

A note on The Name

יהוה



בת ציון

FOR CONGREGATION BAT-TZION

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We are not a 'Sacred Name' congregation in regard to any 'movement,' but our congregation does use the Name, יהוה, in its liturgy. When His Name is used in scripture, whether from Torah or quoted in our siddur, we say His Name. We call Him "Elohim" when He is usually called "God," as Elohim means "God." But "Elohim" is more specific to the Elohim of Scripture, of Avraham, Yitz'k'hak and Ya'akov, and to the Creator's magnitude and supremacy. There are many "gods", but there is ONE Elohim. We have rendered the Hebrew word "El" as "God" in our liturgy. But our God, Elohim, also has a Name. It is יהוה. We teach that it is improper to use this Name in common conversation, but when confessing the truth of Messiah, (preaching the gospel) when praying, when praising, it is not only fitting, but it is proper and powerful to use His Name. This Name has been stolen, not hidden or forgotten. It is the enemy who has effectively robbed the people of Messiah from the power of the Name by which Messiah performed His Wonders and protected His Talmidim. (Yokhanan 17:17) We are careful to use this Name only in sacred contexts.

In traditional, Talmudic Judaism, and in some Messianic circles, the Holy Name of Elohim is not mentioned. It is called "ineffable," or "unspeakable," and replaced either with Adonai or HaShem (meaning "Master" or "The Name" respectively). We do not condemn anyone for doing so. However, there are claims that the pronunciation of the Name has been lost. We do not believe that to be the case. In fact, it was deliberately misvoweled by the Masoretes in the older Hebrew texts, to support the manmade rule of not speaking the Name. Later gentile redactors further misrepresented the name by creating the word Jehovah, and by using only LORD in its place, which simply means "master" and does not convey the nature of Elohim at all, as does His Name. יהוה means "Existing One: Who was, is, and will be."

There is certainly no commandment not to say His Name! We have searched, and cannot find one. Why would He make such a momentous event of telling His Name to Moshe and to Yisra'el, (Exodus 3:14-15, 20:3, 34:6) then only to say, "Do not say my Name?" Why would He write in stone with His own finger,

אנכי יהוה אלהיך

"I am יהוה your Elohim"

only then to tell Yisra'el not to use His Name in prayer? Why would we stop using it, when the preponderance of **scriptural** evidence shows Jews using this Name DAILY? Just read the Tehillim (Psalms). Why, too, would David write a Messianic prophecy, stating that the Messiah would DECLARE the Name among His Brethren, Tehillim 22:23, if it were hidden and unspeakable in the time of Messiah?

כ ואתָּה יהוה, אל תרחק; אֵלֹהֵי לְעִזְרָתִי חוֹשֶׁה. 20 But You, O יהוה, be not far off; O You my strength, hasten to help me.

כא הַצִּילָה מִחֶרֶב נַפְשִׁי; מִיַּד כָּלֵב, יַחֲדָתִי. 21 Deliver my soul from the sword; my only one from the power of the dog.

כב הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי, מִפִּי אַרְיֵה; וּמִקֶּרְנֵי רַמִּים עֲנִיתֵנִי. 22 Save me from the lion's mouth; yes, from the horns of the wild ox do You answer me.

כג אֶסְפְּרָה שְׁמֶךָ לְאַחֵי; בְּתוֹךְ קָהָל אֲהַלְלֶךָ. 23 I will declare **Your Name** unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.

Close examination of the scriptures shows us that Yeshua and others in the Brit Khdasha in fact DID speak the Name of יהוה. Mark 12:29 is one major example, Matthew 21:9 and 22:44 are two other places of import concerning public use of the Name. There are many others. The commandment concerning the use of the Name is "Do not use my name for vanity." This is to blaspheme. Our congregation vehemently supports this commandment. But to continue a manmade tradition of not speaking His Name even in sacred worship is to put the desire of men, be they Jew or Gentile, above the desire of Elohim for His People to KNOW and DECLARE His Name. (Shemot 3:15, YeshaYahu 52:6, Yirmiyahu 16:21, Yekhezkiel 36:23, 39:7)

זֶה שְׁמִי לְעֹלָם, וְזֶה זִכְרִי לְדֹר דָּר.

"This is my Name forever, and this is my memorial from generation to generation."

Zikhri, or 'memorial,' is a 'recalling,' and holds the connotation of remembrance by speaking. (Shemot 3:15)

Yah expressly rebukes those who teach us to forget His Name (YirmiYahu 23:26-27):

כּו עַד-מַתִּי, הֵישׁ בְּלֵב הַנְּבִיאִים--נְבִיאֵי הַשָּׁקֶר;
וּנְבִיאֵי, תִרְמַת לִבָּם.
How long shall this be? Is it in the heart of the prophets that prophesy **lies**, and the prophets of the **deceit** of their **own** heart?

