

## THE MEANING OF "THEOPHORIC NAMES"

In the Bible personal names such as Adoniya, Zidkiya, Ovadya, Yedidya, Yehoyakim and the like are mentioned. Such names are generally regarded as theophoric, derived from the name Yehova (Jehovah). i. e. Adoniya is explained "Adon – ya" (Ya =Yehovah is Adon = master), Zidkiya; Zadik–Ya (Ya=Yehovah is Zadik = righteous); Ovadya, Ovad –Ya (Ovad = worshipper of Ya =Yehova); Yedidya, Yedid – Ya (=a friend to Ya –Yehovah), the composite "Ya" being taken by scholars to be an abbreviation of the name Yehovah. According to such explanation with names such as Ovadya, Yedidya etc. the holder of the name is the active agent i. e. Ovadya – worshipper of Ya; Yedidya – friend to Ya, whereas in names such as Zidkiya, Adoniya – Ya is the active agent and not the holder of the name, i. e. Ya is the righteous (Zadik), Ya is the Master (Adon) etc.

We have said that Yehovah (Jehovah), though may had already been used before, is a name that Ezra links to the name of the God "Adon". If Ezra adds this name how is it that names supposedly derived from the name Yehovah (Jehovah) already existed a long time before the period of Ezra and the religious movement of those returning from the Exile?

To answer this question let us examine the meaning of these names and that of the name Yehovah.

The exact original pronunciation and etymology of the name is uncertain. In the fourth century B. C. we encounter the form Yahve (Jahve) and according to Theodorus this is the way the name is pronounced by the Samaritans. St – Epiphanees accepts this form, whereas St–Jerome adopts the form of pronunciation Yaho (Jaho). Clement of Alexandria adopts the form Yahove (Jahove). The pronunciation as Yehova (Jehovah) is in use already from the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is generally accepted as the name of the God of the Israelites. Innumerable attempts were made to explain its meaning. The traditional one is that according to the biblical account in Exodus 3: 14: ("Ehye Asher Ehye – = "אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה I will be whoever I will be), and therefore it derives from the Hebrew verb הִיָּה (Hayo = to be). This verse is erroneously translated "I am that I am ": "and God said unto Moses, I am that I am."

Gardner explains it as "he loves", Robertson Smith believes Jehovah means "he overthrows" (lightning). Wellhausen explains "he blows" or "he falls". Driver believes that the name developed from "a primeval interjection

– a god cry yah"<sup>1</sup>, Duhm<sup>2</sup> sees in the name an extension of the word Hue (–הוא –he), namely "he the unnameable". Some scholars went as far as to see in Yehovah a name of foreign deity, that the Israelites adapted from another nation, whether a kenite deity (Rowley, Tiele, Sado), or Canaanite (Land, Dussaud, Virroleaud) etc. Today names like Shefatya ((יהושפט Yehoshafat – יהושפט)a cognate form, etc, are regarded as theophoric names i. e. derived from the god's name Yehovah (Jehovah), and that "Ya" is taken to be an abbreviation of Yehova. It must be noted here that the name Yehovah never occurs as a composite in "theophoric" names<sup>3</sup>. Many contrasting views exist regarding this diminutive. Some argue that it is impossible to have a sacred name such as the deity's abbreviated, and we never find any other semitic nation that uses a diminutive form for the names of his deities.<sup>4</sup> Despite these arguments, "Ya" is generally accepted today as the diminutive form of "Yehovah". Here we should mention the peculiar fact that the name "Yehovah" appears in the Bible either alone, or in conjunction with the word "Adonai" i. e. "Adonai – Yehovah"<sup>5</sup>. The Jews when reading the Bible avoid pronouncing the name "Yehovah" and substitute the name "Adonai", but when the text reads "Adonai Yehovah" they read instead "Adonai Elohim" (=Adonai the God; Adonai is the God). Referring to this custom Maclaurin remarks<sup>6</sup>: "If the name YHWH were too sacred to pronounce – so sacred that even the numerals 15, 16, were avoided because being YH; YW they could be taken as abbreviation of YAWH, why was Yah used in theophoric names. and more seriously why was Yah used independently as noted above as the name of God?" (p. 447). "the principle seems to be fairly clear–YHWH is not usually unaccompanied and where it has company the Tetragrammaton is often a secondary insertion, it has been customary to regard the other form as secondary, inserted to protect the divine name, but it seems expedient now to enquire whether the other terms are not to be regarded as primary and YHWH an insertion for doctrinal or political reasons. This will lead us to enquire whether Adon really is a reverential periphrasis for YHWH or whether it is in fact earlier in time and preferable in use. The position we

