

# **THE TETRAGRAMMATON**

and the

## **CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES**

A comprehensive study of the  
divine name (יהוה) in the original writings of  
the Christian Greek Scriptures (New Testament).

First Edition, 1996

Second Edition 1998

Released for internet, 2000

"In turn he that loves me will be loved by  
my Father, and I will love him and  
will plainly show myself to him."

John 14:21

Jesus, I want to be loved by the Father . . . I want to  
be loved by you, too.  
And Jesus, I want you to show me who you really are.  
But Jesus, most of all, I want to really love you!

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For more information including free downloadable and large-print books visit:  
**[www.tetragrammaton.org](http://www.tetragrammaton.org)**

All general Scripture quotations in this book are from either the  
*New World Translation* or the  
*Kingdom Interlinear Translation*.  
Both are published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society  
of New York.

In certain instances which are identified as such,  
quotations are made from either the Hebrew or English portions of  
Hebrew versions. Unless otherwise identified, the Hebrew  
version used is J<sup>18</sup>, *Greek Scriptures in Hebrew*.

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**A Comment Regarding Terminology.** This book was primarily written for Jehovah's Witness readers. Consequently, terminology common to Watch Tower publications is used rather than terminology more familiar to the average reader of religious materials. Specifically, the term *Christian Greek Scriptures* (or *Christian Scriptures*) is used rather than *New Testament*, and the term *Hebrew Scriptures* replaces the more familiar *Old Testament*. The divine name *Jehovah* is used rather than the more universally familiar *Yahweh*. *Inspired Christian writers* is the term used to identify the *New Testament writers*. In a more technical area, the Greek word for *Lord* is transliterated as *Kyrios* following the spelling preference of the Watch Tower Society rather than the common transliteration *Kurios*.

Reference material was limited to those publications familiar to the average Witness reader. For this reason, there are few references to books or research topics published by other than the Watch Tower Society.

## Overview: THE SUBJECT OF THIS BOOK

This book ••i•• examines the use of the Tetragrammaton by the inspired writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures. But why study the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Scriptures now? Hasn't the presence of the Tetragrammaton already been established?

### Identifying growth in biblical knowledge

Is biblical knowledge static, remaining the same today as it was a thousand years ago? Or does biblical knowledge grow with each successive generation, deriving benefit from discoveries made in its own time? *Without doubt, biblical knowledge grows.*

Witnesses worldwide strongly defend the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. The inspired Christian Greek Scriptures were complete when John finished writing in 98 C.E.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Scripture *itself* does not change. On the other hand, as more is learned of biblical history, culture, and ancient manuscripts, our *knowledge* of Scripture grows.

The New World Bible Translation Committee understood that biblical knowledge grows when it searched for evidence of God's name (יהוה) in Christian Greek Scripture manuscripts between 1947 and 1949. Again today, with an ever increasing availability of biblical information, we must re-examine the same question of the Tetragrammaton's presence in the Christian Scriptures.

This book explores the fascinating world of ancient second and third century documents, though it was written for the reader who does not have specialized training in Hebrew or Greek languages. However, it does not discuss the Tetragrammaton from the perspective of *theology*. This is a study of the ancient Greek manuscripts themselves.

### Contemporary trends in manuscript research

Even the experienced Bible student is often surprised by the contemporary advances made in the study of ancient Bible manuscripts.

An example of this developing new light is evident in recent publications. The first Greek text used by the International Bible Students Association was the *Emphatic Diaglott*. In the foreword of the 1942 edition, the translator (Benjamin Wilson) credits the King James Version of 1611 with only eight Greek manuscript sources from the tenth century and later (p. 6, 1942 edition). In contrast, Wilson lists ••ii•• the known Greek manuscripts of his day (the 1860's) as "nearly 700" (the *Emphatic Diaglott* p. 6, 1942 edition). By the publication date of the 1983 edition of "*All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial*," the editors state, "...there are more than 4,600 manuscripts in the original Greek" (p. 315). This number grew to "...over 5,000 manuscripts"<sup>2</sup> by the time of the 1990 edition of the same book (p. 316).

How can ancient manuscripts "come to light" throughout the 20th century? Two examples illustrate the process.

The first example began in 1947. A Bedouin shepherd threw a rock into the narrow opening of a cave above the Dead Sea and heard a pottery jar break. The jars of manuscripts he subsequently found are a part of the collection now known as the *Dead Sea Scrolls*. (A total of 11 caves containing manuscript material were eventually discovered. See the photo of these caves on page 322 of *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1.)

Today, there are 225 Dead Sea Scroll documents containing either Hebrew Scriptures or commentaries on Bible books. In the 1950's, initial translations of the Dead Sea Hebrew Scripture documents were published. (For an example of the material which has been published since the late 1950's, see the discussion under the heading, "Papyrus manuscripts," in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, pages 315-16.)

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture writing dates are not precisely known. In order to establish a consensus throughout this book, we will use the writing dates given in the table "Christian Greek Scriptures (C.E.)," *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> Other publications including *Reasoning from the Scriptures* [1989, p. 64] and *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?* [1989, p.59] also give the number as 5,000.