כּז הַחֲשָׁבִים, לְהִשְׁכִּיחַ אֶת-עַמִּי שָׁמַי, בְּחִלּוּמֵתָם, אֲשֶׁר יִסְפְּרוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ--בְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁכַחוּ אֲבוֹתָם אֶת-שְׁמִי, בְּבַעַל.
That think to cause My people to **forget My Name**, by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers forgot My Name for "Lord?"

Do we not hear HIS thoughts on this subject? Ask Him if He still thinks the same. Further, the Brit Khadasha tells us that one day, every knee will bow, and every tongue will CONFESS that Yeshua HaMashiakh is יהוה:

וְכָל-לְשׁוֹן תִּזְדָּק בִּי יְהוּה הוּא יִשׁוּעַ הַמְּשִׁיחַ לְכַבוֹד הָאֱלֹהִים אָבִיו

"And every tongue will confess that He is יהוה Yeshua HaMashiakh, to the glory of Elohim His Father." [Phil 2:11]

On the pronunciation of the Name, we do not hold that we have a pronunciation that is divinely revealed, other than through common use of the Sacred Language and a desire to know His Name. Likewise, we do not condemn those who choose not to pronounce it as do we. We, however, conclude that there are multiple clues in Hebrew and in History as to how the Name is pronounced, and we will cite a few.

In Hebrew, many prophets' names end with "Yahu", יהו, the first three letters in the Name יהוה. Eliyahu, YeshaYahu, Yirmiyahu are examples. They mean "My God is יהוה", "יהוה is Salvation," and "Appointed by יהוה". MattetYahu, the tax collector and talmid of Yeshua, bears a similar name meaning "Gift of יהוה". This gives us a clue as to how to say the Name. Since in Hebrew the last letter "heh", as in יהוה, is many times pronounced "ah" when it is on the end of the word, we can possibly conclude that יהוה is pronounced Yahu'ah. Supporting this pronunciation is a very similar word, the name of the tribe of Yeshua, Y'hudah (Judah), which has all of the letters of the Name יהוה in it: יהודה. The only 'extra' letter is a "Dalet," a "door." Yeshua, the Lion of Y'hudah, "opened the door" to יהוה. If we "open the door", or take the dalet (a letter whose name means 'door') out, we have Yahu'ah, יהוה.

This is supported by Rabbis who have been in Babylon, modern day Iraq, for thousands of years, who have asserted that this is how the name is pronounced.

Also, In the Arabic version of the Karaite Bible, done by Yefet ben 'Eli (920-1010), which appeared around 960CE, the Name יהוה was punctuated as EE AA OO AH, blended as Yahu'ah, in the Arabic text.

٨ وَأَنْتَ فِي الْإِرْتِفَاعِ لِلدَّخْرِ يَا يَهُوَهٗ:
٩ فَانَّهُ هُرْدَا أُنْدَاوَك يَا يَهُوَهٗ فَانَّهُ هُرْدَا

Tehilla 92:8-9

Yefet ben Eli's Karaite Bible

This is the oldest direct vowelizing of the Sacred Name by a community who turned away from Rabbinic error. These are Karaite JEWS living in Iraq, what used to be called Babylon. These are likely descendants of the "megoshi", Rabbis who observed the star of Beit Lekhem and had the gumption to go see Messiah in Beit Lekhem. They understood both Hebrew and its sister language, Arabic. They voweled His Name "EE AA OO AH/Yahu'ah." This community still insists today that this is how the Name is pronounced. This is very, very compelling evidence on the pronunciation of His Name.

Josephus supports this position indirectly as well. Flavius Josephus (37-100), who, as a kohen, knew the priesthood of this time very well, wrote that when Romans attacked the Temple, the Jews called upon the

Sacred Name of the Awesome Elohim (The Jewish War V:438), but he wrote of his own refusal to give the pronunciation to his readers (The Jewish Antiquities II:275). However, he gave some information of significant importance that helps us understand the pronunciation he wanted to conceal. He revealed that the Name was spoken as **FOUR VOWELS**. The Iraqi rabbis today say the same, and insist these four vowels are EE-AH-OO-AH, which blend to give us Yahu'ah.

There is some support for this in the Samaritan community. Today, the Samaritans live in what is known as the West Bank in Israel. They are the actual descendants of Ephraim and Menasheh. They have their own form of worship, and use the Name in that worship. They have been saying The Name in their liturgical worship for thousands of years. While they do share the Rabbinic avoidance of using The Name otherwise, in their liturgy, when reading scriptures and prayers, they say Yahu'ah. This is documented in the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1911 by George F. Moore.

A relatively new archaeological find has upgraded this position on the pronunciation of The Name. It dates from around 1382-1344 BC.



It is from the Temple of Amun in Soleb, Sudan, from a sculpture of Amenhotep III of Mitzrayim [Egypt]. This is actually the oldest archaeological occurrence of His Name, יהוה, ever found! The hieroglyph is seen above. The meaningful part is in the lower section that is 'set off' from the figure of the 'king,' which is Amenhotep III. An Egyptologist translated the inscription from Hieroglyph, and also gave a phonetic representation of the Egyptian 'sound' of it. He was a professor at *Association Biblique de Recherche d'Anciens Manuscrits* [Association of Biblical research of ancient manuscripts, in France]. His rendering of the sound of it is as follows:

"ta sasuw yeh'hua"

it means: 'From the land of יהוה.'

