

## THE BIBLICAL, DIVINE NAME- THE TETRAGRAM- AND IT'S PRONUNCIATION

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### BACKGROUND:

With reference to Prof. Eric Rasmusen, Indiana,- and his very interesting and well - argumentative article- "Notes of the Divine Name", dated march 22-2008, which gave me inspiration to generate some comments on the above topic.

### THE ARTICLE:

Prof. Rasmusen came up on his first page with the following assertion or allegation:


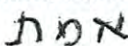
"Despite the consensus, the evidence for "Yahweh" as the original pronunciation is exceedingly weak."

This is "the consensus" or "the established truth" during many decades among theologians, hebraistic linguistic science and scholars, but not all. After a serious searching-work during more than 35 years, of course with more or less intensity, I do agree in the above conclusion by Prof. Rasmusen. He is right! Why?.....




As many other topics in this world today, there are a lot of "circular opinions". "Circular opinions" are made up by "circular arguments", which rarely have their roots in facts or the truth. The above quoted conclusion about the pronunciation of the Divine Name, the Tetragram, is one of them.

In a lot of biblical Hebrew grammarbooks, we find the same "circular" conclusion, very often without heavyweights arguments. When we are talking about the Hebrew Tetragram (From Greek: tetra: four, grammar: letters) which we find 6828 places in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament (OT), according to Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), it's important to distinguish between "translation" and "transliteration".

Translation means "to transfer thoughts" from one language to another. Transliteration means: transferring of a phonetic construction (sound) from one language to another. One ex.:

The Hebrew , wellknown, word  = amen, has been transliterated to many languages as "amen". If we want to translate this word, it must be: truly, true- from the Hebrew word  = emeth= truth.

### THE TETRAGRAM:

When we are looking at the Tetragram, it is a consonantal construction which seems to be more than a twosyllable ( phonetic) construction:  = YHWH/ YHVH. This is not in favor of the pronunciation "Yahweh", which have two. More of this later. The Tetragram has the signs of a Hebrew "yiqtol"- imperfectum of the verb hawah or hayah. In Hebrew there is very little difference between  - hawah and  -hayah. Hawah seems to be an older form than hayah.

### THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE TETRAGRAM:

The interesting question is: Where came the whole idea of the phonetic construction "YeHOWAH" יהוה from?.....This phonetic construction came to be "Jehovah" in English /American. This is in fact an attempt to transliterate YeHOWAH to Jehovah. That phonetic picture is in fact generated from the Hebrew text itself. In modern Hebrew today, they pronounce it יהוה (with *holem* above *he*) = YeHOWAH or YeHOVAH, with the accent on the last syllable. "They" in this case, means those who are allowed to pronounce.

When we ,now, are moving our discussion into the "circular field", we have to ask: Is it right that the vowels in the Tetragram belongs to "Adonay"?...אֲדֹנָי (adonay = my Lord, Lord) This is one of many hebraistic explanations. In fact, it is not! If we are looking carefully at the vowelsigns in אֲדֹנָי -adonay, we will find : *hateph pataḥ* (*shewa compositum*), *holem* and *kamets*. The vowelsigns of YeHOWAH are: *shewa simplex*, *holem*, *kamets*. The vowelsigns in the above two words are not exactly the same. Some hebraists and theologians try to explain the difference, the reducing of *shewa compositum* to *shewa simplex*, with a lot of linguistic capers or gambols. The arguments are not "waterproof".

Some grammarians are interestingly making quotations from the wellknown jewish historian Flavius Josephus, when he wrote:

"The highpriest had his head dressed with a tiara of fine linen embroidered with a purple border, and surrounded by another crown in gold which had in relief the sacred letters; these ones are four vowels."

( Jewish War V: 235, by Flavius Josephus)

The above citation has been, regrettably, instead of explaining this visible abnormality, certain commentators, influenced by the form Yahweh, mislead the readers by indicating that this reading was something like Yahue or close to Yahweh. Here we have two possible reasons to this utterance: Josephus is wrong and should written "four consonants",- or.....The fact is that the "four letters" in the highpriest's forehead obvious was the Tetragram written in paleoHebrew. When Josephus wrote this work in Greek, he used the Greek words *φωνή* phone and *φωνηεντα* phoneenta, which is not exactly "vowels", but "sounds". So, according Josephus, the Tetragram had "four sounds". Again,- this is not in favor of Yahweh, which has only "two sounds".

