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Definitions of MARYAH (מריא) and Related Terms
Compiled by Andrew Gabriel Roth

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## I. Terms of General Human "Lordship" and false pagan deities never used for YHWH:

William Jennings Syriac Lexicon (Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 130-131

מרא (meem-resh-alap), Mara, absolute and construct; emphatic Mara, m., a lord or master, Matthew 9:38, Luke 6:5, John 13:13-14, Acts 14:12 (lord or chief of the gods, i.e. Jupiter); sovereign or ruler; Luke 10:21.[1]

מרן (meem-resh-noon), Maran, our Lord, is often found in the Syriac versions instead of *the Lord*, e.g. John 21:7,12.

מרן אתא (meem-resh-noon alap-taw-alap), Maran atha, our Lord is come, 1 Corinthians 16:22, though this is taken by Dalman as Aram. + pl. suff. + at (ta), imp. of מרנא תא אתא (Marna ta ata) O Lord come!

Plural[2] מריא (meem-resh-yodh-alap)--marya, מרון (meem-resh-waw-noon) --maron, מרואא (meem-resh-waw-alap-alap)--maroaa.

## II. As a term applying exclusively to YHWH and by extension Y'shua, who is also called YHWH:

William Jennings Syriac Lexicon (Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 130-131

<span style="color:red">מריא (meem-resh-yodh-alap), the emphatic form used for the sacred Hebrew יהוה, plus אמר מריא למרי (Amar MarYah l'mari) The LORD said to my Lord, Matthew 22:44, also for Christ as Lord of all, Acts 10:36, and the one Lord, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Philippians 2:11.</span>

Compendious Syriac by R. Payne Smith (Oxford University Press, 1902; Reprinted by Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), p. 298[3]

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[1] As a result, it is my personal belief that Mara, as opposed to MarYah, would have been the closest Aramaic word equivalent to the Greek *Kurios*, which was also used for Zeus. Therefore, the arguments that MarYah is a "man-made term" along the lines of *Kurios* usage in the Septuagint are clearly in error on that basis, in my opinion.

[2] As in 1 Peter 5:3, where it just so happens that the plural conjugation is the identical spelling of MARYAH , but the words are not equivalent.

Mara, absolute and construct, emphatic Mara and מריא (meem-resh-yodh-alap), the latter form is used only of THE LORD GOD, and in the Peshitta version of the O.T. represents the Tetragrammaton.

Oraham's Dictionary of the Stabilized and Enriched Assyrian, by Alexander Yosep Oraham, p. 314

מריא (mur-yaa) The Lord, an appellation signifying Jesus; Jehovah.

The Holy Bible from the Ancient Eastern Text, by George Lamsa (A.J. Holman & Company 1939), p. xix

### THE DEITY

God…Alaha
Lord…Mariah[4]

The Order of the Holy Qurbana for the Use of the Faithful (Abdiabne Publishers 2001), p. 55[5]

אלוֹךְ מריא אלהן

Alokh MARYAH Alahon

To You, O Lord our God

Classical Aramaic Second Edition, by Rocco Errico and Michael Bazzi (Noohra Foundation 1992), p. 104

Lord God… מריא אלהא (MARYAH Alaha)

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[3] Compendious Syriac also gives the same definitions and derivations that I have detailed from Jennings above. For the sake of my focus then that is on distinguishing מריא from these other forms, I am only repeating מריא and not these other forms.

[4] Of course the same spelling of the singular form, מריא.

[5] This is the official liturgy of the Church of the East, the group that has preserved the Peshitta Aramaic New Testament for the last 2,000 years.

**III.** **A Synonym for YHWH also in the Peshitta NT which is used to describe Y'shua:**

מלתא דַאַלהא (Miltha d'Alaha) the Word of God, Hebrews 4:12; the WORD as a Divine Person, the *logos*, with verb in the masculine in John 1:1; מלתא בסרא הו֗ (Miltha besra hwa) *the WORD became flesh = was incarnate, ibid. 14;* 1 John 1:1; Revelation 19:13. Cf. hypostatized use of מימַר, *Word,* in Targums, e.g. Onkelos Genesis 3:8 ית קל מימרא דיי וסמﬠֿוֹ[6] for the Hebrew את־קול יהוה ויסמﬠֿוֹ to avoid the use of the Divine Name in anthropomorphism.

