** *hayah* or its older form: **אֵיִךְ** / **הָוָה** *hawah* (see above); those three forms are: **הָיָה** *Hayah* – **He was there**, **הָוָה** *Howeh* – **He is there**, and **אֵיִךְ** *Yeehyeh* – **He will be there**, though the opinions about this explanation are not unanimous.<sup>26</sup>

*Strong's dictionary* translates (Strong numbers 3068 and 3069): 'The Self-existent or Eternal'.

Regarding its meaning, the wonderful Name has been associated also with the causative *hiph'il* form of the above-mentioned verbs, and thus with God as Creator: 'He Who brings into being' or 'He Who gives life' (in relationship with the *hiph'il* imperfect of e.g. **אֵיִךְ** / **הָוָה**). This is in line with what the old Semitic form of the glorious Name depicts. In the old Semitic script<sup>27</sup> of the second millennium BC the glorious Name is written like this:

אֵיִךְ

The three symbols on the left together form the verb *hawah* - to live, to be, to breathe – consisting significantly of two figures kneeling in wonder and/or worship or celebrating joyfully with their hands raised, connected by a tent pin – the symbol for security and bonding, signifying that life is to be enjoyed in secure attachment with others (the symbol of the tent pin, in between the people, reminds me also of how the God of Israel came to live *in between* His people, in the Tabernacle and even more Personally in Jesus – cf. John 1: 14; Revelation 21:3). The most right (first) symbol is a *giving hand*; so the glorious Name signifies that **אֵיִךְ** is the God Who *hands* us that 'being', that life, in joyful adoration and

<sup>24</sup> At p.26 of his thesis *The mysterious Name of Y.H.W.H.*, see note 4, Max Reisel says that the 'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh represents the etymology of The Name.

Parallel to this the American theologian John Piper also motivates the relationship of **אֵיִךְ** with the verb *hayah* – to be there (specially the form 'Ehyeh – I am there) – from the context of Exodus 3: 13-15; see [his sermon 'I AM WHO I AM'](#), about God's Names **אֵיִךְ** and **I AM**.

See also Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, [Yahweh – The Divine Name in the Bible](#) (note 4), and his extensive analysis of The Name; a.o. in Chapter IV - *The God of Moses* (p.46-62), specifically on the basis of the Exodus story.

<sup>25</sup> See e.g. the references in the previous two notes (Cronin, Reisel and Parke-Taylor) for more details.

<sup>26</sup> This vision is fully supported a.o. by the [Jewish Encyclopedia](#). I encountered this insight at first in *Hebreeuws 'in Zes dagen'* (Hebrew 'in Six days'; in Dutch) by Studyhouse *Reshiet*, Oriënt Press, Rotterdam, 2008; ISBN 978-90-804565-3-2; p.120 and at [one of the Dutch pages, about God Himself](#), of the [Hebreeuwse Volksschool](#) (Hebrew People's School; a Dutch-Israeli initiative, publishing Hebrew studies of the Bible, in Dutch). (Precise wording, presentation and transliteration to the common form in English as given here, fully mine.) For completeness sake I mention that [The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia](#) does not agree and writes: "It is evident from the interpretative passages (Ex 3; 6) that the form is the fut. of the simple stem (Qal) and not future of the causative (Hiph'il) stem in the sense "giver of life" – an idea not borne out by any of the occurrences of the word. *The fanciful theory that the word is a combination of the future, present and perfect tenses of the verb, signifying "the One who will be, is, and was," is not to be taken seriously* (Stier, etc., in Oehler's Old Testament Theology, ...)." (Italics added). Regarding this comment, I do not agree with the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Quoting one of the reviewers of this study: "Our heavenly Abba is able to build in many more layers of meaning [and more 'connections'] than we can dissect..."

<sup>27</sup> The old (West-)Semitic script is the oldest 'Hebrew' script, of the time before 1000 BC; that is: up to the time of king David; this script formed the transition from an originally pictographic/ideographic script where the signs had an obvious meaning of their own, to the later Paleo-Hebrew alphabet script of 1000 to 600 BC.. More information on this old Biblical script in: André H. Roosma, [The Written Language of Abraham, Moses and David – A study of the pictographic roots and basic notions in the underlying fabric of the earliest Biblical script](#) , *Hallelu-YaH!* Draft Research Report (a living web-document on the website [www.Hallelu-YaH.nl](http://www.Hallelu-YaH.nl)), 1<sup>st</sup> English version: 18 April 2011 (1<sup>st</sup> Dutch original: January 2011).

See also: André H. Roosma, [Life, security and belonging in joyful adoration, from the hand of God – A discovery on the Biblical Name of God in old Semitic](#), *Hallelu-YaH!* web-article, Jan. 2011.

secure attachment. He *has a hand* in it; He *takes action* to let us *live* that way in joyful fellowship with Himself and each other.<sup>28</sup>

Walton<sup>29</sup> sees reason for the *hiph'il* form as well and states: "The name Yahweh would ... designate "a God who creates" in the sense of "a God who enters a relationship." This could be a rather generic epithet for a personal god, but it could also lay the foundation for the key concept of a covenant God, for this engendering [the *hiph'il* form of *hawah*, AHR] becomes synonymous with choice (= election). We might recall that besides naming and giving a function, creating often involves separating – so here Israel is separated out, given a function (Exodus 19:5-6), and in that way Yahweh is causing them to exist.

In this sense Yahweh was not presented as a name they had never heard of before, but as a name representing a function that they had not as yet experienced. The god Yahweh who had made promises of land to their forefather was now ready to function in that implied capacity – he was forming a relationship with the family of Abraham (Exod. 19:3-6; Lev. 26:12) and was electing them as a people to populate the land."

The *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Vol.5 (by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; p.500, article *YHWH* by Freedman) says that the *qal en hiph'il* forms could both be applicable but considers the *hiph'il* more probable ("... The weight of the evidence is on the latter").

Personally, I see the two forms *both* as contained in the Biblical narrative. They are 'as one', for it is through  $\text{אֱלֹהִים}$  being with us, that He gives us life indeed. His graceful presence *is* our life. In Him we exist, as Paul asserted as well. One of the meanings of the old verb  $\text{אָוַח}$  *hawah* is 'to breath'. By His breath - *neshamah* -, God gave us physical life and by His spiritual breath - the *Ruach* - He made us alive spiritually.

The [\*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia\*](#) gives another vision and says (under the heading: 'God, Names of'; emphasis added): "(The Name) does not express causation [as referring to: *creating into being*; Ed.], nor existence in a metaphysical sense, but *the covenant promise of the Divine presence*, both at the immediate time and in the Messianic age of the future. ... (Yahweh) is the personal name of God, as distinguished from such generic or essential names as 'El, 'Elohim, Shadday, etc. *Characteristic of the Old Testament is its insistence on the possible knowledge of God as a person; and Yahweh is His name as a person.* The American Standard Revised Version quite correctly adopts the transliteration "Yahweh" to emphasize its significance and purpose as a personal name of God revealed."

The *Concise Bible Dictionary* gives under the heading: *Jehovah*: "This is a name of relationship with men, especially with Israel, taken by God in time. It is derived from *havah*, 'to exist,' and may be expanded into '**who is, who was, and is to come.**' God thus reveals Himself in time as the ever-existing One: that is, in Himself eternally, He is always the same: cf. Heb. 1:12. The above 'relationship' may be seen in the change from Elohim, the Creator, in Gen. 1., to Jehovah Elohim in chap. 2., when man was brought into relationship with God. Again in Gen. 7:16 Elohim ordered Noah to make the ark but Jehovah shut him in. Unfortunately the name Jehovah is seldom employed in the A.V. It is generally represented by LORD (sometimes GOD) printed in small capitals.<sup>30</sup> There is a contraction of Jehovah into *Jah*, also translated in the A.V. by LORD, except in Ps. 68:4, where Israel is exhorted to sing unto God, and "extol him by his name JAH." *Jah* signifies the absolute supremacy of the self-existing One; whereas *Jehovah* was the name made known to Israel, and on which they could count. "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM," Ex. 3:14, where the word is *Ehyeh*, which is from the same root as *Jehovah*, the Eternal existing One; He that was, and is, and the coming One." (emphasis added).

The late Dutch theologian F.L. Koopmans thought, after a broad analysis, to be able to "state, that

<sup>28</sup> Note that in Arabian (often still a little closer to the original West-Semitic language) the prefix *ya-* with a verb root often represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular imperfect *Qal/Pa'al/ fa'ala* – here: He lives / will live, or: He is there / will be there; in Hebrew often / also for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular imperfect *Hiph'il* – He makes to live / will make to live. Both are scientifically defensible.

<sup>29</sup> John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, Baker USA, 2006 / IVP UK, 2007; ISBN: 978 08010 2750 5 / 978 18447 4176 2, p.92-93; see also D.N. Freedman, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* 1:243.

<sup>30</sup> In four places the A.V. has preserved the name *Jehovah*, namely, Ex. 6:3; Ps 83:18; Isa. 12:2; 26:4.

the name **YHWH** means: "He, Who exists in and out of Himself and Who lives and reveals Himself". And He reveals Himself to His crown-creation, man. From this we conclude then, that the name **YHWH** is connected to **the relationship between God and man**. This name only appears in the Bible, **when man is illustrated in his relationship to God and creation.**" (my translation; emphasis from the original; a document about the Names of God that once was on the Internet).

Martin Buber denotes also, in line with Talmudic teaching, that in **אֲנֹכִי** the **presence** of God with His people is emphasized. He says: "YHVH is 'He who will be present' or 'He who is here,' he who is present here; not merely some time and some where but in every now and in every here. Now the name expresses his character and assures the faithful of the richly protective presence of their Lord."<sup>31</sup>

An additional insight is given by the Greek replacement of **אֲנֹכִי**, in line with the Hebrew replacement *Adonai*, as provided in the New Testament and in newer versions of the Septuagint: *Κυριος* – *Kurios*, again: 'Lord' in English, though 'The Supreme Authority', or: 'The Highest' would currently be better translations, to my insight. In those days a *Kurios* was, humanly speaking, a *high authority*; the word was applied both to people of high position – a.o. emperor/king Ceasar – and gods. God **אֲנֹכִי** is **The Supreme Authority** indeed!

### **אֲנֹכִי: the God of the Covenant**

The story of God's dealings with Moses and Israel continues after the text we began with. A few chapters further into the book of Exodus (6: 2-8) we read:

2 And God said to Moses, "**I am אֲנֹכִי**. 3 **I appeared** to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as **God Almighty**, but by<sup>32</sup> **My Name אֲנֹכִי** I did not make Myself known to them. 4 **I also established My covenant with them**, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as sojourners. 5 Moreover **I have heard** the groaning of the people of Israel whom the Egyptians hold in bondage and I have remembered My covenant. 6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, '**I am אֲנֹכִי**, and **I will bring you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and **I will deliver you** from their bondage, and **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment, 7 and I will take you for My people, and I will be your God; and **you shall know that I am אֲנֹכִי your God, Who has brought you out** from under the burdens of the Egyptians. 8 And **I will bring you**

<sup>31</sup> Source: Martin Buber, *Moses*, (see note 4), p.53.

Parke-Taylor (see note 4; p.99) adds to Buber's observations: "From the translation "I am that I am," Buber moved to "I am there as I am there," and finally to "I shall be there as I who will always be there." This is the reality of the "being" of YHWH; the promise of his unailing presence with his people. **God belongs not so much to the realm of ideas as to the realm of relationships.**"

<sup>32</sup> The translation comes a little short here. In stead of 'by' one can read here: "with the most extensive meaning of". In Genesis we see that the Name **אֲנֹכִי** itself was actually known to the patriarchs, but here God shows more of the meaning of His Name, such that people really come to *know* Him (more *experientially* revealed than in the awareness of the patriarchs). For a more thorough analysis, see: Robert Dick Wilson, '[Critical Note on Exodus VI. 3](#)', *Princeton Theological Review*, Vol.22, 1924, p.108-119; Wilson says that instead of 'by' here one can read: "by the character of", or even rephrase the sentence as a question. In Genesis we see that The Name **אֲנֹכִי** in Itself was well known to the patriarchs, but here, God shows more of the meaning behind His Name. A similar reasoning is given by: Shawn D. Glisson, '[Exodus 6:3 in Pentateuchal Criticism](#)', *Restoration Quarterly* 28 (3); 1985/86, p.135-43. Glisson gives a very good analysis of what the Hebrew notion of *knowing אֲנֹכִי* involves; it was not only knowing that His Name was **אֲנֹכִי**, but also to have the *experience* that He was/is **אֲנֹכִי**: the God Who is there and Who fulfills His promises. In and by the events in Exodus the people of Israel did get that experience.

To a similar conclusion came Max Reisel in his thesis (see note 4). At page 27-31, he explains that 'known' (Hebrew: יָדָע - yada') here had better be translated 'acknowledged'. So, the sentence can better be translated as: "By Abraham, Isaac and Jacob I was seen as El Shaddai, but as for My Y.H.W.H.-character I was not acknowledged by them." Reisel also points out that **אֲנֹכִי** was for the patriarchs a God of (then still unfulfilled) promises, and for Israel now the God Who actively fulfilled and realized these promises. An alternative, Jewish view is given in: Jeffrey M. Cohen, 'How God introduced Himself to the Patriarchs,' *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, vol. xxxvii:2 (146), April-June, p. 118-120. See also the reference in note 20. For still another extensive treatment see also: John J. Davis, '[The Patriarchs' Knowledge of Jehovah](#)', *Grace Theological Journal* 4.1, 1963 p.29-43.

into the land which **I swore to give** to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; **I will give it to you** for a possession. **I am** **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים**.”

This text couples the Name **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים** to the renewed covenant that God set up with His people Israel when He delivered them and led them out of Egypt (literally: *'Eretz Mitzraim* – the land of oppression).<sup>33</sup> God Himself says His proper Name is **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים**. Note that the fourfold **'I am אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים'** can also (better?) be translated: **'אֲנִי, אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים'** and coupled to the next or previous sentence (e.g. in the first instance: **"אֲנִי, אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים, I appeared to Abraham ..."**).

Again some chapters further (9: 13-16):

**13** Then **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים** said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים**, the God of the Hebrews, "Let My people go, that they may serve Me. **14** For this time I will send all My plagues upon your heart, and upon your servants and your people, that you may know that there is none like Me in all the earth. **15** For by now I could have put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth; **16** but **for this purpose have I let you live**, to show you My power, so that **My Name may be declared throughout all the earth. ...**

God had let Pharaoh live, and Israel wait a while, such that **God's glorious Name** would be *declared* (preached, with awe) throughout all the earth (cf. Romans 9: 17; 1 Kings 10: 1) – which indeed happened! Whole nations had a deep respect for Israel's God and spoke with great reverence about their God, **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים**! The people of Israel had a missionary calling, like the Korachites clearly knew:

I will cause **Your Name** to be celebrated in all generations;  
therefore the peoples will praise You for ever and ever.

Psalm 45: 18

By the way: again, in this, I see no reason to assume that God did not want us to know or use His Name, on the contrary!

## **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים: the Always Present and most gracious God**

Later (in Exodus 33: 12 – 34: 11), we see Moses again talking with God – things that only underline what I observed earlier: the importance of God's holy Name signifying His presence with His people. Specially notable is the fact that God Himself proclaims His wonderful Name **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים** in 34: 6-7, clearly stressing His great mercy and faithfulness with His people, and seeking (to redeem) the (consequences and repetition of) sins of parents in their children and (grand)children. (In this piece of text, I translated *Adonai* with **my Highest** instead of *Lord*, for further clarity.)

**12** Moses said to **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים**, "See, Thou sayest to me, 'Bring up this people'; but Thou hast not let me know whom Thou wilt send with me. Yet Thou hast said, **'I know you by name**, and you have also found favor in My sight.' **13** Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, show me now Thy ways, that I may know Thee and find favor in Thy sight. Consider too that this nation is Thy people." **14** And He said, **"My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."** **15** And he said to Him, "If Thy presence will not go with me, do not carry us up from here. **16** For how shall it be known that I have found favor in Thy sight, I and Thy people? **Is it not in Thy going with us, so that we are distinct, I and Thy people, from all other people that are upon the face of the earth?"** **17** And **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים** said to Moses, "This very thing that you have spoken I will do; for you have found favor in My sight, and **I know you by name.**" **18** Moses said, "I pray Thee, show me Thy glory." **19** And He said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you **My Name 'אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים'**; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. **20** But," He said, "you cannot see My face; for man shall not see Me and live." **21** And **אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים** said, "Behold, there is a

<sup>33</sup> Max Reisel couples in his thesis (see note 4) the greatness of God in the *'Ehyeh 'asher 'Ehyeh* clearly to God's willingness to faithfully fulfill His promises to His people, where he says at p.18: "I am convinced that the formula *'EHYEH ašer EHYEH'* should be explained *both* statically and dynamically. On the one hand the Revelation of the absolute and external Existence of God must be considered the *condition-sine-qua-non* of the Revelation of His continuous Readiness to fulfil His Promises. ..." This observation is also cited in Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh – The Divine Name in the Bible* (note 4), p.54.

place by Me where you shall stand upon the rock; <sup>22</sup> and while My glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand until I have passed by; <sup>23</sup> then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.”

**34:** <sup>1</sup> **אֵלֹהִים** said to Moses, “Cut two tables of stone like the first; and I will write upon the tables the words that were on the first tables, which you broke. <sup>2</sup> Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to Me on the top of the mountain. <sup>3</sup> No man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let no flocks or herds feed before that mountain.” <sup>4</sup> So Moses cut two tables of stone like the first; and he rose early in the morning and went up on Mount Sinai, as **אֵלֹהִים** had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. <sup>5</sup> And **אֵלֹהִים** descended in the cloud and **stood with him there**, and **proclaimed the Name of אֵלֹהִים**. <sup>6</sup> **אֵלֹהִים** passed before him, and **אֵלֹהִים** proclaimed, “**אֵלֹהִים, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, Who, while pronouncing guiltless, will not pronounce guiltless but reveal more insight into the iniquity of the fathers among the children and the children’s children, into the third and the fourth generation.**”<sup>34</sup> <sup>8</sup> And Moses made haste to bow his head toward the earth, and worshiped. <sup>9</sup> And he said, “If now I have found favor in Thy sight, o **my Highest, let my Highest, I pray Thee, go in the midst of us**, although it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for Thy inheritance.” <sup>10</sup> And He said, “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been wrought in all the earth or in any nation; and **all the people among whom you are shall see the work of אֵלֹהִים**; for it is a terrible thing that I will do with/for you. <sup>11</sup> Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. ...”

Verse 6 is very revealing. God **אֵלֹהִים** is not so distant and holy that we may not pronounce His holy Name, no, He himself declares His great name with emphasis, and associates His wonderful Name with His character of being merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness... That is – above all – characteristic for our God **אֵלֹהִים**! Even in His greatness and holiness, He desires to come close to us. He gave His Son when we were still enemies (Romans 5: 8-10). Would a glorious Name of the great God Who comes so close be ‘unspeakable’ if He Himself calls us to make His Name known everywhere?

Compare what **אֵלֹהִים** Himself says later via the prophet Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah 9: 23-24):

Thus says **אֵלֹהִים**: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he has understanding and **knows Me, that I am אֵלֹהִים** Who practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these I delight, says **אֵלֹהִים**."

The greatest riches to be proud of is to know **אֵלֹהִים by His Name** as a God Who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness. God delights in such people!

<sup>34</sup> These words have often been ill translated and not well understood, creating a contradiction with the words before. First there is the Hebrew form: ‘pronouncing guiltless He will not pronounce guiltless’, which has erroneously been seen as an enforced: ‘He will certainly not pronounce guiltless!’ Then there is the meaning of the Hebrew word *paqad*, according to the constituting original signs (old Semitic pictograms): ‘a cover or door that is blown up’ or ‘a lamp that is blown to give more light’ – here translated as ‘to reveal more insight into’. As pastoral worker I know that all kind of iniquity is easily transferred from parents to children. God therefore is alert to this dynamic; not to punish iniquity of parents in children, but to reveal and stop these cycles. For more detail, see: André H. Roosma, ‘[What God YaHUaH says about Himself – the Message of Exodus 34: 6-7](#)’, *Hallelu-YaH!* web-article, Jan. 2012.

## אֱלֹהִים: the God Who calls

Already with Abraham and the other patriarchs we saw that God called them. Here, in the story of Moses, אֱלֹהִים reveals Himself even more clearly as the God Who calls. Here, we find it written *seven times* that אֱלֹהִים calls; see the following verses: Exodus 3: 4; 19: 3; 19: 20; 24: 16; 33: 19; 34: 5-6; and Leviticus 1: 1.<sup>35</sup> Striking in these passages, and later also with Samuel, Isaiah, and others where there is mention of אֱלֹהִים calling, is that God is explicitly mentioned by His glorious Name. It is precisely and pre-eminently the God with the lovely Name אֱלֹהִים, Who takes the initiative towards man, and calls him or speaks to him. In אֱלֹהִים's calling man there is also a summoning; a summoning to become partaker and partner in His vision and in His wonderful plan of redemption. Also in later situations where we observe אֱלֹהִים calling men and women, this is always the case.

## אֱלֹהִים: the God Who speaks

אֱלֹהִים is not only a God Who calls people, He is a God Who regularly speaks with His people. Recently (I add this section in Jan. 2011) I restored the glorious Name of God in an entire Bible translation (the old Dutch StatenVertaling – comparable to the English KJV – in the Bible study program *the Word*). That means that in a few weeks time I reviewed all the texts in which the lovely Name appears almost 7000 times. What stood out to me was that such an enormous great number of those (I estimate more than 1400 times, or 1/5 of the times His Name is mentioned) deal with אֱלֹהִים **speaking** (אֱלֹהִים said, אֱלֹהִים spoke, אֱלֹהִים says, אֱלֹהִים has spoken, etc.). He reveals His intentions. He tells how much He cares for His people, He tells what He likes, He provides directions for living healthily – spiritually, emotionally and relationally/socially.

## The *Shema'* – the central confession of Israel

Where there is a God Who speaks, there must be people who listen. In the covenant between אֱלֹהִים and Israel, the *Shema'* – the nucleus of the confession of Israel – played an most important role. Note that the words *Shema'* and *Shem* = Name are closely related! So, by its name, the *Shema'* reminds us already of the glorious Name! We find the *Shema'* in Deuteronomy 6: 4, and it starts as follows:<sup>36</sup>

שמע ישראל יהוה אחד: יהוה אחד  
„*Shema' Yishraël, YaHUaH Elohainu, YaHUaH 'echad!*”  
„Hear, o Israel, אֱלֹהִים our God, אֱלֹהִים is one!”

In fact all the confession of Israel revolves around the glorious Name. Here it is confessed that אֱלֹהִים is *'echad* – there is only one of His Kind, and He is a God 'in one piece', as we say in Dutch –, that is: undivided. So, when His Name אֱלֹהִים says that He will be there, than He *will* indeed be there. The origin of the word *'echad* also signifies that He is the One Who brings and keeps all and everybody together. Note that the glorious Name of אֱלֹהִים appears twice: at the testimony of two a case will be fixed and decided. The first time the glorious Name is followed by *'Elohainu* - first person possessive plural of *'Eloha* or *'Elah*. The plural signifies the fact that אֱלֹהִים in all His plurality, greatness and the abundance of His qualities cannot be described; we need a kind of majestic plural form to come close. And the first person form shows that He comes close to us, not to the individual only, but to His community, His multitudes. The second time, the glorious Name is followed by *'echad*, which signifies great unity, harmony and togetherness in all this diversity.

When we lay Psalm 86: 11 next to this, our picture becomes even more clear:

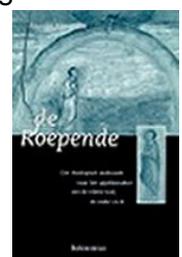
„Teach me, אֱלֹהִים, Thy way, that I may walk in Your truth;  
**unify** my heart to fear **Your Name.**”

Psalm 86: 11

The word *unify* here is the translation of: יָחֵד *yachéd*, from the same root as *'echad*. Our hearts must come in line with אֱלֹהִים and become *one*, undivided as well. Undivided with regard to what?

<sup>35</sup> I encountered this via the Thesis by dr A. Ravestein: [De Roepende - Een theologisch onderzoek naar het appèl karakter van de relatie God, de ander en ik](#) (*The One Who Calls – A theological enquiry into the element of appeal in the relationship God, the other and oneself*, in Dutch), University of Utrecht / Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer NL, June 1999.

<sup>36</sup> See also: [‘The \*Shema'\* – the First Testament declaration of faith, Part \(1\)’,](#) and following parts, [Hallelu-YaH!](#) web-articles, 18 Febr. 2012. About the origin of *'echad* some explanation is given in [Part 3](#).



With regard to revering the **Name of** **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, that is: for **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** and His promise: **“I am with you!”** Then we will live in a totally different way. Then we will live from His presence; from Him. In that light the **Shema** becomes indeed a first step to love **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** and each other, as the next verse denotes (Deuteronomy 6: 5; I translate as literal as possible from the Hebrew; see also Marc 12: 29):

You will love **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** your God with your whole heart, with your whole breath (or: soul; Hebrew: שֵׁנִי) and with your whole enthusiasm (devotion and fire; Hebrew: דָּאָר).

Out of myself I am not able to do that. But when I allow **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** to work it in me, when I attune myself in dependence and with joy and wonder onto Him, *then* it will succeed; perhaps here and now still somewhat limited, but to the full upon His full revelation, at the end of time.