A second example comes from manuscripts which contribute to our understanding of the Tetragrammaton's use in early copies of the *Septuagint*. In spite of the Watch Tower Society's insistence to the contrary, many questioned the claim that the Tetragrammaton was used in early copies of the *Septuagint*. Today, however, we know that the Watch Tower Society was correct. Important finds in a Cairo synagogue confirmed the place of יהוה in both the pre-Christian *Septuagint* and Origen's *Hexapla*. In 1959, P.E. Kahle published *The Cairo Geneza* describing the use of the Tetragrammaton in Jewish copies of the *Septuagint*. In 1958, Giovanni Mercati's study of the Tetragrammaton in a *Hexapla* copy from the same synagogue was published. Then, beginning in 1944 with an article by W. G. Waddell and continuing into the 1970's, other scholars such as Kahle, J.A. Emerton, Sidney Jellicoe, and Bruce Metzger wrote articles in theological journals and published books verifying the existence of the Tetragrammaton in Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

••iii•• *Thus, 2,000-year-old manuscripts which contribute new information to our understanding of Jehovah's Scriptures have been published since the release of the Christian Greek Scriptures in 1950.*

We live in an exciting age of Bible manuscript study. In the past 150 years, many ancient Bible manuscripts have been discovered. Just as important, however, has been the scholarly work of publishing these manuscripts. *In the end, the two examples of the discovery of new manuscripts and the publication of existing material converge into the single result of a more accurate English Bible as seen in the following example.*

*Aleph* (א), one of two primary Greek manuscripts on which the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation's* Greek text is based, was discovered in 1859. (This is *recent* when we realize that the manuscript itself was copied in the fourth century.) Because of the problems encountered in obtaining the manuscript from its original owners,<sup>4</sup> it was not until 1911 that the first photographic reproductions were made available to biblical scholars. It was even later (1933 to 1938) that the manuscript was finally housed in the British Museum in England and carefully studied. Westcott and Hort published their Greek text in 1881 from a hand-copied reproduction of the manuscript. Thus, there was a substantial time interval between the discovery of this fourth century manuscript and the time when it could make a significant contribution to biblical understanding.

### **Emerging manuscript evidence today**

Though many ancient manuscripts have come to light in the last 150 years, the discovery of new manuscript material will diminish with time. Will another cave be found with ancient manuscripts comparable to those from the environs of the Dead Sea? Probably not. How then can the number of Greek Scripture manuscripts increase from "nearly 700" in the 1890's to "more than 4,600" by 1983, and finally to "over 5,000"<sup>5</sup> in 1990? The answer is not measured by new documents ••iv•• discovered in heretofore unknown caves or monasteries. For the most part, *the disclosure of new manuscripts represents the scholarly work of publishing previously unknown ancient documents allowing them to become usable resources for Bible translators.*

A scroll with Greek writing may have value as a curiosity piece, but it has little value as a textual resource. Before such a manuscript can make a contribution to Greek Scripture translation, its age, its place of origin, its relationship to other manuscripts of its day, and many other factors must be determined. In short, it will be subjected to an intense study for evidences of its authenticity. As we have seen in the previous examples, there is often a considerable time interval between the discovery of the actual manuscript and its placement within the body of texts used for Bible translation. We will see in a later chapter that 18 ancient papyrus manuscripts have been published since 1950. Thus, the

<sup>3</sup> These sources are identified in the Bibliography.

<sup>4</sup> The manuscript was discovered in the monastery library of a religious order on Mount Sinai. The original edition contained both the complete *Septuagint* and Christian Scriptures. The monastics had actually used a substantial number of sheets from the *Septuagint* Hebrew Scripture portion to start fires! However, when they realized its value, they were reluctant to release it until a sizable price was paid. See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, p. 323 for photos of both the manuscript and St. Catharine's Monastery. Also see the photo of the manuscript in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 317.

<sup>5</sup> These numbers are used merely for the sake of illustration. Full documentation of the actual manuscripts is found in the work of Kurt and Barbara Aland as cited in *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*, p. 59.

cited references to the growth of available manuscripts encompass the entire process so that by 1990 over 5,000 Greek Scripture manuscripts had been discovered and published.

The primary focus of this book is not *new* manuscript discoveries since 1950, though the chapters reporting the papyri published since 1950, new information concerning the Tetragrammaton, and the work of George Howard<sup>6</sup> certainly constitute new manuscript information. Nonetheless, the study of biblical manuscripts is a dynamic process. Material which was unobtainable 50 years ago is available to a Bible scholar or translator today. Just as the New World Bible Translation Committee evaluated the known biblical manuscripts of its day, so again, we must re-evaluate the entire body of contemporary textual and historical evidence.<sup>7</sup>

### The work of the New World Bible Translation Committee

••v•• In order to maintain the highest standards of Bible translation integrity, the translation itself must be continually evaluated against the most current manuscript information. In October, 1946, Watch Tower Society president Nathan H. Knorr proposed that the Society produce a translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures. The work began in December, 1947. The Christian Greek Scripture portion of the *New World Translation* was presented to a joint meeting of the boards of directors of the Society's New York and Pennsylvania corporations on September 3, 1949. It was released for general use in a dramatic moment on August 2, 1950 before an assembly of 82,075 of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York's Yankee Stadium.

The Christian Greek Scriptures of the *New World Translation* was deemed necessary because of emerging biblical scholarship. *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* (pages 608-609) says,

Furthermore, older and more reliable Bible manuscripts were becoming available. The Greek language of the first century was becoming more clearly understood as a result of archaeological discoveries. Also, the languages into which translations are made undergo changes over the years.

Jehovah's Witnesses wanted a translation that embodied the benefits of the latest scholarship, one that was not colored by the creeds and traditions of Christendom, a literal translation that faithfully presented what is in the original writings and so could provide the basis for continued growth in knowledge of divine truth, a translation that would be clear and understandable to modern-day readers. The *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, released in 1950, filled that need.