1 See: Driver, ZAW, 1928, p. 24

2 As brought by Raymond, The Divine Name Yahweh, JBL, 1961, p. 321, note 19.

3 See: Geheman, Manuscripts of The Old Testament In Hebrew, BA, (8), 1945, P. 100.

Meek, Hebrew Origins, p. 106.

Maclaurin, Y. H. W. H. ; The Origin of The Tetragrammaton, VT. 1962, (12), p. 446.

Lods, Israel, p. 372.

4 Driver, Jehovah, EB. 1929, edit.

5 Translated into English: "God Almighty".

6 Maclaurin, Ibid.

have established concerning YHWH is not what one would expect of a sacred name. a) It is not ancient. b) it is not pronounced "(ibid. p. 449).

Herewith we will see why it is impossible to accept the conjecture that the names assumed theophoric derive from the name 'Yehova' (the Tetragrammaton) and then we will discuss the meaning of the names themselves.

We have already noted that in the assumed theophoric names the active component shifts, sometimes it is the bearer of the name, at others it is "Ya", How to explain this fact? .

Such personal names are met not only in Israelite personal names, but also in gentile ones, like Uriya the Hittite, Tuvya the Ammonite, Nergal – ya, Niniv–Ya (namely in connection with foreign deities as Nergal and Niniv).<sup>7</sup> If we are to accept their derivation from the name "Yehovah" then how are we to explain the fact that these names are found also among gentiles, and in connection with foreign deities? .

In the book of Kings,<sup>8</sup> we read that the Pharaoh Nechoh; king of Egypt, enthrones Elyakim (Eliakim), the son of Josiah instead of his father and changes his name to Yehoiakim (Jehoiakim). If we accept the derivation of this name from Yehovah, it seems quite strange that a foreign Egyptian king calls an Israelite king by a name composed of the Israelite deity "Yehovah", and by this act apparently elevates him in position, when it is more logical that a foreign Egyptian king would call the subjugated king by a name that leaves him in a degraded position. In the Bible we also find the name Baalya (Bealiah – son of king David),<sup>9</sup> which according to the accepted explanation must be interpreted "Ya is Baal = Yehovah is Baal", such an explanation is paradoxical, and any attempt to explain – as it is done – that Baal means Adon = Master and therefore, Baalya means "Ya is master", and that this name is not to be connected with Baal is merely argumentative.<sup>10</sup>

Let us note here that the part considered theophoric namely "Ya" or "Yahu" may come either as a suffix or as a prefix of the name such as Zedkiyahu (Zedekiahau–יהוֹדַקִּיָּהוּ) or Yehozadak (Jehozadak–יהוֹזַדַּקִּיָּהוּ), Yeshayahu–ישַׁעְיָהוּ– (Isaiah) or Yehoshua – יְהוֹשׁוּעַ – (Joshua) etc. The name Yeshayahu (ישַׁעְיָהוּ) according to the accepted explanation will mean "Yesha is Ya " = Deliverer – Salvation is Ya (Yehovah). The same meaning is given also to Yehoshua<sup>11</sup> יהוֹשׁוּעַ except that with the later the part considered theophoric is in the prefix of the name, while with the name Yeshayahu it is in the suffix. But let us turn to the Book of Numbers (13: 16): "...And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun

7 See: Conder, The Syrian Stone Lore, p. 74; Neh. 3: 35; 2Sam. 11: 3

8 2Kn. 23: 34

9 1Chr. 12:

10 For exaple see this explanation by Koifman, TOLDOT HAEMUNA HAIISRAELIT (Hebrew); Driver, EB 1929, entry: Jehovah.

11 See also: Wright W. Illustrated Bible treasure, pp. 522; 529.

Jehoshua – "משה להושע בן-נון ויקרא יהושע" This verse informs us that in the beginning the name was "Oshea (הושע)" and Moses adds only one letter, the letter Yod=י (Y) and so changes the name to Yehoshua. (יהושע). Therefore in the name Yehoshua (Joshua) the letter Yod is additional and between it and the letters "HO" that follow, there is no indivisible theophoric connection, deriving from the name "Yehovah".

On the other hand the name Yehoshua and Yeshayahu are one and the same, the only difference being in the position of the part "Yahu". in the prefix in the first and in the suffix in the second. We must therefore conclude that even in the name Yeshayahu (Isaiah), the part "Yahu" must not be regarded as separate entity representing a theophoric part: such a conclusion gets added support when we see names like Yehoseph (יהוסף – Ps. 81: 6), Yehonathan (יהונתן – 1 Sam. 19: 1)<sup>12</sup>; Yehonadav (Jehonadab) (2Kn. 10: 23); Yehoash (Jehoash 2) (יהואש Kn. 12: 1); Yehoyakim (Jehoiakim) (2Chr. 36: 4); Yehoram (Jehoram) (2Kn. 1: 17); Yehozadak (Jehozadak) (1 Chr. 6: 15)<sup>13</sup>; Yehohanan (Ez. 10: 28) etc (with the letter – ה –H). who appear also in an abbreviated form: Yoseph (Joseph יוסף, Yonathan (Jonathan יונתן) Sam. 20: 1); Yonadav (Jonadab) (Jer. 35: 8); Yoash (Joash 2) (יואש Kn. 14: 1); Yoyakim (Joiakim) (Neh. 12: 10); Yoram (Joram) (2Kn. 8: 28) ; Yozadak (Jozadak) (Ez. 10: 18); Yohanan (Johanan) (1Chr. 3: 24). etc. (without the letter H– ה). The name Uzziya Uzzia – (עזייה) appears also in the form עזייה (Uzzia) – with the letter A – Aleph (א) instead of the letter Heh1) (ה) Chr. 11: 44)<sup>14</sup>

Such "Theophoric" names appear also in two forms such as Yermiya (Jeremiah) – Yermiyahu, Zidkiya (Zedekiah) – Zidkiyahu etc.<sup>15</sup>.

We realise that in all these supposedly theophoric names, the part "Yahu" is not conserved as one integral unit. Moreover if we accept the explanation that "Ya" derives from "Yehovah", then names like Antothija, (ענתותיה). Shehariah, (שחריה) Sheariah, (שעריה) Rephaiah, (רפיה) Neariah (נעריה). Dalaiah (דליה)<sup>16</sup>, which in Hebrew we will have to explain Ya (Yehovah) is Antothi = comes from Anatoth (a name of place near Jerusalem); Shehariah – we will have to explain Ya is shaḥor = black; Nehariah – (נעריה) Ya is Nahar =youngster; Rephaiah – Ya is Rafee = weak, feeble. The absurdity of such explanations is obvious.

Let us see if we can understand and explain these names otherwise. Names like Shefatya (שפטיה) Yirmiya – (ירמיה) – Jeremiah), Zidkiya (צדקיה – Zedekiah), Eliya – (אליה) Eliah) and alike appear in the Bible in a more full form as Shefatyahu,(שפטיהו) Yirmiyahu (ירמיהו) Zidkiyahu (צדקיהו) Eliyahu

12 Yehoseph and Yehonathan appear only in the Hebrew text.

13 In the Hebrew text 1Chr. 5: 40.

14 Seen only in the Hebrew Text.

15 The two forms are only in the Hebrew text. In the English translation they are transcribed as one form.

16 1Chr 8: 24 (in the Hebrew text 25): 26: 38; 3: 21: 22: 24.