### Again the oft repeated: **“I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ, your God!”** in Leviticus

De clause **“I (am) אֱלֹהֵינוּ, your God!”** or **“I (am) אֱלֹהֵינוּ.”** (אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲנִי – ‘ani אֱלֹהֵינוּ) we encounter very often in the Bible, as we saw earlier already. In particular in the book of Leviticus it is recorded very frequently:

18: 1 And **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** spoke to Mosheh, saying, 2 “Speak to the children of Yisra’el, and say to them, **‘I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God!’** 3 ‘Do not do as they do in the land of Mitsrayim (Egypt), where you dwelt. And do not do as they do in the land of Kenaan (Canaan), where I am bringing you, and do not walk in their laws. 4 ‘Do My right-rulings and guard My laws, to walk in them. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God!’** Leviticus 18: 1-4.

30 ‘And you shall guard My Charge, so as not to do any of these abominable practices which were done before you, so as not to defile yourselves by them. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God!’** ”

19: 1 And **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** spoke to Mosheh, saying, 2 “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Yisra’el, and say to them, ‘Be holy, for **I אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God am holy.** 3 ‘Each one of you should fear his mother and his father, and guard My sabbaths. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God!** 4 ‘Do not turn to idols, and do not make for yourselves moulded gods. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God!’** Leviticus 18: 30 - 19: 4.

20: 24 ‘But I say to you, “You are going to possess their land, and I Myself give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God,** Who has separated you from the peoples.” Leviticus 20: 24.

26: 44 ‘And yet for all this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I shall not reject them, nor shall I loathe them so as to destroy them and break My covenant with them. For **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ their God.**’ 45 ‘Then I shall remember for their sake the covenant of the ancestors whom I brought out of the land of Mitsrayim (Egypt) before the eyes of the nations to be their God. **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ.**’ ” Leviticus 26: 44-45.

15: 37 And **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** spoke to Mosheh, saying, 38 “Speak to the children of Yisra’el, and you shall say to them to make tzitziyot (fringes) on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue cord in the tzitzit (fringe) of the corners. 39 “And it shall be to you for a tzitzit (fringe), and you shall see it, and shall remember all the commands of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** and shall do them, and not search after your own heart and your own eyes after which you went whoring, 40 so that you remember, and shall do all My commands, and be holy unto your God. 41 **“I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God,** Who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim (Egypt), **to be your God. I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God.”**

Numbers 15: 37-41.

I have wondered: **What is the reason, that such a clause is connected to each assignment given here to the people of Israel?** That clause **“I (am) אֱלֹהֵינוּ”** appears a stunning 52 times in Leviticus (7x7 + 3 times; especially in chapter 19; there alone already 15 times = 7+7 + 1 or 12 + 3) seems to significant to be just accidental, so it is important, to find an answer to this question.

The answer to this question is to be found again in the very meaning of the glorious Name **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**. Firstly, the glorious Name stands for God’s Character. That is the basis of the *Torah* (תּוֹרָה). Therefore the instruction in Leviticus 18 begins with **“I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ, your God!”**. God **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** Himself stands at the base. The instructions given follow from His Personality; they bring the heart and the behavior of the people in line with the Character of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, their God. **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**’s Own holiness and purity, for example, form the basis for all holiness and purity in His people.

Secondly, the wonderful Name stands for **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** being present. Only by the fact that He is with

them and that He supports and empowers His people, they will be able to follow the directions given in the *Torah*. This is a very important aspect, severely neglected by the Pharisees at the time of Jesus and Jewish rabbi's in general, giving the *Torah* such a legalistic sound among many Christians – completely unjustified, as it appears here. Not without good reason did Jesus rage against this erosion of the *Torah*. It was not the effort of Israel that made them different or set apart, it was the fact that **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** had set them apart from the other nations ('made holy' for or unto Himself), and had committed Himself to them in a covenantal relationship of love, gracious mercy and faithfulness.

‘And do not defile the land which you inhabit, **in the midst of which I dwell**, for **I, אֱלֹהֵינוּ, am dwelling in the midst of the children of Yisra'el.**’ ” Numbers 35: 34.

The Identity, the character and the presence of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** with His people were, are and will remain the basis of the *Torah* and of the whole Bible. When we would take out the presence of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** (e.g. by concealing His precious Name) in fact nothing remains of It... To see the *Torah* or the Bible as a collection of life-instructions or a moral code of law, separate from the glorious Identity and graceful presence of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** as revealed in His glorious Name, is absolutely *not* an option.

Some other remarkable passages in which the clause: “*I (am) אֱלֹהֵינוּ*” appears, are the following:

“**I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ, that is My Name**, and My glory I do not give to another, nor My praise to graven images. Yesha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 42: 8.

For **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ thy God**, the Holy One of Israel, thy **Saviour**; (**מוֹשִׁיָּע** - *Moshiakh*, of the same root as *Yeshu'ah*); YeshaYahu [Isaiah] 43: 3; (cf. 43: 11; 44: 24).

Thus said **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, thy redeemer, The Holy One of Israel, **‘I [am] אֱלֹהֵינוּ thy God**, teaching thee to profit, causing thee to tread in the way thou goest. Yesha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 48: 17.

and say unto them, ‘Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: “In the day when I chose Israel, and swore to the seed of the house of Jacob, making Myself known to them in the land of Egypt, when I swore unto them, saying, **I am אֱלֹהֵינוּ your God**; ...” ’ Jechezqel (Ezechiël) 20: 5.

Replacing God's wonderful Name **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** by some title that also is or has ever been used for others and/or for graven images (idols), is to rob Him of His honor and praise!

And even in the First Testament it was already obvious, that Israel could not obtain salvation in their own strength, but they, too, needed **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** as their Redeemer (**מוֹשִׁיָּע** - your *Moshi'a*, of the same root as *Yeshu'a*), and that **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** was more than willing to be that Redeemer to them, and wanted to instruct, lead and bless them from His Identity and presence with them.

### **אֱלֹהֵינוּ at the time of the Judges; again: “I am with you!”**

A clear passage in which the wonderful Name of God appears a lot, is about the time when the people of Israel is suppressed by the Midianites. Then too, **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is with them, supporting them:

11 Now the angel of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** came and sat under the oak at Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press, to hide it from the Midianites. 12 And the angel of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** appeared to him and said to him, “**אֱלֹהֵינוּ is with you**, you mighty man of valor!” 13 And Gideon said to him, “Oh, my Lord, if **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all His wonderful deeds which our fathers recounted to us, saying, ‘Did not **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** bring us up from Egypt?’ But **now אֱלֹהֵינוּ has cast us off**, and given us into the hand of Midian.” 14 And **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** turned to him and said, “Go in this might of yours and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian; **do not I send you?**” 15 And he said to him, “Oh, my Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.” 16 And **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** said to him, “**Because I will be with you**, you shall smite the Midianites as one man.” Judges 6: 11-16.

What stands out here, is that Gideon thinks, on the basis of the problematical circumstances, that God **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** has left them. The memories of the old stories about **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**'s acting and redeeming were weakened and had been pushed to the background. But **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** does not leave it there. It is His initiative, to rescue His people once again. He chooses one of the lowest men to be His servant and to raise up in His Name (with His presence) and to liberate the people again from their oppressors.

## Stage three. The Kingdom Israel

### 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏: the God Who redeems and protects

The foundation of the Kingdom of Israel initiated a new stage in the circulation of God's wonderful Name. This was also a new phase of preparation to the coming of the Great King: **Yeshu'ah!**, born from the royal tribe **Yehudah**, where David as 'friend of God' had been His predecessor as a kind of 'pointer'.

One of the most striking stories about the wonderful Name of God, in relation to His promise "*I am with you!*", I consider the story where the Philistine Goliath challenges the army of Israel, the battle-array of the living God, in a gruesome way. David cannot stand that. He knows God 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 intimately, and it grieves him that God's wonderful Name is slandered. We read about this in 1 Samuel 17. I start in verse 32, where Saul hears about David has him called to himself:

32 And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." 33 And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." 34 But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, 35 I went after him and smote him and delivered it out of his mouth; and if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him and killed him. 36 Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, **seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.**" 37 And David said, "𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 Who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, **will deliver me** from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "**Go, and 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 be with you!**"

Here we see a very important principle in action. David knew that God 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 was with him. He knew that 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 had saved him in the past and had given him victory over lions and bears (see also: Psalm 34: 5, 7-9, 16, 18-20; 35: 10). He believed on the basis of these build-up experiences with 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏, that 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 would give him victory now again. Hearing that, even Saul exceeds himself spiritually, and recognizes (remembers!) that it is 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏' s character to be with David in this situation (𐤓𐤌𐤏 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤏 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 – **YHWH / IAUA** *yihyeh 'immakh*). We recognize this in the sequel as well:

David ... 40 ... took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag or wallet; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine. 41 And the Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42 And when the Philistine looked, and saw David, he disdained him; for he was but a youth, ruddy and comely in appearance. 43 And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And **the Philistine cursed David by his gods.** 44 The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." 45 Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin; but I come to you **in the Name of 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏** of multitudes, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 This day 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 **will deliver you into my hand**, and I will strike you down, and cut off your head; and I will give the dead bodies of the multitudes of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth; **that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,** 47 and **that all this assembly may know that 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 saves not with sword and spear; for the battle is 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏' s and He will give you into our hand.**"

In modern management Dutch we would say: David switches up, or hands it over (though staying involved), to a higher level. He says, this is not a battle between you, Goliath, and me. This is a battle of my God 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏 against your idols and that battle is settled -gloriously- in advance! What follows is well known. Goliath tumbles down and the Philistines suffer a colossal defeat.

And again **the most honorable Name travels the earth over**, from city to city, from nation to nation: "Did you hear, what 𐤑𐤏𐤑𐤏, that God of the Israelites, did? Some Philistine giant had the crazy nerve to defy Him and as a result he was slaughtered – even by a shepherd boy with a sling –

and they had to make a fast retreat and suffered gigantic losses!” “Wow, what an awesome God is He!”

Later, when David has become king and has retrieved the Ark of the Covenant under enthusiastic singing and dancing to Jerusalem, he leads the Levites-singers in a song that starts with the following significant words (1 Chronicles 16: 8-10; cf Psalm 105):

O give thanks to **יְהוָה**, **call on His Name**, make known His deeds among the peoples!  
Sing to Him, sing praises to Him, tell of all His wonderful works!  
Glory in **the Name of His holiness**; let the hearts of those who seek **יְהוָה** rejoice! ...

And a little further (verse 28-29a) we read:

Ascribe to **יְהוָה**, **ye families of peoples**, Ascribe to **יְהוָה** glory and strength.  
Ascribe to **יְהוָה** **the glory of His Name** ...

It is clear that David's aim was that **יְהוָה**'s lovely and magnificent Name would be called and praised and worshipped by all peoples.

The greatness and international worship-worthiness of **יְהוָה** determines everything in David's life, as e.g. the immense preparations he makes for the building of the Temple for **יְהוָה**:

For David said, ... the house that is to be built for **יְהוָה** must be **exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands**; I will therefore make preparation for it.”

So David provided materials in great quantity before his death. ... from 1 Chronicles 22: 5

Solomon, the son of David, clearly was educated in this atmosphere. For him as well, the goal is that all peoples will get to know the great Name of **יְהוָה** and revere Him above all. At the consecration of the temple, which he had build exclusively *for the Name* of **יְהוָה**, he prayed (see also 2 Chronicles 6: 26, 32-33; Psalm 45: 18):

<sup>41</sup> “Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of thy people Israel, comes from a far country for **Thy Name's** sake <sup>42</sup> (for **they shall hear of Thy great Name**, and Thy mighty hand, and of Thy outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, <sup>43</sup> hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to Thee; **in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy Name and fear Thee**, as do thy people Israel, and that **they may know well** that this house which I have built is **called by Thy Name**.  
1 Kings 8: 41-43

And:

<sup>59</sup> “... Let these words of mine, wherewith I have made supplication before **יְהוָה**, be near to **יְהוָה** our God day and night, and may He maintain the cause of His servant, and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires; <sup>60</sup> **that all the peoples of the earth may know that יְהוָה is God; there is no other.** <sup>61</sup> **Let your heart therefore be wholly true to יְהוָה our God, walking in His statutes and keeping His commandments, as at this day.**”  
1 Kings 8: 59-61

Under Solomon the story about the glorious Name **יְהוָה** has reached such heights all over the world, that even from the far away Ethiopia (Sheba, says the Bible, probably this was Ethiopia though including Yemen, see 1 Kings 10 and 2 Chronicles 9) a mighty queen comes to have a look.

Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon **concerning the Name of יְהוָה**, she came, ...  
1 Kings 10: 1

From extra-Biblical sources we know that at her return to her home country, she erected a large temple for **יְהוָה**, modeled after the temple of **יְהוָה** that Solomon had build. And linguists or archeologists discovered that *accidentally* from that time on (roughly: the ninth century BC) Ethiopia adopted a Semitic tongue and script... And thousands of years later, there was still a community worshipping **יְהוָה** there.

## אֱלֹהִים: the God Who is involved and trustworthy present

Also in this phase we see the involved presence of God אֱלֹהִים. In the first book of Kings (1 Kings 9: 1-3) we read about a most interesting conversation between אֱלֹהִים and king Solomon. God connects **His wonderful Name to His eyes** (cf. His face in [the Aaronic Blessing](#)) and **His heart**. Both will be with His people, particularly in the Temple Solomon had just finished building. The implication is that He will look at them most tenderly, with great compassion beyond measure. Note the 'for ever' and 'for all time' – **He will be there**, faithfully and unchangingly:

1 When Solomon had finished building the house of אֱלֹהִים and the king's house and all that Solomon desired to build, 2 אֱלֹהִים appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. 3 And אֱלֹהִים said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put **My Name there for ever; My eyes and My heart will be there for all time.** ..."

Wonderful also is **Psalm 91**, where knowing God's significant Name is connected, all through the entire Psalm, to deliverance, intimacy, protection, long life, salvation and even honor. Note also, that in verse 9-10 by the Hebrew poetic form used (parallelism; repetition in other words) the wonderful Name 'אֱלֹהִים' is regarded more or less equivalent to 'the Most High':

1 He who dwells in the shelter of **the Most High**, who abides in the shadow of **the Almighty**, 2 will say to אֱלֹהִים, "My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust." 3 For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; 4 He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler. 5 You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, 6 nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noon-day. 7 A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you. 8 You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. 9 Because you have made אֱלֹהִים **your refuge, the Most High** your habitation, 10 no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent. 11 For He will give His angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways. 12 On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. 13 You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot. 14 "Because he cleaves to Me in love, **I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows My Name.** 15 When he calls to Me, **I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will rescue him and honor him.** 16 **With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation** (lit. *My Yeshu'ah*)."

Against the background of verse 16 it is very understandable what the old Simeon says when in his old age he has seen God's *salvation - Yeshu'ah* - as a baby (Luke 2: 30; note also verse 38: "the redemption..." - in Hebrew also *Yeshu'ah*).

God's lovely Name being connected to the notion that He is *actively* present, we see amongst others also clearly in Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 33: 2-3. That is a great basis to direct us to Him:

"Thus says אֱלֹהִים who made the earth, אֱלֹהִים who formed it to establish it – אֱלֹהִים **is his Name**: Call to Me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known. ..."

## The Jerusalem Temple as a house for the Name of אֱלֹהִים

The theme of the Temple in Jerusalem being built explicitly as a dwelling place for the glorious Name of אֱלֹהִים, is frequently showing up in the Biblical narrative. It begins in 2 Samuel 7: 13 with God's promise that David's son will build a house 'for His Name'. See further a.o. 1 Kings 3: 2; 5: 3-5; and 2 Kings 8: 29.

This confirms what I said earlier about the glorious Name representing אֱלֹהִים's presence among His people (cf 2 Samuel 7: 5;). The Temple was the place where אֱלֹהִים was indeed most vividly present with Israel. This theme is – amongst others – quite pervasive all through the books of Chronicles and the Psalms.

And there is more. The Temple was also the place of worship and bringing sacrifice, and the central

place for the great *Moedim* or festivals, instated by **יְהוָה**, where **יְהוָה**'s active presence with His people was celebrated with great enthusiasm and exuberant joy, as well as His faithfulness, deliverance and provision for His people.

In the Second Testament the Temple is used as a picture or metaphor for the believer's body. Those who are redeemed in *Yeshu'a ha Mashiach* are to be a place where the glorious Name of **יְהוָה**, and thereby His presence in the form of the Holy Spirit, can live and bear fruit, in joyful community with others as well. Where we neglect or ignore the glorious Name, we neglect and ignore the Life in the active presence of **יְהוָה**!

## **יְהוָה – the Source of ultimate joy and peace, whatever the circumstances**

In the book of Nehemiah (actually: Nechem-yah) I came across a most revealing passage, from the time of return after the first great exile. The temple is being rebuild, the Torah has been found again, and 'Ezra is reading Torah to the people. The people are overcome by feelings of intense sorrow and grief, as they see how they and their ancestors themselves were the cause of all their tragedy, as they had ignored God's own counsel that was meant for their welfare. Read with me:

5 And 'Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people); and when he opened it, all the people stood up: 6 and '**Ezra blessed יְהוָה**, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with the lifting up of their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped **יְהוָה** with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshu'a, and Bani, and Sherebyah, Yamin, 'Aqqub, Shabbetai, Hodiayah, Ma'aseyah, Qelita', 'Azaryah, Jozabad, Chanan, Pela'yah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the Torah: and the people stood in their place. 8 And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood the reading. 9 And Nechemyah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto **יְהוָה** your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the Torah. 10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye grieved; **for the joy of יְהוָה is your refuge**. 11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and **to make great mirth**, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. Nechemyah 8: 5-12

In the midst of their sorrow, the great joy of **יְהוָה** over their return was to be their refuge and source of joy, to be celebrated together. God made it clear what He said when declaring His great Name to Moses, in Exodus 34: 6, as a God of mercy, grace and steadfast love.

Also in the other prophets and in the Psalms we find an abundance of verses on the joy to be found with **יְהוָה**, by His presence, protection, blessing and redemption. See amongst others the following jewels of Hebrew poetry about God and His lovely Name:

But let all who take refuge in Thee rejoice,  
let them ever sing for joy; and do Thou defend them,  
that those who love **Thy Name** may exult in Thee. Psalm 5: 11

**יְהוָה** is my chosen portion and my cup; Thou holdest my lot.  
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.  
I bless **יְהוָה** Who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

**I keep יְהוָה always before me;**

**because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.**

Therefore **my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices**; my body also dwells secure.

For Thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let Thy godly one see the Pit.

Thou dost show me the path of life;

**in Thy presence there is fullness of joy,**

**in Thy right hand are pleasures** for evermore. Psalm 16: 5-11

I will bless **יְהוָה** at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

My soul makes its boast in **יְהוָה**; let the afflicted hear and be glad.

O magnify **יְהוָה** with me, and let us exalt **His Name** together!  
I sought **יְהוָה**, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.  
Look to Him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.

This poor man cried, and **יְהוָה** heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.  
The angel of **יְהוָה** encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.  
O taste and see that **יְהוָה** is good! Happy is the man who takes refuge in him!  
O fear **יְהוָה**, you His saints, for those who fear Him have no want!  
The young lions suffer want and hunger;  
but those who seek **יְהוָה** lack no good thing.

Psalm 34: 1<sup>b</sup>-10

– A Psalm. A Song for the Shabbat. –

It is good to give thanks to **יְהוָה**, to sing praises to Thy Name, O Most High;  
to declare Thy steadfast love in the morning, and Thy faithfulness by night,  
to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.  
For Thou, O **יְהוָה**, hast made me glad by Thy work;  
at the works of Thy hands I sing for joy.

How great are Thy works, O **יְהוָה**! Thy thoughts are very deep!

Psalm 92: 1-5

May the glory of **יְהוָה** endure for ever, may **יְהוָה** rejoice in His works,  
Who looks on the earth and it trembles, Who touches the mountains and they smoke!  
I will sing to **יְהוָה** as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being.  
Sweet is my meditation on Him, I – I do rejoice in **יְהוָה**.

Psalm 104: 31-34

**O give thanks to יְהוָה, call on His Name**, make known His deeds among the peoples!

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him, tell of all his wonderful works!

Glory in His holy Name; let the hearts of those who seek **יְהוָה** rejoice!

Psalm 105: 1-3

The meek shall obtain fresh joy in **יְהוָה**,

and the poor among men shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.

Yeshu'-'Yahu (Isaiah) 29: 19

For **יְהוָה** will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,  
and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of **יְהוָה**;  
joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Yeshu'-'Yahu (Isaiah) 51: 3

for I am **יְהוָה** their God and I will answer them.

Then Ephraim shall become like a mighty warrior, versatile

and their hearts shall be glad as with wine.

Their children shall see it and rejoice, their hearts shall exult in **יְהוָה**.

Zekhar-'Yahu (Zechariah) 10: 6b-7

In Church history, the glorious Name of **יְהוָה** has not been used frequently in titles of books or other works. However, where the glorious Name of **יְהוָה** has been used, rather remarkably, the glorious Name has often been associated with the **joy** and **security** to be found in His presence, and with great **appreciation** and honor for Him as He is. As an arbitrary example I mention [Hert-sterkte in Jehova I & II](#) (*Strength of heart in Jehovah I & II*; in Dutch; part of: *Meditations on some of the Characteristics of the Lord God*), two poems/hymns by the 17<sup>th</sup> century theologian and poet Jodocus van Lodensteyn. He wrote them while held hostage near Cleve in winter 1673/74. In these poems there is reference to **יְהוָה** as the ultimate and final Source of destiny, joy & protection. 1 Samuel 30: 6, where David strengthens himself in **יְהוָה**, was his basis for these two hymns.

Some of this can also be found in Hymn 75 in the old Dutch Reformed hymnal (1938), after another hymn by Van Lodensteyn, of which especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse (a contraction of 4 verses in Van Lodensteyn's original)

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*Jesus, source of that heavenly joy,  
that our hearts one time will taste,  
whatever rejoiced us here on earth,  
You rejoice us above all;  
for You prepare us already here  
for the heavenly glory, where  
we will forever love and praise You:  
Jesus, draw our hearts up to You!*

after **Jodocus van Lodensteyn**,  
Dutch Reformed Hymn 75: 2  
(my translation)

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– given on the right here – is very clear.<sup>37</sup> By looking up to **ጸሐፊ** and His Character, we also partake in His joy.

Remarkable is the freedom Van Lodensteyn felt to use the Name **Jehovah**. In his hymns collection *Uyt-spanningen* we see this form of the great Name very often, as in many works by others in those days. (Note: The pronunciation-variant **Yahweh** as well as the current avoidance of the glorious Name of God starts to be seen from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only.)

The same freedom and title was used a little more than a century later by Jacobus Willemsen, a Middelburg (NL) theologian, for his book: **Hertsterkte in Jehova – Aanmoedigende opwekking tot eene gezette Oefeninge der Godzaligheid** (*Strength of heart in Yehovah – An encouraging appeal to a regular exercise in the joy & fear of God*; in Dutch; publ. by: Hendrik Sas & Jan Dane, Middelburg NL, 1775).

## **ጸሐፊ – a most resourceful God**

### **Adjectives to the glorious Name ጸሐፊ**

In various Bible texts, we encounter the great Name of God with an adjective that highlights or says something more about a certain aspect of His character. Some examples are:<sup>38</sup>

- **ጸሐፊ Jireh** (הארר ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** sees (to it) and provides (a.o. Genesis 22:14, 1 Samuel 16);
- **ጸሐፊ Ro'i** (רעי ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** is my Shepherd (a.o. Psalm 23:1);
- **ጸሐፊ Nissi** (נסני ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** is my Banner (a.o. Exodus 17:15);
- **ጸሐፊ Rapha** (רפך ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** heals you (a.o. Exodus 15:26; 2 Kings 2:21);
- **ጸሐፊ 'ish Milchamah** (המהלחמ איש ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** is a Warrior (Who does not shrink back from battle) (a.o. Exodus 15:3);
- **ጸሐፊ Shamma'** (שמעו ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** listens attentively (a.o. Psalm 34:6,17);
- **ጸሐፊ Shammah/ Sham hayah/ Shehayah** (המה ጸሐፊ/ היה שם ጸሐፊ/ היה שם ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** is there/ was there/ is there with us (a.o. Yechezqel (Ezekiel) 35:10; 48:35; Psalm 124: 1, 2);
- **ጸሐፊ Shamar** (שמר ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** your Preserver (a.o. Psalm 121:5; 146:9);
- **ጸሐፊ Shalom** (שלום ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** is our Peace (a.o. Judges 6:22-24; cf. 1 Thes.5:23).
- **ጸሐፊ Tsidqenu** (צדקנו ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** our righteousness (applied to the Messiah; Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 23: 6 and 33: 16)
- **ጸሐፊ Tsebha'oth** (צבאות ጸሐፊ) – **ጸሐፊ** Who brings all together; **ጸሐፊ** of the multitudes (traditionally also translated as: **ጸሐፊ** of (the heavenly) hosts) (a.o. 1 Shemu'el (Samuel) 1: 11; Zekhar-Yahu (Zechariah) 1: 4; Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 31: 35).

Note that each of these adjectives link closely to the meaning of the great Name of God Itself; for example: **ጸሐፊ** provides – because He is already there, and actively involved; **ጸሐፊ** is a superb Shepherd Who really watches carefully, being really there to protect His sheep and to care that they are safe and get everything they need (quite unlike a hired man who may not watch well all the time), etc.

The last adjective in the above list is worth a closer look. The title **ጸሐፊ Tsebha'oth** has traditionally mostly been translated as *The LORD of Hosts* (where in many languages the equally archaic equivalent of the word *hosts* has a strong military connotation). Though *hosts* is linguistically a legitimate translation of the Hebrew *tsebha'oth*, it does neither do full justice, in my view, to a large part of the contexts in which this title is used, nor to the origins of *tsebha'oth*. *Tsebha'oth* derives from **צָבָה** - *tsabha'* – as verb: bring together, as noun: an orderly multitude (**as** brought together as an army). **ጸሐፊ** is *par excellence* a God Who brings people and multitudes together. In Exodus 12: 41 we

<sup>37</sup> Van Lodensteyn (1620-1677; student of Voetius in Utrecht and of Coccejus in Franeker, from 1644 Reverend in Zoetermeer, from 1650 in Sluis and from 1653 in Utrecht, NL) was a respected poet & preacher within the *Nadere Reformatie* (Dutch 2<sup>nd</sup> Reformation, a pietistic movement within the Dutch Reformed tradition), stressing a simple and God-directed lifestyle. Also the hymns 137, 205 and 216 from the mentioned hymnal are his. Unfortunately, none of these works have been incorporated in the *Liedboek voor de Kerken* van 1973 (the hymnal of the Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (mainstream Dutch Protestant Church)).

