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# A NEW SOLUTION OF AN OLD PROBLEM.

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IT is well known that Ex. vi. 3 involves a problem with regard to the use of the Divine Name YHWH("Jehovah," or rather Yahweh), as to whether it was or was not used in pre-Mosaic times. In our present Hebrew text it occurs repeatedly in Genesis and in the earlier chapters of Exodus, yet the verse to which we have referred seems, at first sight at least, to say that the Name was unknown to the Patriarchs. How can this apparent contradiction be explained? Has a satisfactory solution yet been found?

Some of us Biblical students feel by no means sure that any one of the solutions already put forward is satisfactory. They each and all seem to involve difficulties, to fail to explain *all* the facts of the case. Hence they do not at once carry complete conviction to the student.

To us it seems that the key must fit the lock exactly and easily, without force or twisting, if it be the proper key. If it does not satisfy this condition, then it cannot be quite right, and we must try another and yet another, until we find one that will do.

I propose to try another key, — one, I fancy, which has not yet been tried, — in order to see whether it will succeed any better than the others. I think myself that it does; but my object in writing this article is to ask the opinion on the

subject of those better qualified to judge.  If I venture to consider as still *sub judice* what many deem a *res judicata*, the interest of the subject may in some measure tend to excuse my skepticism on the point.

The verse we are considering runs thus, according to a Karaite Hebrew MS., the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and the LXX, the Peshitta, Vulgate, and Armenian versions:—

" I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as *El Shaddai* [God Almighty], and My Name Yahweh [" Jehovah "] did I not make known to them."

The chief explanations of this verse now current are these:—

1.  That it means that, in the belief of the writer of the passage, God was not known to the Patriarchs as מויה (Yahweh).  Thus Wellhausen says: " Emphasis is laid upon the fact that God was unknown to the pre-Mosaic time by His Israelite name, that He made Himself known to the patriarchs only as El Shaddai, but to Moses first as Jahve (Yahweh). " [1]  Similarly Professor Toy writes: " It seems obvious that the intention of the writer is to say that the name Yahweh was not known to the patriarchs, . . . yet it occurs abundantly in Genesis." [2]

2.  That it means only that God did not *Himself directly* reveal Himself under this name, though angels used it of Him.

3.  That the meaning is that God had not previously revealed Himself with the fullness of significance of the name Yahweh, which was in itself a Divine Self-Revelation of God as in a special sense the covenant-keeping God of Israel,

[1] Prolegomena (3d Ed., 1886), p. 353.
[2] Christian Register, April 26, 1910.

the God of Revelation, — in this differing from the titles (such as *El Shaddai,* etc.,) which *men* gave to God to express *their* conceptions of Him.

Now to me, at least, it seems that No. 2 is hardly satisfactory; No. 3 contains a good deal of truth, yet it does not appear to convey the sense which one would naturally draw from the passage; No. 1 is much more natural, and yet it involves many difficulties, of which we select two. Thus understood, the verse contains: (1) an apparent absurdity, and (2) a seeming contradiction to the narrative contained in Genesis. On the former point, Wellhausen remarks: "What is it but a theory that the name Jahve (Yahweh) was first revealed to Moses, and through him to the Israelites, and had remained quite unknown previously? — a theory which, without doubt, will not hold water, — for Moses could have done nothing more senseless than introduce a new name for the God of their fathers, to Whom he referred his people." On the second point it should be noticed that not only does the Tetragrammaton occur in Genesis (in P,[1] e.g. Gen. xvii. 1, as well as in J, see especially Gen. iv. 26), but it enters (apparently[2] at least) into the composition of the name of Moses' mother, Jochebed (Ex. vi. 20; Num. xxvi. 59, both P). Now the author of P shows too much common sense to let us suspect him of asserting the absurdity so well pointed out by Wellhausen. Still less can we believe that he contradicted himself by stating that the first element in the name of Moses' mother was a Divine appellation which was not revealed until Moses was *eighty years old.* What is the way out of these difficulties?

[1] Ex. vi. 3, itself is considered to belong to P.