Prof. Rasmusen stated on his page 2:

"It is not that they (theologians,- added by me) cite evidence that cannot be evaluated unless the reader understands Hebrew....."

I do agree Prof. Rasmusen in this matter. Myself, I have during the years collected a lot of hebraistic, linguistic scientific articles, and corresponded with a lot of hebraistic scholars and professors in semitic languages,- and their arguments which have the purpose to support "Yahweh" are weak and few.

THE PRONUNCIATION YeHOWAH- Jehovah, Jehova:

When we are looking at the consonantal, four-letter name, we have to be reminded on the

following:

In the 2. cent., CE the Talmud said, according to Rabbi Abba Shaul, prohibited "the pronunciation of the Tetragram according to its letters", and warned that those transgressing this command would forfeit their portion in the world to come.

( Talmud: Sanhedrin 101a, 10:1- Rabbi Abba Shaul)

The phrase "to pronounce the Name according to its letters" means pronouncing the Name as it is written. We may ask: How was the Name written?.....The common, and traditional opinion is that the "vowelsign-system" (Hebrew: niqqud) was made by the Masoretes from the 5. cent. CE- to the ca. 10 . cent CE. But according to Matt. 5:18 there seems to be vowelsigns at an earlier stage, because Jesus said:

".....for truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one smallest letter or one PARTICLE OF A LETTER to pass away from the Law.....".

The translation of "particle of a letter" comes from the Greek word **κερεῖα** = kerea, which means in practical way - a vowelsign or accentsign. The fact is that the Masoretes followed or manifested an earlier phonetic tradition. If this is the case, we better understand Flavius Josephus and his "four sounds", and the Abba Shaul's "according to its letter". The conclusion of this sequence is: A strong standpoint of a "four-sounds" Name according to the Greek alphabeth,- f. ex. lehouah.

According to Hebrew , linguistic rules, there must be a vowel, or a shewa quiscence (silent) after the first "he" in the Tetragram. Again,- this is not favor of Yahweh. The Jewish , Hebrew Bibles as Biblia Hebraica Rabbinica (BHR) are using the construction YeHOWAH mostly, but the academic editions as Biblia Hebraica- Rudolf Kittel (BHK) used earlier the construction YeHOWAH, but changed it to YeHWAH later on. This,- because of findings of older manuscripts, as the Aleppo Codex of ben Asher and others. They changed to YeHWAH **יהוה** as in BHS. In the last edition we also find the Name as YeHOWAH about 50 times.

#### A SUBSTITUTE SYSTEM:

*Because of a rabbinical view and system, many theologians and scholars have made the following substitute explanations :*

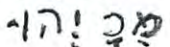
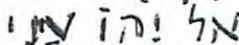
- 1) YeHOWAH - ketiv is qere : Adonay
- 2) YeH?WAH - " " " : Shema , Aramaic = The Name
- 3) YeHOWIH - " " " : Elohim ( or something else)

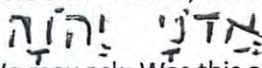
Some times the Masoretes changed YeHOWIH to YeHWIH. It seems to be that the rabbis tried to put the whole question on a "blind track" or to "fog" the whole matter. Because of the above system, many bible translators are influenced by this and translate the Tetragram, the Divine Name as Lord.

If the above "niqquds" were meant to pronounce another word, what about the theophoric name as YeHORAM? In Hebrew it has the same niqqud as in the Tetragram : **יהוה = יהורם**! So,- as everyone are able to see: many of the rabbinical arguments are falling apart.

#### THE THEOPHORIC NAMES:

There are about 300 so-called "theophoric", personal names in the Hebrew Bible (OT). Ca. 50 with the prefix YeHO, and the rest with the suffix YAH/YAHU. Many are convinced that YAH/YAHU proves the pronunciation Yahweh. In fact, it is not! We will find, as eager students, when looking carefully on the theophoric names, an "o" or an "u". Names as Joel, Johannes, (English: John), Jonatan, Joshua, Jehu, etc.

Some scholars are in fact misleading the readers and students when they are stating that Jahu /Yahu is the right, and is a support to Yahweh. When you carefully are searching the theophoric names, it seems to be a "system": prefix YeHO and suffix YAHU, but there are also other possibilities. See, for example, 1. King. 22:8, Jer. 36:11, there you will find the names "Micha-yehu" = , and in Ezr. 8:4 the very interesting name: "el yeho enay" = . Here the "o" and "u" are not following the normal system. We find here the use of "matres lectionis".