<sup>38</sup> A [series of Bible studies](#) on a number of these (and others) can be found at the website of 'Maranatha Church', Virginia Beach Va USA (scroll down to the Name **YHWH** on that page).

read that the *multitude* (תְּסִבְהוֹת – *tsibhe'oth*) of אֱלֹהִים was led out of Egypt; this is the entire people of Israel (with others who chose to join them), as made into a unity; one big people by אֱלֹהִים in His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and with them as entire people via Moses. In Genesis 2: 1 we read that the whole earth and heaven were created and all their 'multitudes', I would say (מְסֻבְּוֹת – *tsabha'am* - 'multitudes' of heavenly bodies and beings: angels, humans, animals; cf. Deuteronomy 4: 19; 17: 3; Isaiah 40: 26; in those days there were no battle or armies!). In other words we encounter the same idea for example in Isaiah 56: 8, where Yesha'-Yahu (אֱלֹהִים has saved) says: "The Lord אֱלֹהִים, Who **gathereth** the outcasts of Israel, saith: Yet will I **gather** others to him, with those of his that **are gathered...**" (cf. Yesha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 11:12; 60: 4; Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 23: 3; Yechezqel (Ezekiel) 28: 5; Psalm 147: 2;).

Jesus also often attracted *multitudes* that *gathered* around Him. The same we see in the days of the apostles (a.o. Acts 4: 32) and will see in the last days (Revelations 7: 9; 19: 6). Compare also the Greek πατριὰ - *patria* - people/nation, from Ephesians 3: 15 (cf. 1:10; 2: 16; 4: 16) which is sometimes translated by *family* (KJV), or *community* (Dutch NBV) as named or *brought together* by אֱלֹהִים, the Father, in or under His Name (cf. Revelations 3:12).

## More about God's wonderful Name

It would be too much for this brief study to structurally treat the occurrence of God's wonderful Name throughout the Old Testament. However, the following verses further signify and illustrate various aspects of the importance of God's precious Name אֱלֹהִים (*YHWH / IAUA*). I give them without further explanation.

I am אֱלֹהִים, **that is My Name**; My glory I give to no other,  
nor My praise to graven images. Yesha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 42: 8

The Name of אֱלֹהִים is a strong tower;  
the righteous man runs into it and is safe. Proverbs 18:10

And אֱלֹהִים – He is going before your face; He Himself shall be with you;  
He shall not fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear nor be afraid. Deuteronomy 31: 8

"Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know My  
power and My might, and **they shall know that My Name is אֱלֹהִים.**"  
Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 16: 21

If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart to give glory to **My Name**, says  
אֱלֹהִים of multitudes, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your bless-  
ings; indeed I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart. Malachi 2: 2

Then those who feared אֱלֹהִים spoke with one another; אֱלֹהִים heeded and heard them,  
and a book of remembrance was written before Him of those who feared אֱלֹהִים and  
thought on His Name. [lit.: לְחַבְּלֵי שְׁמִי – this has been explained as: who are *in* His Name /  
who let themselves be weaved together with His Name]. Malachi 3: 16

And Asa cried to אֱלֹהִים his God, "O אֱלֹהִים, there is none like Thee to help, between  
the mighty and the weak. Help us, O אֱלֹהִים our God, for we rely on Thee, and **in Thy  
Name** we have come against this multitude. O אֱלֹהִים, thou art our God; let not man  
prevail against Thee." 2 Chronicles 14:11

'If evil comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand  
before this house, and before Thee, for **Thy Name** is in this house, and cry to Thee in  
our affliction, and Thou wilt hear and save.' 2 Chronicles 20: 9

O אֱלֹהִים, our **Highest**, how majestic is **Thy Name** in all the earth! Psalm 8: 1 and 9

אֱלֹהִים of the multitudes is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*  
Psalm 46: 7 and 11

Remember this, O אֱלֹהִים, how the enemy scoffs,  
and an impious people reviles **Thy Name**. Psalm 74: 18

I will call to mind the deeds of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**;  
yea, I will remember Thy wonders of old. Psalm 77: 11; see also 78: 4

Ascribe to **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, O families of the peoples, ascribe to **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** glory and strength!  
Ascribe to **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** **the glory due His Name**; Psalm 96: 7-8<sup>a</sup>

**אֱלֹהֵינוּ** hath made known His *Yeshu'ah* (יְשׁוּעָה - salvation);  
His righteousness hath He openly shown in the sight of the heathen. Psalm 98: 2

But thou, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, art enthroned for ever;  
**Thy Name** endures to all generations. Psalm 102: 12

I have remembered **Thy name**, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, in the night and have kept Thy law.  
Thou art my portion, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**; I have said that I would keep Thy words. Psalm 119: 55, 57

In the path of Thy judgments, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, we wait for Thee;  
**Thy memorial Name** is the desire of our soul. Yasha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 26: 8

Who among you fears **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, who listens to the voice of His Servant? When he walks in  
deep darkness, robbed of light, let him trust in the Name of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** and rely on his God.  
Yasha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 50: 10

Praise **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** / **יהוה** (*YaH*); for **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is good:  
sing praises unto **His Name**; for it is delightful.  
**Thy Name**, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, endureth for ever;  
Thy memorial, O **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, throughout all generations. Psalm 135: 3, 13

These texts are most clear, I think. **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is our God's memorial, majestic and most delightful and precious Name *forever* – so, including this present day and till all eternity. That wonderful Name represents His presence with His people. God's glorious Name **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** is the representation of His active presence! In the presence of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** we find comfort and shelter in times of peril. By calling on the lovely and precious Name **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**, we place ourselves clearly under His leading and protection. Only **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** deserves all our honor and praise. The context of the passage from Psalm 119 shows that continuous and intensive remembering of the wonderful Name (and what the wonderful Name stands for!) has the effect on us that we will live like God meant us to.

## The usage and striking omission of God's significant Name

In the above, we looked at how significant the meaning of God's precious Name **יהוה** is, and how this Name appears in a lot of Bible passages. We saw that **God's Name expresses His desire for close relationship, His nature to be with us**. God's glorious Name **יהוה** is the representation of His active presence with us! Since I started this study (this section I added only in February 2010 – almost a year later) I am really amazed how significant the usage or omission of God's wonderful Name is in the Bible. Where people feel close to God they appear to use God's Name **יהוה**; where they feel distant they omit the Name. Or might the cause and effect sometimes perhaps be the other way around – as the precious Name clearly reminds us of God's loving presence?

In the beginning I already mentioned Jacob, in whose life we see peaks of thriving, faith and commitment where the glorious Name is mentioned with reverence and valleys where God's notable Name is totally absent from the story, or at least not mentioned by Jacob.

In the life of Moses we see that things go very well in the time when his parents and the midwives have more respect for **יהוה** than for the Egyptian rulers. We see forty years later that things are not going well when Moses as Israelite as well as Egyptian prince makes his *own* plan to be recognized and redeem his people. He had the resources, he had the power, and yet, it goes wrong. The key is in the fact that he did not start from the presence of **יהוה** in his life and calling. Again forty years later he knows that he does not have the power to do it. In dependence on **יהוה** he goes, and **יהוה** goes *with him*, as we read. **יהוה** rescues His people out of Egypt, 'with a powerful arm' as it says so vividly. As a priest Moses goes up the mountain to receive guidelines from **יהוה** for the life of His people – how they could live daily in peace and joy *with יהוה* and with each other. Then, while Moses is on the mountain, things go wrong. The people listen more to their own fears than to the promise that **יהוה** had given them in His Name – that *He Himself would be with them*. Aaron listens more to the fear of the people and to his own fear for the people (he does not dare to sound a holy 'no' to their protection!), than to **יהוה**'s promise. Completely unjustified he feels powerless and alone, and he creates a horrible idol ... This way it goes, all through the history of Israel. Where they are conscious of the promise that lies in the glorious Name **יהוה**, they flourish; where they 'forget' that promise and trust in their own abilities or in idols, they wither.

Some other arbitrary examples that I encountered:

In Psalm 44 the Psalmist isn't in the most favorable circumstances, euphemistically phrased. He feels alienated from God, and does not use the Name **יהוה** in this Psalm. Where he speaks about God or to God, he uses the description '*Elohim* (אלהים – God) or '*Adonai* (אדני – Lord). Certainly in the beginning of the Psalm, God is not personal to him, he only had heard what God did long ago in the time of his forefathers (verse 1). In verse 4 this 'remembering' of what God has done has led him to acknowledge God as 'my King' (מלכי). In verse 8 he comes so far as to praise God (still using '*Elohim*'). Only in verse 20 he remembers the relevance of God's personal Name. In verse 23, he also sort of claims God's involvement and rescue, but in his experience, God is too far away to use the Name **יהוה** – God has not fully 'become' his personal covenant God, the One he fully depends on.<sup>39</sup> Although he comes close: he does yearn to see God's face again and to see God's deliverance. What we see is that enemy suppression can bring *a feeling of separation* between a man and God, but sin can really bring separation in the confidence between a man and God. In that

<sup>39</sup> According some translations (a.o. de 1897 *Dächsel*- and 1977 NBG-version of the Dutch *Staten Vertaling* and the *Restored Names KJV* of the Q-Bible) the Psalmist in verse 24 does use (just once in the entire Psalm) the wonderful Name of God. Possibly these translations base that on the observation that in the margin of one of the most dominant sources (the Leningrad or Aleppo Codex), the Masoretes wrote: '*read יהוה here*', though it has '*Adonai*' in the main text. Given the reluctance of the Masoretes to use the Name **יהוה**, this can be seen as a testimony that the original manuscript may well have had **יהוה** here. More information on the changes made with respect to the glorious Name of God in what we know as the Masoretic texts (mostly replacement of **יהוה** by 'אדני - '*Adonai*') can a.o. be found in the web-article: '*Adonay, The Tetragrammaton, and the Great Isaiah Scroll*', 1 June 2009. There are 134 places where the Masoretic text has 'אדני, where this should probably be **יהוה** / יהוה'. A much older Isaiah-scroll (of 150 to about 100 BC; the Masoretic texts were from past 1000 AD) that was discovered at Qumran, confirms *a large part* of these. In some instances even the Masoretic *Westminster Leningrad* and *Aleppo* codices differ, e.g. in Psalm 68: 26/27 (*Aleppo*: 'אדני; *WLC*: יהוה'), which clearly shows that sometimes – accidentally or on purpose – errors have crept in here.

respect it is remarkable, that God's lovely Name does not appear at all in Psalm 51.

What a contrast these Psalms show with, e.g., Psalms 27, 30, 33, 34 or 35, in which God's wonderful Name appears so often. In general one observes that Psalms full of belonging and appreciated connection with God – like Psalm 27 – also mention the Name **יְהוָה** frequently (Psalm 27 even 13 times in 14 verses).

A pattern with increasing use of the wonderful Name **יְהוָה** with increasing intimacy is discerned, amongst others, in Psalm 80. Only in the last verse the Psalmist comes to use the wonderful Name of God. A similar pattern we observe in some other Psalms (like 54, 55, 81 en 90), and various other places. In Psalm 73 – the Psalm of envy at the ungodly – God's Name **יְהוָה** does not appear until the 20<sup>th</sup> verse, where He is described as despising the wicked in the end, so: as protecting His own. And the Name appears in the last verse, where the writer wants to draw close to Him, put his trust in Him and praise Him.

Significant also is the frequent usage and omission of God's Name in the book of Jonah. Already the first verses of the first chapter tell us that Jonah (= dove) was called by **יְהוָה** (verse 1) but fled from **the presence** of **יְהוָה** (Hebrew: "from the Face of **יְהוָה**" or: "from facing **יְהוָה**"; verse 3, twice!). Verse 4 tells that **יְהוָה** remains involved (His Character!). In the ensuing storm Jonah has to confess to his shipmates which God he serves, upon which he says he fears **יְהוָה** but flees from **יְהוָה's presence**. The result is that these ship-mates fear **יְהוָה** 'exceedingly' (! in verses 14 and 16 His Name is mentioned 5 times and with great reverence!), and pray to Him for grace. Chapter 2 is about Jonah's rescue via the stomach of a big fish; Jonah mentioning the Name **יְהוָה** frequently and with reverence, attributing his rescue to Him and saying that **יְהוָה** is his God. In chapter 3 we read again about **יְהוָה** calling Jonah, but in the story about Jonah preaching to the Ninevites, or in their turning from evil, God is only referred to as 'God' (*Elohim*); His Name is not mentioned. For Jonah, God was not to be personal to the Ninevites, and neither was He personal to them in their perception yet. In 4:2 Jonah claims some old intimacy with **יְהוָה**, but with kind of a double mind, in a futile effort to convince God that this rescue of the Ninevites was a bad plan in the first place. In his further alienation from God, he doesn't use the Name anymore, while God Himself does remain **יְהוָה** and devoted to establish connection.

In the period when I worked on this study I came across Lamentations 3. That Bible chapter, too, appeared very telling with regard to its usage of God's Name. There are long portions where the writer feels alienated from God, and never uses His proper and intimate Name **יְהוָה**. And then, at roughly two stretches in particular (verse 18, 22-26 and 55, 58-66), a portion with hope, where God's Name **יְהוָה** actually *is* mentioned – even quite a lot, and especially as the Protector of His people! Both stretches start with a single mention of the Name, after which a renewed sense of God's presence and a frequent use of His Name follows a few verses further on. Reflecting on what the glorious Name stands for, I think this is not an arbitrary coincidence...

That things will not go well when we do *not* remember **יְהוָה** as **The Present One**, or if His being actively present is not dear to us, becomes very clear from this verse from Yechezqel (Ezekiel):

Then He (**יְהוָה**) said to me, "The guilt of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of blood, and the city full of injustice; for they say, '**יְהוָה** has forsaken the land, and **יְהוָה** does not see.' Yechezqel (Ezekiel) 9: 9; cf also Psalm 94: 1-11

It is of utmost importance that we **know** – both with our head and with our heart – that our God **יְהוָה is there and sees us!** In that awareness there is life and growth; otherwise we will see decay, in every area. In the first chapter of his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul also talks about this.

I think we can learn a lot from all of this with regard to using and proclaiming **יְהוָה's** proper and wonderful Name, if we really want to grow in intimacy with God **יְהוָה**. At least, it encourages me to use God's covenantal Name **יְהוָה** more again!

Could it be, that by re-focusing us on His Name, God is preparing us in and for 'end times', in which we will need the intimate connection with **יְהוָה**, our God, more than ever?

## The Aaronic blessing in relation to the wonderful Name of God

God gave Aaron (actually: 'Aharon) and the priests after him very specific instructions to bless the people of Israel.

אָהֲרֹן said to Moses, "Say to Aaron and his sons,  
'Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,  
'אָהֲרֹן bless you and keep you:  
אָהֲרֹן make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you:  
אָהֲרֹן lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.'"  
So shall they shall put **My Name** upon the people of Israel,  
and I will bless them."

Numbers 6: 22-27



Here we see the character of אָהֲרֹן most clearly summarized. It is His nature to bless and to protect. He prefers to look happy and hopeful (with a shining and lifted face; not 'dark', gloomy or downcast) to us. And He sees that we can only flourish when we are conscious of His joyful look at us – therefore this blessing. But that He can look at us with joy, despite our sin, is only thanks to His abundant grace. That grace is also the basis for letting us share in His peace. When we become conscious of this Divine grace, joy and peace, we in fact realize what the significance is of God's wonderful Name. Then we come under the governance of His Name. For His Name stands for His joyful and hope-bringing active presence, on the basis of His overflowing grace.

In addition, in the time when this was written the following held. When a governor or a head of a family put his name on you, this meant that you came under his governance and protection. You were adopted in the protection of his family, one could say. Various times we read that God connects His holy Name to His people; puts His holy Name on them, so to say. Thereby He connects them to Himself, takes them under His protection and takes them up in His family. This is almost too big for words!<sup>40</sup>

This Aaronic blessing is part of a great collection of Bible passages in which the **Face of אָהֲרֹן** is mentioned (only the form אָהֲרֹן יָנִיב already appears more than 250 times; in a somewhat more loose form we talk about thousands of verses). In most of these cases the subject is the intimacy and confidential friendship that God aims at. A good example (though not containing the expression 'the Face of אָהֲרֹן' as such literally), is the already earlier partly quoted Psalm 16, in particular verse 11 from it, which is later cited by Peter:

Thou wilt show me the path of life:

**Abundance of joy is close to Thy Face;**

In Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Psalm 16: 11

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;

Thou wilt make me full of gladness with **Thy Face**.

Acts 2: 28

There is also clarity and discernment before **the Face of אָהֲרֹן**, for example with regard to sin. Where the light shines so very, very brightly, the darkness cannot exist! And if there is to be security for deep friendship, there must be commitment also. The joy of those who have allowed Jesus to reconcile themselves with אָהֲרֹן, and His condemnation over those that reject Him, appear when both groups come into contact with God's Face. This appears, amongst others, clearly in Psalm 21:

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

In Thy strength the king rejoices, O אָהֲרֹן;

and in Thy *Yeshoe'ah* (הַשׁוּעָה) – help, salvation) how greatly he exults!

Thou hast given him his heart's desire,

and hast not withheld the request of his lips. *Selah*

For Thou dost meet him with goodly blessings;

thou dost set a crown of fine gold upon his head.

He asked life of Thee; Thou gavest it to him,

length of days for ever and ever.

His glory is great through Thy *Yeshoe'ah* (הַשׁוּעָה) - help, salvation);

<sup>40</sup> See also: André H. Roosma, 'The Aaronic Blessing', *Accede!* ([www.12accede.org](http://www.12accede.org)) web-article, May 2003.

splendor and majesty thou dost bestow upon him.  
Yea, Thou dost make him most blessed for ever;  
**Thou hast filled him with joy by Thy countenance**  
[The MKJV has here: **You have rejoiced him in the gladness in Your holy face.**]  
For the king trusts in **יְהוָה**;  
and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.  
Your hand will find out all your enemies;  
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.  
You will make them as a blazing oven when they appear before Your Face.  
**יְהוָה** will swallow them up in His wrath; and fire will consume them.  
You will destroy their offspring from the earth,  
and their children from among the sons of men.  
If they plan evil against you, if they devise mischief, they will not succeed.  
For You will put them to flight; You will aim at their faces with Your bows.  
Be exalted, O **יְהוָה**, in Thy strength! We will sing and praise Thy power. Psalm 21

Living *face to face with or under the face of* an authority figure is in the Bible also a clear gauge for the relationship. We may be familiar with an expression like: ‘daring to face someone (or not)’. If the relationship is not good, you rather don’t have the other look into your eyes. In the Bible the expression for this is: *to live before the other’s face*. After Adam and Eva had distrusted God and followed the counsel of the adversary, they did not dare to face God any more; they did not dare to come *before His Face*; they *were ashamed*. God covers them and thus cares that they could yet come before His face – albeit with a certain limitation until Christ restores everything completely. Later God promised prosperity in case the people *would live before His Face* (see a.o. 2 Chronicles 7: 17). In the New Testament (especially the writings of John) this is also called: *living in the light*. I connect this to *the light of God’s face (countenance)* from the Aaronitic blessing. Living *before the Face of יְהוָה* we belong under His glorious Name, and thereby also under His protection. In this way we can flourish and come to our destination.

## **Name and authority**

In the Bible there is a close link between name and authority. Also the glorious Name **יְהוָה** is connected to His sovereign authority. Therefore, too, there is protection in or under His wonderful Name, for all opposing powers are subjected to the sovereign authority of **יְהוָה**. Above we saw that the people of Israel were brought ‘under the Name of **יְהוָה**’ by the Aaronic blessing, and thereby also under His protection, blessing and authority.

**“Even in biblical literature, the attaching of a name to a place claims ownership.”**

**William M. Schniedewind**  
in: [‘The Evolution of Name Theology’](#) (see note 4), p.231.

Where people place themselves under the Name, that is: under the authority of **יְהוָה**, they also share in part of His authority. A very clear example we see in the situation where the Name of **יְהוָה** was proclaimed powerfully by Israel over Jericho, and the (wicked!) city collapsed like a house of cards. Also in the blessings and curses often pronounced by prophets of **יְהוָה** *in His Name*, we clearly see the authority of the glorious Name.

At some moment a son (especially: the oldest) got authority over the family business. The state of young adult (obtained via the *Bar-Mitswah*, or the *Bat-Mitswah* for a daughter) was already an introduction to that. As young adult / apprentice the son or daughter could already learn to take part in responsibilities of his family. By the later blessing of the father, the son received his full mandate and responsibility. This is the essence of the Hebrew concept of ‘adoption’. From His *Bar-Mitswah* Jesus said He had to be engaged in the business of His Father (**יְהוָה**). And from the moment the Father blessed Him into His ministry (Matthew 3: 17), He could do what His Father and He had been up to – one could say: from that moment on He got responsibility for ‘the Family-mission’. Not surprisingly, He acted ‘in the Name of His heavenly Father’. Those ‘acts’ started with performing a test (Matthew 4: 1-11) in which Jesus uses the wonderful Name of the Father (**יְהוָה**) three times. I will come back to this in the section: *‘Something about God’s glorious Name in the New Testament’*.

A man or a nation over whom the wonderful Name of **יְהוָה** has been called out, is thereby also called to carry out ‘the Family-mission’. This brings responsibility *and* authority. That authority is

linked and subjected to (1) the son- (or daughter-)ship, (2) having obtained the blessing of the Father and (3) a full devotion to fulfilling the will of the Father. All three these aspects were present in Jesus, and for example also largely in Paul. Not present they were in the sons of Sceva (Acts 19: 13-16), who therefore missed the spiritual authority. Because Jesus operated fully in the Name of the Father, His Name is clothed with the same authority as the glorious Name of the Father, and may we use Jesus' Name – provided we have become children of **אֱלֹהִים** in Jesus, have received His blessing and want to partake in the Family-mission actively and with full devotion.

## **The frequently used expression 'the Word of אֱלֹהִים'**

The expression 'the Word of אֱלֹהִים' (**אֱלֹהִים דַּבָּר** – *dabar אֱלֹהִים*) appears very frequently (more than 450 times) in the Bible. For example in Genesis 15: 1-4:

<sup>1</sup> After these things **the word of אֱלֹהִים** came to Abram in a vision, "Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great." <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Lord אֱלֹהִים, what wilt Thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "Behold, Thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir." <sup>4</sup> And behold, **the word of אֱלֹהִים** came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir."

The first thing that stands out here is that 'the Word of אֱלֹהִים' *comes*. God takes the initiative. It has been that way from the very beginning. The creation came into being by His Word. When Adam and Eva turned their backs on Him, אֱלֹהִים is The One Who takes up contact again: „Adam, where are you?"

Secondly, when the Word of אֱלֹהִים comes into any situation, things *are going to happen*. Something changes in that situation. Abraham feared to remain childless. In the end he gets quite a row of children – the Bible mentions at least 8 sons. Of several of them we know, from the stories recorded in the Bible, that they came to be large peoples. That things are going to happen when אֱלֹהִים come to it with His authoritative word is not so strange, when we remember that there is a close relationship between the wonderful Name and the verb *to be / to happen*. In addition: He spoke and it was there, we also read in Genesis 1 already (compare Psalm 33: 9). His Word is Deed and has creating authority.

We regularly read also about 'the Word of אֱלֹהִים' with the prophet Elijah – the prophet whose Hebrew name *Eli-Yahu* already gave a clear witness of **the Name: אֱלֹהִים is my God!** And there, too, a lot happened; wherever Elijah was, and however 'humanly speaking impossible' the circumstances were. Of course one of the major events in his ministry was the demonstration of אֱלֹהִים's power against the idol priests at Mount Carmel. Something similar we see with other prophets, like *Yirme-Yahu* (Jeremiah) and *Zekhar-Yahu* (Zachariah).

Wherever the Word of אֱלֹהִים comes, there comes life. That too appears already in Genesis 1 (see also Psalm 33: 6). And also with the prophets we see it: the Word of אֱלֹהִים even overcomes the last enemy, death.

Also when the Word of אֱלֹהִים becomes 'flesh and blood', that is to say: takes on a human form, a lot *is happening* (see also John 1). Then 'the Word of אֱלֹהִים' shakes all world history on its foundations. Even the dating system, which everyone uses intensely every day now, is adapted to it... And the most important: there comes Life – 'eternal' life; life with a deeper quality; life in community with אֱלֹהִים, that will never end, for everyone who is willing to receive it from His hand. That brings me to the New Testament. There, too, is written about the wonderful Name!

## Something about God's glorious Name in the New Testament

In the New Testament, we continue to see the great Name of God described and we find clues in how we may use the glorious Name, amongst others in the way in which our *Highest* Jesus used the great Name.<sup>41</sup>

It is, for example, striking, how often Jesus quoted passages from the Old Testament in which the glorious Name of God appears. Very clearly, this is the case in the situation where Jesus was tempted in the desert (Matthew 4 and Luke 4). From the cited Bible passages from the Old Testament I adopt the usage of the glorious Name of God, because everything points in the direction that Jesus cited these texts in their full original Hebrew form:

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward He was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But He answered, "It is written,

‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of **אֱלֹהִים**.’”

5 Then the devil took Him to the holy city, and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will give his angels charge of you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written,

‘You shall not tempt **אֱלֹהִים** your God.’”

8 Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; 9 and he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written,

‘You shall worship (fear) **אֱלֹהִים** your God and Him only shall you serve.’”