### Our task today

Since 1950, however, many advances have been made in the study of the Greek text. Just as it was necessary to evaluate Bible translations of that day in the light of emerging textual scholarship, so again today, the Christian Greek Scriptures of the *New World Translation* must be re-evaluated using the textual, historical, and scholarly understanding which has become available in the past 45 years.

We must take seriously a statement of the writers of *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* found on pages 146-148. Though the topic of discussion is prophesy, their comments can equally be applied to the new light emerging from ancient Greek manuscript discoveries and research:

••vi•• As reflected in their modern-day history, the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses has

<sup>6</sup> George Howard's work with the *Shem-Tob Matthew Gospel in Hebrew*, which is reported in Chapter 5, would certainly describe the scholarly work dealing with manuscript *identification*. If it is finally substantiated, the result of Howard's identification is almost as significant as if a new manuscript had been discovered.

<sup>7</sup> The distinction between a new understanding from *existing textual evidence* and the discovery of *new manuscripts* may be more easily illustrated than explained. The Watch Tower Society has long recognized that biblical understanding is *progressive*, though this certainly does not imply a continuous process of manuscript discoveries. An interesting series of examples of this awareness can be seen in Chapter 10, "Growing in Accurate Knowledge of the Truth," from the book *Jehovah's Witnesses Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*. The entire chapter is worth reading. On page 121, this comment is made:

Did [Charles Taze Russell and his associates] believe that they had all the answers, the full light of truth? To that question Brother Russell pointedly answered: "Certainly not; nor will we have until the 'perfect day.'" (Prov. 4:18, KJ) Frequently they referred to their Scriptural beliefs as "present truth"—not with any idea that truth itself changes but rather with the thought that their understanding of it was progressive.

been like that described at Proverbs 4:18: "The path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established." The shining of the light has been progressive, just as the light of early dawn gives way to sunrise and the full light of a new day. Viewing matters in the light that was available, they have at times had incomplete, even inaccurate, concepts. No matter how hard they tried, they simply could not understand certain prophecies until these began to undergo fulfillment. As Jehovah has shed more light on his Word by means of his spirit, his servants have been humbly willing to make needed adjustments.

Such progressive understanding was not limited to the early period of their modern-day history. It continues right down to the present...

In recent years a greater diversity of Bible study material has been provided to satisfy the needs of both mature Christians and new students from many backgrounds. Continued study of the Scriptures, along with fulfillment of divine prophecy, has in many instances made it possible to express Bible teachings with greater clarity. Because their study of God's Word is progressive, Jehovah's Witnesses have spiritual food in abundance, even as the Scriptures foretold would be true of God's servants. (Isa. 65:13, 14) Adjustments in viewpoint are never made with a view to becoming more acceptable to the world by adopting its declining moral values. On the contrary, the history of Jehovah's Witnesses shows that changes are made with a view to adhering even more closely to the Bible, being more like the faithful first-century Christians, and so being more acceptable to God.

This book will present a comprehensive study of the current understanding of historical and textual evidence which has a bearing on the Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures. To that end, this study again asks the same question raised by the translators of the *New World Translation* started their work in 1947: "Did the original inspired Christian writers use the Tetragrammaton in 237 instances while writing the Christian Greek Scriptures?"<sup>8</sup>

### **A personal study**

The material in this book is primarily the result of a personal study. More than ten years ago, as a result of a very pleasant contact ••vii•• with two of Jehovah's Witnesses, the author began an intensive Scripture search to determine the identity of Jesus. It was much more than a study of the Greek text; it was a study with momentous personal consequences in the author's faith. Almost two years were spent in a meticulous study from the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*. Early in that study, the importance of the Tetragrammaton (or *Kyrios*) in the Christian Greek Scriptures became apparent.

The material in this book represents some of the answers discovered in the author's personal study.

The *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* published by the Watch Tower Society in 1969 and 1985 is an indispensable resource for this study. If possible, obtain both editions. This interlinear Greek-English Bible will give you first-hand information for the verification of much of the material contained in this book.

May Jehovah bless your study.



For the sake of credibility, the author was identified in the second edition of this book. As this material becomes generally known, there is no longer need for that precaution. The author has been in repeated contact with the Governing Body of the Watch Tower Society. If you need additional information, they can supply it to you at their discretion.

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<sup>8</sup>We do not wish to imply that this question is an actual statement made by the New World Bible Translation Committee. The use of the divine name within the Christian Greek Scriptures, however, implies that this question was asked in some form, and was subsequently answered affirmatively.

## Prologue

••viii•• "Did the original inspired Christian writers use the Tetragrammaton in 237 instances while writing the Christian Greek Scriptures?" is not an innocuous question. The answer will have momentous consequences on your life as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The author has talked with elders and publishers who believe that their faith is unaffected by the inspired Christian writers' use—or lack of use—of יהוה in the original Greek manuscripts.

Their perception of the importance of יהוה in the Christian Scripture text is profoundly inadequate!

*The ancient biblical documents you will examine in this book will confront you with the most fundamental challenge to your faith as a Witness which you will ever encounter.*

As a single example, if the Apostle John used the Tetragrammaton at Revelation 11:17, he wrote,

Εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, **יהוה** ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ

We thank you, **Jehovah** God, the Almighty... (NWT).

On the other hand, if John did not use יהוה, then he wrote,

Εὐχαρισταῦμέν σοι, **κύριε** ὁ θεός, ὁ παντοκράτωρ

We are giving thanks to you, **Lord** the God, the Almighty... (KIT).