[2] The reason for saying "apparently" will be made clear farther on.

Astruc light-heartedly fancied that the theory of a distinction of documents would solve the problem involved in Ex. vi. 3 taken in sense No. 1. The higher critics followed his lead, and evolved P, J, and E, with their subdivisions. Of course it has now been found that the terms " Jehovist " and " Elohist " are unsuitable, i.e. the use of " Yahweh " and " Elohim " respectively for the Supreme Being is not reliable as a criterion to enable us to distinguish J from E, and so on. Hence Eerdmans quite gives up the use of these Divine appellations as distinctive of J and E respectively. Dr. Toy holds that the requisite distinction between the documents can be made " by contents and tone. . . . This decisive difference would remain if one and the same Divine Name were used throughout the two sections " (he is speaking of Gen. i. and ii.). Mr. C. J. Ball actually makes E stand for " the Ephraimitic [1] document " and J for " the Judaic document," which is an ingenious *volte face* that speaks for itself.

Now it is beyond our present purpose to discuss the question whether " the contents and tone " distinction is or is not sound (though, in passing, we may remark that this way of reasoning in a circle might be applied with remarkably striking results to Rudyard Kipling's " Jungle Book," " The Day's Work," " Rewards and Fairies," " Puck of Pook's Hill," or to Lewis Carroll's "Alice in Wonderland " and " Through the Looking-Glass." In these books the style and vocabulary of the poetic passages is at least as different from that of the prose as anything which Dr. Driver's laborious investigations have pointed out between the supposed original documents of the Hexateuch). But, leaving all this aside, it is evident that the surrender of the use of " Yah-

[1] See his " Explanation of Colours " on the inner cover of his edition of the Hebrew text of Genesis in the Polychrome Bible.

weh " and " Elohim " as the criterion admits that explana-
tion No. 1 of Ex. vi. 3 is not quite satisfactory.

Moreover, the division of sources is so intricate and over-
elaborated (as is seen at a glance in the Rainbow Bible) that
this very elaborateness suggests doubt, just as a similar in-
tricacy in the details of the Ptolemaic theory in astronomy
led to the further study which overthrew it in favor of a
simpler system.  But here we limit our objections to one
single point.  How are we, on higher critical grounds, to
account for the fact that the redactor, who, *ex hypothesi*, re-
duced the Hexateuch to approximately its present form
after the Babylonian captivity, left such an apparently glar-
ing contradiction between Ex. vi. 3 and, e.g., Gen. iv. 26?
He must have tried to produce a consistent narrative.  The
so-called " doublets " are quite a different matter, for they
would not necessarily appear to him to involve contradictions
(nor do they to some of us) ; whereas the verse we are con-
sidering does so appear.  How can we account for his going
out of his way to retain this puzzling verse from P, when he
must have omitted so much of each document in his attempt
to condense them all into one?  Is it not clear that, when the
Pentateuch assumed approximately its present form, the
compiler was of opinion that this passage presented no dif-
ficulty, but afforded a clear sense?  If so, it cannot have
conveyed  to him any one of the three main meanings given
above.

I venture to suggest that much, if not all, of our difficulty
in solving the problem lies in the fact that we assume, con-
trary to all evidence and probability, that " Jehovah " (Yah-
weh) is another form of the name " Jah," and that the
Tetragrammaton, wherever it occurs previous to Ex. vi. 3,
should be read (Yahweh) " Jehovah." *Why not read it*

"*Jah*"(i.e. punctuate יְהֹוה or יְהֹוֹה, not יַחְוֶה, *Yâhûh* or *Yâhôh*, not *Yahweh*)?

To make my meaning clear and to support this suggestion, I have (1) to show that such a form of the name which we know as Jah(i.e. *Yâh*, יָהּ, Ps. lxviii. 5, etc.), i.e. *Yâhû*, actually existed; and (2) to prove that this name Jah is not, as commonly supposed, a shortened [1] form of Yahweh, but, on the contrary, is a completely different word, having probably no etymological affinity with the latter.