11 Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Matthew 4: 1-11; with quotes from Psalm 91: 11-12; Deuteronomy 6: 16; 8: 3; and 6: 13-14.

It is very striking, that the adversary *did not* use the personal Name of God (he did not have a good relationship with God!), while Jesus *did* use the glorious Name **אֱלֹהִים** (He *did* have a good, personal bond with **אֱלֹהִים**!)

The great Name of God is mentioned and our way of using it admonished, amongst others also in the prayers that Jesus taught us:

Pray then like this: Our Father Who art in heaven, **hallowed be Thy Name**.

Matthew 6: 9; cf. Luke 11: 2

This text immediately gives rise to two questions: Which Name of God does Jesus refer to, here, as the Name to be hallowed? And how do we actually hallow His Name then? Above, the first question has been answered adequately: God's glorious Name is **אֱלֹהִים**. One of the ways in which we **honor or hallow God's holy Name** is by **respecting His desire to be actively present in our lives**, not by avoiding and/or forgetting His Name. This is a most vital observation.

Being aware of God's significant and glorious Name has an effect in us, as I noted earlier. That is also visible here. When we pray that God's glorious Name be hallowed, and so become conscious of His loving presence with us, that automatically brings us to subject ourselves to His Kingship and long for His full dominion over all the earth – the next prayer.

<sup>41</sup> Some people have claimed that in the New Testament the glorious Name of God does not appear, and that *therefore* it would be irrelevant to New-Testament believers to know or use the glorious Name. This is based on a misconception. The Gospel of Matthew, and quite likely more parts of the New Testament have originally been written in Hebrew, and in that original the glorious Name *did appear*. Only later these documents have been translated into Greek, replacing the glorious Name by the Greek word *Kurios*. The fact that the first – Hebrew – New-Testament documents *did* contain the glorious Name has been confirmed in the Babylonian Talmud (Shabbat 116a), the Talmud of Jerusalem (Shabbat 15c), and in the Tosefta (Shabbat 13:5), where Jewish rabbis debate about the destruction of the scrolls of the New Testament (*Brit Chadashah*). The question was, "Can they be burned, regarding that they contain the Name of God **אֱלֹהִים**?" This debate confirms that in the first churches in Israel there were Gospel scrolls available in Hebrew (various historians from that time said that Matthew wrote his Gospel first in Hebrew and that only later this was translated into Greek) and that these *did contain* the glorious Name of God. In the translation to Greek the glorious Name of God was 'translated away', i.e. replaced by the Greek *Kurios* - Highest / (His) Highness.

The Bible Itself gives us many clues on what it means to sanctify God's Name. As God rebukes Moses that he hadn't held God's Name high towards the Israelites, when they murmured against Him at Qadesh (see Numbers 20; Deuteronomy 32: 51). Later, in Yechezqel (Ezekiel) 36: 23, Israel is appealed by God:

“And I will vindicate the holiness of My great **Name**, Which has been profaned among the nations, and Which you have profaned among them; and **the nations will know well that I am יְיָ**, says the Lord **יְיָ**, when through you I vindicate My holiness before their eyes.”

The wonderful and lovely Name of God is due all honor, in all openness! The wonderful Name may, yes, must be mentioned and honored with much respect and appreciation!

Jesus Himself has glorified God's holy Name in this way throughout His life on earth. God's holy Name had received glory through the things by which people had seen God at work in and through Jesus' life. I think of that when I read this interaction between Jesus and God the Father in heaven:

“... **Father, glorify Thy Name.**” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified It, and I will glorify It again.”  
John 12: 28 (cf. also John 17: 26)

Even in the last, most fearful, and humanly speaking most lonely hours before His conviction and death on the cross, Jesus knew what **יְיָ** – His Father – stood for; that He **would be with Him**:

“The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave Me alone; yet I am not alone, for **the Father is with Me.**”

John 16: 32

Note that, in one of His final prayers, Jesus said He had made the Name of God known to His disciples:

“... **I have manifested Thy Name** unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word. ...

John 17: 6

Jesus' act was considered a crucial offense in Judaism those days, as it sadly is until this day! However, by this Jesus clearly fulfilled Psalm 22: 22 (also quoted in Hebrews 2: 12; cf. also Psalm 45: 17):

“... **I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren:**  
in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.  
Ye who fear **יְיָ**, praise Him; ...”

Psalm 22: 22-23<sup>a</sup>

A few verses further on, Jesus prays to His heavenly Father:

“...And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to Thee. Holy Father, **keep them in Thy Name**, which Thou hast given Me, **that they may be one, even as We are one.** ...”

John 17: 11

Here we see again that there is protection in the wonderful Name **יְיָ**! God protected Jesus' disciples – including all disciples after them, unto this day and even unto the end of days (cf. vs 20) – **in His Name**. Is it clear from all the Bible passages I quoted so far, why and how this will cause unity among them of such intensity as the unity between Jesus and the Father? This kind of unity is impossible for us, as humans by ourselves. Jesus knew that all too well. But in God's magnificent Name **יְיָ**, that is: in glorious, close, intimate bonding with Him, the Creator of all the earth, there we are transformed such as to grow in unity also with each other. This is the only way to become a Bride that is One, as God **יְיָ** Himself is One.

And, in case verse 6 wasn't clear enough, Jesus repeats:

“... **I made known to them Thy Name**, and **I will make It known**, that the love with which Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

John 17: 26

The marvelous Name **יְיָ** represents His wonderful grace-ful and loving presence with us. And as we saw so very clearly in the life of Jacob: being aware of God's lovely Name **יְיָ**, instills in us a great love for God and for others as well.

Do we see by now, that the Bible is not speaking of the glorious Name of God as a mere title, label or designation? No, far from that! God's Name **יְיָ** stands for **Who He is in His desire to be close, to be present and actively involved in our lives from our earliest beginning till the end!**

A very clear clue about the glorious Name we also find in Mattityahu (Matthew) 28, according to the Messianic 'Jewish' Bible-translation by David H. Stern.<sup>42</sup> Where the usual translations read, **to baptize** the people of all nations **in the Name** (authority) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, he translates there:

Yeshua came and talked with them. He said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make people from all nations into *talmidim*, **immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the *Ruach HaKodesh***, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. **And remember! I will be with you always, yes even until the end of the age.**" Mattityahu 28:18-20

In an explanation, Stern declares how the Bible is a Jewish book; and that in the Jewish culture a 'name' says something about the reality of the person involved. It is clear, that 'in the Name of' is here and elsewhere more than a slogan to enforce the authority of a remark. As it appears clearly throughout this study, the wonderful Name of God is connected to His 'being there'; His presence with us. Instead of 'reality' Stern could have used the word 'presence', "**immersing them into the presence of the Father, the Son and the *Ruach HaKodesh***". Both include that after such an immersion, we see everything more through God's eyes.

Note, that in this Scripture the glorious Name of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** ('Name' here singular!) – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is again associated with the lovely promise that is sooo important to remember: **„I will be with you – always”!**

In the following Bible-verse from Revelation, I see the meaning of the holy Name of God resounding very clearly:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says **the LORD** God, **„Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty."** Revelation 1: 8

Here, **'the LORD'** translates the Greek: **Κυριος** – *Kurios* ('Lord', literally: supreme in authority, often used as a title for gods; a better translation would be **'Highest'**), the common Greek 'translation' for **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** (as e.g. in the later editions of the Septuagint and Old Testament quotes in the New Testament text we now have). The 'Alpha and the Omega' may refer to 'Beginning and End' (cf. Yasha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 43: 10; 44: 6; 48: 12) – which do describe God indeed, but in a Hebrew or Aramaic context (John's native tongue), it would have the additional connotation of 'Aleph and Tav' (the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet) – meaning: 'God, the Creator, and the cross'! God – **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** in the Old Testament – and Jesus are really One! The last part of this verse **'Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty'** very clearly refers back to the holy Name of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ**.

That the Name of **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** remains very relevant, we observe also in Revelations 3: 12, where Jesus declares to the church in Philadelphia that they will literally bear God's Name (in itself not surprising for children of the heavenly Father):

Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will go out no more. And I will write upon him **the Name of My God**, and the name of the city of My God, New Jerusalem, which comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My new Name. Revelation 3: 12

The great number of times the holy Name **אֱלֹהֵינוּ** appears in the Old Testament (more than 6 800 times<sup>43</sup>) is significant indeed, to say the least. Apparently, time and again, God wanted His people to

<sup>42</sup> *The Complete Jewish Bible* – An English Version of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) and *B'rit Hadashah* (New Testament), Jewish New Testament Publications, Clarksville MA USA / Jerusalem Israel, 1998. Compare Galatians 3: 27; Acts 11:16; 8: 15-16; 10: 48; Romans 6: 3. The *PeShitta*, the Syriac-Aramese version of the Bible (based on very old manuscripts) has for 'baptizing' or 'immersing' (after the Greek: βαπτίζοντες) here the word **ܐܡܝܕܘܢܐ** - *w'amedw* – to immerse, enter into.

The column **'Onderdompelen in de Drie-eenheid'** ('Immersing in the Trinity'; in Dutch) by the diaconal / pastoral-legal (debts)counselor Jaap Bos from Eindhoven pointed me to this telling translation of this text.

<sup>43</sup> The theological scholar Franz Delitzsch (1813-1890) is renowned for his good [translation of the New Testament into Hebrew](#) (1877; currently also available for the Bible software **TheWord**). For the books of the New Testament that were originally written in Hebrew (like the Gospel of Matthew), this can be seen as a reconstruction of the original Hebrew text. In this translation out of the 685 occurrences of *Kurios* in the

be reminded that He – though transcending any description – was present with them, is present with them, and will be present with them. Not as an outside masquerade, but as His core Identity, one might say – He IS **The One Always Present** with His people; from the earliest beginnings of all human history till the future eternities!

## God lives up to His significant Name

What I appreciate so much about the Bible, is how God proves His Name throughout the whole Bible. When Adam and Eve had turned their backs on God in Genesis 3, it is God Himself Who searches them again – He chooses for belonging. When Jacob experienced the presence of God in a dream, it says that he got more respect for God and called on God's glorious Name **יְהוָה**. I read God's wonderful Name throughout all the history of the people of Israel. Again and again God is the Almighty One Who is faithful and Who stands up for His people, and Who wants that His people lives in His presence. He wants to be with them, but not to overwhelm them or force Himself on them, no, based on a free choice, on mutual love.

In the New Testament we see that God sends His Son – *'Immanu-El* – to restore us into His fellowship. When Jesus went back to heaven He promised His Spirit to always be with us. In everything we see that splendor, the faithfulness and the longing for nearness. It culminates in the book of Revelations, writing about the end times of this earth, in the wedding of Jesus as the Lamb that let Himself be slaughtered to buy many into freedom and redeem Himself a glorious Bride – consisting of all that showed to take pleasure in belonging to God, in being united under His most glorious Name **יְהוָה**.

In this it is also important, that **יְהוָה** asks His people – and thus: us as well – to be conscious of His Name and so: of His wish to be present in our lives, and to enjoy His presence. That enjoyment can be expressed at any moment in appreciation towards God, for His wonderful presence with us, and by setting time apart at certain moments to celebrate His active presence together, like Israel did during every Shabbath and during all the big festivals (*Pesach*, Pentecost/*Shabhu'ot*, *Sukkot*/Tabernacles, etc.).

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Greek text, and a few occurrences of *Theos* he brings in total **198** back to the magnificent Name **יְהוָה**. This concerns citations from verses of the Old Testament that had the wonderful Name in them, and a limited number of verses that speak clearly of God **יְהוָה** Himself, strikingly often in an atmosphere of closeness! Something similar is observed in [the Hebrew NT translation by Salkinson-Ginsburg](#) from 1886 (also available for *theWord*). In that one the glorious Name of God **יְהוָה** appears **211** times.

Together with the occurrences of the wonderful Name in the Old Testament we come to over **7 000** (!) times the wonderful Name appears in the entire Bible. Truly a very remarkable number!!

This is also clear in the English translation *The Scriptures* of the [Institute for Scripture Research](#), which translates e.g. the mentioned text from [Revelations 1: 8](#) as follows: "I am the 'Aleph' and the 'Taw', Beginning and End," says **יהוה** "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."

## Where did things go wrong? Why was the greatest Name forgotten?

### Something about the holiness and ‘forgetting’ of the lovely Name $\text{YHWH}$

The Name of God is most majestic and holy, and deserves it that we use this magnificent Name purely and respectfully, like Exodus 20:7 tells us:

“You shall not misuse the Name of  $\text{YHWH}$  your God, for  $\text{YHWH}$  will not make anyone clean who misuses his Name. ...”

Leviticus 24: 11-16 even mentions that in Israel the death penalty could be applicable when somebody consciously cursed or blasphemed God’s holy Name. For all clarity: the Hebrew word that is used in Exodus 20: 7 for ‘**mis**(use) / abuse ’ (the King James had: ‘take in vain’) is:  $\text{שָׁוָה}$  - *shaw*; the meaning of which contains notions such as: devastating, evil, destructive, untruthful/lying/false, in vain (it is related to  $\text{שׁוֹאָה}$  - *sho’ah* - devastation, the Jewish word for the holocaust!). Of the first part of the above text I also encountered the quite accurate translation: “Do not make the Name of  $\text{YHWH}$ , your God, empty or worthless, ...”. In my opinion we make His honorable Name ‘empty’ or ‘worthless’ when we do not honor the meaning associated with the lovely Name (as is stimulated by replacing the glorious Name with some *relatively* empty title like LORD).

The Dutch Messianic pastor/teacher Gerard Wijtsma says after this verse: “*A man and a church who bear God’s name, but do not live with Him, ridicule themselves and thereby also their God.*”<sup>44</sup>

To my idea he so clearly demonstrates that it is possible to abuse the revered Name of God, even *without* pronouncing Him. To know the difference between good usage and abuse of God’s holy Name, it is important to be aware of the great significance of His lovely Name.

Yet, the above verse has been forwarded as a reason *not* to use the wonderful Name. Forbidding the use of the wonderful Name of God among the Israelites has been a two-staged process: first **pronouncing** the Name was arrested (about 400 BC - 70 AD) and then the **writing** of the Name in other texts than the original Hebrew scrolls of the Old Testament, was eradicated (about 100-200 AD). Most remarkable is the fact that both of these periods follow shortly after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (the destruction of the first Temple around 586 BC and the destruction of the Herodian Temple in 70 AD).<sup>45</sup> God had announced such a destruction of the Temple in case the people would not hold on to the covenant that God had sealed with them in His Own Name, in other words: if they would not abide by His Name and by what His Name stood for. So, we see that holding on to the testimony of God’s Name had already diminished considerably in the periods before the final eradication of the pronunciation or writing of the Name, respectively. After the destruction of the Temple another factor was added, being that the Jewish religious leaders were very distressed and disillusioned. The Temple represented God’s presence in their midst, as we saw earlier. One could say that they had deep doubts whether God was still with them. That caused some psychological resistance against pronouncing God’s Name, because that Name represented a clear hint to God’s presence. Add to that their (legalistic) belief that the destruction was the result of a failure to obey the laws sufficiently punctually. So, their fear for another destruction and their hope to advance the coming of the Messiah let them to ‘put a law around the law’ (making all laws more strict). They said that it was no longer allowed to pronounce the Name and corroborated that from the above commandment not to use it in vain (Exodus 20: 7; cf also Leviticus 24: 11-16 where abuse was met with a death sentence). They taught not to pronounce the Name at all (“*Whoever pronounces the Name forfeits his portion in the future world*” – Sanh. xi. 1), and to replace  $\text{YHWH}$  by words like ‘*Elohim - God*, or ‘*Adonai - My Highest/Lord/Master*, or *Ha Shem - The Name*, in reading out loud whenever encoun-

<sup>44</sup> Gerard Wijtsma, “[Wet contra genade??](#)” – [Zijn wet en genade tegenstrijdig?](#) (‘Law opposing grace?’ – is there a contradiction between law and grace?; in Dutch) (📄), web-document, *Dutch Messianic Platform*; my translation. He implicitly refers to the Dutch translation of the mentioned verse from: *TORA – De onderwijzing van Mosje (Torah – The teaching of Moshe*; in Dutch), (translated from the Hebrew by Lineke Buijs and Marianne Storm), Querido, NL, 1994; p. 230. There verse 7<sup>a</sup> is translated into Dutch as: “[Je draagt niet de naam van JHWH je e’lohim voor de schijn...](#)” (something like: “[You do not bear the name of YHWH your e’lohim in vain / for the appearance/show...](#)”).

<sup>45</sup> In ‘The Evolution of Name Theology’, William M. Schniedewind (see note 4) also observes that after the exile and destruction of the Temple, the glorious Name is often replaced – even in the Biblical narrative itself. E.g. when referring to the temple, expressions like ‘the house of  $\text{YHWH}$ ’ are replaced by ‘the house of God’ in post-exilic writings.

tering **יְהוָה** in a written text. Slowly and gradually the mentioning of the Name of God was removed – first from public life till finally even the high priest wasn't allowed to pronounce the Name anymore. Therefore, and quite unfortunately, the original pronunciation of **יְהוָה** is not known for certain anymore. It has been 'forgotten'. That the holy Name actually once was used and pronounced by 'ordinary' people, appears for example from what has been written on the time of the patriarchs: Abraham (Genesis 24: 3, 7), his servant (Genesis 24: 12, 27 (2x), 35, 40, 42, 44, 48 (2x), 56), Isaac (Genesis 25: 19; 26: 25; 27: 27), and Jacob (a.o. Genesis 28: 10-22 (2x)), as we saw earlier. Jacob's story in Genesis 28: 16-17 appeared very significant in that.

Julius Fürst (citing old writers such as Tacitus, Lydus, Proclus, Plutarch, and Julian) in his good Hebrew dictionary<sup>46</sup> what is probably the most important reason for the Judaist leaders, after their lengthy stay in Babylon, to declare the glorious Name of God secret. From old days the reigning Chaldeans knew already of a god, whose name was written in het Aramaic as **יְהוָה** and in Greek as **Ἰαώ** - Iaho/Yaho. According old writers this God was just as mysterious and unmentionable as the Hebrew **יְהוָה** / **יְהוָה** - YaHO, and His name was communicated only to the initiates. The Phoenicians had a supreme god with a three-letter, secret name, which was **Ἰαώ** - Iaho/Yaho as well. So, for 70 years in Babylon they had been taught to keep the Name of their God **יְהוָה** - **יְהוָה** secret. **Secrecy of the glorious Name **יְהוָה** was a habit, adopted from Babylonian idolatry!**

**„YHWH ... is a name,  
not a mysterious code,  
but a promise ...  
“I will be with you” ...”**  
**A. Ravestein**  
in: *De Roepende*, p.48-49.  
my translation

Additionally Max Reisel and G.H. Parke-Taylor both mention another reason for the Jewish leaders to discourage the use of The Name: the then frequent magical use or abuse of The Name.<sup>47</sup> In particular amongst mystics, Cabbalists and Gnostics great magical powers were ascribed to various forms of The Name. The wonderful Name is then seen as a kind of secret mantra or incantation, the power of which is to be restrained by keeping it secret (as a powerful 'weapon' He should not fall into the hands of the enemy!). May this be a warning to us! However, this also shows that when we radically reject this magic use of the wonderful Name, nothing remains from this reason to hide the wonderful Name, either. On the contrary, for the secrecy about the glorious Name just stimulated the mysticism.<sup>48</sup>

After the destruction of the second Temple (that Herod had extended and beautified) around 70 AD, the Jewish leaders in their disillusion went even a step further. Where they had first still maintained the concept of Gods presence *on paper* (in theory), around the end of the first and during the second and third centuries it was totally deleted from all written texts, except the original holy scrolls of the Old Testament. Until that time, the Greek translation of the Old Testament – the Septuagint – still

<sup>46</sup> Julius Fürst (Samuel Davidson, vert.), *Hebrew & Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, Bernhard Tauchnitz, Leipzig / Williams & Norgate, London/Edinburgh, 1885; p.548 (the 589-th p. in the digital copy).

<sup>47</sup> See the thesis of Max Reisel (note 4), p.3, and G.H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh – The Divine Name in the Bible*, (note 4); p.93 ff. I happened to notice that [Israel ben Eliezer](#) (1698-1760; particularly active in what is now southeast Poland and Ukraine), who is considered to be the founder of Chassidism (also: Hasidism), is also named *Baal Shem Tov: Master of The Good Name* (or actually: *Good Master of The Name*), because he 'guarded' The Name of God and performed a lot of miracles (a.o. according Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* already since the time before he became well educated in the Bible). A lot of stories are told about him, amongst others one, where he blessed a childless couple with a son by using the holy Name. However, the consequence was that he thereby forsook his own life in the future world, as the story goes. The tale then praises him by saying, that he continued with joy because now it was clear that he didn't do what he did to secure his own position in the future world, but out of love only. God's reaction then, we are told, was to re-give him his place in the future world...

This kind of stories show me how influential Jewish movements may have some good elements (Israel ben Eliezer e.g. emphasized the love of God and the joy to be experienced in Him) while at the same time being full of sorcery and a magic way of dealing with faith and life (related to qabbalah (also: cabbala), panentheism, etc.). This reflects a view on God that is hard to align with that of the Bible...

<sup>48</sup> In his article '[A nameless God: Judaeo-Christian and Gnostic 'theologies of the Name'](#)' (see note 4) Guy G. Stroumsa explains that the secrecy about the glorious Name by the rabbinic religious leaders indeed stimulated the mysticism around it strongly. If the Judaist leaders had explained things – like I do here –, the people had received concrete suggestions for respectful sharing of the glorious Name and about the associated experiencing and enjoying of God's presence.

contained the original Name of God, mostly in the original, Hebrew script. However, in all later versions of the Septuagint the Name of God is suddenly replaced by the Greek *Κυριος* - *Kyrios* ('Lord', literally: higher in authority, often used as title for the gods). In that way, the Name (and all that looks like it) also disappeared from the Greek texts of the New Testament.<sup>49</sup> The early (Roman) Church and the mutual aversion between that Church and the Jews has contributed to this as well. In 2008 the present Roman Catholic Church has decreed (again) that the Name of God is not to be pronounced in the liturgy.<sup>50</sup>



*Fragment from an old version of the Septuagint with the glorious Name of God in Paleo-Hebrew*

It is most remarkable what God Himself had said via the prophet Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) about causing people to 'forget' His Name, just before the first period:

Am I a God near by, says **יְהוָה**, and not a God from afar?  
 Or can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I do not see him, says **יְהוָה**?  
 Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, says **יְהוָה**?  
 I have heard what the prophets said, those who prophesy lies in My Name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long is this there in the heart of the prophets, the prophets of lies; yea, the prophets of the deceit of their own heart? **They plot to cause My people to forget My Name** by their dreams which they tell, each one to his neighbor, even as **their fathers have forgotten My Name** for Ba'al.

Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 23: 23-27

This text is ever so more harrowing regarding the traditional English replacement of the wonderful Name of God, when we consider what the English translation of the Hebrew word Ba'al is – that is: 'Lord'! So, the above text actually says: "... **as their fathers have forgotten My Name for 'Lord'**."! In this light we see that the confusion and spiritual battle over **יְהוָה** and 'Lord' is already quite old. Think of Elijah (even his name *Eli-Yahu* says it: *Yahu is God!*), in 1 Kings 18 (especially the verses 21, 24, 26, 36-37 en 39)...

It is striking also how the Bible itself (even the Torah!) in general speaks about the usage of names of gods:

"Take heed to all that I have said to you; and **make no mention of the names of other gods**, nor let such be heard out of your mouth." Exodus 23: 13;

"You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree; you shall tear down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and burn their Asherim

<sup>49</sup> Usually it is said that the Jewish leaders after the destruction of the temple became more punctual to prevent a following deportation and destruction and to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, and that they therefore made the laws more strict. I join this vision, but as psycho-pastoral counselor I also add an obvious explanation from trauma-theory. Somebody who experienced a great threat, such that a former religious conviction becomes hard to maintain as truth, will often try to erase reminders to this former conviction.

I find it most remarkable, that after the destruction of the Temple of Solomon pronouncing the Name of God was slowly eradicated, and after the destruction of the Herodian Temple also writing the Name was eradicated (apart from in the original Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, that were holy and which were not allowed to be changed). Hereby in fact God's Name and covenantal promise: "I am with you" was denied out of the pain of the destructions that followed on overt negligence of God's desire to be close. I consider it extremely sad that 70 generations of Christians have joined in with this pain and legalism induced thinking.

<sup>50</sup> In June 2008 the Vatican (Pope Benedict) has issued that in the church-liturgy the Name of God should no longer be pronounced (this was communicated via CWN by the US Bisshop for Liturgy, Arthur J. Serratelli von Paterson in the: ['Vatican directive: 'Yaweh' inappropriate for liturgical use'](#)). The Vatican would have done this in response to Riccardo Di Segni, the Chief Rabbi of Rome.

with fire; you shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and **destroy their name** out of that place. You shall not do so to **יְהוָה** your God.” Deuteronomy 12: 2-4;

“Therefore be very steadfast to keep and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left, **that you may not be mixed with these nations left here among you, or make mention of the names of their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow down yourselves to them, but cleave to יְהוָה your God as you have done to this day.**” Yahu-shu‘a (Joshua) 23: 6-8;

cf. also Psalm 16: 4; Hoshe‘a 2:17; Zekhar-Yahu (Zekariah) 13: 2-3.

And in Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 11 we read how the leaders of *Yehudah* (the Jews) later thought about Jesus – The Tree of Life – when they had Him crucified:

„Let us destroy The Tree with its fruit, let us cut Him off from the land of the living, **so that His Name may be remembered no more!**” Yirme-Yahu 11: 19b

**The usage of the name of any godhead (God or idol) is connected to worshipping that godhead, and not calling or concealing the respective name to consciously *not* worshipping that god.** Not mentioning someone’s name is like **ignoring or sentencing** that person or godhead **to death**. In refusing to speak the glorious Name of **יְהוָה**, the responsible Jewish and so-called-Christian (mainly Roman Catholic!) teachers refused to acknowledge and worship **יְהוָה**, the Creator of the universe!! And we as 21-st-century Christians (and Jews), would we mention the names of all kinds of idols boldly and frequently (e.g. in the names of the days of the week), and *not* mention and confess the glorious Name of our wonderful and mighty God **יְהוָה** ??? That cannot be true!