We have also an extraordinary writing by the Masoretes in Ezek. 28:22, by the Aleppo Codex, about the combination of "Adonay YeHOWIH". There, the scribe Ben Asher, vowel-signed "Adonay YeHOWAH" (  ). So, - the Masoretic scribes made an unique combination here. We may ask: Was this an accident?..... This construction is illogical and absurd and unnecessary IF - the niqqud in the Tetragram came from Adonay. In Psalm 8:2 we have an interesting combination, which shows that YeHOWAH or YeHWAH couldn't be results of Adonay. There, (Psal. 8:2) we have the combination "YeHOWAH adonenu". According to the "rabbinical rule", it should be "Lord, our Lord". This is illogical. The more logical is: "Jehovah, our Lord", or "Our Lord, Jehovah".

In the everyday-life, there should be very unrealistic if a Hebrew (Jewish) mother should call her son YeHO-natan as "Adonay-natan". The fact is, the rabbinical scholars had to know exactly what to avoid. They played with words!..... Or is it right that the Masoretes belong to the Karaite-group?.....

WHAT ABOUT "YAHWEH" (YAHWAH)?.....

A lot of Hebraistic scholars are supporting the "circular opinion" that Yahweh is the correct pronunciation, - without questions. There is no doubt, - YHWH is based on the verb (s) hawah, hayah. Many have the view that YHWH is an imperfectum, causative (Hebrew: hiphil). This statement gives a linguistic consequence, since the 3. person, singular, imperfectum, causative - is "yahweh" of the verb hawah.

"The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible." (NY, Abington Press, Nashville, 1962, p 410) says: "b. The causative meaning. Another interpretation, which has much to commend it, takes the verb in the causative (Hiphil) stem, which is precisely the grammatical form of the word "Yahweh". In this view instead of "I am", we should read "I cause to be".

So, - the consequence of the above statement is the pronunciation "Yahweh". This is a strange situation. Why?.....

On the one hand, theologians accept Yahweh as a right pronunciation. It's said in "Theological Dict. of the Old Test.:

"yahweh is now accepted almost universally" (TDOT. vol. 5, p 500)

On the other hand, "almost all" accept the translation of Exod. 3:14, from the verb "ehyeh",

( imperf. of hayah) which derives from the verb hayah, as " I am". How can hebraists and theologians first accept the pronouncing "yahweh" as a consequence of the verb, which should give the translating- consequence as " I cause to be", from Exod. 3.14, but again, most cling to the translation " I am". The reader of this article, may ask: How can this be logical?.....The above two statements are in conflict!.....

The "big problem" with the above, grammatical causative statement- Yahweh-, is that this stem does not appear anywhere else in the Hebrew text and in the other hebrew literature. Therefore, - "Anchor Bible Dict. ( D.N. Fredman, vol. 6, p 1011) wrote:  
"The name could be an unique or singular use of the causative stem....." But,- on the same page, in the same work, it is stated: " The pronunciation of yhwh as Yahweh is a scholarly guess."

The now, wellknown jewish scholar, Nehemiah Gordon, wrote in one of his articles:  
" Now, the verb HYH, to be, from which the name YHVH derives, only exists in the 1 st (qal) and 2nd (nifal) stems in Biblical Hebrew. This means that the scholarly assumption that YHVH is the piel or hifil form of HYH, to be, is impossible since this verb does not exist in those conjugations. In other words, Yahweh is non-existent verbal form in Biblical Hebrew.....The attempt to reconstruct the vowels of YHVH by forcibly identifying it as an impossible piel or hifil verb, is hopeless....."

WHAT ABOUT YAH AND YAHU?.....

In Psalm 68:4 , it is written: ".....as Jah, this is his name.... " In the light of YeHOWAH- pronunciation- how can Jah/Yah be His Name- according to the above scripture?.....The above verse is transliterated : " beYah shemo". Some scholars believe that "Yah" is the first part of the Tetragram. When we are looking carefully at the hypothetical Yahweh ( יהוה ), we find: yod, pataḥ, he , shewa quiescence (silent), waw, segol, he. In the shortname "Yah" ( יה ) we find another niqqud: yod, kamets, he. As the reader and the student can see: The niqqud is "kamets" and not "pataḥ". So,- the shortname Yah is not the first syllable in the Tetragram. It's obviously the yod and the last he, together with kamets, the last syllable in YeHOWAH.