It is clear that, if we are justified in reading " Jah " for " Jehovah " (*Yâhû* or *Yâhûh* for *Yahweh*) in Genesis, the contradiction between, e.g., Gen. iv. 26 and Ex. vi. 3, vanishes, as also the difficulty in accounting for the name of Moses' mother, Jochebed(*Yôkebed=Yâhû+Kebed*). But are we justified in doing so, and in differentiating " Jah " from " Jehovah " as a name of the Supreme Being?

1. That Jah (*Yâh*) had an earlier form from *Yâhû* (יהו) is clear from the fact that this form of the word *occurs* [2] as the final element in such names as Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Gemariah, which are often actually written Ḥizqiyyâhû (or Yᵉhizqiyyâhû or, in Assyrian, Ḥazaqia'u), Yirmᵉyâhû, and Gᵉmar-yâhû. Similarly, with the change of â to Shewa in the first syllable, in accordance with the general laws of accentuation, the same word occurs as the first element in very many names, such as *Jeho*ahaz (Yᵉhô-âhâz for Yᵉhû-âhâz). The shortened form of such names (Joahaz=Yô-âhâz) is due to an attempt made by a certain Jewish school

[1] In an article entitled "The Divine Name Jah," in the Churchman of February, 1910, I have tried to show the unlikelihood of a Divine Name like " Yahweh " being shortened.

[2] In the Aramaic Elephantine papyri, the Name יהו occurs separately, and should be read *Yâhû*.

of redactors of the text to guard against the pronunciation of the Divine Name.[1]

2.  Even if the form *Yâhû* did not actually occur in the Hebrew Bible, it would still be evident that it once existed. For all Semitic scholars are aware that the nominative singular masculine of all regular Semitic nouns at one time had the termination *-ûm*, found in the Himyaritic inscriptions (cf. Arabic *-un*).  The form *Yâhûm*[2] is thought to have been found in the name Yâhûm-îlî, belonging to a man contemporary with Abraham, though some dispute this.  But it must have been the original nominatival form.  The final *m* was early lost in Assyrian as well as in Hebrew, leaving the termination *-û*, which in the few words that still retain it in Genesis (e.g. חַיְתוֹ[3] in Gen. i. 24) has been changed by the Massoretes into *-ô*.

Now it is granted that the *matres lectionis* אהוי in Hebrew came into use as vowels, or as substitutes for vowels, only comparatively late.  Before *Vâv* was so used, *Hê* final quiescent was the only means of showing that a word ended in a vowel sound.  This method of indicating the sound of *ô* final persists in a few Hebrew grammatical forms (cf. *Shelômôh*,[4] שלמה. for *Shelômô*, Solomon).  In early days, therefore, Yâhû must have been written יהה.  When *Vâv* became admitted into use as a vowel sign,[5] Yâhû would be written יהו,

[1] Ginsburg, Introduction, p. 369.

[2] Sayce, Religions of Babylonia and Assyria, p. 484, who refers also to Hommel.

[3] In the construct state: cf. the construct forms *abû, akhû, fû, dhû*, which still survive in Arabic.

[4] Of course another possible explanation might be given of ה‎ַ— for the pronominal וֹ—.

[5] Ginsburg (Introd., pp. 137, 138) quotes Jehudah Chayug and Ibn Ezra as stating that the insertion or omission of the *matres lectionis* was always left to the discretion of the scribes. After

*and would then become indistinguishable in form from Yahweh.*

It is not, therefore, unlikely that, throughout Genesis and up to Ex. vi. 2, wherever the Tetragrammaton occurs, it should be read Yâhû ("Jah"), and not Yahweh ("Jehovah"). The fact that the form Jah itself occurs very rarely indeed in the Pentateuch (though it does occur in, e.g., Ex. xv. 2 and in the Eastern reading of Ex. xvii. 16) supports this conjecture.