I really find this really stunning! Which religion has ever forgotten or ignored the very name of its godhead, its supreme deity? Which has ever annihilated and eradicated the knowledge of the name and character of its ultimate object of worship? And all those other godheads and objects of worship are really nothing – idols only... How is it possible that 2 500 years of Jewish religion and 2 000 years of Christianity has allowed this to happen within its ranks? A radically false translation of such texts as Exodus 6: 2; Yasha‘-Yahu (Isaiah) 42:8 and many others has misled millions of believers to think that the title LORD is the proper Name of God, at the expense of remaining totally ignorant with regard to the true, lovely and glorious Name **יְהוָה**, and all the glory and richness of the meaning of that great Name...

In the last Bible-book of the First Testament (Malachi) we see that God called *Yehudah* still three times, to learn from the people around them. Even those ‘heathen’ people knew the glorious Name of God and brought honor to His Name or will bring honor to His Name, respectively!

For from the rising of the sun to its setting **My Name will be great among the (heathen) nations**, and in every place incense is offered to **My Name**, and a pure offering; for **My Name will be great among the nations**, says **יְהוָה** Who brings multitudes together.

Malachi 1: 11

Cursed be the cheat who has a male in his flock, and vows it, and yet sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished; for I am a great King, says **יְהוָה** Who brings multitudes together, and **My Name is feared among the (heathen) nations**.

Malachi 1: 14

**יְהוָה** connects consequences to it, when *Yehudah* would not restore His glorious Name in honor:

If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart **to give glory to My Name**, says **יְהוָה** Who brings multitudes together, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; indeed I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.

Malachi 2: 2

## Something on the pronunciation of the magnificent Name of God

My focus in this study is not on the pronunciation of the holy Name of God. In the course of history, a lot of philosophies and debates have emerged about that pronunciation. The only thing of which we are certain is that the original pronunciation is not known absolutely for sure anymore. Below I first present some observations, to subsequently assert that – in my view – the pronunciation of the glorious Name is actually quite clear.

A short version of the holy Name of God also appears on its own:  $\text{יְהוָה}$  –  $\text{יהו}$  / *YH* / *IA*, and there is little discussion about the pronunciation of this being *Yah*<sup>51</sup>, though some say that the pronunciation of  $\text{יְהוָה}$  /  $\text{יהו}$  must have been *Yahu*. If we see this as the first part of  $\text{יְהוָה}$  ( $\text{יהוהו}$  / *YHWH* / *IAUA*) then the pronunciation could well start with *Yah...* However, also a pronunciation *Y...ah* could be related to the short form *Yah*. And it is not 100% certain whether  $\text{יְהוָה}$  /  $\text{יהו}$  really is a short form of  $\text{יְהוָה}$ .<sup>52</sup> If it is, this increases the likelihood that  $\text{יְהוָה}$  /  $\text{יהו}$  was pronounced as *Yahu*.

**The Masoretes** were Jewish scholars in the Middle Ages who wanted to secure the pronunciation of the Hebrew Bible for the future. They assumed that the Hebrew text of the Old Testament existed almost only of consonants and was not well readable without extra vowel pointings and therefore added these vowel signs to it.

To the glorious Name they added in relatively few cases the vowels *shewa e*, *cholam o*, and *qamats a*. Quite some 15<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> century Bible translations based the form *Jehovah* (or a variant, as: *Yehowah*, *Yehouah*, *Iehouah*, *Jehova*, or *Jehowah*) on this, using it in a few instances (e.g. KJV, JPS) or throughout (as the ASV does).<sup>53</sup>

However, this presentation and pronunciation *Jehovah* or *Yehowah* has been the basis for much debate. It has been argued that it is based on a mis-interpretation and *in that case* it is possibly incorrect. It has been contended that the Masoretes only added the vowel signs of *Adonai* (the beginning *qamats a* would be ‘evaporated’ to a *shewa e*), to stimulate the reader *not* to read the glorious Name itself but “*Adonai*” (my Lord/Master/Higher Authority) instead, which erroneously yielded the pronunciation *Yehowah* or *Jehovah*. Further, it is not 100% clear to me, whether the *cholam* stands with the first *hé* or with the *wav*. It seems to be with the *wav*, and in this case it is more correct to assert that this would lead to the pronunciation: *Yeho-ah* because the *cholam o* changes the *wav* itself into an *o* while canceling the possible *w*-sound of the *wav*.

However, in the majority of cases the Masoretes only added the two vowels *e* (*shewa*; with the *jod*),

<sup>51</sup> Once, after hearing a very, very sad story from someone, I noticed that I – at a loss of words for that horrible situation – in a kind of sigh said “*Yah*” (I must tell you that the Dutch for ‘yes’ is ‘ja’, pronounced as ‘ya’; if I had been English I might have said ‘yeah’). I think you recognize. It was as if in my spirit I heard  $\text{יְהוָה}$  reply: “*Did you call Me?*” Just before I had been working on this chapter... I realized that the Holy Spirit in God’s abundant grace sometimes prays through us, without us even noticing, and calls on the Name of God – even in something as seemingly insignificant as a sigh – especially in a situation where we know we have nothing else...

<sup>52</sup> The co-existence of two variants of names like ‘*Eliah*: ‘*Eli-Yah* and ‘*Eli-Yahu* (*Yah* is My God and *Yahu* is My God, respectively) seems to corroborate that *Yah* and *Yahu(w)ah* (or a form where the first *qamats a* is softened to a *shewa e*: *Yehu(w)a*) could very well be related. By the way, the incorporation of (a shortened form of) the precious Name of God in a multitude of human names in the Bible (*Yehudah*, *Yehoseph* (*Joseph*), *Yehoshu’a*, *Yehochanan* (the source of *John*), *Yehoyaqiyim*, *Yehoram*, *Yehukal*, *Yehuw*’ (*Jehu*), *EliYahu*, *JeremiYah*, etc.), I see also as a clear sign of the freedom people once felt to speak the great Name of God with boldness; a fact to which later rabbinic thought is quite in contradiction.

In his book *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašû Documents* (Harvard, Scholars Press, Missoula MT, 1976; ISBN 978 0 89130019 9), Michael David Coogan shows that many of these names that the Masoretes gave vowels according *Yeho-*, appear in old clay-tablets from the city of Nippur in Babylonia as *Yahu-*. It looks like that these names were changed shortly before, in or after the Babylonian exile, or that the Masoretes changed these names consciously! See also: Paul-Alain Beaulieu, ‘[Yahwistic Names in Light of Late Babylonian Onomastics](#)’, in: Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, Manfred Oeming (Eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period – Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (Winona Lake, Indiana, 2011; ISBN 978-1-57506-197-9; Part 2: *Negotiating Identity: Cultural, Historical, Social, and Environmental Factors*).

<sup>53</sup> E.g. in Exodus 6: 3 the William Tyndale Bible and the Geneva Bible of 1587 had already *Iehouah* and the King James translation of 1611 *Jehouah* (corresponding to *Yehouah* in current writing; the old *J* at the beginning sounded like the current *Y*).

and a (*qamats*; with the *wav*, before the last *hey*).<sup>54</sup> Direct application of this would lead to the pronunciation *Yehwah*, which does not make any sense, or, when interpreting the *wav* as an *u*, to *Yehuah*, which makes a lot of sense, as we shall see further on. As above, it has been argued that these vowel pointings were meant to denote *not* to pronounce the glorious Name but to read something else, like the Aramaic *Shema*, or *Adonai*, as above, instead.

It is difficult to be sure that the addition of the vowels *e-o-a* or *e- -a* led to a completely different pronunciation than the pronunciation attributed to the glorious Name in the last age of the Old Testament. It has been suggested that the Masoretes' vowelization was consciously or more or less 'accidentally' (led by God) (almost) an (almost) 'right' one (for either the Masoretes did not know the original pronunciation – which is unlikely –, in which case they could not mislead on purpose, or – more likely – they still knew some 'valid' pronunciation and did follow that one after all).<sup>55</sup>

In relatively few cases (about 300 of the almost 7000, only where יהוה appears together with *Adonai*) the Masoretes added the vowels *chataf segol e* (as in *bed*), *cholam o* and *chirik i*. This would have been to stimulate the reader to read *'Elohim* (which has these vowels) instead, in these cases, to avoid a double *'Adonai* (as would have resulted from the *e-o-a* vowelization).

Some linguists do see grammatical problems with the Masoretes' vowelization,<sup>56</sup> but in my view the glorious Name is above grammatical rules; if grammatical rules must be broken to present the proper pronunciation, let it be so.

Others see the vowelization by the Masoretes as a faithful representation of the right pronunciation (at the time of the Masoretes!).<sup>57</sup>

At first, a replacement by *Ha-Shem* (litt.: *The Name*)<sup>58</sup> and from that a vowelization with *a- -e* (leading to *Yahweh*) has also been applied by some Masoretes. The fact that this was discontinued

<sup>54</sup> The exact vowel signs of *'Adonai* have nowhere been applied to the glorious Name in the source texts. The numbers found in various source texts of the First Testament by different researchers, differ. Uniformly it appears that in the Westminster Leningrad Codex (based on the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) more than 4000 times the form יהוה appears (without *cholam*), and only a few dozen (according to some at most a few hundred) times the form יהוה (with *cholam*). In the Aleppo-codex the dominance of יהוה is even clearer still. Only in an old (but no longer considered accurate) *Miqraot Gedolot* text (on which the original KJV based itself) the form with *cholam* occurred more often.

<sup>55</sup> A long time I avoided publications by the French scientist [Gérard Gertoux](#) (once President of the French Bible Society, and President of the *Association Biblique de Recherche d'Anciens Manuscrits*) because he later joined the *Jehova's witnesses*. However, he did very extensive research (published as: *Un historique du nom divin. Un nom Encens* and in English: *Y H W H in Fame Only: A Historical Record of the Divine Name*) where he asserts that *Yehowah*, or the already mentioned variant *Yeho-ah*, would have been the proper pronunciation. However, [he also says](#) the two sounds 'e' (ay) and 'o' are not archaic because the only original vowels in Hebrew and other Semitic tongues are only the i, u and a, that is to say e and o always arise from an obscuring or contraction of these three pure sounds (with reference to A.E. Cowley - *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 1988 Oxford Clarendon Press, p. 35). That forces to see his earlier mentioned observations on the pronunciation of the Name as referring to later times, and the combination of his most valuable sources with this most essential remark about the e and the o leads unmistakably to asserting the pronunciation *Yahu-ah* as the most original (oldest) one.

<sup>56</sup> The respected Dutch Hebraist Pieter A Siebesma sees no room for the pronunciation *Jehova(h)*. He says about this (in: *Handleiding bij de studie van het Bijbels Hebreeuws (Manual to the study of Biblical Hebrew*; in Dutch), Institute Da'at, Lunteren NL, 2008, p. 37-41): "On the basis ... of grammatical arguments, one can state with certainty that however the name of God may have sounded, it will not be *Jehova*." He defends this from the fact that two vowel signs (the o and the a) have both been added to the *Wav*, which is normally impossible (note that many Internet-versions of the Hebrew Bible cannot even realize this in the current Hebrew fonts and therefore omit the o altogether: יהוה).

Even a theologian/spokesperson of the so called *Jehovah's witnesses* – though they often still defend the form *Jehovah* – has admitted that this pronunciation is probably not completely correct.

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. [The Pronunciation of the Name](#), by the Karaite Jew Nehemia Gordon. He also gives a good analysis of the theory that suggests the pronunciation *Yahweh*.

<sup>58</sup> The Karaite Jew Nehemia Gordon and others see the preference for the title *Ha-Shem* (and the Aramaic *Shema* among Samaritans) as appellation for God related to the name אַשִׁימָא - '*Ashima*' of an idol of the people from Chamaat in Syria, who were added to the northern Israelites after the influential people among them had been carried into exile (2 Kings 17:30; see the document in the previous note and esp. footnote 7 at p.6 therein).

could be an indication that the e- -a vowelization, associated with **Yehuah**, as used in the majority of cases, was somehow correct after all.

**The Samaritans** form another source of signals around the pronunciation of the glorious Name. The Samaritans were primarily people of other nations deported by Shalmaneser, an Assyrian emperor, around 700 before Christ to the region of the also deported, unfaithful original 10 (or 9<sup>59</sup>) tribes of Northern Israel, with a single Israeli priest to teach them the religion of the region (see 2 Kings 17; and 2 Chronicles 30: 1 - 31: 6; according to the currently surviving Samaritans they are descendants of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh; Northern Israel involved the 12 tribes minus the tribes Yehudah (Judah) and Benjamin and the tribe Levi, who had joined Yehudah). The God/god (?) of these Samaritans is described in old Greek texts as Ἰαβὲ - *Iabe*.<sup>60</sup> Various authors from the fourth century, like Epiphanius and Theodoretus refer to that to illustrate how the glorious Name of God should be pronounced. This is the most important basis for the pronunciation of the glorious Name that is currently most common under theologians: **Yahweh** (of which two interpretations exist in practice: *Yahwéh* – ending on an *ay* sound – and *Yáhwéh* – where the *e* sounds as in the English *bed*). This pronunciation is, except on the Samaritan form, also based on (Aramaic) grammatical relatedness and similarity in sound with *'EhjeH*. This transliteration has been adopted in various translations as well, such as the World English Bible (2002) (in Dutch a.o. the Leidse translation, the Canisius Translation (1936/1940) and the Willibrord translation of 1961/1975). This pronunciation was defended by the Dutch Old Testament theologian J.P. Lettinga, for many years Professor of the right wing of the Theological University in Kampen, amongst others.<sup>61</sup> I have found no other solid archeological arguments for this pronunciation.

If we want more certainty and clarity, we have to go further back in history. An important clue is then given by the first-century Jewish historian and Levite Josephus Flavius. He writes about the Name as **four vowels** that stood on the golden tiara of the high priest.<sup>62</sup> Now it is such, that old Hebrew did not have consonants only (as it is often erroneously believed), it also had vowels or 'mothers of reading' (*matres lectiones*): the י (yod) served as *i*, the ו (vav) as *u* and the ה (hē/hey; originally: āh) as *a* (according to A.E. Cowley, Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar, Oxford Clarendon Press, 1988, p. 35, these are precisely all vowel sounds that existed in old Hebrew, though later also the א (aleph) and י (ayin) were sometimes used to represent a kind of vowel-sound for *a* or *è*, and *a* respectively). From this, the pronunciation **Yah u ah** (or possibly **Ye h u ah**) can be reconstructed with great confidence.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Northern Israel involved the 12+1 tribes minus the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the tribe of Levi, who had joined Judah at some moment as well; 12+1 because the tribe of Joseph was split in Manasseh and Ephraim; counted after the 12 sons of Jacob there were, after the transfer of Levi to Judah, only 9 tribes left in the Northern kingdom and 3 in Judah; counting the allotted areas there were 10 and 2 respectively (the tribe of Levi had had no area, the tribe of Joseph had 2).

<sup>60</sup> Quite likely, this does not refer to the glorious Name of God at all. Even the Samaritans – under similar strong influence of Aramaic idolatry – replaced and *did not* mention the glorious Name at all. So, what the Greeks may well have heard the Samaritans talk about is the *replacement* יָפֵה - *Jafeh* – Wonderful one, which they *did* use.

<sup>61</sup> See: P.A. Siebesma, *Handleiding bij de studie van het Bijbels Hebreeuws (Manual to the study of Biblical Hebrew*; in Dutch), Institute Da'at, Lunteren NL, 2008, p. 37-41. And: J.P. Lettinga (+ T. Muraoka, W.Th. van Peursen), *Grammatica van het Bijbels Hebreeuws (Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*; in Dutch), Brill, Leiden, NL, 1976 / 1996. See also: Jan Pieter van de Giessen, '**JHWH**' ('YHWH'; in Dutch), webdocument, part of the site *Aantekeningen bij de Bijbel (Notes to the Bible*; in Dutch), 1985-2009. This document has a lot in common with that of Siebesma, due to co-operation of the two authors.

This form I encounter a.o. also in [the Q-Bible](#), an Internet-version of the Hebrew original text I frequently use (with pronunciation-help and the King James translation in parallel), that has recently even given The Name new vowel signs in the 'Names restored KJV' version, that fit this pronunciation: הַוְּהַיָּ.

<sup>62</sup> Josephus wrote about the clothing of the high priest: "A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, embroidered by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown in which was engraven the sacred name [of God]: it consists of four vowels." (*The Jewish War* V: 235; cf. William Whiston (Ed.), [The works of Flavius Josephus: the learned and authentic Jewish historian](#), Harvard, Cambridge MA, 1910, p. 532). Cf. Exodus 28: 36-39.

<sup>63</sup> This pronunciation has been defended a.o. by Max Reisel in his extraordinary thorough thesis: *The mysterious Name of Y.H.W.H.*, (see note 4). He does so from a multitude of backgrounds and arguments: language history, grammar, and various early historical sources – in particular from (far) before and the first two centuries after Christ. He so unambiguously arrives at the pronunciation *Yahuah* (*Yah u ah*) or *Yehuah*. In Reisel's own words: "vocalisation of the Tetragrammaton must originally have been *YeHuàH* or *YaHuàH*." The objection against the ending **-ah**, being often a typically feminine ending, while God would be more



In [the Lachish letters](#) – of an older date: between 600 and 500 BC – the glorious Name appears often in full, and also in a lot of people’s names (then mostly as **יְהוָה** / **יְהוּ** – **YaHU**, even most occurrences of the **ו** there are commonly transliterated as *u*). The pronunciation of the many names containing a part of the great Name of God, also point in this direction (especially in the direction of the pronunciation variant **Yahuah**).<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, there is a remarkable parallel of the pronunciation **YeHUaH** with **יְהוָה** / **יְהוּדָה** – **Yehudah** – Judah/Jew (from **יְהוּדָה** and *yadah/wadah*; litt.: **YHWH** / **IAUA** -praising, as we saw when looking at the life of Jacob<sup>68</sup>); indeed, we have here only a letter *d* (*daleth*) extra for the name of the people of **יְהוּדָה**, where the addition of the **ד** / **דַּלֶּת** (*daleth* = door, movement) can be seen as referring to the people *through whom* all peoples could learn to know **יְהוָה**. Additionally, this pronunciation shows a remarkable parallel



One or Master) of the heaven”.

[By the way, this form **YaHU** is hard to relate to the pronunciation of the full Name of God as **Yahweh**, which makes this latter pronunciation a lot less plausible.]

<sup>67</sup> For an overview of these names see: [http://www.bayithamashiyach.com/Names\\_listed\\_bearing\\_His\\_Name.pdf](http://www.bayithamashiyach.com/Names_listed_bearing_His_Name.pdf). In the course of this study it stroke me how many names in the Hebrew source-text end at **יְהוּ** - **YaHU** (or **יְהוָה** - **IAhU**), where this has been shortened to -jah, -ia, -iah or -ijah or removed in English and/or Dutch (and often even already in the currently available version of the Greek Septuagint translation they were often transformed to -as) almost structurally (e.g.: *Abihu* (my father is ‘he’) instead of *Abi-Yahu*’ (my father is **YaHU**’ - the *aleph* at the very end could vocally relate well to the last A in **IAUA**), *Adonijah* instead of *Adon-Yahu*, *Ahaziah* instead of *Achaz-Yahu*, *Ahijah* instead of *Achi-Yahu*, *Amariah* instead of *Amar-Yahu*, *Amaziah* instead of *Amats-Yahu*, *Athaliah* instead of *Athal-Yahu*, *Azaliah* instead of *Atsal-Yahu*, *Azariah* instead of *Azar-Yah* and *Azar-Yahu*, *Benaiah* instead of *Bena-Yahu*, *Berechiah* instead of *Berekh-Yahu*, *Bukkiah* instead of *Buq-Yahu*, *Chenaniah* instead of *Khenan-Yahu*, *Delaiah* instead of *Dela-Yahu*, *Elijah* instead of *Eli-Yahu*, *Gedaliah* instead of *Gedal-Yahu*, *Hashabiah* instead of *Chashab-Yahu*, *Hilkiah* instead of *Chilqi-Yahu*, *Hizkiah* or *Hezekiah* instead of *Chizqi-Yahu*, *Isaiah* instead of *Yesha-Yahu*, *Jaaziah* instead of *Ja’az-Yahu*, *Jehdeiah* instead of *Jechdi-Yahu*, *Jehizkiah* instead of *Jechizqi-Yahu*, *Jeremiah* instead of *Yirme-Yahu*, *Jeshaiah* or *Isaiah* instead of *Yesha’-Yahu*, *Jesiah* instead of *Yishshi-Yahu*, *Josiah* instead of *Yoshi-Yahu*, *Kushaiah* instead of *Quwsha-Yahu*, *Maaseiah* instead of *Ma’ase-Yahu*, *Mattaniah* instead of *Mattan-Yahu*, *Mattithiah* instead of *Mattith-Yahu*, *Micah* and *Micaiah* instead of *Mikha-Yehu* (Strong 4321; cf 4318), *Mikneiah* instead of *Miqne-Yahu*, *Nethaniah* instead of *Nethan-Yahu*, *Obadiah* instead of *Obad-Yahu*, *Rehabiah* instead of *Rechab-Yahu*, *Remaliah* instead of *Remal-Yahu*, *Shechaniah* instead of *Shekhan-Yahu*, *Sephatiah* instead of *Shephat-Yahu* (note: translated completely away in 1 Chron.12:6, probably after the Septuagint), *Shebaniah* instead of *Sheban-Yahu*, *Shemaiah* instead of *Shema’-Yahu*, *Tobijah* instead of *Tobi-Yahu*, *Tebaliah* instead of *Tebal-Yahu*, *Uzziah* instead of *Uzzi-Yahu*, *Zechariah* instead of *Zekhar-Yahu*, *Zedekiah* instead of *Tsidqi-Yahu*, *Zephaniah* instead of *Tsephan-Yahu*, etc. – there are 654 Bibleverses in which one or more names with **יְהוּ** - **YaHU** appear! The wonderful Name of **יְהוָה** in the very nice name **עֵלְיָהוּ** (*El-Yeho-ena-i* = at **יְהוָה** is my eye; a.o. in 1 Chron. 26: 3) is often hardly recognizable anymore; the Septuagint makes it into *ελιοεναι*, the AV *Elioenai*. In this light, or more correct: in this obscuration, it is not too strange that we got estranged from the great Name of God **Yahu-ah** / **IAUA**... I am somewhat shocked, though: one cannot change or abbreviate the holy Name of God (or the larger part of that Name that is enclosed in the name of someone who refers to Him) after one’s own liking, and certainly not in such a way that the glorious Name can no longer be recognized at all?! On the contrary, certainly with these names in a translation I would expect a footnote that gives the meaning, which in all of these names refers clearly to the glorious Name of God.

<sup>68</sup> There is a peculiarity about the name **יְהוּדָה** - **Yehudah**. Here, the word **הוּד** seems fitted like a precious jewel in the middle of the Name (the Being of) **יְהוָה** - **YaH**. **הוּד** is supposed to come from an unused root and means: grandeur: – beauty, comeliness, excellency, glorious, glory, goodly, honor, majesty. Not unfitting for the precious Beloved of **יְהוָה** / **יְהוּדָה** / **יְהוָה** the Almighty... (I discovered this when I came across the name **עַמְיָהוּד** – normally transl(ite)rated: Ammihud (people of splendour), though the **יְהוּ** - **YaHU** in his name also seems to show his close affiliation with **יְהוָה** – the Source of his splendor and His people! Something similar in the name **אֲבִיהוּד** – normally read as Abihud - my father is majesty, but also readable as Abi-Yahud - my father is **יְהוָה**-praiser. That praising **יְהוָה** / **יְהוּדָה** and experiencing splendor and majesty are so close, also in the Hebrew language, does not surprise me at all...)

to the pronunciation of Jesus' proper Hebrew name: **Yeshu'ah** (or *Yehoshu'a*) (more on the relationships between the Names of God and Jesus further on in this article). Isn't it remarkable that the most precious Name of God **YeHUaH**, that of His people **Yehudah** and that of His Son **Yeshu'ah**, show such great similarity?

Still others have argued for variants on the above, such as *Yahawah* (in parallel to the similar looking Hebrew word for love: אהבה *'ahabha*).<sup>69</sup> Or *Yahu(w)eh*, because of early Greek transliterations of The Name that presented as: *Ἰαουε* - *Ya-u-eh* or *Ya-u-ah*.<sup>70</sup> Note that *Ya-u-eh* is not far from the pronunciation *Yahweh* (with a soft *u*-like, and not a continental European *w*).

The Hebrew language has been in development during many centuries (think of how drastically English has changed in the last few centuries already). Also the pronunciation of the glorious Name of God seems to have experienced such a development. My hypothesis/reconstruction of that development is, that the glorious Name was originally pronounced 'according the letters' (old vowels!) (איהוה / יהוה / **IAUA**), as **Yahu-ah** (**YaHUaH**). According Reisel this is in full agreement with the grammar of the old Hebrew (a.o. around the verb אהה / הוה - *hawah / hua* with an old imperfect: אהה - *yahuwu*), the development of words in those times in Semitic languages, and with appearances of the Name of God in other languages, of peoples surrounding Israel. This pronunciation is also in agreement with the many derives personal names ending at אה - i.e. **-Yahu**. The *u* would have shifted towards an *o* in early ages, while its emphasis increased. By the emphasis on the second, the first syllable got less stress, softening the first *a* to *shewah e*: **Yeho(w)ah** – the form possibly still remembered by the Masoretes and the one at the basis of the many (especially: somewhat later) names beginning with **Yeho-** (or *Jeho-*) (in NT and our times even often further shortened to **Jo-**; think of *John-* originally: *Yehochanan*), but according other sources from before the Babylonian exile with **Yahu-**.<sup>71</sup> An intermediate form we encounter in a name like *Jehudah* (with emphasis on the *u*). Later or partly in parallel to this, the ending **-ah** may have been replaced in some areas by the ending **-eh**, leading to **Yahu-eh** (written with a shortened *u* in English also as *Yahweh*).<sup>72</sup>

Finally, it has been suggested that some remnant of the tribe of Levi might still know the proper pronunciation (as the High Priest would pronounce the Holy Name at least once a year during his service in the Holy of Holies of the Temple), though that is doubtful, because even in the last Temple the wonderful Name was hardly ever used – in the end not even on that one special occasion in the year.