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[6] Noting that יי is a polite form of יהוה that is used in Jewish liturgy to avoid pronouncing the name. The Lexicon is simply carrying over this usage to avoid offending pious Jews.

<h1 style="text-align:center"><u>Understanding why MarYah is the Aramaic Name for YHWH</u></h1>

## Introduction

Throughout both volumes of this work, I have been repeatedly making the assertion that the Peshitta Tanakh and New Testament usage of the phrase *MarYah* (מריא) is neither a title nor a conjugation of the word *Mar* (מר), meaning "master". Instead, the word is a carrying over of the set-apart Name, a.k.a. the "Tetragrammaton"; a compound word, comprised of *Mar* and the simplified form of YHWH, *Yah*.  In this form, *MarYah* replaces YHWH almost 7,000 times in the Peshitta Tanakh alone.  Furthermore, the Peshitta New Testament carries over all Tanakh quotes with this word applying also to YHWH, as well as using it in the narrative portions of the Gospels and elsewhere to clearly designate YHWH.

Now, all this should be simple enough to those who have undertaken a sincere study of Aramaic, but some have made it more difficult than it should have been on purpose.  The reason is simple.  Many in the Nazarene Messianic community refuse to accept the divine aspects of Messiah that are clearly contained in the Peshitta text. Unable to change what the text says, they simply deny the meaning of the key word!  The purpose of this part of Path to Life however, is to just debunk all of their artifices in the strongest yet clearest language that I can muster.  That is why I have also put this portion directly after the "Definitions of MarYah" section to provide the underpinnings and context to the scholarly conclusions Oraham, Payne-Smith and Jennings have already reached.

Finally, please understand that for those who already understand and agree with this key issue, there is no need for you to have to wade through this grammar-intensive section.  However, if you are someone who is unsure about this critical matter or you have spoken with someone that has tried to confuse you about the truth and you don't know where to turn, let me tell you, you have come to the right place.  I will begin with taking on each argument and, one at a time, deconstruct them for the flawed theses that they truly are.

## Argument #1:  There is no basis for this etymology in Hebrew Tanakh

This argument simply states that the form of *MarYah* cannot be anything other than a title for YHWH (as opposed to His real name) because the exact form was not preserved in the original Torah. However, this is simply not true. The evidence from Tanakh has always been there, but has simply not been noticed.  Here are just a few places where Yah and YHWH are interchangeable terms:

> **Yah** (יה) is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation;
> This is my Elohim, and I will enshrine Him; My father's Elohim, and I will exalt Him. **YHWH** the warrior—**YHWH** is His name!

Exodus 15:2-3 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

He said, "It means hand upon the throne of **Yah**[7] (יה)! **YHWH** will be at war against Amalek throughout the ages."

Exodus 17:16 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

**Yah** (יה) is my strength and my might; He has become my deliverance…The right hand of **YHWH** is triumphant!  The right hand of **YHWH** is exalted! The right hand of **YHWH** is triumphant!"

Psalm 118:14, 16 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

Furthermore, there are additional passages where Yah is called the name of YHWH directly:

In that day you shall say: "I give thanks to you, O YHWH!  Although You were wroth with me, Your wrath has turned back and You comfort me.  Behold the El who gives me triumph! I am confident, unafraid; for **Yah YHWH** (יה יהוה) is my strength and my might; and he has been my deliverance."

Isaiah 12:1-2 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

I recall the deeds of **Yah** (יה); yes, I recall Your wonders of old; I recount Your works; I speak of Your acts.

Psalm 77:12-13 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

Praise **Yah** (יה)[8].  Servants of **YHWH**, give praise.  Praise the name of **YHWH**.

Psalm 113:1-3 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

In the case of Isaiah 12:1-2, we find also a very interesting reading in Peshitta Tanakh where *Yah-YHWH* is simply substituted with *MarYah*, proving that both of the Hebrew terms were interchangeably understood as being exactly one and the same.

*It is also significant that, Hebrew יה (yodh-heh) is interchangeably rendered as יא (yodh-alap) on the Aramaic side.*

Those reasons are also why Jastrow's Dictionary of the Talmud agrees with this usage by saying:

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[7] A better reading emerges when we recognize "hand upon the throne of Yah" as an idiomatic expression of oath taking, and therefore is clearer as "Yah has sworn".
[8] Or literally, "halleluYah".