(אליהו) etc.<sup>17</sup> We can conclude that the suffix in these names is "Yahu" and not "ya" and "ya" is but a diminutive of "yahu". What does this added part Yahu (יהו) means? . Because of its final pronunciation it is reasonable to conjecture that originally it had the letter (Aleph) which was omitted in writing because it was superfluous in pronunciation. Similarly we see in other Hebrew words such as Haleluhu (הללוהו), Shabhuhu (שבחוהו) and alike that originally were Halelu –Hue , (הללו הוא), Shabhu –Hue. (שבחו הוא) Meaning praise him, glorify him (הוא – Hue in Hebrew means He – him). There is place to assume that also the word Yahu – יהו, was originally Yahue – (יהוא with the letter Aleph א – at its suffix). In the Bible we find the name Yehue (Jehu – יהוא) (with the letter aleph) by itself. And also names like Elihu (אליהו), Avihu (אביהו) without the letter Aleph at their end, that appear in the form of Elihue (אליהוא) Avihue (אביהוא) with a letter Aleph at their end<sup>18</sup>. These forms with the letter Aleph must be regarded as the more ancient ones. Therefore names like Shefatyahu etc. must have been originally Shefatyahu (שפט יהוא) Zedekyahu (צדק יהוא) etc. (with an Aleph in their end) It is obvious that in these names the end part "Yahue" derives from the word "Hue" (הוא = he) preceded by the letter Y (Yod– י) And we have already seen that even in the name Yehoshua (Joshua) the letter y (Yod) was added afterwards "And Moses called Oshua the son of Nun Jehoshua." (Nu. 13: 16). In Hebrew the consonant (letter) yod (י) before the stem often represents the word Yihye (יהיה = will be) namely it is the conjunction in third person of the verb to be (hayo – היה) – If we apply the same rule also to Hebrew nouns (non verbs) that are prefixed by the consonant y (י) we realise that many words are thus rendered comprehensible.<sup>19</sup> For example, the Hebrew word yahad (יחד) = together, might be considered as yihye (will be) – had (= ehad = one), i. e. some objects group together to form one unit.<sup>20</sup>

In the book of Job (3: 6) we read: "As for that night, Let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year" (In Hebrew: Halayla hahu yikaheu ofel al yiḥad bi'yme shana". הלילה ההוא יקחהו אפל אל־יחד בימי". "שנה" we can construe the word "yiḥad" as yihye ḥad = will be one i. e, that night will not be one of the days of the year<sup>21</sup>. This rendering conforms with the succeeding verse: "let it not come into the number of months" (" במספר ירחים אל־יבא").

17 1Chr. 12: 5; 27: 16 ; 2Chr. 21: 2 ; 1Kn. 17: 1 etc. See note 85 above.

18 Job. 35: 1; 36: 1; 32: 4–5; 34: 1; 1Chr. 12: 20; 27: 18; 26: 7; 2Chr. 13: 20 –21; Le. 10: 1; Nu. 3: 2.

19 In the original Hebrew book i brought several examples but to alleviate the english reader only a few examples were brought in the english edition.

20 compare Ezk. 33: 30 "Vediber Ḥad el Ehad" (Heb.) (Tran. A. V. "and speak one to another").

21 Ibn Genah regards the word "Yiḥad" as derived from "Yahad (together). Cassuto explains "let no joy be in this day".

In Exodus (18: 8 – 9) we read that Moses told his father-in-law Jethro "all that the Lord had done to Pharaoh" etc."and Jethro rejoiced (in Hebrew Va –yihad – ויחד for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel". We can explain "Vayihad" as "va–yihye had ,(ויהיה חד)" i. e. that Jethro was one (unanimous) with Moses, namely he agreed with Moses about the goodness, the wonders the Lord bestowed on Israel We see here words which apparently differ from one another, basically derived from one and the same root.