A positive side-effect of the holy Name not being pronounced and not being used in most modern translations, is the fact that the Name has not become abused as a vain or cursing word, in the way *Lord* or *Jesus* have been abused. On the other hand the wonderful and lovely Name is also not remembered, proclaimed and praised, as God would have liked to see, and as He commanded.

Not without a reason I speak very reverently about איהוה as **the holy, magnificent, significant, honorable, glorious** or **most precious Name of God**. איהוה more than deserves our highest reverence and respect! I stress that we cannot take איהוה's awesome Name up, or address Him

<sup>69</sup> The [Jewish Encyclopedia](#) (part IX, article 'Names of God', p.161) sees *Yahawah* as a serious possibility, next to *Yahweh*, but suggests also alternatives like *Ihōah*, *Ihehoua* en *Yohoua*.

<sup>70</sup> Greek transliteration used by Clemens of Alexandria and in Magic Papyri. See a.o. Max Reisel's thesis from note 4, p.36-37. I note that a reading *Yaoveh* of this Greek seems possible as well – related to something like *Yahoveh* –, though *Yahu-eh* seems more likely. Regarded that the Greek letter ε *epsilon* sometimes also was the transliteration of a Hebrew *a* with guttural (as in Noah: אה - Greek: *Νοε*), the Greek *Ἰαουε* can as well be a transliteration of *Yahu-ah*.

I have come across an argumentation (a.o. by Anson F. Rainey, Professor Emeritus of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures and Semitic Linguistics, Tel Aviv University) that actually sees a close relationship between *Yahu* (*Yahu(w)*) and *Yahweh* (*Yah(w)e(h)*) – in sound very close to *Yahu-eh*; I place the *w* of *Yah(w)e(h)* between brackets here, because it should be read as a very soft *w* (rather similar to *u*; that is: without lips or tongue touching teeth as they do in northwestern continental European *w* or *v*). *Yahu(w)* ends with a similar sound). *Yahu* in this case would be the brief *preterite* or *jussive* form of the *hiph'il* *Yahweh*.

<sup>71</sup> See Michael David Coogan's book: *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murašû Documents* (Harvard, Scholars Press, Missoula MT, 1976; ISBN 978 0 89130019 9), and note 52.

<sup>72</sup> Possible because in Greek times or under Greek influence – possibly partly via the Samaritans – the ending **-ah** was seen as too feminine, though this is not certain; it is clear though, that in later times in effort to reconstruct the pronunciation this argument often played a large role. Erroneously, by the way, for there are many Hebrew words and names ending on **-ah** that are not or not exclusively feminine, think e.g. of *ra'ah* - shepherd. Even the shorter Name for God, **Yah**, also has an **-ah** ending.

lightly. (As a practical and actually relevant example: A study on Paul I might store in my pc in a file named 'Paul.doc', thus using the name 'Paul' as a mere designator or label, but I would *never* use *the holy Name of God* in any such way!! When I do not refer to the Eternal Himself, I prefer to use 'the glorious Name' or 'the precious Name of God' or so, as I frequently do in this document.) Moses had to remove the shoes (regarded less clean) from his feet when he spoke with God. Similarly, we must use this *holy Name of God* with utmost reverence. On the other hand our reverence is not to neglect the intimacy to which God invites us. Earlier in this study we saw that God Himself calls us to remember, use and think about His Name **יהוה** / **YHWH** / **IAUA** – with utmost respect, though. When I have to pronounce the magnificent Name, I do so personally in the form of **Yahu-ah**, **Yehu-ah** or occasionally **Yahweh**, trusting that He will be gracious when I, in ignorance, would not pronounce His Name completely correctly (as I fully and with confidence trust He does when we say *Jesus*, knowing that His proper Name actually is more like *Ye(ho)shu'ah*).<sup>73</sup> Occasionally I may use a kind of translation like *The Always Present One* or *the God Who is there*.

However, the Bible speaks to me very clearly concerning our (being allowed to or even recommended to) boldly use of the holy Name of God, as a.o. in Exodus 3: 15; and also in the prophecy from Joel 2: 32<sup>a</sup> (significantly quoted by Peter in Acts 2 and by Paul in Romans 10: 13 !):

And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on **the Name** (of) **יהוה**, shall be delivered; ...

That there is power in calling on or calling out the Name **יהוה**, we find in many Bible passages, as in Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 10: 6:

There is none like Thee, **יהוה**! Thou art great and **Thy Name is great in might!**

## **The glorious Name, the breath of **יהוה** and blowing the shofar**

There is something peculiar about the pronunciation **YaHUaH** of the wonderful Name **יהוה** (or the variants **YeHUaH** or **YaHUeH**). If one pronounces **YaHUaH** softly, the sound is like a kind of sigh. It is a “rush of air that is only slightly modified by our lips and tongues”.<sup>74</sup> This reminds me of the life that God ‘breathed’ into every animal and human being, in order to let it, him or her come to life.<sup>75</sup> In quiet stillness and peace, the presence of God **יהוה** brings life to any being.

At a spiritual level the Ruach ha Qodesh – the Holy Ghost Who also comes to us as a breath (cf. also Romans 8: 23-26) – also provides that life of God.

In a very loud voice, the sound of **YaHUaH**, **YeHUaH** or **YaHUeH** still is a “rush of air that is only slightly modified by our lips and tongues”, though in this case resembling a most joyful and victorious blow on a big Shofar, so very central in Biblical exclamation of God’s greatness and glory.<sup>76</sup> The Hebrew word for blowing the shofar - *teruah* - is also the word for a joyful shouting (from

<sup>73</sup> My view in this is influenced by Jesus’ parable in Matthew 25: 14-30. The servant who, distrustful towards his master, had anxiously hid the treasure that was entrusted to him (vs 25), was not pleasing to his master.

<sup>74</sup> In a ‘Meditation for Eight Day of Elul’ on Exodus 20:2 (part of ‘[Hearing Shofar: The Still Small Voice of The Ram’s Horn](#)’, by Michael T. Chusid, 2009; p.35), Rabbi Arthur I. Waskow is quoted about pronouncing The Name as “he asks, what if there are no vowels in The Name, only the consonants *yud*, *hay*, and *vav*? Pronouncing these letters sounds like, “yyyyyyyyy-hhhhhhh-hvvvvvv-hhhhhh,” a rush of air that is only slightly modified by our lips and tongues. (source: Arthur I Waskow, *Godwrestling-Round 2: Ancient Wisdom, Future Paths*, Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.)” The text continues: “The voice of shofar is, similarly, only a rush of air slightly modified by our lips and tongues and amplified by a conical horn. It is, perhaps, as much of The Name as we are able to hear as humans, the rest of the name is on spiritual or dimensional bandwidths to which mortals cannot attune. / While the Temple still stood, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur and utter The Name. Now, during the Days of Awe, we must each be our own high priest and enter the Holy of Holies that is indwelling within each of us. There, we can hear “yyyyyyyyy-hhhhhhh-hvvvvvv-hhhhhh” – the Eternal Exhalation of shofar – as The Name whispered in a rush of air. Amen. / *When you hear shofar today, remember standing at Sinai and hearing, for the first time, “I am yyyyyyyy-hhhhhhh-hvvvvvv-hhhhhh, your God...”*” If this does not advocate the **YaHUaH** pronunciation..

<sup>75</sup> The Hebrew word for breath (of life) in this context is *neshama*. It is remarkable that in this word, the word *shem*, name, can be distinguished!

<sup>76</sup> In particular at the Day of Atonement. The *Mishnah* records that when the High priest pronounced the glorious Name at that day, this could be heard all the way from Jerusalem till Jericho (more than 20 km distance).

the verb *ru'a* - to shout with joy), and is almost always coupled to praising and calling the glorious Name **יְהוָה** (see a.o. Exodus 19: 16, 19; 20: 18; Leviticus 23: 23-24; Jehoshu'a 6: 5-20; Judges 6: 34; 7: 18-22; 1 Shemu'el 4: 5-6; 2 Chronicles 15: 14; Job 38: 4-7; Psalm 47: 5; 89: 15; Yasha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 27: 13; 'Ezra 3: 11-13). The stylistic form of parallelism (repetition in other words), that we often encounter in the Bible, provides additional insight on this issue. For example in Psalm 27: 6 (notice also the rhyme!):

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies round about me;  
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with *shouts of joy* (*teruah*);  
I will sing and make melody to **יְהוָה**.

In Numbers 23:21 we hear Balak say to the people who hired him (here two parallelisms):

He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob; nor has he seen trouble in Israel.  
**יְהוָה** their God is with them, and the *shout* (*teruah*) of the King is among them

Aren't these two sides of God's wonderful Name – life and peace with quietness on the one hand, and vibrant joy and loud victory on the other – exactly the two things we, humans, need in order to thrive? We can also see the two as 'nourishing femininity' and 'energizing, outgoing masculinity' in **יְהוָה**... or as the two sides of worship: the still standing or laying prostrate in total awe and the great shouts of the glorious Name or abundant "Hallelu-**YaH!**"-s! and "Holy, Holy!"-s by multitudes, accompanied by great soundings of shofars and trumpets, all to the great honor and glory of **יְהוָה**!

## What the earliest scripting of the glorious Name tells us

Also significant is what the earliest Semitic scripting of the wonderful Name of our God **יְהוָה**, that is, **𐤎𐤏𐤍𐤃**, tells us about Him. This notation shows us a hand (*yad*), than a man who raises his arms in wonder or adoration ("Ah!"), a tent pin (*wav / u*) that offers security and connection, and at last another man lifting his arms in wonder or worship ("Ah!"). So, He is the God Who acts, thus providing security to those who wonder about Him and who adore Him, while at the same time connecting them. To those who lift their hands in awe and worship, something important is thereby revealed, and they get (life-) breath (these are common connotations of that symbol as well).<sup>77</sup> Regarding pronunciation, this old Semitic form clearly suggests a pronunciation *Y-aH-U-aH* as well (in the old Semitic the *i*, *a* and *u* (*oo*) were the only vowels, as noted earlier).

## Back to the beginnings – and to the declaration of the magnificent Name!

God showed me that in fact, the 'forgetting' of the magnificent Name of God started even much earlier, before what could be seen as the very first exile, namely: the one into Egypt because of a severe famine. We ended our discussion of the life of Jacob at the time he had just returned from Haran (actually: Charan). What happens next is most revealing in this context. Remember that Jacob had gone to Haran to find a wife. When Laban deceived him by giving him Leah (the one with the less shining eyes), he still wanted his chosen one, Rachel, as well. And he got her. But was that really God's plan A? The Bible is clear that God talks about one man and one woman forming a couple. And the fruit of Jacob insisting on having Rachel as a second wife is very clear: Leah names her boys in great appreciation for **יְהוָה** – the fourth, *Yehudah*, especially, as we saw. Much less appreciation towards God is seen in Rachel – she only says she sort of expects **יְהוָה** to give her another son, after Joseph (יְהוֹסֵפֶת - *Yosaphe* - let him add; later in Psalm 81: 5 re-interpreted as a contraction of *Yeho-saphe* - let **יְהוָה** add). At his flight from Laban, it is Rachel who steals her father's idols, thus jeopardizing Jacob's faithfulness to **יְהוָה**. She is temporarily 'saved' from

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It also appears that strong local winds around certain rock formations at one of the likely locations of the Biblical mount Sinai/Horeb regularly give a sound as that of the blowing of a horn or shofar. Local Bedouins call this sound *the trumpet of God*. Source: [Wikipedia](#).

<sup>77</sup> See also: André H. Roosma, '[Life, security and belonging in joyful adoration, from the hand of God – A discovery on the Biblical Name of God in old Semitic](#)', *Hallelu-YaH!* web-article, Jan. 2011. More information on the old Biblical script in: André H. Roosma, '[The Written Language of Abraham, Moses and David – A study of the pictographic roots and basic notions in the underlying fabric of the earliest Biblical script](#)' , *Hallelu-YaH!* Draft Research Report (a living web-document on the website [www.Hallelu-YaH.nl](http://www.Hallelu-YaH.nl)), 1<sup>st</sup> English version: 18 April 2011 (1<sup>st</sup> Dutch original: January 2011)..

Jacob's curse ("the one who stole the idols may be killed"; free after Genesis 31: 32) only by another deceptive lie, of her towards her own father. And – and here comes the crux (as happens more often when we take something that or someone whom God has not given us, we become too much attached to it/her) – Jacob had become so attached to her, that after her death, he distances himself from God. He never uses the lovely Name of intimacy for His God anymore... He apparently doesn't adequately educate his sons on the lovely Name of God (they never use His beloved Name), and starts to favor Rachel's sons in such a way that the family gets divided, only to be re-united in Egypt through the abundant grace of God during a heavy famine. In several chapters of the Genesis account, the magnificent Name of intimacy is never mentioned by any member of the family. Only once, when at the end of his life, Jacob sees he needs the *Yeshu'ah* – i.e. the salvation – of **יְהוָה**, he uses His lovely Name just once more (Genesis 49: 18).

Look at this for a moment from God's perspective. God reveals Himself by His lovely Name of great intimacy to the patriarchs. He bestows them with great promises to **be with them**, to bless and protect them. He lives up to His promises – even to a magnificent extent. Other people see it over and over again and stand in awe for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel and the God of Yehudah, called **יְהוָה**. Abraham spoils it by taking other wives and having other sons – a source of great unrest even until today. Jacob takes another wife and two slaves as wives. Still, God continues with His plan. The later King has come forth from *Yehudah*, the son of Jacob and his first (and in fact only legitimate) wife Leah.<sup>78</sup> Even in Egypt, God blesses His people such that they flourish and multiply greatly. He leads them out of Egypt – a landmark for the rest of all their history, again revealing His glorious Name of intimacy and asking their cooperation in declaring His wonderful Name among all the nations of the earth. When they depart from God, and fall into exile again, **יְהוָה** shows them through His prophets that He wants to restore them in intimacy with Him once more. The joy of **יְהוָה** is to be their ample refuge in times of true sorrow. He warns them by mouth of Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah), not to forget His Name...

They knew of the protection and guidance their ancestors received when they called on the wonderful Name of God. But they said: let us not declare, but ban the magnificent Name from our speech, and even from writings... Thereby they withdrew themselves further from His presence, protection and guidance. They let *Yasha'-Yahu* (Isaiah) 64: 7 be applicable to themselves...

**There is no one that calls upon Thy Name**, that bestirs himself to take hold of Thee;  
for Thou hast hid Thy face from us, and hast delivered us into the hand of our iniquities.

(The Hebrew style of parallelism used here implies that "that calls upon Thy Name" and "that bestirs himself to take hold of Thee" are considered to be almost identical or at least equivalent!)

Can you feel some of the deep pain in the heart of God **יְהוָה** - *YaHUaH*, as He sent His Son, *Yeshu'ah*, to His people (in the meantime largely reduced to the tribe of *Yehudah* including, a part of Levi and by the grace of **יְהוָה**, Benjamin) and they at large did not even recognize Him – a relatively few happy exceptions excluded? And as they did not recognize His deep desire to restore the bond of intimacy between Himself and them, and the calling they had to declare His glorious Name to all the world?

About forty (!) years God still waited, after the death and resurrection of *Yeshu'ah*, and still protected His sanctuary in Yerushalam, before He allowed it to fall prey to a new destruction...

God sometimes even used great rulers of other peoples to restore His Name to honor in Israel. Here I think of the situation in which Pharaoh Necho changed the name of Judah's king 'El-iakim ('God raises up') into *Yeho*-iakim ('**יְהוָה** raises up'; 2 Kings 23: 34; 2 Chronicles 36: 4). Also Nebuchadnezzar, the well-known king of Babel, clearly knew the glorious Name, for he changed the name of Mattaniah (actually: *Mattan-Yahu* - 'gift of **יְהוָה**') into Zedekiah (actually: *Tsidqi-Yahu* - 'right of **יְהוָה**'; 2 Kings 24: 17) what Nebuchadnezzar did was in fact to plead towards Israel for the right and the glorious Name of **יְהוָה**. Later (see 2 Chronicles 36: 22-23; Ezra 1: 2-4) it is the Persian king Cyrus who appears to be familiar with the glorious Name and who fights for '**יְהוָה**, the God of Israel, Who lives in Jerusalem'.

Maybe it's time now to pray fervently for God's people, and weep with Jesus over *Jerushalaim* – the city from which the teaching of the glorious Name and the peace of **יְהוָה** should have spread

<sup>78</sup> Did you ever wonder why Leah was buried in Abraham's family grave, and not Rachel (Genesis 49: 31; 35: 19-20)? Might it be Godly providence/rule?

over all the nations. Even in the last century, as the terrible shoah went over them, it did not cause a majority of them to return to their former intimacy with **יְהוָה** (cf. Psalm 83: 17 – shame is a reason to seek God’s wonderful Name!).

Maybe it’s time now also to weep and pray for the Christian church worldwide, who diverted so far from her Jewish roots, and still allows to let the glorious Name of their God, the Name so full of His desire to be with us, the Name to be declared to and magnified by all nations, to be kept largely secret; that magnificent Name so full of His longing to be with us, the glorious Name to be proclaimed worldwide and to be magnified and praised by all nations...

## **The Bible foretells the return to the awesome and praiseworthy Name of God**

Fortunately, there is hope. In various instances the Bible fortunately tells about the return of God’s people, with other nations, to the knowledge and use of the holy Name of God, **יְהוָה**, and to the cherished relationship with Him:

4 For thus says the Lord **יְהוָה**: “My people went down at the first into Egypt to sojourn there, and the Assyrian oppressed them for nothing. 5 Now therefore what have I here, says **יְהוָה**, seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail, says **יְהוָה**, and **continually all the day My Name is despised**. 6 Therefore **My people shall know My Name**; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I Who speak; **here I am** (הִנְנִי - *Hineni*).” 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes **Yeshu‘ah** (שׁוּעָה - *salvation*), who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” 8 Hark, your watchmen lift up their voice, together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of **יְהוָה** to Zion. 9 Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem; for **יְהוָה** has comforted his people, He has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 **יְהוָה** has bared His holy Arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the **Yeshu‘ah** (salvation) of our God. Yeshu‘-Yahu (Isaiah) 52: 4-10

The people of Israel was called to proclaim the wonderful and lovely Name of God such that all nations on the earth would magnify His glorious Name (cf. also Psalm 45:18). Notice that in this situation the suppression of the wonderful and lovely Name of God is equal to slandering the respectable Name, for by suppression you withhold God the honor of so many. Therefore:

“Therefore, behold, I will make them know, this once I will make them know My power and My might, and **they shall know that My Name is יְהוָה**.” Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 16: 21

Yechezqel (Ezekiel) gets to prophesy in the Name of **יְהוָה** (38: 23; 39: 7-8, 25):

“... I will show My greatness and My holiness and make Myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am **יְהוָה**. ...

And **My holy Name I will make known in the midst of My people Israel**; and **I will not let My holy Name be profaned any more**; and the nations shall know that I am **יְהוָה**, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, says the Lord **יְהוָה**. That is the day of which I have spoken. ...

Therefore thus says the Lord **יְהוָה**: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; and I will be zealous for **My holy Name**.

And Malachi (1: 11; 2: 1-2; cf also 1: 6;):

“For from the rising of the sun to its setting **My Name is great among the nations**, and in every place offerings are presented **unto My Name**, even pure oblations; for **My Name is great among the nations**, says **יְהוָה** Who gathers them all. ...

And now, O priests, this command is for you. If you will not listen, if you will not lay it to heart **to give glory to My Name**, says **יְהוָה** Who gathers them all, then I will send the curse upon you and I will curse your blessings; indeed I have already cursed them, because you do not lay it to heart.”

The Psalm poet writes:

**All the nations Thou hast made shall come and bow down before Thee** (litt: before Thy Face), O **יְהוָה**, and **shall glorify Thy Name**. Psalm 86: 9

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to **Thy Name**;  
the upright shall dwell in Thy presence (lit.: 'right before Thy Face'). Psalm 140: 13

And John sees:

And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,  
"Great and wonderful are Thy deeds, O Lord (עֵלֹהִים) God the Almighty! Just and true are  
Thy ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and **glorify Thy Name, O Lord**  
(עֵלֹהִים)? For Thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship Thee, for Thy judg-  
ments have been revealed." Revelation 15: 3-4

(The places where I inserted the holy Name in brackets are the places where Delitzsch  
has the holy Name in the Hebrew version of the NT;  
note that 'Thy Name' here cannot refer to Jesus; He - the Lamb - is the Author of the song!)

Fortunately, there is also hope for Israel:

"**You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the Name of עֵלֹהִים your God, Who**  
has dealt wondrously with you. And My people shall never again be put to shame.  
You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, עֵלֹהִים, am your God and there  
is none else. And My people shall never again be put to shame. Jo'el 2: 26-27

And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to עֵלֹהִים, **call upon His Name**; make known  
His deeds among the nations, **remind them that His Name is exalted**. "Sing praises to  
עֵלֹהִים, for He has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout, and sing for  
joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."  
Yesha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 12: 4-6

"Yea, at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them  
may call on the Name of עֵלֹהִים and serve Him with one accord. ... For I will leave in the  
midst of you a people humble and lowly. **They shall seek refuge in the Name of עֵלֹהִים**,  
those who are left in Israel; ... On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear, O  
Zion; let not your hands grow weak. עֵלֹהִים, your God, is in your midst, a Warrior Who  
delivers (*yoshi-y'a*, of *yasha'* - to set free); He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will  
renew you in His love; He will exult over you with loud singing.  
Tsephan-Yah (Zephaniah) 3: 9, 12-13a, 16-17

"In the whole land," says עֵלֹהִים, "two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third  
shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines sil-  
ver, and test them as gold is tested. **They will call on My Name, and I will answer them**.  
I will say, 'They are My people'; and they will say, 'עֵלֹהִים is my God.'"  
Zekhar-Yahu (Zechariah) 13: 8-9 (see also: 10: 12)

"... **Father, glorify Thy Name.**" Then a Voice came from heaven, "I have glorified It, and  
**I will glorify It again.**" Yahu-chanan (John) 12: 28

Finally God will maintain His promise to be with His people, despite their unfaithfulness:

"... For **I am with you** to save you, says עֵלֹהִים; I will make a full end of all the nations  
among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end. I will chasten you in  
just measure, and I will by no means leave you unpunished." Yirme-Yahu (Jeremiah) 30: 11

The book of Enoch (עֲנוֹךְ - *Chanokh*), written before (maybe even very long before) the first coming of  
Jesus - *Yeshu'a ha Mashiach* -, and seen as part of the canon by the Ethiopian church, says (note  
how *Yeshu'a* fulfilled all of this, even the NT title *Son of Men* seems to be derived straight out of the Book of  
Enoch):

At that hour, that the Son of Man was given a Name, in the presence of עֵלֹהִים of multitu-  
des, the Before Time; even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation  
of the stars, He was given a Name in the presence of עֵלֹהִים of multitudes. He will  
become a staff for the righteous ones in order that they may lean on Him and not fall. He is  
the Light of the gentiles and He will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts.  
All those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before Him; **they shall magnify,**  
**bless, and sing the Name of עֵלֹהִים** of multitudes. For this purpose He became the  
Chosen One; He was concealed in the presence of עֵלֹהִים of multitudes prior to the

***The magnificent and most lovely Name of the God Who was there, Who is there and Who will be there***

creation of the world, and for eternity.

Enoch 48:3-6

The question is: do we eagerly cooperate in making God's wonderful Name known and magnified again, or do we rather oppose God in this?

## Some implications of the magnificent Name of God

In and from the above, we see that the most precious Name of God, **יְהוָה**, has a fullness of meanings and implications, of which I can only mention a few here. I will especially focus on the meanings of The glorious Name that are most relevant for pastoral counseling, renewal and restoration.

Firstly, **יְהוָה** is **far above anything that was created or any other power**. He was there before anything else was created, He is there and He will be there in all eternity. Created beings and powers have come and go and will come and go, but our God **יְהוָה (YHWH / IAUA)** is from all eternity to all eternity. **His 'being there' transcends all other forms of (temporal) being**. This is a stark contrast to any other god/idol or human being. We describe people by what they do or by whom they descended from or by who they are related to. Their history, background, relationships and work more or less 'define' them. By giving a name or designation to someone, we try to provide some order, and gain some form of control over our environment. Not so with God. He is beyond any human description or control. He was there before anything else. He is not defined or formed or described by any outside reality; on the contrary: He created and shaped all other reality, including the 'little ants' we are (metaphor after the former American revivalist Jonathan Edwards).

Secondly, the holy Name of God also signifies that God is **unchangeable – He simply is and was, and always will be Who He is**. Utterly stable and dependable beyond comparison.

Both of these describe the exceeding greatness of our God **יְהוָה**. He is far beyond all our human understandings. These two aspects alone should make us stand in humility and utter awe and highest reverence before Him. We owe Him and His wonderful Name our greatest respect and reverence!

Another meaning signifies Who God is **in relation to His people**. There is absolutely no one, as consistently and **actively present** with His people, as our God **יְהוָה**! Also the general sense in which '*Ehyeh*' occurs in the Old Testament – mostly as being there empathically with someone in a consoling and protective way –, contributes to this meaning of **יְהוָה**.