**י** (b.h.) *Yah,* abbreviation of the Tetragrammaton. Succ. IV, 5 (45a, missing in Mss. M., v marginal note to ed.); Tosef. ib. III, i ליה ולך מזבח unto Yah and unto thee O altar (do we give praise); Succ. 45b - מודים ולך ובי ליה אדהנו to Yah we offer thanks and thee (altar) we praise. Ib. V, 4 (51b) אנו ליה ולה עינינו We are Yah's and to Y. we lift up your eyes. Gen. R.s. 79,end,v. דיקינתין; a.e.

*A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic* Literature (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1903), p.565 (emphases are mine, AGR)

So, with the case of *Yah/Ya* being firmly established in the Hebrew and Aramaic Tanakh, we can now turn our attention to the prefix, *Mar*. Put simply *Mar* is a respectful title, used to mean "lord" or "master", and it is used to call men "sir" or "mister" in Israel to this very day. It is the cognate of *Adon/Adonai*, which can be used to designate either human masters or YHWH. Now, in places where the Hebrew Tanakh reads *Adonai* and it is 100% clear that its meaning is YHWH, the Aramaic universally substitutes with *MarYah*. But, when *Adonai* is clearly referring to men, just *Mar*, or the appropriate conjugation of its root is used. It is definitely the case then that the Jews in Babylon, who did the Peshitta Tanakh from Hebrew sources and who would later compile the Talmud, were able to easily distinguish between these concepts.

In addition, Hebrew Tanakh itself shows the precise trending that led up to the combining of terms on the Babylonian side:

> He (Nebuchadnezzar) was fed grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he came to know that the Most High Elohim is sovereign over the realm of man and sets over it whom He wishes. But you, Belshazzar his son, did not humble yourself although you knew all of this. You exalted yourself against the Lord (מרא) of Heaven, and had the vessels of His Temple brought to you. You and your nobles, your consorts, and your concubines drank wine from them and praised the gods of silver and gold, which do not see, hear or understand; but the Elohim who controls the lifebreath and every move you make—Him you did not glorify!
>
> Daniel 5:21b-23 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

Now the reader will recall that in "Definitions of MarYah" the related word also used in the above Scripture (Mara), is defined in terms of human kings or false deities, not YHWH. Here we are though only a few pages later and it seems that rule is broken—or is it?

What is going on in this case is a phenomenon that I like to call *metaphoric transference*. Put simply, *metaphoric transference* means that two concepts that are not alike at all in reality are linked through metaphor as if they were. In this case, the pagan court of Belshazzar does not know the personal name for the Creator, YHWH. But their Aramaic dialect certainly is used to addressing their false gods with the title *Mara*. Enter Daniel,

who is in this one instance transferring this word temporarily to YHWH to make a point that the deities the Babylonians think are supreme are false and have no power—they are dust compared to the *real* Master-Mara of Heaven! In later times then, the Jews who stayed behind in Babylon would simply take off the *alap* (א) and strip the word down to the root level so that it would not appear to have dual pagan-Yahwistic use, hence *MarYah*, which was not used in Daniel's time but which clearly grew out of this usage in his book

Furthermore, it is very easy to see Daniel as the pivot point in the usage for this word for two especial reasons:

1) This portion of Daniel is in Babylonian Aramaic, in a form fairly close to the later Babylonian variety that the Peshitta Tanakh would be translated into. As a result, it is also no coincidence that Daniel is the only Tanakh book to even have this word.

2) The use of *Mara* in Daniel is effectively split between human (4:19, 23) and divine (2:47, 5:23) applications, which is also instructive in showing how the root *Mar* would become attached to Yah later.

Another key point is this: Just because the metaphoric usage ends up *referring* to YHWH, does not mean it is *equivalent* to YHWH Himself in the plain definition or usage of that word. To see this aspect more clearly, compare this:

YHWH is a man of war…

Exodus 15:3 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

YHWH goes forth like a warrior; like a fighter He whips up His rage. He yells; he roars aloud, He charges upon His enemies: "I have kept silent far too long. Kept still and restrained Myself; Now I will scream like a woman in labor, gasping breathlessly.