If we accept it, there vanishes the difficulty which, as Wellhausen points out, is involved in the idea that Moses, when presenting himself to Israel in Egypt as sent by the God of their fathers, fancied he could *prove*(?) this by calling God by a hitherto unknown Name. Then Ex. iii. 15 would run: "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Jah (*Yâhû*), the God of your fathers, . . . hath sent me unto you." The context in this and in the next verse shows clearly that the name of God there mentioned was supposed to be already well known to Israel and to have been known to the patriarchs.[1] According to Ex. vi. 3, the name Yahweh was *not* so known.

It still remains to be shown that Jah (*Yâhû*) is not a mere contraction of Yahweh, but etymologically a different name altogether. This seems clear from Isa. xxvi. 4: "Trust ye in Jehovah forever: for in Jah Jehovah (Yâh Yahweh) is the Rock of Ages" (cf. Isa. xii. 2, where the two names occur together again). If "Jah" were but an apocopated form of Jehovah, the use of them both in the same verse, one

giving instances in the case of *Aleph* and *Hê*, Ginsburg adds: "Far more arbitrary is the presence or absence of the letter *Vav* as a vowel sign in the middle of a word" (p. 148).

[1] The names of *Jochebed* and *Moriah* support this view.

following the other, would be unmeaning, and would spoil the melody of the passage.

Another fact which points to the same conclusion is that, in Hebrew, "Yahweh" does not enter into combination[1] with other words to form proper names; whereas "Yah" (*Yâhû*) does. Possibly one reason of this was that "Yah" was a far older name than Yahweh.

We may state the case thus:—

From Enosh's time (Gen. iv. 26) God was known as Yah (*Yâhû*), and under that name (as well as by certain other titles) he was worshiped by the patriarchs. Accordingly he commanded Moses (Ex. iii.[2] 15, 16) to call him by that name in speaking as his messenger to Israel in Egypt. Afterwards when this had been done, and when Moses was in Egypt, acting as their instructor, God gave Moses another revelation of Himself, slightly modifying the name and, as it were, paraphrasing it, by turning "Yâhû" into "Yahweh," or rather by permitting the latter word to be used as representing one aspect of the meaning which should be attached to the ancient name Yâhû. Preparation for this was made by the statements "I am that I am" and "I Am hath sent me to you" (Ex. iii. 14), and by the explanation that "I Am" was Jah(Yâhû) in the following verse. Thus "Yahweh" was not to supersede Yâhû as a name (Ex. iii. 15, 16), but to explain it.

Exodus iii. 14 would lead us to expect that God as $\acute{o}$ *"Ων* (LXX) would be spoken of as *Yihyeh*, not as *Yahweh*. But the former would have been an entirely new name; whereas the latter was, in form, a modification of Yâhû (changing

[1] In the Captivity times, as Sayce points out. Yahweh is found in Hebrew names in Babylon (e.g. Gamar-*Ya'awa*, *Ya'awa*-natanu).

[2] Needless to say, we do not take this as a doublet of Ex. vi. 3.

יִהְוֶ into יִהְיֶה). Another reason for the preference being given to " Yahweh " was perhaps that there was a religious value in the archaic form, for the ancient root was *hâwâh*,[1] not *hâyâh,* and the ancient, "Arabicized," [2] form of the aorist. *Yahweh,* was very archaic. With the modification of " Yâhû " into " Yahweh," we may compare the change of Abram into Abraham and of Sarai into Sarah.

If we ask, What was the reason for modifying or paraphrasing " Yâhû " into " Yahweh "? two good hypotheses present themselves. One is that " Yâhû " had ceased to be understood, and hence had become a merely arbitrary and unmeaning appellation, and, as such, was destitute of value as a revelation of God's Nature. The second reason is that, considering how prone the Israelites then were to idolatry and the strong influence which generations of contact with Egyptian religion and civilization must have had upon them, there was very great danger lest they should explain " Yâhû " to themselves as identical with the Egyptian I'âhu ( =Coptic Ioh), the moon-god, who is sometimes identified [3] with Osiris, by far the most popular deity in Egypt. The incidents of the golden calf and of those made by Jeroboam, *in each case as symbols of Jehovah,* (i.e. of Yâhû) show how great this danger was. If the old name (Yâhû) Jah were

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[1] Where Hebrew has *y* in roots, Arabic has *w*, the older form.