A most remarkable thing about the precious Name of God is that only from Genesis 2 (verse 4) onward, the Bible uses **יְהוָה** – that is: after creating mankind. To us, human beings, *in the relationship*, God is **The One Always Present**, not abstractly but **Personally**. He expresses **a form of deep love, companionship, tenderness, security and protection, while at the same time calling us continuously into the relationship with Him. In His presence, there is life. In experiencing His presence, we experience life.**

I find it almost incredible that in His most precious Name, God reveals *both* His utter greatness and transcendence, *and* His desire to have such a grace-ful, close and tender relationship with us. In Him there is no tension between the two, but they are in unity. In Him a unity is possible that we simply cannot comprehend.

What is striking in the stories about **יְהוָה being close to us** is that He is particularly close to *the weak* – the one who, humanly speaking, is less powerful or less valued. Of Esau and Jacob He chooses Jacob, of Leah and Rachel He selects Leah, He chooses Moses at the point in time when Moses feels old and feeble, not 40 years earlier when Moses still had a vision that he himself could lead *his* people out of Egypt. Might that have anything to do with the notion, that when we are weak in our own strength, we more easily realize how desperately we need God to be with us, and give Him more room to go *His way*?

From Jacob's example I see that we have to learn to *be aware* of and *remember* **יְהוָה's** presence, and that that awareness and those memories will lead us to great reverence for **יְהוָה**. **Honouring God's Name יְהוָה** means **we focus on remembering Him en becoming more aware of His presence all the time.**

## Jesus – *Yeshu'a*, *'Immanu'el* and *I am* – further revelation of **אֱלֹהִים**

As we know, Jesus is most closely related to God and also to His holy Name as described above. In the previous sections we saw that **אֱלֹהִים** revealed Himself as the God **Who is there with us** and **Who liberates** or **redeems**. **Jesus** continues the Self-revelation of God. He is described as **אֱלֹהִים** - **'Immanu'El: God with us** (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23). His Name in Hebrew and the holy Name **אֱלֹהִים** show similarity as Jesus in fact was and is God **אֱלֹהִים** incarnate. Jesus' Name ('Jesus' is derived from the Greek Ἰησους – *Iēsoûs*) has multiple appearances in Hebrew and Aramaic; most common are a short variant: **אֱלֹהִים** – **Yeshu'a**<sup>79</sup>: 'Redeemer/Saviour' (or **אֱלֹהִים** – **Yeshu'ah**: 'Deliverance/Salvation' – both derived from the verb **אֱלֹהִים** – **Yasha'**: to be open or free, hence also: to save, rescue, deliver, redeem<sup>80</sup>) and a longer one: **אֱלֹהִים** – **Yehoshu'a**, that stands for: **אֱלֹהִים saves**' (variant: **אֱלֹהִים** – **Yehoshu'ah**: **אֱלֹהִים (is) salvation**).<sup>81</sup> The link of Jesus' Name with the verb 'to save' is very clear in the following Bible verse (Matthew 1: 21<sup>b</sup>):

Thou shalt call his name **Jesus**; for it is He that shall **save** His people.

Note that this original Hebrew/Aramaic Name of Jesus can be formed from the letters of **אֱלֹהִים** by addition of the Hebrew letters **שׁ** (shin) and **א** (ayin). The **שׁ** is the first letter of the title **אֱלֹהִים** **Shaddai** - Almighty; short for **אֱלֹהִים** **El Shaddai - God Almighty**, a meaningful title for God.<sup>82</sup> On its own already a symbol for God, the **שׁ** is also on every Jewish prayer box. **אֱלֹהִים** - **Shaddai** can also be seen as related to **שׁ** - **shad**, the Hebrew for 'breast'.<sup>83</sup> Jesus both manifested the supreme might of **אֱלֹהִים** and His motherly love and care (cf. Isaiah 66: 10-14): He gave us Life! Jesus made **אֱלֹהִים** **visible**; who had seen Jesus, had seen **אֱלֹהִים** – **God Almighty** also (John 14: 9); I find it therefore remarkable that besides the **שׁ**, also the **א**, the ayin – symbol for the eye – is present in His Name.

When the people of Israel have departed from Egypt, are encamped on the shore of the sea, and the Egyptians come after them, the people fear. But Moses says to them, that they will see the **salvation** of **אֱלֹהִים**, literally: **אֱלֹהִים** **אֱלֹהִים** – **the Yeshu'ah** (**אֱלֹהִים**) of **אֱלֹהִים** (Exodus 14: 13; see also 15: 2). In the script of Moses' time, the letter **א** - **tav** that has been added grammatically at the end of **Yeshu'a** here, was: **א** - a cross sign! Do we see the magnificent unity of the First and Second Testaments?

But there is still more, and for that we go back to the Hebrew **'Ehyeh** – I am / I will be.

In the Old Testament texts where the English has simply **'I am**' (**'Ehyeh** in Hebrew), as in Exodus 3: 13-14, or **'I am the LORD** your God' (**'anokhiy YHWH 'eloheykha**, as above), as in Exodus 20: 2 and many parallel places, the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament translation that probably was already available in Jesus' days) reads: **'Εγω εμι** – **Ego eimi** for the **'I am**-part (for the longer form: **'Εγω εμι Κυριος ο Θεος**).

<sup>79</sup> Note that in the (rather simply readable) older form with **א** as vowel (that we also encountered already in the derived form **אֱלֹהִים** a.o. in Genesis 49: 18) here, too, the **א** represents an u- (oo-)sound, and not a hard (continental European) w-sound.

<sup>80</sup> The website of the Hebrew People's school has [a study on this verb](#) (in Dutch). There **yasha'** is also related to **'being there**' for another.

When studying this verb myself, it stroke me that the first time this verb occurs in the Bible is when Moses **comes to the aid** of some female shepherds, among whom his later wife (Exodus 2: 17).

<sup>81</sup> Certain rather fanatic groups contend that if **Yahu-ah** is the pronunciation of the glorious Name of God, then Jesus' Name should correspondingly be pronounced as **Yahu-shu-ah**. However, this neglects the development of the Hebrew language. At the time of Jesus the pronunciation of the Name of God – already thousands of years old right then! – probably had changed already into the direction of **Yehu-ah** or possibly even **Yeho-ah**, such that the pronunciation **Yehoshuah** is legitimate. Additionally, sounds in Hebrew often change under the influence of the syllable before or after. This, too, could legitimate a pronunciation like **Yehoshuah**. I do not have a conclusive statement on the glorious Name of **Yeshu'ah**.

<sup>82</sup> **אֱלֹהִים** - **Shaddai** is also seen as an acronym for **שׁוֹמֵר דְּלֹתוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל** – **shomer delatot Yisra'el** – 'The Protector of the gates of Israel'.

<sup>83</sup> Though **Shaddai** often is seen only as derived from a root **shadad** meaning **being burly or powerful**, related to **shod** = **destruction** (whereby **Shaddai** would be **most powerful to destroy**), this connection is seen by understanding that **Shaddai**, when used of our God, also refers to the **power** of **אֱלֹהִים** to **give life** and nourish the vulnerable.

Now, the striking thing in the New Testament is, that in the Gospel of John, Jesus often used this **Εγω εμι** – *Ego eimi*, when talking about His identity and Who He was. Thereby, Jesus Himself often referred to this designation of God as being His very Own Name; amongst others when using several of the phrases that, translated, begin (or end) with “**I am**” (Greek: **Εγω εμι** – *Ego eimi*), such as: “I am the Bread of Life” (John 6: 35, 41, 48, 51), “I am the Light of the world” (John 8: 12; 12: 46), “I am the Good Shepherd” (John 10: 11, 14), “I am the Son of God” (John 10: 36), “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11: 25), “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” (John 14: 6), “I am the True Vine” (John 15: 1, 5).<sup>84</sup>

When a group of people came to arrest Him (John 18: 5-6), Jesus made the statement ‘**I am He**’ – ‘*Ego eimi*’ i.e. ‘**EhjeH**’. The first reaction of the group to this was to draw back and fall to the ground. This looks a rather peculiar reaction for a well-armed band of people looking to arrest a criminal. But when we see that Jesus in fact uttered ‘*EhjeH*’, which was regarded as about equal to the Name of God Himself, certainly equal in holiness (and not to be pronounced by ordinary people), a reaction as if they actually encountered **עִימִי** Himself is not that strange. It clearly illustrates that Jesus did use at least wordings that were considered almost equal to the holy Name, and applied them to Himself, thereby equating Himself to God **עִימִי**. Compare the later charges against Him.

Also Matthew 28: 20 uses the *Ego eimi* in the Greek, when Jesus repeats **עִימִי**’s old and still valid promise (also in Acts 18: 10):

‘**I am with you** all the days, to the completion of the age. Amen’.

In the Hebrew/Aramaic that Jesus will have spoken He will likely have used **הִיְהִיֶה** - ‘*Ehyeh*’ in these instances. That explains also why the Jewish religious rulers of His day became so angry about these words, especially when “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I am.**’”<sup>85</sup> (John 8: 58; in Greek: **πριν αβρααμ γενεσθαι Εγω εμι** – *prin Abraam genesthai Ego eimi*; see also John 6: 34, 41). They saw it already as blasphemous to use the holy Name of God anyway and as highly presumptuous *and* blasphemous when someone would apply it to himself, as Jesus did. In their view (rejecting that Jesus Himself actually *was* the Messiah), what Jesus did was extremely misleading and hindering the sanctification of the people and thereby the coming of the Messiah. In reality, Jesus actually being the promised Messiah, Jesus only continued God’s presence with His people as presented in the Old Testament since creation. Yes, even stronger: Jesus cleared the way for both Jews and non-Jews, to come freely into the fellowship of God’s family and experience His presence more fully than ever before. As ‘*Immanuel*’ – literally: **God with us** (Isaiah 7: 14; Matthew 1: 23) – He truly revealed God’s nature of *Being there with us* as reflected in God’s precious Name.

There are significant cues, that Jesus, against all human religious rules, sometimes actually did pronounce the wonderful Name of God. Amongst others this appears to be the case in Marc 12: 11 (Jesus citing Psalm 118: 22-23), according to [Delitzsch’ Hebrew translation](#) (see note 43). Remarkably, the Jewish leaders immediately wanted to take Jesus prisoner, though there was more in what He said that disturbed them!

<sup>84</sup> Cf also Matthew 14:27; Luke 21: 8; 24: 39; John 4: 26; 6: 20; 8: 18, 24, 28; 9: 9; 10: 7, 9; 12: 26; 13: 19; 18: 5, 6, 8; and Revelation 2: 23; 22: 16; while – apart from the Septuagint’s rendering of the Old Testament / *am* texts – the following texts clearly link the NT phrase to the OT: Matthew 22: 32; 24: 5; Marc 6: 50; 13:6; 14: 62; Luke 22: 70; John 8: 58; Acts 9: 5; 18: 10; 22: 8; 26: 15 and Revelation 1: 8, 17. The reaction of the people who came to arrest Jesus, to His statement ‘*Ehyeh*’ or *Ego eimi*’ (that is: to shrink back and fall to the ground), denotes clearly that by this statement Jesus equalled Himself to God.

Note that the probably Hebrew (/Aramaic) original of John 8:18 “**I am** one who bears witness of Myself, and the Father Who sent Me bears witness concerning Me”, can also be translated: “**I am** bear witness of Myself, and the Father Who sent Me bears witness concerning Me.” In either case, it uses a common Hebrew style form, where more or less the same thing is repeated in slightly different wordings, but in the second Jesus clearly identifies Himself as being ‘*Ehyeh*’, considered to be a Name or designation almost equivalent to the precious Name **עִימִי**.

<sup>85</sup> Significantly, David H. Stern (*Complete Jewish Bible*, Jewish New Testament Publ., Clarksville USA / Jerusalem Israel, 1998) translates here: “**Before Avraham came into being, I AM!**” Jesus’ **being** is eternal and existentially and fundamentally different from that of Abraham, who was born somewhere in time. Jesus – being God – stands above the time; His **being** knows no beginning or end.

In a way, **Jesus'** Name and God's Name **יְהוָה** show much correspondence, like Jesus actually was and is God ("I and the Father are One." - John 10: 30).<sup>86</sup> Therefore, the following text may be seen as referring to both the holy Name **יְהוָה** and to **Yeshu'a** - Jesus - as well, thus presenting significance with regards to our usage of both of God's holy and wonderful Names:

"I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept My Word and **have not denied My Name.** ..."

Revelation 3: 8

Both Names appear in a remarkable way in the following piece of Scripture:

1 You will say in that day: "I will give thanks to Thee, O **יְהוָה**, for though Thou wast angry with me, Thy anger turned away, and Thou didst comfort me. 2 "Behold, God is **my Yeshu'ah**;<sup>87</sup> I will trust, and will not be afraid; for **יְהוָה** (**יהוה** - *YaH*, probably a short form of **יְהוָה**) **יְהוָה** is my Strength and my Song, and He has become my **Yeshu'ah** (**ישועה** 'salvation')." 3 With joy you will draw water from the wells of **Yeshu'ah** (**ישועה** 'salvation'). 4 And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to **יְהוָה**, call upon His Name; make known His deeds among the nations, proclaim that His Name is exalted. 5 "Sing praises to **יְהוָה**, for He has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. 6 Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitants of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

Yasha'-Yahu (Isaiah) 12: 1-6

Doesn't verse 3 resound in John 4: 6-15, where **Yeshu'a** speaks with the Samaritan woman about the *Living Water* that He wants to give?

Verse 4 is exceedingly clear about using the wonderful Name of God. The glorious Name is to be thanked, called, proclaimed and praised!

We saw earlier that there is protection *in the lovely Name of יְהוָה*. And we saw that that glorious Name is connected to the worship to Him (the word *teruah*). The same we see with the glorious Name of Jesus - **Yeshoe'ah**, as Yasha-Yahu (Isaiah) writes (60: 17<sup>b</sup>-18; note the crossed figure of style in the last part; most translations diminish this; I see it as most significant):

"...I will make **shalom** (peace) your government and **tsedaqah** (righteousness) your ruler. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call **Yeshoe'ah** (*Salvation*) your wall (protection), and your gates **tehilah** (Praise)."

When **יְהוָה** cares that **shalom** reigns over you with **righteousness** (no corruption, no abuse of power!, no violence, no destruction) then you praise Him and His grace-full Salvation, His **Yeshoe'ah**, for that protection in all that you do (in all your 'going in and out' of the gates).

Some Christians say, concerning Names of God, that actually only the Name Jesus is important. He is our Redeemer/Savior. However, Yasha'-Yahu 43: 3<sup>a</sup>, 10-11 says:

"For I am **יְהוָה** thy God, The Holy One of Israel, thy **Savior** (**מושיע** *Moshi'a*); I have given Egypt as thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. ...

You are my witnesses," says **יְהוָה**, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me. I, I am **יְהוָה**, and besides Me there is no **Savior** (**מושיע**)."

<sup>86</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>-century Roman-Catholic scholar (with Jewish and also Qabbalistic sympathies) Johannes Reuchlin went even further, saying: 'only the wise understands that the names **YHWH** and **Yeshu'ah** (liberation) are the same.' Elsewhere he noted that the pentagrammaton **YHSHW** (possibly for something like **יהשוה** *YaHShuWaH* or *YeHoShUaH* (the latter assuming equivalence of U and W in transliteration) – a non-existent 'Hebrew word' similar to our *Yeshu'ah* or *Yehoshu'ah*, Ed.) must now be seen as the proper holy Name of God, so, an extension to and replacement for the 'old' Name **YHWH**. Source: [Reuchlin, Johannes](#), article in the *Jewish Virtual Library*. However, this teaching looks appealing but is actually of Qabbalistic (Mystic, occult) origin and incorrect. It has removed the **א** ajin (= eye) from Jesus' actual Name (almost metaphorical!). I stick to the vision that both Names of God show a telling relatedness, but are not equal and one is not replacing the other.

<sup>87</sup> The precise form here is: **יְהוָה יְהוָה** *Yeshu'athiy* : my **ישועה** *Yeshu'ah* – salvation.

Outside **אֱלֹהִים** there is no Savior (the Hebrew *Moshi'a*, from the earlier discussed *yasha'*)! So, **Jesus** can only be our Redeemer because He is also **אֱלֹהִים**. The Name **אֱלֹהִים** tells us also much about Who Jesus – in the fullness of His Name **אֱלֹהִים Yasha'** – really is, just as Jesus showed us Who **אֱלֹהִים** is in His redeeming presence! If we reject **אֱלֹהִים**, we reject **Yeshu'ah** as well!<sup>88</sup> If we say that the glorious Name **אֱלֹהִים** is unspeakable, then the Name of **Yeshu'ah** is unspeakable. Fortunately, both great Names are given to us to be remembered, used, proclaimed and magnified, till all eternities!

## The heavenly Fatherhood of God

In the Old Testament we already observe that God sees Himself as the Father of His people – a Father Who defended them, protected them, and also a Father Who enjoyed it when they knew to appreciate His love (which they didn't always do, yet God sought after them again and again; cf. Jeremiah 3: 17-22; 31: 9).

In the Gospels we see that Jesus, by His sacrifice and resurrection, has prepared the way for all of us to God as Father. He also encourages us to call upon God as 'Father' in our prayers:

Pray ye then like this: “**Our Father** Who art in heaven, ...”

Mattit-Yahu (Matthew) 6: 9; see also John 16: 23-32

(This opening is immediately followed by the “... **hallowed be Thy Name** ...” we discussed earlier. The best way I see to hallow God's Name **אֱלֹהִים** is to heed His desire to be present in our lives, and allow Him full access! By the way, most of us know our earthly father's name, as in our culture we normally even adopt our father's last name as our own last name. *Addressing* God as Father is in no way at odds with *knowing* His Name; on the contrary!)

It is good, to know clearly Who our heavenly Father is. As *Yasha'-Yahu* (Isaiah) 64: 8 says (see also *Yasha'-Yahu* 63: 16):

Yet, O **אֱלֹהִים**, Thou art our Father; we are the clay,  
and Thou art our Potter; we are all the work of Thy hand.

Also in the letters we often see it re-appear that in Christ Jesus we have been accepted fully as children of God and that we are entitled to call God Father, a.o. in the letters to the Christians in Rome and Galatia (see also: 2 Corinthians 6: 18 / *Yirme-Yahu* (Jeremiah) 3: 19; Ephesians 2: 18; 1 John 1: 3; 2: 1; 3: 1):

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship. When we cry, “**Abba! Father!**” it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.

Romans 8: 14-17

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “**Abba! Father!**”...

Galatians 4: 6

The use of the Aramaic *Abba* – *Daddy* – amidst the otherwise Greek text here denotes that the Father-hood of God is not at all meant to be distant but to reflect closeness. Exactly this image of God as Father and all believers as His family, denotes again that proximity and closeness. Where God as **אֱלֹהִים** was with (close to) Israel as the God Who saved them as a people from their enemy nations, as *Daddy* He now has come even more personally close as the loving Father of His home family. Also the title *Father in heaven* links closely with, and affirms the character of God, as previously revealed in His most precious Name **אֱלֹהִים**. We also saw already that Jesus again confirmed the old promise “**I am with you!**”, that **אֱלֹהִים** had given the patriarchs and Israel ...

<sup>88</sup> Notice that in the conviction of **Yeshu'ah** the accusation 'blasphemy' played a major role, precisely because He used the wonderful Name, and even applied the Name to Himself. This accusation also played a role in the persecution of His disciples by the Jewish religious leaders (think e.g. of Peters' and Paul's citations of Joel 2:32!).

## Some practical and pastoral relevance of this all

The observations regarding God's holy Name reveal some core characteristics of God's Identity. Our God is Who He is (no matter what happens), and He was there, is there and will be there with us. This has great relevance for practical theology; in particular: church life and pastoral care.

It all begins with God and the way He reveals Himself through His Word and especially through His precious Name **יהוה** (יהוה / **YHWH / IAUA**). If we allow that to touch our heart, we cannot but stand in awe and wonder before Him, the great God Almighty, Creator of all that is. From that, follows adoration and worship, rejoicing in Him and in His great love for us,<sup>89</sup> and a right view on who we really are in relation to an unspeakable great and loving God. From there, it goes further and spills into every area of life, including every area of church life and pastoral care and all...

As humans we are created for connection – both with God and with each other. Even sincere secular development psychologists have concluded that we need an attachment figure (or rather: an Attachment Figure, I would say).<sup>90</sup> We learn, mature and thrive only when there is someone else (or Someone else) who is and will be there with us when difficulties or hardships might arise. This is called 'secure attachment'. A prerequisite is that the attachment figure is securely attached him/herself, and is well able to tune into our mental and emotional states and lead us back from distress, sadness, anger, despair et cetera, to what God called by the Hebrew word **שְׁלוֹמ** – 'shalom' (peace, a state of being glad to be together, including moments of energetic joy as well as sufficient rest, each paced in time and intensity to our emotional capacities).

More and more mental illnesses and behavioural problems (including delinquency!) are discovered to be the consequence of, or a human adaptation to, a lack of such 'secure attachment'. As modernistic 'autonomy', individualism and isolation increase in modern western and eastern societies, so do the problems caused by a lack of secure attachment. Most basically, many people feel isolated, alone, unable to cope and literally help-less.

What we need in this is a return to God, and a renewed curiosity to *really* know Him by heart, as He expresses Himself in His most precious Name **יהוה**. Who could ever be a secure Attachment Figure like **He is, Who is with us** always and everywhere?

To my experience, such a return will take us away from the Greek / 'enlightenment' thinking and focus our heart on the kind of relating to God and each other as we were created for in the first place. This is not a functionality-focused kind of relating, but one where heart meets heart in vulnerability, as even God makes Himself vulnerable, time and again. In such shared vulnerability love can grow, as recently observed very clearly by Sue Johnson in the context of (secular) marriage counselling as well.<sup>91</sup> The study on the most precious Name of God provides in fact a perfect template for Sue Johnson's practical observations and advices. Knowledge of the holy Name calls us to live with and from the fact that God wants to be continuously present in our lives and that He wants to redeem us from all hatred, isolation, suppression et cetera.<sup>92</sup>

Such a return also includes a wholly new – and yet Bible-old – view on suffering: not as something to be avoided at all cost (as the world around us proclaims!), but as something used by God for our very good. As John Sanders concludes about the suffering Joseph underwent from his brothers' action to sell him as a slave into Egypt: "Finally (Genesis 50:20) Joseph suggests that what they

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<sup>89</sup> See the books, sermons and articles by John Piper on this, at [www.desiringGod.org](http://www.desiringGod.org).

<sup>90</sup> For a more extensive treatment of attachment theory, see the other materials on my International and Dutch websites [www.12accede.org](http://www.12accede.org) and [www.12accede.nl](http://www.12accede.nl), respectively.

Another good and practical Christian exposé of attachment theory can be found in the first chapters of: E. James Wilder, *(The Complete Guide to) Living with Men – Keep Growing and Stay Lovable*, Shepherd's House Publishing, Pasadena CA, USA, 1993/2004; ISBN 0 9674357 5 7.

<sup>91</sup> Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight – Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love*, Little, Brown & Company, Hachette, USA, 2008. And her *Emotionally Focused couple Therapy (EFT)* based on the principles laid out in this book.

<sup>92</sup> The concept of our need for someone (or Someone) who **is there**, who is **with us**, is a.o. the basis of the so called [Presence-theory](#) of prof dr Andries Baart of Presence and Care, Faculty Mental sciences of the University of Tilburg, Netherlands. In **good care**, as observed by prof Baart's extensive research, the care provider **is there** in the first place **with** (and only thereby **for**) **the other person**.

intended for evil, God intended for good. I take this to mean that God has brought something good out of their evil actions. God was not determining everything in Joseph's life, but **God did remain "with" him** (39:2). The divine presence does not mean the removal of famines, sibling hatred or personal betrayal. It does mean that God will be working from within the situations to redeem them."<sup>93</sup>

With regard to community formation and related areas, this gives a fresh viewpoint – one that values everybody's presence, stories and contributions. Receiving and giving life are natural in this context. Welcoming others becomes a most natural part of feeling oneself welcome in God's presence.

Growth towards maturity in Christ is highly dependent on our intimacy with Him. So in this area, too, being conscious of the meaning of the holy Name **יְהוָה** (יהוה / **YHWH** / **IAUA**) will show its fruit.

God – **יְהוָה** – is great and most stable and at the same time a God Who chooses to be there with us as a Great Companion – **'Immanu'el**. In any kind of pastoral care, this fact is a starting point beyond comparison to any other. This is what we need above all. In [my study on the Aaronic blessing](#), I highlight one aspect of what it means in practice that God is with us: the transforming influence of being blessed regularly, after His explicit desire, by the gladness and pride on God's face. A similar thing counts for His great desire to be present with us in general, amidst all our circumstances. I have had the privilege to see people change, long held fears and distancing released, families re-united after years of fighting or 'cold war', people freed from long-held addictions, et cetera, after people started to experience **יְהוָה** and/or **'Immanu'el** – the presence of God Almighty with them, in their pain, sorrow, shame, distress or anger. In my series of articles on *Layers and the role of attachment in mental and social-emotional processing* I will elaborate further on this, especially in a context of healing from childhood traumas and of growth to spiritual maturity.<sup>94</sup>

In a conversation with a colleague we came to the understanding, that the intimacy with God, so also the wonderful Name, implicitly draws a clear and sharp boundary. Within the confidential relationship with God there is life and growth to wholeness, outside of it, there is a lack of life, and hence the reign of death and all kind of misery and dysfunction. **יְהוָה** is a God of clear boundaries, as is very obvious from Genesis 1 already. This observation is invaluable in pastoral care.