Another such group may be seen in the hebrew words "yasaf" (יסף) and "yasuf" (יסוף). "Yasaf is used many times in the connotation of ; to terminate, finish; cease. For example: "They prophesied and did not cease" (Nu. 11: 25). As for the word "Yasuf" it is used in the sense of to disappear; vanish. For example, "Lo yasuf zichro leolam vaed (לא יסוף זכרו לעולם ועד)" i. e. his memory will not vanish (will persist) forever. (See Esther 9: 28 – "nor the memorial of them perish" – in Heb. "Yasuf – from their seed"). If in these two words we consider the letter yod (י) as the abbreviation of yihye, we will understand that Yasaf and Yasuf derive from "yihye sof", i. e."There will be an end". Therefore "vayitnabu velo yasafu"(Nu: 11: 25) means "they prophesied and there was no end . .", their words did not reach an end, i. e. did cease. Whereas his memory will not "yasuf" forever – his memory will not have an end i. e. his memory will remain forever = will not perish. The verb "yarosh" (ירש) = to inherit, might be seen as "yihye Rosh" (yihye = to be, Rosh = head). namely: "to take the head" of the estate, house etc. i. e, to inherit. Another example might be seen in the verse (Eccl. 11: 3) "and if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be" (in Heb. sham yehue – "יהוא" namely sham yihye hue – שם יהיה הוא – there it shall be – remain.)

In the light of what was said above we may see the letter Y (י=Yod) in the suffix "Yahue" as the abbreviation of the word Yihye = יהיה = will be, and therefore Yahue will be Yihye Hue הוא יהיה – He will be; therefore names like Shefatyahu שפטיהו – Zedkiyahu צדקיהו – etc. (that in their origin were Shefatyahue שפטיהוא, – Zedkiyahue צדקיהוא – etc. – with a letter Aleph in their end), are but Shofet yihye hue =a judge he will be, Zadik yihye hue =a just man he will be. El yihye hue = God he will be<sup>22</sup> etc.

In the words "Yihye hue "(=he will be) the reference is to the bearer of the name himself. When giving names to their children, the parents expressed their wishes and what they hoped to see in their children, or what they expected to find in them. and this was done by adding the suffix "Yahue"

22 Compare with Ex. 4: 16 "...he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God".

The Hebrew text reads "a God" (אלהים) and Ex. 7: 1" I made thee as God to Pharaoh "The Hebrew text reads "I made thee God to pharaoh." (נתתיך אלהים). (לפרעה).

(יהוא) meaning "Yihye Hue" (He will be) to a certain name or verb. It was not only the parents that gave names to their children, but occasionally names were given later in life. For instance, Pharaoh Nechoh changes the name Elyakim to Yehoyakim, Solomon at first was called Yedidya, and Matanya – Zedekiah. The adding of "Yahue (יהוא)" or in its abbreviated form "Yahu" or "Yah" (The letter Aleph has been dropped most probably for being voiceless and not pronounced) could be added either in the suffix of a name or at its prefix. Like Shefatyahu – Yehoshafat, Zedekyau – Yehozadak etc. But the meaning remains the same. In the course of time, also these names have been abbreviated Yehozadak to Yozadak, Yehonathan to Yonathan, etc. Now we can understand that names like Uriah the Hittite, Tuvia the Ammonite, Baalya, or Nergalya their meaning is Ur (Or) = light – illumination will he be, Tov Yihye Hue – טוב יהיה הוא = Good may he be, Baal yihye Hue – He will be a Baal (The same as El will he be) – namely a priest to Baal he will be, and the same Nergal he will be. Such an explanation answers all the questions regarding such names. Now we can understand why Moses calls Oseah son of Nun – Yehoshua. Oseah means to save – but before entering the land of Canaan, Moses passes on to Joshua the leadership over the people of Israel, He therefore changes his name to Yehoshua (Joshua) namely: "He will be the saviour" i. e. he will save the people of Israel. We understand now names like Antotiya, Sheharia, Dlaya, Refaya, etc. which mean: He will be an Antoti, he will be dark coloured, he will be hirsute, he will be feeble etc. And the reference is always to the bearer of the name alone. In all such names the active component is always the bearer of the name. Such names are also met as women's names like Yehoad, Yehotal, Yehoshawa, Yehochan.<sup>23</sup>