Isaiah 42:13-14 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

With this:

(YHWH) is not a man that He should be capricious; nor a son of man that He should change His mind.

Numbers 23:19 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

So, in the first passage we have the clear statement that "YHWH is a man of war". In the second passage we have a clarification that YHWH wails *like a woman in labor*, which makes it clear, like the last passage, that YHWH is neither mortal man nor mortal woman in actual fact.

Finally, there is the Persian connection to consider, also known as this passage from Nehemiah:

> And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all who separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to [follow] the Teaching of Elohim, their wives, sons and daughters, all who know enough to understand, join with their noble brothers and take an oath with sanctions to follow the Teaching of Elohim, given through Moses the servant of Elohim, and to observe carefully all the commandments of **YHWH Adonenu** (יהוה אדנינו)/**MarYah Maran** (מריא מרן), His rules and Laws.
>
> Nehemiah 10:29-30 (Masoretic Text and Peshitta Tanakh)

Of course Persia is right next door to Babylon and speaks a similar, but not identical, Aramaic dialect whose influence is apparent even in Hebrew. The main point for now though is simply to show that *Adonenu* was rendered as *Maran* on the Peshitta Tanakh side. Not only does this show *Mar* and *Adon* to be root cognates which was mentioned earlier, but it also previews some of the reasons against our next argument, as we are about to see.

**Argument #2: MarYah is simply a conjugation of Mar, and therefore does not exclusively refer to YHWH.**

In this case, what we have is a simple misinterpretation of the evidence. It is true that conjugations from the root Mar do result in a spelling of *meem-resh-yodh-alap*, the same spelling for *MarYah*. However, Hebrew and Aramaic are full of words that are spelled the same but are nevertheless completely different. Sometimes similarly spelled roots conjugate into a spelling identical to another un-conjugated word from another root.[9] In this case however what we have is simply the plural version of *Mar* coincidentally sharing the same letters as the name of YHWH in Aramaic. Let us see how this actually plays out Scripturally:

> **Masters**, supply your slaves with what is right and fair, since **you know that you too have a Master in heaven**.
>
> מריא עבודו שויותא ובאנותא לות עבדיבון והיתון ידין דאף לכון אית
> הו מרא בשמיא
>
> Colossians 4:1[10] (my personal translation)

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[9] Also noting that in many, if not most of these cases, the pronunciation of the two words is different despite the fact they are spelled the same.

[10] Also see 1 Peter 5:3, "not as מריא of the flock", another plural usage applying to humans in this separate word spelled the same way as MarYah.

Here we see that *MarYah*[11] is clearly in the plural and refers to human masters. Interestingly enough, through *metaphoric transference* we also have the reversal of YHWH being compared to human masters, hence *Mara*.

Finally, because Nehemiah 10:29-30 demonstrates that the conjugated version of *Mar* (Maran) appears directly next to *MarYah*, we can be certain that the latter word itself cannot be a conjugation, but stands alone as His name.

However, when trying to separate *Mar/Mara* and their Hebrew and Greek equivalents such as *Kurios* and *Adon* from *MarYah*, we must always keep in mind this one central fact:

*In 7,000 Aramaic Tanakh references there is not one instance of MarYah (in its singular form) applying to anyone other than YHWH!* Furthermore, the Peshitta New Testament always renders Tanakh passages that it quotes from YHWH to *MarYah*.

**Argument #3: MarYah can refer to humans because Y'shua, a human, is called MarYah.**

This is, in effect, a circular argument. Since most proponents of this idea see Y'shua as a human only, the word used for him must also apply equally to us, they say. However, this is clearly *not* the case because no other NT figure is ever called *MarYah* and there are hundreds of places where this clearly should have happened if it was a general reference to lordship. All the apostles, people like Peter, John and James, who as "pillars" surely can be called "masters", are **never** called *MarYah* when the text is singular, referring to themselves alone.