This study advocates an anthropology and a form of counseling, that starts from our deep dependence on God **יְהוָה** – the Very Highest – and His explicit wish to be actively, redeeming and protectively involved in our lives (as illustrated in this document). Such will yield much better results than an anthropology or psychology that is based on Greek idols and myths (as is the case with Freudian psychology)<sup>95</sup> or on eastern idols and teachings (as Jungian psychology a.o.).

God's Name and His promise: *"I am with you!"* gives a totally new perspective to every situation. Insight into the importance of God's Name gives us also insight on to important aspects of church/community life, including gatherings, pastoral care, evangelism, home groups and other church ministries:

- God's promise *"I am with you!"*, coupled to His desire to be actively present in our lives; to set us free, to protect and bless us. By responding to Him, we receive this promise and we will thrive. One could see this as God's side of the covenant, towards us.  
It is the best imaginable starting point for recovery and spiritual, relational and emotional

<sup>93</sup> John Ernest Sanders, *The God Who risks – A theology of providence*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove IL, USA, 1998; ISBN 0 8308 1501 5; p. 55; boldface added.

<sup>94</sup> See a.o.: André H. Roosma, ['Layers and the role of attachment in mental and social-emotional processing – Part IV: The quest for a consistent life story'](#), web-article on [www.12accede.org](http://www.12accede.org), November 2009.

<sup>95</sup> See a.o.: Kalman J. Kaplan, Matthew B. Schwartz, *A Psychology of Hope – A Biblical Response to Tragedy and Suicide*, W.B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI (USA) / Cambridge (UK), 1993, 1998 (Revised & Expanded Edn.); ISBN 978 0 8028 3271 9. Though the author writes from a Jewish and not a Christian viewpoint, I consider this book a relief because of the very clear contrast it shows between the Biblical and the Greek worldview. In the Biblical worldview recovery is always possible from outside, to which we open ourselves by calling on God (open worldview with a God that is grace-full and eagerly coming to our aid). Within the closed Greek worldview at the bottom there is in fact only hopelessness in the face of failure. With the patriarchs it already stood out: not they were better persons than others, but they had a awesome God!

growth, and therefore essential in pastoral care, evangelism, groups and other church ministry. It is also the basis for the church as social, coherent group and as organism.

- We do not live for ourselves, but to remember, thank, declare and magnify the great, wonderful and lovely Name of God. One could call this our side of the covenant towards God. These days there often is the narcissistic seduction to be so involved with ourselves that we forget that there is a God to Whom we owe ourselves and our devotion. In this vision teaching, community, pastoral care or evangelism, or whatever branch of ministry, comes down to cooperating that people can keep up the testimony of God's Name, not by who they are themselves, but by what others, perhaps through their weaknesses, can see of the work of God in them.

How did Israel obtain freedom from its slavery? How did they receive victory over enemies that attacked them, like the Philistines in the time of David or Palestinians and many other peoples in the last decades? How could Israel become such a big and important nation in the world? What's the explanation that worldwide so much pioneering and most influential work in science and technology is in the name of Israelis?<sup>96</sup> Was it their special knowledge, their supreme technology, or their superb skill or fighting-spirit? No, it was **עֵלֹהֵינוּ** Who protected and blessed them and it was their covenantal relationship with **עֵלֹהֵינוּ** – the God Who was and is, and will be with them!

How, do we as pastoral workers expect then, will people find a way out of their spiritual, relational or emotional problems...? Or freedom from addiction (in Dutch, we use the same word for addiction as for slavery)...?

By the way, all that gives me another reason to pray that God's old people Israel, including the Jews, will call on and praise the Name of God again. In this way Yehudah (a contraction of *Yehuah jada* – **יהודה** praising) will come to her destination again and experience full redemption from the ages-long oppression!

Some people try to 'catch' all of this into a system, but it will be clear that such a thing is not really possible. God is far beyond our control and our systems thinking. He is able to use even that what is foolish to human understanding, to create or do things that will baffle the most wise (cf. 1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 2: 7). However, I do see that a study and meditation on the most precious Name of God does leave its marks in one's life – at least it does so in mine. Praise be to God **עֵלֹהֵינוּ** – *the Supreme God Almighty!*

A strong catalyst for the transformation from our side is the belief that reading, remembering, calling or magnifying His magnificent and most lovely Name means becoming conscious of His beloved presence with us. It is our understanding of God and His nature as expressed in His precious Name, or rather, our acknowledgement of non-understanding and our wonder and amazement about Him in His transcendent greatness and majesty. As the Psalmist wrote (8: 9):

**וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָהּ, our *Highest*, how majestic is Thy Name in all the earth!**

To you as reader of this study I say very personally: God bless you, with an increasing insight into and knowledge of the immeasurable greatness and abundance of God and His most glorious and most precious Name, till deep in your heart and soul!

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<sup>96</sup> For example: 22% of all Nobel prize winners between 1901 and 2009 was (at least half) Jew, while of the total world population only 0.25% is Jew. See: [Jewish Nobel Prize Winners](#), JInfo.org 2002-2010. Similar ratios can be found in many other places with regard to influential scientists (a.o. Albert Einstein; in general e.g.: professors in the USA), tradesmen and a broad spectrum of artists.

God's Name **יהוה** (יהוה / YHWH / IAUA) is ...

*wonderful,*

*majestic,*

*holy,*

*amazing,*

*most lovely,*

*intimate,*

*cherished,*

*most precious,*

*beautiful,*

*great beyond any description,*

*gorgeous,*

*glorious,*

*breath-giving,*

*magnificent,*

*awesome,*

***DIVINE !***

## Appendix: What the Bible calls us to do with regard to **יהוה** and His Name

Below a first and rather arbitrary selection of examples of what the Bible calls us to do towards **יהוה** and His glorious Name. In a later version this appendix may be expanded further.

- ◆ **ברך** - *barakh* <sup>1288</sup> – to bless, praise  
– 2 Chron. 9: 8; Ps. 16: 7; 34: 1; 104: 1, 35; 119: 12; 135: **19,20**; Neh. 8: 6;
- ◆ **ידה** – *jadah/wadah* <sup>3034</sup> – to praise, thank  
– 2 Chron. 7: 3, 6; Ps. 45: 18; 92: 1; 105: 1; 118: 1, 19, 21, 29; Jer.33:11
- ◆ **הלל/הלול** - *halal/hillul* <sup>1984/1974</sup> – to praise, honor, rejoice in  
– Lev. 19: 24; Ps. 34: 2; 104: 35 (hallalu-Jah); 105: 3; 135:1(3x),3; Isa. 62: 9;
- ◆ **דרש** - *darash* <sup>1875</sup> – to search/seek for, to ask, to follow, to worship  
– 2 Chron. 12: 14; 14: 4, 7; 15: 2, 12, 13; 16: 12; Ps. 34: 4, 10;
- ◆ **זכר** - *zakar* <sup>2142</sup> – to remember, mention  
– Ex. 13: 3; Ps. 45: 18; 77: 12; 119: 55; 135: 13;
- ◆ **קרא** - *qara'* <sup>7121</sup> – to call, proclaim  
– Gen. 4: 26; 2 Kron. 14:11; Ps. 34: 6; 105: 1; 118: 5; Jer. 33: 3, 16;
- ◆ **קרב** - *qarab* <sup>7126</sup> – to offer / sacrifice to  
– Lev. 22: 18;
- ◆ **זמר** - *zamar* <sup>2167</sup> – to praise, sing to  
– Ps. 9: 11; 18: 49; 27: 6; 92: 1; 104: 33; 105: 2;
- ◆ **בקש** - *baqash* <sup>1245</sup> – to search/seek  
– Ps. 105: 3; 2 Chron. 7:14; 11: 16; 15: 15;
- ◆ **רום** - *rum* <sup>7311</sup> – to lift up, also: offer / sacrifice / dedicate (things) to  
– Lev. 22: 15; Ps. 34: 3;
- ◆ **גול/גיל** - *gil/gul* <sup>1523</sup> – to exult, rejoice in/over  
– Ps. 118: 24; Isa. 29: 19; Zach. 10: 7;
- ◆ **גדל** - *gadal* <sup>1431</sup> – to lift up  
– Ps. 34: 3;
- ◆ **נבט** - *nabath* <sup>5027</sup> – to look up to  
– Ps. 34: 5;
- ◆ **ירא** - *jare'* <sup>3372/3</sup> – to fear  
– Ps. 34: 9; 118: 4; Isa. 59: 19;
- ◆ **אהב** - *'ahabh* <sup>0157</sup> – to love  
– Ps. 5: 11;
- ◆ **זבח** - *zabach* <sup>2076</sup> – to offer / make sacrifice to  
– Lev.19: 5; 2 Chron. 7: 4; 11: 16; 15: 11;
- ◆ **צעק** - *tsa'aq* <sup>6817</sup> – to call (together)  
– 2 Chron. 13: 14; Ps. 34: 17;
- ◆ **היה קדוש** - *hajah qadosh* <sup>1961+6918</sup> – be holy, dedicate oneself, set oneself apart for  
– Lev. 20: 26; 21: 6;
- ◆ **שבוע** - *shabha'* <sup>7650</sup> – to swear to/by, (to acknowledge) to be complete in  
– Deut. 10: 20; 2 Kron. 15: 14; Jer. 12: 16;
- ◆ **שוב** - *shubh* <sup>7725</sup> – to turn around to  
– 2 Chron. 15: 4;
- ◆ **שׂוה** - *shavah* <sup>7737</sup> – to set (before one's eyes)  
– Ps. 16: 8;
- ◆ **שיח** - *siach* <sup>7878</sup> – to speak, meditate on  
– Ps. 77: 13; 104: 34;
- ◆ **שׂור/שיר** - *shir/shur* <sup>7891</sup> – to sing  
– Ps. 104: 33;
- ◆ **שמח** - *samach* <sup>8055</sup> – to rejoice in/over  
– Ps. 104: 34; Jes. 29: 19;
- ◆ **שען** - *sha'an* <sup>1872</sup> – to lean on, to trust in  
– 2 Chron. 13: 18; 16: 7, 8;
- ◆ **חסה** - *chasah* <sup>2620</sup> – to trust in  
– Ps. 118: 9.

### Note:

Significantly, in this list you will not find anything like: 'don't mention', 'hide', 'forget' or 'keep secret'; on the contrary, many of actions recommended in the Bible involve speaking, singing or even shouting the glorious Name aloud.

### What not to do with the glorious Name:

- ◆ **עזב** - *'azab* <sup>5800</sup> – to leave  
– 2 Chron. 7: 22;
- ◆ **נשא שוא** - *nasa' shaw'* <sup>5375 7723</sup> – to use in vain or make empty (e.g. by ignoring, forgetting)  
– Ex. 20: 7; Deut. 5: 11;
- ◆ **חלל** - *chalal* <sup>2490</sup> – to humiliate, to defile, pollute  
– Lev. 19: 8, 12; 21: 6; 22: 2;
- ◆ **שבוע רקש** - *shabha' sheqer* <sup>7650 8267</sup> – to swear **falsely** by / abuse for lies  
– Lev. 19: 12.

## Appendix: Some arguments for the pronunciation of the glorious Name

In this document it has been argued, that we should not hide the glorious Name, but feel free to call, remember, pronounce, speak, praise, bless, seek, honor, love, swear by (in the sense of: “she swears by that approach/brand/...”; i.e. to ‘believe in, at the exclusion of others’), sing, proclaim and declare the glorious Name of God with dignity fitting to the Eternal Creator and King of the Universe. God **יְהוָה** Himself told us so, most clearly, as amply illustrated in the many passages, mentioned in the previous appendix and throughout the main text of this document.

Many have argued that the glorious Name of the Father God is too holy to be pronounced. Or, that we do not know for certain how exactly it should be pronounced, and we should not pronounce it wrongly, because that would be dishonoring to God. I then ask: “why is it, that the glorious name of God the Father would be more holy than the Name of God the Son?” The Name of the Son has been pronounced wrongly all through Church history. Whereas His Name probably (*not certain either!*) was pronounced *Yehoshuah* (maybe *Yahushuah*) or, more shortly, *Yeshuah*, the English language has mutilated this glorious Name of the Son into something like *Dzjeezuhs*. And nobody, apart from a minority of Messianic believers, ever objected...

However, since God **יְהוָה** is most worthy of all our efforts in this matter, out of reverence and respect we should do our utmost to seek to pronounce His glorious Name *as well as we possibly can*. If He commands us to speak and sing His Name, who are we to say we shouldn’t and to *replace* His glorious Name and thus *mutilate* the holy Bible – God’s Word, and make the glorious Name empty, something strictly forbidden in the *Thorah*?

In this document I advocate the pronunciation *Yahuah* (transliteration **IAUA** / *YaHUaH*) as closest to the original one. Below, I summarize a few of the many arguments for this particular pronunciation:

- Josephus Flavius, a first century Jewish priest, has written that the glorious Name exists of 4 vowels. Indeed, in old Hebrew the letters **א** / **י**, **א** / **ה** and **ו** / **ו** were frequently used as vowels, for *i*, *a* and *u* respectively (when looking at the earliest Hebrew). The Jewish Mishnah confirms implicitly that the Name should actually be pronounced *according to its [own] letters* (i.e. as 4 vowels; not interpreting the letters as consonants, with the need to introduce other, additional vowels), though they fiercely forbid this in general (an exception being an admonition to use of the glorious Name in blessing each other as a greeting, in *Berachot* 9:5, with reference to how Boaz greeted his workers and how they greeted him in turn, using the glorious Name). Unambiguously, this leads to the transliteration **IAUA** and to a pronunciation like *Yahuah*.
- Max Reisel<sup>4</sup> made what is probably the deepest investigation ever into the glorious Name, studying amongst others the oldest Hebrew (as well as other Semitic) word-forms and grammar around the verb **יָחַד** / **יָחַד** – *hawah* (used by God Himself in the explanation of His Name to Moses), and concludes that the Name is related to the old *imperfectum* of this verb, being *yahuwuh*, and from this and various other arguments he derives with great likelihood that the Name will have sounded like *YaHuâH* or *YeHuâH*. The former being the more likely form in the earliest times.
- In the oldest known ‘Hebrew’, by linguists also called ‘(West-)Semitic’, of the time from Abraham till king David (roughly 2000 - 1000 BC) there were basically only three vowels: *i*, *a*, and *u*. This rules out such pronunciations as *Yehowah* or *Yahweh* as candidates for an original pronunciation of the time of the patriarchs up to the time of king David. The pronunciation *Yahuah*, on the other hand, is very likely from the basic (West-)Semitic characters.
- The Biblical short form of the glorious Name is **יְה** / **יְה** - *YaH*. Excavations in Elephantine, a big isle in the river Nile on the south border of Egypt, where a sizeable orthodox Jewish settlement was around 600-400 BC, revealed a lot of documents testifying that **יְהוָה** / **יְהוָה** - *Yahu* was the common way orthodox Jews spoke and wrote about their God around 400 BC, fully in line with the observations in the previous three points. (The pronunciations *Yehovah*, *Yehowah* or *Yahweh* cannot be brought in agreement with this, or only via very complex reasonings.) To get from *Yahu* to *Yahuah*, we only need to refer to the many names ending on a **א** / **ה**, almost all with the ending *-ah*. The ending *-eh* (as in *Yahweh*) must clearly be seen as a polluted Samaritan/Greek deviation. The argument that the *-ah* ending would be too feminine does not hold; God **יְהוָה** encompasses in His Character both the masculine and the feminine (cf. Isaiah 66).
- The pronunciation *Yahuah*, later migrated to *Yehuah*, is most in line with the later pronunciation of both His people *Yehudah* (originally: *Yahudah*) and His Son *Yeshu’ah*. *Yehuah* can also be

regarded as being in line with the vowels (e.-a; regarding the ך as a vowel *u*) the Masoretes added to what they erroneously thought to be consonants, in the vast majority of cases.

- A pronunciation like *Yahuah* or *Yehuah* is acknowledged by testimonies of other, adjacent peoples, as revealed through archeological excavations.

As transliteration I prefer **IAUA**, or alternatively also **YaHUaH** (**JaHUaH** in continental European languages) as kind of a concession to all those who have always written *YHWH* (*JHWH*, respectively).

## Appendix: The problems of the transliteration and pronunciation *Yahweh*

The transliteration and pronunciation of the glorious Name of God as *Yahweh* is largely based on not very solid interpretations of Greek interpretations and Greek transliterations of what *possibly* was a Samaritan pronunciation. Some Greeks (e.g. Theodoret) wrote about this in Greek letters as: IABE – transliterable to our script as: *Iabe* or *Yabe*.

Three side remarks to that:

1. It is far from certain that we are dealing here with the glorious Name of God **יְהוָה** here, or with a *Samaritan replacement*. Like the Jews, the Samaritans were influenced by the Babylonian idolatry that forbade pronouncing the glorious Name of the God of Israel. Next to *Shema'* - Aramaic for 'the Naam', they used the replacement *Iafe* - 'the wonderful one'. It is very well possible that the Greek IABE was a transliteration of that, and not of the glorious Name of God **יְהוָה** at all. The only thing that Theodoret said is that the Samaritans called God this way, and His real Name they definitely did *not mention*...
2. Around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC the Greeks adopted the Paleo-Hebrew/Phoenician script. In the beginning writing was from right to left, or *boustrophedon* (litt.: as an ox plows: one line from right to left, the next the other way round). When they went to write consistently from left to right, most letters got mirrored. The sound of some letters was unknown to the Greeks, these letters got to be used for another sound in Greek; this counts especially for the letters that became vowels in Greek, like the letter E - *epsilon*. This Greek letter E - *epsilon* is based on the Paleo-Hebrew **א** - *ah/hey* in shape but *not in pronunciation*. So it is not so strange, that this letter was used to transliterate the last letter of what *may perhaps have been* the glorious Name **יְהוָה**, but then it says *nothing at all* about the pronunciation.
3. The Greeks often transliterated an *-ah* at the end of Biblical names with the letter E - *epsilon* (the same with *-a'*, *-a'*, *-a* and *-ach*). Some examples from the Septuagint-translation:

	Passage	Masoretic Text		Greek transliteration	notes
<i>-ah</i> :	Gen. 36: 24	אַיָּה	'Ayah	AIE	<i>Aie</i>
	1 Chron. 3: 20	חַשׁוּבָה	<i>Chashubah</i>	ΑΣΟΥΒΕ	<i>Asoube</i>
	Gen. 36: 13	מִזָּזָה	<i>Mizzah</i>	ΜΟΖΕ	<i>Moze</i>
	Gen. 36: 13	שַׁמָּה	<i>Shammah</i>	ΣΟΜΕ	<i>Some</i>
<i>-a'</i> :	'Ezra 10: 30	עַדְנָא	'Adna'	ΕΔΕΝΕ	<i>Edene</i>
	Gen.25:14	מַסְסָא	<i>Massa'</i>	ΜΑΣΣΗ	<i>Massè</i>
<i>-a'</i> :	Num. 1: 15	אַחִירָע	'Achira'	ΑΧΙΠΕ	<i>Achire</i>
	1 Chron. 8: 4	אַבִּישׁוּעַ	'Abishua'	ΑΒΙΣΟΥΕ	<i>Abisoue</i>
	1 Kings 19: 16	אֵלִישָׁע	'Elisha'	ΕΛΙΣΑΙΕ	<i>Elisaie</i>
	2 Sam. 5: 16	אֵלִיָּדָע	'Eljada'	ΕΛΙΔΑΕ	<i>Elidae</i>
	2 Sam. 8: 18	יְהוֹיָדָע	<i>Yehojada'</i>	ΙΩΔΑΕ	<i>Iōdae</i>
	2 Kings 11: 2	יְהוֹשֻׁבַע	<i>Yehosheba'</i>	ΙΩΣΑΒΕΕ	<i>Iōsabe-e</i>
<i>-a</i> :	Num. 13: 16	הוֹשֵׁעַ	<i>Hoshe'a</i>	ΑΥΣΗ	<i>Ausé</i>
	2 Kings 17: 6	הוֹשֵׁעַ	<i>Hoshe'a</i>	ΩΣΗΕ	<i>Ōsè-e</i> also Rom. 9: 25
	1 Chron. 7: 27	יְהוֹשׁוּעַ	<i>Yehoshu'a</i>	ΙΗΣΟΥΕ	<i>Ièsoue</i>
	'Ezra 2: 6	יֵשׁוּעַ	<i>Yéshu'a</i>	ΙΗΣΟΥΕ	<i>Ièsoue</i>
	1 Chron. 2: 24	תְּקוֹעַ	<i>Teqow'a</i>	ΘΕΚΩΕ	<i>Thekōe</i>
	Amos 1: 1	תְּקוֹעַ	<i>Teqo'a</i>	ΘΕΚΟΥΕ	<i>Thekoue</i>
<i>-ach</i> :	2 Kings 17: 6	חֲלָח	<i>Chalach</i>	ΑΛΑΕ	<i>Alae</i>
	Gen. 6: 8	נֹחַ / נֹחַ	<i>Noach</i>	ΝΩΕ	<i>Nōe</i>
	'Ezra 2: 54	נֶצְיָח	<i>Netsiach</i>	ΝΑΣΟΥΕ	<i>Nasoue</i>
	2 Kings 15: 25	פֶּקַח	<i>Peqach</i>	ΦΑΚΕΕ	<i>Fake-e</i>
	Gen. 36: 13; 2 Chron. 14: 9	זֶרַח	<i>Zerach</i>	ΖΑΠΕ	<i>Zare</i>

This selection shows clearly how inaccurate the Greek transliterations were in the names. And so, that the ending with a Greek –E says *absolutely nothing* about the pronunciation. Upon only a few notes very, very little can be build then...

The above shows that the basis for the ending *-eh* in the transliteration *Yahweh*, and the associated pronunciation, is very shallow and fragile indeed!

## Appendix: The true meaning of Kiddush HaShem and Chillul HaShem

In Jewish faith an important concept is that of *Kiddush HaShem* versus *Chillul HaShem*; the sanctification versus desecration of the glorious Name, respectively, in everyday life. Wikipedia concisely describes (part of the capitalizations, bold and *italic* of letters added for clarity): “Any behavior or action that **disgraces, harms or shames God** and His Torah is regarded as a *Chillul HaShem* (“desecration of God’s Name”). The opposite term, *Kiddush HaShem* (sanctification of God’s Name) means any action that **brings honor, respect, and glory to God**. ... The obligation to refrain from *Chillul Hashem* [is] one of the 613 *Mitzvot* (commandments).”<sup>97</sup> One of the basic texts for these two concepts is:

31 And ye shall keep My commandments, and do them: I am **אֱלֹהִים**. 32 And ye shall not **profane** (desecrate) **My holy Name**; but **I will be hallowed** (consecrated, sanctified) **among the children of Israel: I am אֱלֹהִים Who hallow** (consecrate, sanctify) **you**, 33 that brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am **אֱלֹהִים**. Leviticus 22: 31-33

We have to watch carefully, though, what is written here.

The root of the Hebrew word that is used here for ‘profane’ (לָלַחַח – *chala*) means ‘to bore’ (drill a hole into, make empty); a derived meaning is ‘to dissolve’. Some Jewish scholars have interpreted “ye shall not profane My holy Name” solely as ‘*don’t pronounce or otherwise use My holy Name*’ (possibly with the exception of sacred use by the High Priest in the Jerusalem Temple). Indeed, a profane, derogatory use can ‘empty’ the holy Name of the rich, most significant and glorious meaning the holy Name has. But the same can happen by *not using* the glorious Name at all, or by refusing to praise **אֱלֹהִים** and His glorious Name daily, till the rich meaning of the glorious Name is completely forgotten... Yes, in a profound way, forgetting the supreme Personal Name of the Almighty One is the ultimate *Chillul HaShem* !

Another important clue to the interpretation of these verses is provided by the word ‘hallow’ (שָׁדַח – *qadash*). It has the meaning: to set apart, to dedicate, to consecrate or to let shine. The text says we should hallow **אֱלֹהִים** and His Name, as He hallows us, with reference to how **אֱלֹהִים defended** Israel against the Egyptians who suppressed them, delivering them **from under that suppression**. In fact, shouldn’t we be doing exactly that: defending the uplifting praise for **אֱלֹהִים’s** glorious Name, thus consecrating the glorious Name of **אֱלֹהִים** again, and ‘delivering’ the glorious Name from under **suppression** by man-made laws and traditions?! I see this as a most relevant task for every Jew and Christian.

The call to *Kiddush HaShem* and to avoid *Chillul HaShem* in our everyday lives remains. Our specific way of using of the glorious Name will be either uplifting the glory of **אֱלֹהִים**, or it will degrade the glorious Name. As I said: forgetting the glorious Name is a most crude way of committing *Chillul HaShem*. Furthermore, we will either ‘hallow’ (*qadash*) or ‘profane’ (*chala*) the glorious Name by the way we are and live in this world (partly irrespective whether we use the glorious Name or not). When **אֱלֹהִים’s** presence is clearly visible in us, or when people or angels who see what we do and how we live, are encouraged to praise **אֱלֹהִים**, His glorious Name is hallowed. On the other hand, when the character of **אֱלֹהִים** is totally not reflected in our lives, His glorious Name may be profaned.

The clue or kernel of the distinction here is again: **how much influence do we allow the presence of אֱלֹהִים in our lives?**

This is an important, if not the most important way in which we can hallow, or sanctify the glorious Name: by paying special honor and attention to the glorious Name, by observing **אֱלֹהִים’s** desire to be actively present in our lives (*including following His leading!*), and by educating others about the rich and profound meaning associated with the glorious Name.

That’s also an important aspect of what motivated me to write this document, and to update it regularly (with any additional insights as they are revealed to me).

<sup>97</sup> Legally, Jewish *Chillul HaShem* focuses *especially* (but not exclusively) on the three most grave ‘sins’ (those that bring most *dishonour* to the glorious Name of **אֱלֹהִים**): idolatry (serving another god), murder and sexual sins like paedophilia, incest, prostitution, bestiality, etc.

### **More information or suggestions**

For more information, questions or suggestions you can contact me  
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