[2] In the Semitic tongues the preformative of the Aorist Qal was originally *ya,* as it still is in literary Arabic; whereas in Hebrew it has sunk to *yi,* as often in modern Arabic dialects. Hommel gives reason to think that Abraham's ancestors came from South Arabia with the conquerors who founded the Hammurabi dynasty. The reverential effect of the ancient form of a language, in contrast to the modern and colloquial, is felt when we compare our Authorized Version with a colloquial one.

[3] See Lamentations of Isis and Nephthys, iv. 3. Properly the Egyptian word should be transliterated יעהוּ, but the '*Ayin* was only slightly pronounced.

to be retained at all (as it evidently must be and was), and if no word remained [1] in Hebrew which would suggest to the people at large the original signification of that name, it was evidently desirable to paraphrase it in such a way as to guard against danger and to reveal something of the covenant-God of Israel. This was accomplished by the paraphrase in Ex. vi. 3.

As a solution of the problem raised by Ex. vi. 3, therefore, I offer, with all deference, the hypothesis that, in Genesis and Ex. i.–vi. 2, wherever the Tetragrammaton occurs, it was intended to be read Yâhû or Yâhûh (i.e. Jah), not Yahweh. The theory is at least simple, it requires no change in the text, and it seems to remove some of the main difficulties which the explanations given at the beginning of this article do not take away.

It remains to be seen whether we can find the root of Yâhû in any Semitic language, if we consider it etymologically distinct from Yahweh. We should be inclined to seek for the root in some Semitic tongue connected with the south of Arabia, for reasons already given. The chief South-Semitic tongues are Himyaritic and Ethiopic. Of the former we know very few words, whereas we possess a large vocabulary of Ethiopic. In this latter tongue the root *yaweha* occurs, meaning " to be kind, clement, merciful, upright." [2] From it comes the adjective *yawâh*, " gentle, kind, upright, merciful." Now, if this root existed in Hebrew, it would be written יוה, and its present participle Qal (in accordance with the paradigm of verbs with *Vâv* medial )would be יָה (Yâh). This with the old nominative masculine ending would be Yâhûm,

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[1] As is clear from the fact that its root (if it be not a contraction of *Yahweh*) does not exist in Biblical Hebrew.

[2] Dillmann, Lexicon Linguæ Æthiopicæ, *s.v.*

and then Yâhû, since the *qâmês* in that class of participles is invariable.   Hence Yâhû (Jah) would originally mean "kind, merciful," etc.   This meaning exactly agrees with what we read in Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7: "The LORD, the LORD, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth," etc.   If instead of reading the Tetragrammaton here twice over "Yahweh," we read "*Yâhû, Yahweh,*" etc., the sense will be better, there will be no repetition, and it will agree with the later "Yâh Yahweh" of Isa. xii. 2 and xxvi. 4, thus supporting our proposal to read Yâhû, instead of Yahweh, in Genesis and as far as Ex. vi. 2.

In conclusion it may be asked, Why should we not *every-where* alike read Yâhû(h), and never Yahweh, even though this would leave unsolved the problem raised by Ex. vi. 3? In answer we may say that the occurrence of the Jewish names Gamar-*ya'awa* and *Ya'awa*-nanatu in the Babylonian contract tablets of the time of the Captivity shows that, at least at that time, the name Yahweh (or Yahaweh) existed. Later we find Theodoret and Epiphanius writing the pronun-ciation thus 'Ιαβέ, which is equivalent to "Yahweh." We can no more infer, however, that "Yahweh" originated in the Captivity than that it was invented in Theodoret's time.

It is worthy of note that the Divine Name in the form Yâhû is still preserved in Arabic, though the popular idea is that it is formed of the interjection *yâ*, "O," and the pronoun *hua*, "he." But this is impossible. The Creed of the Anṣà-riyyah sect runs thus: *Yâhû, Yâhû, yâ man lâ ya'lamu mâ hua illâ hua*, "Jah, Jah, the one of whom nobody knows what he is except Himself."