In fact, in the Psalms we find this shortening many times, in the Hebrew text. In Psalm 64:11, we can read : " ba YHAH". So,- when we understand this shortening the Psalm 68:4 has very right in writing " as Jah, this is his name.."- "as YeHOWAH = YAH.

This was a wellknown tradition in biblical times, therefore we understand the utterance " hallelu-Yah" ( הללו יה ) better. It would be difficult and complicated to say or sing "hallelu YeHO", the rhytm is too difficult.

What about Yahu?.....

There is little doubt, the suffixed YAHU among the theophoric names, is a shortening and a combination of " Yah hu" ( יהוה ), which means " he is Yah" or " Yah he is". In Hebrew "hu" means "he" or "him". Yahu is therefore a substitute. The scholar B. Davidson

said : "yah is an abbreviation of yehowah" ( Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon,p. 171b)

Yahu is ,at the end, a shortform of "He is Yehowah".This explaining strengthening the phonetic construction YeHOWAH, which is generated from the Hebrew text itself, it's in there. In the opposite- Yahweh- is not appearing anywhere in the biblical Hebrew text!

#### SEPTUAGINTA ( LXX) AND THE NAME:

Some scholars mean that LXX didn't used the YHWH, but translated all the way to the Greek word and substitute Kyrios. The Greek "Kyrios" is the cognate of the Hebrew "Adon" and "Adonay". But at least older fragmentary evidences shows clearly the opposite. We are able to find the Hebrew Tetragram among the Greek text. In this matter I do make ref. to the work of Prof. Georg Howard.

#### THE VIEW ON THE PRONUNCIATION YAHWEH:

As we have seen so far, and as a "little understander" of the biblical languages, I do agree in many of Prof. Rasmusen's partial conclusions about the Name.Even there is written earlier in this paper: " Yahweh is now accepted almost universally", we have noticed "almost". As written earlier: Circular opinions are grasped by many without investigate the real facts.

Let's look at some quotations from quite a lot hebraistic scholars. As commented earlier in this article, there are a lot of circular opinions, one of them is the following:

" One of the most striking uses of Qere is the Divine name **יהוה** ,which should not be read as it is written, that is **יהוה!** YeHOWAH.....The combination of the vowels of Adonay with the consonants of YHWH has produced the artifical form Yehowah , or Jehovah." ( The book: "Hebrew for Theologians" by Jacques B. Doukham, University Press of America)

As an opposition, the very wellknown jewish Maimonides said:

"We were commanded that , in the sacerdotal blessing, the name of the Lord should be pronounced as it is written in the form of the Tetragrammaton..."

( The book: " The Guide for the Perplexed" by Moses Maimonides, chapter LXII, p 91)

Rabbi Jacob bar Acha said: " Like it is written -YHWH and read **יהוה** " ( Mishnah-Sanhedrin 10:1)

When we are "boiling down", supporters of Yahweh have a "straw" in the utterance of Theodore about the Samaritans priest's possible pronouncing IABE , in Greek. Samaritans language were not Hebrew, but a form of Aramaic. Look at the following comments about "Yahweh":

1) In the article: " The Tetragrammaton -Jahweh- Name or Surrogate?" Canon D.D.A. Lukyn Williams. On page 268 Williams wrote:

" Prof. Eissfeldt sees in it fresh evidence for the theory that Jahweh is the true pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton. I do not understand why....." On page 269 ,he also wrote:

" (ii) But this very evidence indicates, nay almost proves that Jahweh was not the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, but only one of the many surrogates employed to represent it.....( Art. "The Tetragrammaton- Jahweh, Name or Surrogate" , Zeitschrift für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft. ", 1936, Berlin, pp 262-269)

2) Even the Norwegian, but wellknown Prof. in Semitic Lang., Sigmund Mowinckel, who used Jahve in his Norwegian Bible- translation " Michelet, Mowinckel, and Messels transl.", came to the following conclusion in the art. " The Name of God of Moses": " It goes without saying that it is merely by chance that the modern hybrid "Jehovah" has come very close to the supposed original form Yahuwa." ( H.U.C. A: 32,,1961,pp 121-133)

3)The wellknown dictionary "Anchor Bible Dictionary" says:

" A. Pronunciation: The pronunciation of YHWH as Yahweh is a scholarly guess."  
(Anchor Bible Dict. , D.N. Freedman (ed)vol 6, NY, 1992, p. 1011)

4) In Scandinavia, the earlier, wellknown Swedish bishop Bo Giertz wrote the book "Troens ABC" , "The ABC of Faith" where he wrote about Jahve: in Swedish: " det underlige och fula Jahve", that means " the strange and ugly Jahve".