The one addressed in this verse is clearly "God...the Almighty." Did John write this of *Jehovah* (יהוה), or did he write it of the *Lord* (Κυριος)?

The answer to this question is not found in theology. Nor is it found in personal conviction or even loyalty to an organization. *The answer is found through a careful examination of the ancient Greek manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures.*

With the help of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, this book will examine the earliest known Greek manuscripts and their surrounding context, in order to determine whether the inspired Christian authors wrote יהוה or Κύριος (*Kyrios*) in 237 specific instances in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

Your faith is unavoidably dependent on the answer which comes from the early Greek manuscripts themselves!

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SECTION 1

The Tetragrammaton, inspiration, and a study  
of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

Page 3

Chapter 1: WHAT IS THE TETRAGRAMMATON?

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Chapter 3: A GREEK INTERLINEAR STUDY (Part 1)

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Chapter 4: A GREEK INTERLINEAR STUDY (Part 2)

## Chapter 1: WHAT IS THE TETRAGRAMMATON?

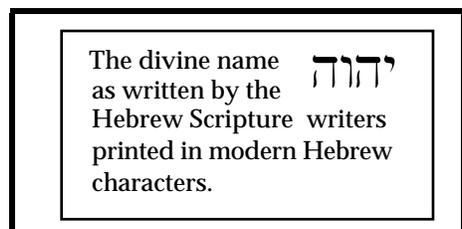
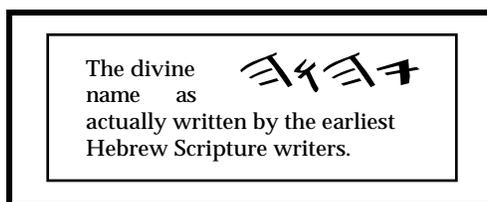
Regular readers of Watch Tower publications already understand the meaning of the word *Tetragrammaton*. However, it is worthwhile to give some background information for the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with the term.

••3•• *The Tetragrammaton is the divine name as it is written in Hebrew letters.* In English, God's name is written in its various forms as *Jehovah* or *Yahweh*.

Before going further, however, it will be of interest to look at the meaning of the word *Tetragrammaton*<sup>1</sup> itself. The Greek word *tetra* (τέτρα) is used as a prefix designating the number *four*. We find this word at Luke 3:1 where it refers to Herod as a district ruler or *tetrarch* as noted in the *New World Translation Reference Edition* footnotes. The tetrarch shared a kingdom area; he was one of four rulers. (In contrast, a single ruler is called a *monarch*.) The Greek word *gramma* (γράμμα) means *writings* or *letters*. Galatians 6:11 says, "See with what large *letters* (γράμμα) I have written YOU with my own hand." Thus, *Tetragrammaton* means *four letters*.<sup>2</sup> The term *Tetragrammaton* itself is not a word found in the Bible, but is a useful word describing the four Hebrew characters used in God's name.

### Formation of the letters

The orthography (letter formation) of all written languages gradually develops over a period of time. That is especially true of Hebrew which has been written for thousands of years from ancient to modern times. The Tetragrammaton as first written



in the Hebrew Scriptures is depicted in the box on this page. The Watch Tower publication *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever* (1984) gives two excellent illustrations of the divine name in its early written form. The first illustration on page 12 shows two occurrences found on a ••4•• pottery shard from the second half of the seventh century B.C.E. The second illustration on page 13 shows two occurrences from the Moabite Stone inscribed about 850 B.C.E. By carefully studying the examples given in that publication, slight differences in character<sup>3</sup>

formation can be detected between the two specimens. In both cases, however, the Tetragrammaton of this period of time has the general appearance of  $\aleph\aleph\aleph\aleph$ .

In the article "Hebrew II" found in *Insight on the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1072) the writers say,

The earliest Hebrew inscriptions known are recorded in an ancient script considerably different in form from the square-shaped Hebrew letters of later documents, such as those of the early centuries of the Common Era. The square-shaped style is often called "Aramaic," or "Assyrian." It is believed that the change from ancient Hebrew characters to square Hebrew characters took place during the Babylonian exile. However, as Ernst Würthwein says: "For a long while the Old Hebrew script remained in use beside the square script. The coins of the period of Bar Kochba's revolt (A.D. 132-135) bear Old Hebrew letters. Among the texts found in the Dead Sea caves are some written in the Old Hebrew Script."

Even though the formation of the characters has changed over time, the Hebrew spelling of the

<sup>1</sup> The word may properly be written either *Tetragrammaton* or *Tetragram*. Throughout this book we will use *Tetragrammaton*.

<sup>2</sup> *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 882.

<sup>3</sup> The word *character* is more correctly used of written Hebrew than *letter*. We will generally use *letter* to refer to written Greek or English and *character* in reference to written Hebrew.

divine name itself has not. That is, both יהוה and יהוה are transliterated into English as YHWH. Since Hebrew is written from left to right, the ancient Hebrew character ו and the modern Hebrew character ם are both Y (Yohdh); ה and ה are both H (He'), and ו and ו are both W (Waw).

The designation *palaeo-Hebrew* is occasionally encountered in technical descriptions of written Hebrew. This term identifies the ancient style characters as represented by ווהו.<sup>4</sup> ••5••

In the remainder of this book, we will follow the general practice of the Watch Tower Society in representing the Tetragrammaton of the early Hebrew Scripture writers with modern Hebrew characters. Thus, irrespective of the time period under consideration, we will use the four Hebrew characters יהוה to represent the Tetragrammaton. The reader should understand, however, that at any time prior to the Babylonian exile, the divine name would have been written ווהו.