Another related question is perhaps most directly dealt with by the verse below, although many others also follow the same pattern:

> And no one can say *MarYah haw Eshoa* (YHWH is Y'shua) except by the Ruach ha Kodesh.
>
> 1 Corinthians 12:3 (my personal translation)

If my critics are correct, then it stands to reason that their reading "Y'shua is a (human) master" fits in the context with other NT verses. Guess what? It doesn't! Let's see why:

> Not everyone who says to me *Mari, Mari* will enter the kingdom of heaven but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, *Mari, Mari*, did we not prophesy by your name and by your name have

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[11] Or more properly, *Marya*. My normal tendency is to render the word as "MarYah" when it is singular and therefore means YHWH but in the plural/human masters mode revert to its technical spelling of "Marya". It is not that I want to leave a false impression with the reader that the word is spelled differently; rather, what I wish to do is make it easy for the reader to easily distinguish the two meanings in English.

driven out devils, and by your name have we done many miracles? And then I will profess to them that from eternity I have not known you. Flee you (then) from me, workers of iniquity.

Matthew 7:21-23 (my personal translation)

Now, no Aramaicist doubts that *Mari* refers to the first person possessive of "my human master".[12] That being the case, my point is a simple one: If even the sinners who are bound for destruction know to call him "Master", and these same people by definition do not have the Ruach Ha Kodesh, how in the world is identifying Y'shua as a human master a sign of having the Ruach Ha Kodesh? Also, repeatedly throughout the NT, we see the phrases *MarYah* and *Meshikha* next to one another (e.g. Luke 2:11, Acts 2:36). Now, since *Meshikha* (Messiah) is by definition also a human master via a king from David's line, what can possibly be the incentive to list *MarYah*, if it also means a human master? In both cases, the only answer that makes any sense at all is that *MarYah* refers to something separate from Messiah's human kingship, and that would have to be YHWH.

**Argument #4: Because "Elohim" is plural in form but singular in terms of usage, MarYah must also be understood in this manner, implying an equivalence of human and divine usage, and not separated words.**

For debunking this theory, I will quote from my colleague Joe Viel:

Some claim that because *Elohim* looks plural, but treated as singular, that *MarYah* should be viewed the same way.

Of course, that's Hebrew, not Aramaic. Aramaic does not have a plural for "G-d". *Alaha* (the cognate of Hebrew *Eloah* –AGR ) is not plural. And there's two strong arguments against this theory:

(1) YHWH Elohim is translated as *MarYah Alaha*, thus to accept that argument would assume that they translated a plural into a singular from Elohim to Alaha and a singular (YHWH="He who is") to a plural!

(2) Even more telling is that Adoni=singular. Adonai looks plural, but is translated *Mar*, not *MarYah*. Certainly, if *MarYah* was plural in some sense analogous to Elohim or Adonai, that Adonai would get translated as *MarYah* not *Mar*.

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[12] Very rarely, and analogous to the few uses of *Mara* that we have been discussing, conjugated forms of *Mar* appear next to *MarYah*. In addition to showing that the "Mar" attached to the word in question is itself not being conjugated, there is another key point to be made. Nehemiah 10:29's "MarYah Maran" and Revelation 1:10's "MaranaYah" demonstrate that there is not a single place in either Tanakh or NT where Mar/Mari/Maran standing alone and without clarification clearly means YHWH. Instead, the normative usage of all forms of Mar is exclusively the province of human beings. In the case of Revelation 1:10 also, this usage may have been proof that the original version was in Hebrew and read "Adonai YHWH" but that such was lost and combined in a later redactor with an oral memory of Rav Shaul saying "Maran atha".

So, put simply, this is a red herring, having nothing to do with the meaning of the word itself. Instead, my original point of two different words, each with the same spelling, and only having the singular form of that word apply exclusively to YHWH, stands.

## A Word on the Pronunciation of the Sacred Name

In a related issue, there is also a lot of controversy out there on the proper pronunciation of the Sacred Name on the Hebrew side of the fence. For example, while I was happy that my recent translation of Aramaic Galatians was used in a commentary by my colleague Avi Ben Mordechai, I parted company with him and fellow scholar Nehemia Gordon in proclaiming the traditional and majority scholarly view that it is *Yahweh*, as opposed to their advocacy of *Yehovah*. But lest the reader feel I am unfairly singling these men out, I should comment that I have seen at least half a dozen other incorrect assumptions, including as *Yahwah*, *Yehowah* and a bunch more too exotic to even write down here. However, because my translation is the basis for Avi's book, owing to the fact that I am most familiar with it, and because the argumentation there is among the best I've seen for the other side, I will be focusing on it as my source for explaining my position.