5)Also the Swedish Prof. in Semitic, Hugo Odeberg, had the same opinion as above. In one of his books in Swedish : "Tilbaka til Bibeln" (Return back to the Bible) he called Yahweh in Swedish: " det vanskapeliga uttalet Jahve", that means approximately : the deformed pronunciation Jahve.

6) Already in his art. : " The pronunciation of the name of God of Israel" said the known hebraist D.D. Luckenbill ( he discussed the theophoric names):

" First of all, we must bear in mind that there are no personal names containing the element Yahweh either in the Old Testament itself or in the extrabiblical sources. ( the Aramaic papyri found in Elephantine)" ( The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures,vol 40,no 4 Jul., 1924,pp. 277-283)

7) In this art. "The Name Jahu", B.D. Eerdmans wrote:

"These passages have induced scholars to insert the vowels of the Samaritan Jabe into the original Hebrew consonants, pronouncing Yahweh. But this is a mere guess. It is inconsistent with other passages in THEODORET and lacks historical probability. Should not have been regarded as evidence for the Jewish pronunciation."

(Oudtestamentische Studien, 5, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1948, pp. 2,3)

8) In the " Revue de Qumran -13", the wellknown , American George Wesley Buchanan had an interesting article: "Some Unfinished Business with the Dead Sea Scrolls". Buchanan said: "The name "Yahweh" does not even sound Semitic.....Only from THEODORET's Greek spelling of the Samaritans use of the term is there any basis for the pronunciation "Yahweh" or "Jahveh". This is hardly enough to overpower all other exhibits.....There is little basis in the ancient text for the popular pronunciation Yahweh or Jahveh."

Buchanan cited from the book of Max Reisel (1957), and wrote: "From this and other

materials, he concluded that Yahuwa was another example of the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, which must have originally been pronounced Yahuwah, Yehuwah, Yahowah or Yehowah."

Buchanan had also an interesting comment at the end:

"Some scholars have reexamined this problem, but must be happy to have this problem settled once and for all." (Quotations from pp. 414, 418, 419)

9) In the art. "YHWH- the origin of the tetragrammaton" by E.C.B. MacLaurin, it's written:  
"But its evidential value for an early use of the pronunciation Yahweh is nil....."  
(Vetus Testamentum, Leiden, 1962, p. 459)

10) The norwegian and eminent, Rolf Furuli, who is Dr. in Biblical Hebrew and characterized as a "heavyweight" linguistic scholar, wrote in his book: The Role of Theology and Bias in Bible Translation" (second ed.), p. 318:

(In a footnote): "113. The verb haya has a yod as the second consonant, while YHWH has a waw in the third position. In Aramaic, a waw is used in the equivalent verb, and such a verb with waw also occurs five times in the Hebrew text. Gen. 27:29, Isa. 16:4, Eccles. 2:22, Neh. 6:6"

On pp 195,201 it's written:

".....but can say that the popular form Yahweh is an artificial construction. There is not a single thread of evidence in any ancient Hebrew manuscripts in favor of this form."

"There is, however, absolutely, no evidence in old Hebrew writings for the twosyllable form yahwe. Because the w is etymological, that is, it is one of the original consonants of the divine name, it is more likely that it is used as a consonant than as a vowel, and the pronunciation was ye-ho-wa or ye-hu-wa."

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A conclusion at the end must be: The phonetic construction of the Divine Name as YeHOWAH, stands on its own linguistic feet because it is generated from the biblical Hebrew text itself, it's in there, - both in the main text and in the theophoric names.

YAHWEH is nonexistent. Isaiah 42:8 says transliterated and according to Biblia Hebraica Rabbinica: "ani YeHOWAH hu shemi". Translated: "I am Jehovah that is my name".