### The Tetragrammaton in its Hebrew background

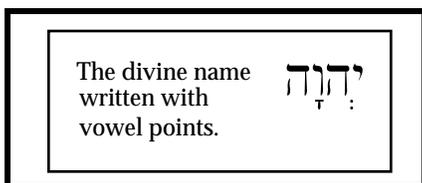
We encounter the divine name early in the Hebrew Scriptures. At Genesis 2:4 and 16, Moses wrote God's personal name for the first time when he said, "This is a history of the heavens and the earth in the time of their being created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven." When Moses wrote this verse, he penned the name of God with four Hebrew characters as יהוה.

Because Genesis 2:4 is the first reference to the divine name in the Bible, the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (p. 17) gives the following information in a footnote to this verse:

"Jehovah." Heb[rew], יהוה (YHWH, here vowel-pointed as *Yehwah*), meaning "He causes to Become" (from Heb[rew], הוה [*ha-wah*', "to become"]); LXX (Gr[ee]k) *Ky'ri-os*; Syr[ian], *Mar-ya*'; Lat[in], *Do'min-us*. The first occurrence of God's distinctive personal name, יהוה (YHWH); these four Heb[rew] letters are referred to as the Tetragrammaton. The divine name identifies Jehovah as the Purposer. Only the true God could rightly and authentically bear this name. See App[endix] 1A [in the Reference Bible].

Though the Tetragrammaton is God's most holy name, it is derived from a common Hebrew grammatical structure. Again, the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (p. 1561) gives us the following information:

"Jehovah" (Heb[rew] יהוה YHWH), God's personal name...is a verb, the causative form, the imperfect state, of the Hebrew verb הוה (*ha-wah*', "to become").



This is further amplified in *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William Gesenius (1865, pp. 249-250) wherein three primary English equivalent uses of the Hebrew verb הוה (*ha-wah*', "to ••6•• become") are listed. Gesenius

identifies the following English meanings: 1) *to come to pass, to happen, to be*; 2) *to begin to be, i.e. to become, to be made or to be done*; and 3) *to be*. These uses of the verb הוה give us a sense of the meaning behind the divine name.

A related topic is the *pronunciation* of the divine name. To understand pronunciation, we must consider Hebrew vowel points.

Until well after Jesus' time, the Hebrew language was written using only consonants. Sometime after 400 C.E. a group of Jewish scholars called Masoretes added vowel points in order to standardize pronunciation. We need to give an illustration of a written language without vowels. We can use the sentence, "Moses wrote the five books of the law." If we write the sentence without vowels, it looks

<sup>4</sup> The reader interested in pursuing the subject of the Hebrew language further would profit by the useful information found under the heading "Hebrew II" in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 1068-1077. A complete table of Hebrew character formation from the ninth century B.C.E through modern Hebrew (including the time of Christ) is given on page 344 of the *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*. In most instances, according to this table, the Hebrew character formation of Jesus' day is closely akin to the later square characters which are the predecessors to modern Hebrew.

like this:

m s s w r t t h f v b k s f t h l w

English, of course, uses regular vowel letters. However, later Hebrew script added *points* to identify vowel pronunciation. The points are marks under (or over) the consonants which inform the reader of the connecting sound (vowel). If we used our existing English vowels as *points*, the above sentence might look something like this:

m<sub>o</sub>s<sub>e</sub>s w<sub>r</sub>t t<sub>h</sub> f<sub>i</sub>v b<sub>o</sub>ks f t<sub>h</sub>e l<sub>a</sub>w

(In this example, double letters and vowels at the end of words were eliminated. Vowel *function* is found only in pronounced language components.)

The Hebrew Scriptures were originally written without vowel points. Therefore, during the time of the *Septuagint* and the early Christian era, the divine name contained only the Hebrew consonants without vowel markings, and was written יהוה. (The English phonetic equivalent is YHWH.) After vowel points were added, the name of God was written יהוה־ה. The English phonetic equivalent with vowel points is most likely transliterated into English as YeHWaH—or very probably YeHVaH as we will soon see.<sup>5</sup> ••7••

(The exact pronunciation of any Hebrew Scripture word is equally uncertain. As stated, *the entire Hebrew Scriptures were devoid of vowel markings* until centuries after the last books were written. Presumably, when vowel points were added, the pronunciation of proper names was subject to greater uncertainty than more common words.)

From the above illustration of *missing* vowels, it should be obvious why we do not know the precise pronunciation of the divine name during Moses' day. We can be more confident of the pronunciation of the consonant portion (YHWH or YHVH) of the word. However, we cannot be certain of the vowel pronunciation because no corresponding written information was preserved. As a written word, the divine name without vowel points is the form we are concerned with in this study.

How did YHWH become *Jehovah*? Again, we quote from the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (p. 1561) which says,

To avoid the risk of taking God's name (YHWH) in vain, devout Jews began to substitute the word 'adona(y) for the proper name itself. Although the Masoretes left the four original consonants in the text, they added the vowels e (in place of a for other reasons) and a to remind the reader to pronounce adona(y) regardless of the consonants.

The Masoretic Jews added the vowels found in the name *Adonay* (which is properly translated in the English Hebrew Scriptures as *Lord*<sup>6</sup>) to the consonants of the Tetragrammaton in order to obtain a circumlocution<sup>7</sup> for the divine name. The book *Aid to Bible Understanding* (pp. 884-885) says,

By combining the vowel signs of 'Adho-nay' and 'Elo-him' with the four consonants of the Tetragrammaton the pronunciations *Ye<sup>h</sup>o-wah'* and *Ye<sup>h</sup>o-wih'* were formed. The first of these provided the basis for the Latinized form "Jehova(h)." The first recorded use ••8•• of this form dates from the thirteenth century C.E. Raymundus Martini, a Spanish monk of the Dominican Order, used it in his book *Pugeo Fidei* of the year 1270.