With those thoughts in mind, let us begin with looking at their view and then I will show mine. Nehmia begins by explaining why he does not think Theodoret of Cyprus' report of "Yahweh" being the right pronunciation as used by the Samaritans is credible:

> There are several problems with Theodoret's statement. First of all Theodoret was not talking about Israelites but rather the Samaritans who were Babylonian gentiles forcibly settled in Israel by the Assyrian kings.
>
> Galatians: A Torah-Based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context, p. 475

Actually, this statement is not totally accurate; as the Samaritans were also part Israelite:

> Samaritans: Inhabitants of the district of Samaria, following the exchange of population effected by the Assyrians after their conquest in 722/1 B.C. Pursuing their policy of transferring conquered peoples, the Assyrians deported many of the original inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom and replaced them with a mixture of people from the east: Babylon, Avva, Hamath, Sepharviam and Cuth (deriving from the latter, the Samaritans are often referred to in rabbinic literature as Cuthim). The name Samaritans only appears once in the OT, in II Kings 17:29, where it is used for these newcomers, who persisted in their pagan ways. **However, the majority of the population was constituted by Israelites who had not been deported and who continued their Israelite faith. The beliefs bought by the newcomers did not survive and no paganism is found in later Samaritan theology.**

Illustrated Dictionary and Concordance of the Bible, 1986 Edition (emphases mine)

What I suspect happened in this case is that Nehmia looked at the only Tanakh reference to the Samaritans, and since it did not overtly state their Israelitish component, he assumed there was none. This idea was probably also given apparent credence by 2 Kings 17:18 which said "YHWH was incensed at Israel and He banished them from His presence; none was left but Judah alone."

However, not all of those living in Samaria were pagans. 2 Kings 23:16-18 records that decades later King Josiah preserved a grave of a Judean prophet "who came from Samaria". More than a century and a half later, Jeremiah 41:5 describes 80 men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria who shaved their beards and came to the Temple to worship. Tanakh also tells us that while the early Samaritans worshipped YHWH, they had also mixed that worship with other gods; however by Y'shua's time we have a clear acknowledgement in the Gospels that they just worshipped YHWH (John 4:21). Certainly if they were still pagans, the Israelite Y'shua would have said so! Therefore, the biblical evidence strongly suggests that while Israelites were scattered so that their tribes were not intact as they once were, pockets of Israelite individuals remained in Samaria.

Nehmia Gordon then says:

> Furthermore, Theodoret states that the Jews pronounce the name as AIA. This does not refer to YHWH but to the abbreviated form of Yah (as in: Halleluyah). If Theodoret is talking about the Jewish pronunciation of Yah, then perhaps he is not even talking about the Samaritan pronunciation of YHVH when he says they call God by the name IABE.
>
> Galatians: A Torah-Based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context, p. 475

With all due respect to Nehmia's great learning, that is just an opinion. I have not seen any serious scholar use the Jewish usage of Yah against the idea that Theodoret is talking about the pronunciation of YHWH with respect to the Samaritans. In reading Theodoret in fact, there seems a very clear separation of topics between the two groups. This brings us to Nehmia's next point:

> Finally, the Greek language in which Theodoret is writing is incapable of transmitting the full range of Hebrew sounds. For example, the divine name has the Hebrew letter *he* as the second letter, which cannot even be expressed in the Greek language! So whatever Theodoret may have heard from the Samaritans would have been corrupted from the Greek.
>
> Galatians: A Torah-Based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context, p. 475

Now, interestingly enough, even I agree with part of this, having written in the previous volume of *Ruach Qadim* that there is no fully articulated letter *he* equivalent in Greek. However, that does not mean the "h" sound is absent in Greek. The letter *theta* brings this sound in from a "th" first of all, and second of all we have this proof that I detailed also from the previous volume regarding a title for YHWH in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:33:

> So why does Matthew (in both Greek and Aramaic) say "Eli Eli" but Mark in many Greek manuscripts says "Eloi, Eloi"? The answer has to do more with the Greek language in this case…The only way Greek can approximate an "h" sound is by a breathing accent on the letter O. However, the problem arises that such an accent is allowed at the beginning of a word, never the middle. Even so, this was the best the Greek redactors of Mark could do, and so they sometimes inserted the O into "Eli", resulting in "Eloi".
>
> Ruach Qadim: Aramaic Origins of the New Testament, p. 110