Other Egyptologists insist the pronunciation is Yahu'ah. How would Mitzrayim [Egyptian] even come close, if the Hebrews never spoke The Name? And, why is there no consonant in it, if it were indeed 'yehoVah,' as many assert. This king was ruling during the time of the Judges, before the Temple, not too many years

after Moshe. Our former oldest support was from about 1000AD, the Yefet Ben Eli citation above. This is a full 2300 years earlier! And it is still very similar to Ben Eli's vowelings. And, it is NOT a product of the debate over the pronunciation, so no one here is trying to influence the reader's prejudice about pronunciation. That says a lot to us.

Since Hebrew makes it CLEAR that the first syllable of יהוה is Yah, this just appears to be more support for the conclusion we have drawn, that His Name is pronounced IAUA, EE-AH-OO-AH.

How did we get "Yahweh" as the defacto English standard? By a misinterpretation of Josephus by GREEKS. Any wonder? They did not know Hebrew as the Jews did, were NOT linguists, especially concerning Hebrew. Certain commentators (influenced by the form "Yahweh") misled the readers of Josephus by indicating that Josephus' four vowels were IAUE [using the greek equivalents, obviously].

Now, it is evident that the "sacred letters" noted in the four letter name were written in Hebrew, and not in Greek. Furthermore, in Hebrew these consonants, yod, vav, and heh, Y, W, H, were actually used as vowels in the times of Messiah! They were called "mothers of reading." The Qumran's writings showed that in the first century the Yod ך [indicated with Y] was a vowel that served only to indicate sounds EE and EH; the Vav ם [indicated with W] served only for sounds Ô [long OH] and OO, and a Heh ה [second and last letters, indicated with H] served ONLY for the sound AH. At that time, the Heh ה was used as a vowel only at the end of words, and never inside of it. Clearly, here, in The Name, there is an exception, since Josephus tells us that the Name was FOUR VOWELS. So, to read the name YHWH as four vowels, it is to read EE-AH-OO-AH, Yahu'ah. יהוה. (right to left in Hebrew)

So, our internal evidences of Yah [the abbreviated form ending with the Heh as AH, which was the ONLY USE for this letter on the end of the word in the time of Messiah] Yahu [the suffixes that have yod, heh and vav on the end, and stand for His Name, many times over in scriptural names] Yehudah [taking out the Dalet, you have the same letters as יהוה] are further supported by the grammatical rules uncovered in the Qumran scrolls!

Further, the letter Heh ה on the end of a word usually means the word is feminine. But, there are always exceptions. Even so, what is the distinct nature of femininity? Bringing forth life! That is what the Ruakh does! And the Ruakh is Mashiakh's, and it is יהוה !

So, looking at the simplicity of the language, and to Jews who have preserved the Name for 3000 years, along with a newly discovered Egyptian hieroglyph dating from 3,000 years ago, we have arrived at a satisfactory pronunciation of the Name.

This is our halakha concerning the use of His Name. Might we be wrong? Possibly, but if so, not by much. What we are not wrong about is on the spirit of the Word concerning His Name, which is an overwhelming theme of declaring, preserving, and using His Name in all sacred settings, especially since Messiah bore this Name, and Kepha and all the Shlikhim declared it! (Acts 2:21,36; 5:9, and more)

וְהָיָה כָּל אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה יִמָּלֵט

"And it shall be that all who call upon the Name of יהוה will be saved"

(MaAseh HaShlikhim 2:21, Yoel 3:5)

If one's halakha (conclusion on how to follow the command to say His Name) is different, feel free to join us, but we ask that no one impose upon us their own conclusion, apart from civil, brotherly conversation supported by fact. We do not accept "divinely revealed" pronunciations of His Name: He loves us all the same.

Why pray in Hebrew and be concerned about His Hebrew Name, in a Texas synagogue? We understand that it can be strange. But, many in our congregation do understand Hebrew, and many more are learning. Praying in this setting helps us learn. But, the more important reason is that when we pray the scriptures in Hebrew, we are praying the very words of Elohim as close as possible to how they were originally inspired. Hebrew is the language of creation. We believe there is a very spiritual element to the language itself, and have experienced a 'shalom' by hearing the prayers daily, and by uniting in them on the Day that יהוה blessed, His Shabbat. We are His Sanctuary, His House, and He says that His house shall be a House of Prayer. Praying in Hebrew connects us with Yisra'el, and identifies us as part of Yisra'el, and allows us to participate in the fulfillment of prophecy concerning His Language and His Name:

כי-אז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל-עַמִּים, שְׂפָה בְרוּרָה, לְקַרְא כָּל־שֵׁם יְהוָה, לְעַבְדוֹ שֶׁכֶּם אֶחָד.

"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they may call upon the Name of יהוה , to serve Him in one accord." (ZephanYah 3:9)