<sup>5</sup> The pronunciation of the vowel points are only known within modern Hebrew. The book *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, p.195 gives this further explanation.

No human today can be certain how [the divine name] was originally pronounced in Hebrew. Why not? Biblical Hebrew was originally written with only consonants, no vowels. When the language was in everyday use, readers easily provided the proper vowels. In time however, the Jews came to have the superstitious idea that it was wrong to say God's personal name out loud, so they used substitute expressions. Centuries later, Jewish scholars developed a system of points by which to indicate which vowels to use when reading ancient Hebrew, but they put the vowels for the *substitute expressions* [Adonay] around the four consonants representing the divine name. Thus the original pronunciation of the divine name was lost.

<sup>6</sup> It is correctly written as *Lord*, but not in small capitals as *LORD*. In other words, *Lord* is the translation of *Adonay* and should not be confused with the faulty English Bible tradition which translated the Tetragrammaton as *LORD*. The *New World Translation* properly translates *Adonay* as *Lord*.

<sup>7</sup> The pronounceable expression which replaces an ineffable (unpronounceable) word.

The reader should also be aware that there is uncertainty regarding the early pronunciation of the "W" consonant. The Hebrew character represented as "W" in the English transliteration of YHWH is *waw* (ו). (This Hebrew character's name is pronounced *vav*, though when identified in English letters, it is often written as *waw*.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, newer biblical Hebrew language texts actually transliterate the character in English as *vav* to reflect the preferred pronunciation.) In all likelihood, the above combination of characters from the Tetragrammaton and *Adonay* becomes YaHoVaH. *Aid to Bible Understanding* (p. 882) says, "These four letters (written from right to left) are יהוה and may be transliterated into English as YHWH (or, according to some, YHVH)." If the more appropriate phonetic reproduction of the divine name as pronounced in Moses' day is truly YHVH, the English word *Jehovah* more closely reproduces the ancient Hebrew character *waw* (ו) than does the English transliteration *Yahweh*.

For further reading concerning the divine name, consult Appendix 1A in the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (1984). Also, see Appendix 3A in the *Reference Edition* for a brief introduction to both Hebrew and Greek characters. The section contains a particularly useful description of Hebrew vowels. For a comprehensive study of the divine name, refer to the heading "Jehovah" in *Aid to Bible Understanding*, beginning on page 882, or under the same heading in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, beginning on page 5.

### **The Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew Scriptures**

God's personal name occupies a place of prominence in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Tetragrammaton occurs 6,961<sup>9</sup> times in the Hebrew text.

The perspective of this book is a current historical and textual understanding for the use of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures. As such, we are not emphasizing the place of the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, *the reader must remember throughout this book that God's name is used extensively in ••9•• the Hebrew Scriptures, and that the textual evidence supporting its presence is beyond any doubt.* The *New World Translation* is to be commended for its use of the divine name in the Hebrew Scriptures.

### **The Tetragrammaton in the Septuagint (LXX)**

Because there is sometimes confusion between the *Septuagint* and the Christian Greek Scriptures when the Tetragrammaton is being discussed, a brief introduction to the *Septuagint* is in order.

We are familiar with the history of the nation of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures. During the periods of the judges and the theocracy under such leaders as Samuel, the nation of Israel was moving toward occupation and consolidation of the land. This consolidation as a united kingdom reached its climax in the days of King David and his son Solomon. However, because of King Solomon's disobedience to God, the kingdom was divided and weakened. Though good kings occasionally came to power, divine judgment eventually fell. The divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel were finally conquered, with each being led into captivity.

Without going into any of the details of the military and political defeats of Israel, we are aware that a typical form of conquest for that time was deportation of the populace to the conquering nation's homeland. Thus, colonies of Jews<sup>10</sup> were established in various areas of the Mediterranean world. Alexandria (Egypt) became an important center for expatriate Jews. Alexandria was also the leading center of learning and Greek culture from about 350 B.C.E. until its conquest by Rome.

The Jewish religious leaders were confronted with a problem which they had not encountered before the days of national captivity. Many Jews living in Greek-speaking cultures could no longer read

<sup>8</sup> *New World Translation Reference Edition*, p. 1570.

<sup>9</sup> The book *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 885 says, "The Tetragrammaton occurs 6,961 times in the original-language text of the Hebrew Scriptures (this includes 134 times where the Masoretic text shows that ancient copyists [Sopherim] had changed the primitive Hebrew text to read 'Adho-nay' or 'Elo-him' instead of *Yehowah*)."

<sup>10</sup> Strictly speaking, descendants of Abraham were not called Jews until post-exilic times. (See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 73 under the heading "Jew(ess)" for more complete information.) In this book, however, we will use the term "Jew" in the generally accepted sense.

and understand the Hebrew Scriptures. Thus, in approximately 280 B.C.E.,<sup>11</sup> a group of Hebrew scholars began translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. There are some interesting—though uncertain—traditions surrounding that translation project. The least credible tradition says that the translators were supernaturally empowered and completed the entire work in 70 days. A more probable tradition is that 72 Hebrew scholars did (or at least began) the work. Whatever the truth is, the translation became known as the *Seventy*. Thus, we have ••10•• the name *Septuagint*, which is abbreviated with the Roman numerals LXX (70). (The name *Septuagint* is an Anglicized form of its early Latin name *secundum septuaginta interpretes*.)