To this day the breathing accent on the Greek O is transliterated as "h" into other languages, including Hebrew. Furthermore, in Aramaic the letter *beyt* can take on a sound of B, V or W depending on the word, so Theodoret's transliteration of "IABE" can very easily reveal the Semitic original behind itself. Nehmia then says something very interesting:

> In ancient Israel, people often had names that incorporated the divine name in a short sentence. For example, my name is Nehmia, in Hebrew *Ne-chem-yah*, which means "YHVH comforts". This name combines the verb *nichem* ("he comforts") and *yah*. In earlier times, *yah* would have been *yahu* as in the name of Elijah, in Hebrew *Eliyahu* (*eli* "my God", *yahu* "is YHVH"). *Yahu* appears in many biblical names as part of YHVH. From this we could conclude that the divine name is to be pronounced something like *Yahu-ah* or *Yahu-vah*.
>
> Galatians: A Torah-Based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context, p. 475

See, to my mind, this proves my point utterly! The name of Yah is perfectly preserved here, and the phrase *Yahu* is accurately broken down as "Yah is". Therefore, this etymology dovetails extremely well and extends logically from what I said in the MarYah section, where we get the meaning of "Yah (he) is" within the fuller name itself.

Furthermore, the acknowledgment of Yah also shows his previous attempts to discredit that sound based on what "non Israelite Samaritans" said to be a diversion, especially since in almost the same breath Nehmia talks of "the Jewish use of Yah"!

The fact then that Yah is maintained would, by definition then, preclude the *yeho* beginning that Nehmia is arguing for. Furthermore it is also a fact that Yah is maintained by the Jews of Babylon in the Peshitta Tanakh that Nehmia ignores, which in my mind is a critical omission that greatly reinforces the Hebrew usage and pronunciation we saw

earlier. However, those problems don't stop Nehmia from making a solid effort, as he does in my final quote[13] here:

> The problem with this (the use of "Yah" in pronouncing the divine name—AGR) is that in the names of other biblical personalities the name of YHVH appears as *Yeho-*. For example the name Joshua, in Hebrew *Yehoshua* (*Yeho* "YHVH", *shua* "saves"). This raises the question: Does the divine name begin with *Yeho* or *Yahu*? One of the rules of Hebrew names is that when words are combined to form a name, they undergo changes to their vowels depending on their position within the new name. So the verb *nichem* "he comforts" is changed in the name Nehemia because of its position in the word. The rule is that the letters YHV (from YHVH) always appear as *yeho-* at the beginning of names, but *–yahu* at the end of names (because of something called "pre-tonal shortening"). In the name of YHVH the letters are YHV at the beginning of the name, so based on the rules of Hebrew pronunciation the divine name should begin with Ye-Ho!

> Galatians: A Torah-Based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context, p. 476

In this area I definitely see where Nehmia is coming from, but I still have to say no to his conclusions. Reason being, the "rule" that Nehmia references is based on the patterns in the Tanakh, and while it is surely true that names like *Yehoshua* and *Yehosophat* follow this exact pattern, the fact is there are other areas of Tanakh that do not, such as these verses we looked at earlier:

> **Yah** (יה) is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation;
> This is my Elohim, and I will enshrine Him; My father's Elohim, and I will exalt Him. **YHWH** the warrior—**YHWH** is His name!

> Exodus 15:2-3 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

> In that day you shall say: "I give thanks to you, O YHWH! Although You were wroth with me, Your wrath has turned back and You comfort me. Behold the El who gives me triumph! I am confident, unafraid; for **Yah YHWH** (יה יהוה) is my strength and my might; and he has been my deliverance."

> Isaiah 12:1-2

> I recall the deeds of **Yah** (יה); yes, I recall Your wonders of old; I recount Your works; I speak of Your acts.

> Psalm 77:12-13 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

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[13] While the balance of Nehmia's essay from this point is both well written and interesting, it nonetheless appears speculative to my eyes in the way he parses through medieval mss evidence and Karaite/Masoretic linkages, conspiracy theories on why the name was covered up, and so on. It is therefore my preference to focus solely on the aspects of this argument that deal with the original primary and most ancient evidence.