Let us note here that in the light of the said above, there is reason for seeing the name Yoseph (Joseph) or Yehoseph as "yihye hue Saf" – He will be Saf. The meaning of Saf is unknown to us, perhaps it derives from the Hebrew word Sof=end, and the name then will mean; "he will be the end," namely he will be the last. Rachel probably had hard labour and wishes he will be the last.<sup>24</sup> The name Saf by itself is found in the Bible "then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant".<sup>25</sup>

It is worth mentioning that Yoseph is called by the Pharaoh Zafhnath–

23 See: Lachish Letters. Let us add here that Stolper (BASOR, 227, 1976), refers to a name "Hu–u–na–tan in the Murasu texts that cannot be explained as a simple scribal lapse since it occurs in precisely the same form three times in the text. Instead, it must be inferred that in the language of personal names in 5<sup>th</sup> century Babylonia. Hu was current and acceptable as a shortened form of yahu."

24 The traditional explanation is: "The Lord shall add to me another son" (Gen. 30: 24).

25 2Sam. 21: 18.

paaneah<sup>26</sup> The first syllable Zaf equals to Saf.<sup>27</sup> which forms the name Yoseph, perhaps therefore we can see Zafhnath – paaneah as Saf–Nath–paaneah, or Saf Nat Fanh – (voiceless p). The explanation of the name I leave to the Egyptologists, but it is interesting to note the similarity between Paaneah and Fan'h from the papyruses, which Sethe regards as equal to the name Phoenicians and on the other hand the similarity between Zaf – Saf which is part of the name Yoseph.<sup>28</sup>

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26 Gen. 41: 45.

27 In Hebrew the letters S (Samech) and Z (zadek) interchange. see the Hebrew text Job. 30 13: ("natsu"– for "natzu"); Ps. 71: 4 ("hometz" for "homes"); Is. 1: 17 ("hamotz" "hamos"; Tosephta, Avoda zara 5 (6) (Parsufot for Partzufot); Alatz – Alas; Karas – Karatz, See Gesenius (Hebrew Grammar. 19a). In Hebrew; Mitzrayim; Zidon. In Arabic – Masr; Saida Such an interchange is to be found also in ancient "phoenician" inscriptions, Slouschz (Otzar Haketovot afenikiyot, 1942, p. 24–Hebrew) mentions such interchange in the words "Samdat – Zemed" See these words also in Lidzbarski –Handbuch der Nordsemitische epigraphik, I – text 1962.

28 Let us note here that the name Zaphnath –paaneah is accepted by scholars to be an Egyptian name, and many interpretations were given to it. Mallon explains: "God say he is alive" ("Dieu dit il est vivant") – Les Hebreux en Egypte, Orientalia, 1921, (3), p. 75., So believes Spiegelberg as cited by Naville. Whereas Naville explains: "Head of the sacred college" – Naville –The Egyptian name of Joseph, JEA, 1926, pp. 16 – 18. Engelbach suggests "that the word –צפנת Safnat is a metathesis for" צתנף (Zatnaf) meaning: "Joseph called Paneh". Engelbach, The Egyptian name of Joseph, JEA, 1924, p. 205. Brugsch explains: "The governor of the residential district of he who lives" – ("Le gouverneur du district du domicile de celui qui vit"); Brugsch – L'Exode et les monuments Egyptiens, Leipzig 1875, p. 17.