However, regarding the *Septuagint* itself, we must make five statements which have a bearing on our study of the Tetragrammaton:

1. *We must recognize the importance of the Septuagint.* The *Septuagint* occupied an important place in both Jewish and Christian thought. It was a monumental and far-reaching translation. Among other things, it represented an understanding on the part of the Jews who used it that God's revelation was not confined to the Hebrew language. There is much to be learned from the study of its history and development. Though outside the scope of this book, a study of the Tetragrammaton in the *Septuagint* is an interesting and worthwhile subject.
2. *We must differentiate between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Scriptures from which it was translated.* The Hebrew Scriptures were written in Hebrew. (However, Daniel 4 was originally written by King Nebuchadnezzar—and then included in Daniel's prophetic book—in Aramaic. Portions of Ezra and Esther also contain Aramaic. See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 1070 under "When Did Hebrew Begin to Wane?") As we have noted earlier, the *Septuagint* was a specific translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language. The term *Septuagint* should never be used as a synonym for early Hebrew Scripture manuscripts written in Hebrew.
3. *We must differentiate between the Septuagint and other ancient Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures.* The *Septuagint* was not unique as a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures.<sup>12</sup> However, the *Septuagint* version was widely accepted by both the Greek-speaking Jews and Gentile Christians. By the end of the third century C.E., however, a number of Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures were available. Three widely used translations were done by Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus. Aquila's translation of the Hebrew Scriptures is of particular interest. ••11•• Although many manuscripts are available today which contain *Kyrios* rather than the Tetragrammaton, a recent discovery was made in Cairo in which יהוה is clearly used within Aquila's Greek text.
4. *We must identify which editions of the Septuagint most likely contained the Tetragrammaton.* The *Septuagint* was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures which was widely circulated throughout the Greek-speaking world of its day. Today we know that the Tetragrammaton was generally used in copies of the *Septuagint* which were intended for Jewish readers.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, the *Septuagint* which was circulated in the Gentile world used the Greek word *Kyrios* (Κύριος)<sup>14</sup> as a translation of the divine name. In Chapter 13 we will discuss this further, including the interesting problem of why so few copies of the *Septuagint* containing the Tetragrammaton have survived until today. *Aid to Bible Understanding* (p. 886) quotes Dr. Kahle from *The Cairo Geniza*

<sup>11</sup> "All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial," p. 307.

<sup>12</sup> Appendix J shows Origen's use of three—and sometimes as many as five—distinct Greek versions of the Hebrew Scriptures. These versions were all available by the end of the third century C.E. Early studies erroneously concluded that Origen's *Hexapla* used only the Greek word *Kyrios*. Today, however, we know that both the original *Hexapla*, as well as Aquila's version, did contain the Tetragrammaton in the Greek text. (See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 9 for more information regarding Aquila's version. Appendix J gives a complete explanation of Origen's use of יהוה in the *Hexapla*.)

<sup>13</sup> According to "All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial," (pp. 307 and 310) the *Septuagint* manuscripts containing the Tetragrammaton are principally the Fouad papyrus collection dating around the second or first century B.C.E. For a more complete discussion of the *Septuagint*, see the entry in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 9 under the heading, "In the Christian Greek Scriptures." For a photographic reproduction of the Fouad manuscript showing the Hebrew lettering, see *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, pp. 324 and 326.

<sup>14</sup> See the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (pp. 1562-1564) for a partial list of these manuscripts.

as saying,

We now know that the Greek Bible text [the *Septuagint*] as far as it was written by Jews for Jews did not translate the Divine name by *Ky'rios*, but the Tetragrammaton written with Hebrew or Greek letters was retained in such MSS [manuscripts]. It was the Christians who replaced the Tetragrammaton by *ky'rios*, when the divine name written in Hebrew letters was not understood any more.

5. *Finally, we must make a clear distinction between the Septuagint and the Christian Greek Scriptures.* The *Septuagint* is a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. The translation work began in approximately 280 B.C.E.<sup>15</sup> The books of the Law (the writings of Moses) were probably completed by 180 B.C.E.; the translation of the entire Hebrew Scriptures was probably not complete until the second century C.E. On the other hand, the Christian Greek Scriptures were written no earlier than 41 C.E. (Matthew) and no later than 98 C.E. ••12•• (the Gospel of John and 1, 2, 3 John).<sup>16</sup> Despite the fact that the early Christian congregation extensively used the *Septuagint*, the two Scriptures are distinctly separate. One cannot surmise that if a true statement can be made of one, it will be equally true of the other. Stating that the Tetragrammaton was used in certain *Septuagint* versions is not proof *per se* of the Tetragrammaton's presence in the Christian Greek Scriptures in the absence of a thorough study of ancient Greek Scripture manuscripts themselves. However, this distinctiveness of the two Scriptures does not imply that the *Septuagint* did not greatly influence the Christian Scriptures. Both Jesus and the Christian Scripture writers extensively quoted the *Septuagint*.