Praise **Yah** (יה).  Servants of **YHWH**, give praise.  Praise the name of **YHWH**.

Psalm 113:1-3 (Jewish Publication Society 1999 Hebrew English Tanakh)

The usage is clear. Yah is standing alone as the divine name.  Furthermore, when the Psalms repeatedly stress "HalleluYah" they are neither saying "yahu" nor "yeho", disproving the idea that the names have to follow the pattern Nehmia suggests.  The fact is, many names do follow this pattern Nehmia mentions, but the Almighty has clearly bent the rules for His own purposes.

Now some will no doubt point out that Nehmia specifically mentions three letters (YHV) not just the first two (YH) as having this pattern.  However, if the phrase is a name (Yah) combined with a verb (is), then this rule would not apply.  The names then that Nehmia references, while on point, still contain this verb as referenced by the letters *heh-waw* (הו).  Furthermore, Aramaic carries this pattern over as well, as we see from quoting this familiar passage once more:

> And no one can say YHWH is Y'shua (MarYah **haw** Eshoa- מריא הו ישוע) but by the Ruach Ha Kodesh.
>
> Aramaic 1 Corinthians 12:3

At this point I beg for the reader not to misunderstand me. I am not saying that the original sacred name was Yah over YHWH.  Rather, what I am saying is that both forms are equally ancient, but whereas the former version only mentions the "is" factor once (from *hayah*, the Hebrew form for "to be"), the latter states emphasizes it with the addition of the *waw* also forming another form of "is".  As such "YHWH" is akin to Isaiah's "shalom shalom" except that here we are amping up the existence factor of the Creator who said His name is YHWH.

Furthermore, and unlike Nehmia Gordon saying elsewhere in this essay, Theodoret is far from the only source on the pronunciation of the name.  Another very ancient source of evidence for the correct pronunciation of the divine name can be found in ancient transliterations of the name of YHWH into cuneiform script. Thankfully cuneiform, unlike Hebrew, contained written vowels.  Therefore, it is significant that in 1898 A. H. Sayce transliterated three cuneiform tablets dating back to Hamurrabi that clearly said "Jahweh (Jehovah) is God."[14]  It does not take then much imagination to realize that the text really said "Yahweh" and leave the "J" beginning to the writing style that was prevalent in the 19th century.

In addition, other cuneiform inscriptions, known as the Murashu Texts, agree with this usage.  Found in Nippur and dating to between 464 and 404 BCE, these texts directly contradict Nehmia's assertion and show that YAHU, not YEHO, was frequently used at

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[14] See *Halley's Bible Handbook,* p. 62

the beginning of biblical names.[15]  The Peshitta Tanakh also changes biblical names from YEHO to YAHU, indicating Nehmia's evidence is not as airtight as it might otherwise appear to be. ***In fact, even Nehmia's own name which he uses for an example is not ending in YAHU, but YAH alone! His own name is an exception to the rule he references!***

And that brings us to the last portion, *weh*.[16]  In addition to the ancient evidence just mentioned, the second century Church Father Origen used the Greek letter *eta* which is clearly pronounced *hey* for the last letter of the Name and which also descends from paleo-Hebrew with that exact pronunciation. Clement also follows this usage in Greek, referring to this exact sound at the end of YHWH as well.

Taken all together then, it seems very solid that the evidence points to one of two related pronunciations for the Name:

1) *Yah-way* or
2) *Yah-hoo-way*

In the case of #2, the "oo" may simply be the result of an extended hiss from the *he* that could be rushed to a degree that it might not even be heard unless one knew to listen for it.  A third possibility, though less likely, is a fully articulated OO, as in Yah-OO-way. While I personally do not feel this last version is probable, as a scholar I cannot wholly eliminate it either.  Whichever the case may be however, it is surely not *Yehovah*.

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[15] See *Patterns in Jewish Personal Names in the Babylonian Diaspori* by M.D. Coogan; Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 183f.

[16] In spite of Nehmia Gordon's belief that *waw* and *vav* were equally ancient, the evidence he mentions is exclusively modern in showing the dichotomy of pronunciation.  Most linguists are adamant though that *waw* is the original ancient rendering of the 6th letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and this is the assumption I go by throughout this section.