The *Septuagint* was the Bible of the early Christian congregation. In most cases when the Christian Scripture writers quoted Hebrew Scripture, they used the *Septuagint* version rather than Hebrew documents. However, important as the *Septuagint* is to the history and study of the Christian Greek Scriptures, it is inaccurate to treat textual variations which are true of one as though they must also be true of the other. *The two documents are entirely independent entities, separated in time by over 200 years, and set apart by different cultures.*

### **The Tetragrammaton in the teaching of the Watch Tower Society**

The use of the Tetragrammaton in the original writings of the Christian Greek Scriptures is a central teaching of the Watch Tower Society. The Society teaches that Jehovah's name—written as the Tetragrammaton—was used by the original writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures, and that the present content of the Greek text took form because of heresy and changes which were made by the scribes who copied the Scriptures. These scribes presumably changed the four Hebrew characters (YHWH) to the Greek word *Kyrios*.<sup>17</sup>

A concise summary of this teaching is given in Appendix 1D of the *New World Translation Reference Edition* (p. 1564). We quote in part:

Matthew made more than a hundred quotations from the inspired Hebrew Scriptures [in his gospel written in Hebrew<sup>18</sup>]. ••13•• Where these quotations included the divine name he would have been obliged faithfully to include the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew Gospel account. When the Gospel of Matthew was translated into Greek, the Tetragrammaton was left untranslated within the Greek text according to the practice of that time.

Not only Matthew but all the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures quoted verses from the Hebrew text or from the *Septuagint* where the divine name appears. For example, in Peter's

<sup>15</sup> "All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial," p. 307. Also see *Insight into the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, p. 1152.

<sup>16</sup> *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 318.

<sup>17</sup> In this study, we will repeatedly refer to the Greek word *Κύριος*. However, rather than using Greek letters, we will transliterate it as *Kyrios* with English letters in a distinctive type face. For a more complete discussion of the use of the Greek word *Kyrios*, see *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever*, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1984. Note especially the article starting on page 23, "God's Name and the 'New Testament.'"

<sup>18</sup> In this same section, Jerome is quoted as stating that there was a gospel written in Hebrew by Matthew. The testimony of Jerome must be accepted as reliable. There would be no reason to doubt that Matthew wrote a parallel gospel in Hebrew. We will evaluate Matthew's Hebrew Gospel in a later chapter.

speech in Ac 3:22 a quotation is made from De 18:15 where the Tetragrammaton appears in a papyrus fragment of the *Septuagint* dated to the first century B.C.E. As a follower of Christ, Peter used God's name, Jehovah. When Peter's speech was put on record the Tetragrammaton was here used according to the practice during the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E.

Sometime during the second or third century C.E. the scribes removed the Tetragrammaton from both the *Septuagint* and the Christian Greek Scriptures and replaced it with *Ky'ri-os*, "Lord" or *The-os*, "God."

Concerning the use of the Tetragrammaton in the Christian Greek Scriptures, George Howard<sup>19</sup> of the University of Georgia wrote in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 96, 1977, p. 63: "Recent discoveries in Egypt and the Judean Desert allow us to see first hand the use of God's name in pre-Christian times. These discoveries are significant for N[ew] T[estament] studies in that they form a literary analogy with the earliest Christian documents and may explain how N[ew] T[estament] authors used the divine name. In the following pages we will set forth a theory that the divine name, יהוה (and possibly abbreviations of it), was originally written in the NT quotations of and allusions to the O[l]d T[estament] and that in the course of time it was replaced mainly with the surrogate  $\kappa\varsigma$  [abbreviation for *ky'ri-os*, "Lord"]. This removal of the Tetragram[maton], in our view, created a confusion in the minds of early Gentile Christians about the relationship between the 'Lord God' and the 'Lord Christ' which is reflected in the MS [manuscript] tradition of the NT text itself."

We concur with the above, with this exception: We do not consider this view a "theory," rather, a presentation of the facts of history as to the transmission of Bible manuscripts.

As we saw in the Overview to this book, the above quotation represents the perspective of the translators of the *New World Translation* based on the textual and historical perspective of the late ••14•• 1940's. Today, we are faced with the need to re-evaluate *any* Bible translation on the basis of the most recent understanding of the Greek manuscripts on which it is based. It would be the desire of all—whether we are talking of the Watch Tower Society as a whole or individual Witnesses—to have a copy of the Christian Greek Scriptures which faithfully reproduces exactly that which the apostolic authors wrote.

Throughout the remainder of this book we will be evaluating the most current textual and historical information available while asking a central question, "Did the original writers of the Christian Scriptures use the Tetragrammaton?" If so, what evidence remains today which will verify this claim?

### **The format of this book**

Throughout this book, our study of the Tetragrammaton's presence in the Christian Greek Scriptures is based on historical and textual considerations. The final answer to the place of the Tetragrammaton in the original Christian Scripture writings will be based on ancient manuscript evidence. These manuscripts should indicate to us whether the original writers of the Christian Scriptures wrote the Hebrew word יהוה (the Tetragrammaton) or the Greek word Κύριος (*Kyrios*) in 237 instances within the Christian Greek Scriptures.

When we attempt a historical study of Greek manuscripts, we are not doing light reading. Therefore, in order to make this material as informative as possible, the following format will be used: general information is found within the main chapters, supplementary information is added in footnote form, and finally, highly technical material has been placed in the appendices. This appendix information deals with the form of the Greek text itself, the translation footnotes from the *New World Translation*, information concerning the Hebrew versions which substantiates the 237 *Jehovah* references, and much more on which this study was based. Though this information is necessary for a proper study of the historical Greek text, it has been separated from the main chapter material in order to simplify reading.

### **Keeping our focus**

We will frequently refer to certain subtopics throughout this book. In the interest of being as accurate as possible, four of these subtopics need a brief explanation.

<sup>19</sup> See Appendix D for a partial reproduction of the George Howard paper.

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