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Hashem: Pronunciation - Part 3

119 Ministries does not have a Hebrew scholar on staff. Because of this, in this portion of the series, we must leverage the knowledge and studies of those who have mastered Hebrew to the degree necessary for the purposes of this teaching.

In this teaching we will begin to focus on some possible ways YHWH could be pronounced, and also reveal some ways YHWH cannot be pronounced.

We would like to cite and credit the Ancient Hebrew Research Center for the information and Hebrew analysis contained in this teaching. We would encourage you to consider offering some support to their ministry if you feel led at www.Ancient-Hebrew.org.

A top reason we have so many different pronunciations of YHWH is because many who invent said pronunciations do not know Hebrew.

Just like any other existing language, the Hebrew language follows rules. There are rules of pronunciation and rules of grammar. In order to discern how YHWH is to be pronounced, we need to understand these rules.

In Hebrew, syllables are broken up in rather specific ways, just as we see in the English language.

There are two kinds of syllables, open and closed. Open syllables are a consonant and a vowel. (Cv)
Closed syllables are a consonant-vowel-consonant (CvC)

The words *He* or *She* are open syllables. The words *Him* and *Her* are closed syllables.

For a two syllable word, English will usually place a closed syllable at the beginning of a word whenever possible, and an open syllable at the end of a word.

For example, when we say this Hebrew Word, many often say *ToR-aH*.

However, in Hebrew, the closed syllable comes at the end, so it is actually pronounced *To-Rah*.

Also note that most vowels are not written in Hebrew, but are implied. Hebrew is normally broken up as consonant vowel, and consonant-vowel-consonant (Cv-CvC)

An example is this Hebrew word *Ha-Lak* (use throat in “k”), meaning “walk.”

A Hebrew word with four letters will often be broken up in two ways.

The first is consonant-vowel-consonant, and consonant-vowel-consonant (CvC-CvC). An example of this is this Hebrew word, *MiD-BaR* (meed-bar), meaning desert.

The second way is consonant-vowel, consonant-vowel, and consonant-vowel-consonant. An example of this would be *Be-De-Rek* (use throat in “k”), meaning “in the road”

The Hebrew letters *yod* and *waw* (or *vav* in modern Hebrew) may function as a vowel or a consonant, much like the English letter Y.

The letter Y can act as a consonant in the word “yellow,” or a vowel in the word “why.”

Depending on where the *yod* or *waw* is located in relation to the syllables, will determine whether it is going to be used as a vowel or a consonant.

If the *yod* or *waw* is at the beginning of a syllable, it will take the consonant sound. But if it is in the middle or the end of a syllable, it will take a vowel sound.

Here are some examples:

MoT (moat), meaning death. Notice that the *waw* is in the middle of the consonant, so it is a vowel.

ToRaH, meaning teachings, instructions, or law...has the *waw* at the end of the syllable, so it is also a vowel.

MiT-S-WoT (MiTS...WoT rhymes with boat), meaning commandment. Here the *waw* is at the beginning of the syllable, so it is a consonant.

DiN is the word for judge, the *yod* is in the middle of the syllable, so it is a vowel.

Ya-Wan, which is the Hebrew word for the land of Greece, *yod* and *waw* are consonants because they appear at the beginning of each syllable.

Ya-Do (Ya-Doh) means “his hand”

The *yod* is a consonant because it is at the beginning of a syllable and the *waw* is a vowel because it is at the end of a syllable.

At this point, it is possible to clear up a common misconception pertaining to the pronunciation of YHWH, in relation to the Hebrew name *Yehudah*, which is transliterated to *Judah* in English.

Many have noticed that the Hebrew letters in *Yehudah* and YHWH are identical, with the exception of the Hebrew letter *dalet*, or the “d” in English.

Notice how *Ye-Hu-Dah* clearly follows the Hebrew rules of pronunciation.

Ye-Hu-DaH

The *waw* (u) is at the end of the syllable, so it is a vowel, and the word ends with a closed syllable.

However, when we remove the “D” everything changes.

Ye-Hu-aH

Now we have three open syllables and no closed syllables.

To correct this according to the rules of Hebrew, the *waw* must move from the end of the second syllable, to the beginning of the last syllable.

Ye-H-WaH

And since the *waw* is now at the beginning of a syllable it must take the consonant form of “*wuh*.”

Now we have a consonant in the middle without a vowel, which is also not possible, so the H must move to the end of the first syllable.

YeH-WaH

This does not suggest that *YeH-WaH* is how YHWH would be pronounced because there is still more to consider regarding how Hebrew names work.

All we can prove so far is that the pronunciation cannot be *Ye-Hu-aH*.

All Hebrew names are Hebrew words.

Take *A-DaM* for example. *A-DaM* means man.

No-‘aH means “comfort,” and *Ha-WaH*, or Eve, means “living.”

All of these names come from Hebrew words that are nouns.

However, some Hebrew names are verbs.

Ya-‘a-QoB (yah-ah-kov) is Ya – ah – kov.

Notice here that the *yod* is at the beginning of a syllable and is a consonant, and the *waw* is in the middle of syllable and therefore a vowel.

This is a verb meaning “*He grabs the heel*.”

Some names can be multiple verbs or nouns.

The name *YiSh-Ma* - 'eL (yeesh ma el), or Ishmael, is the verb *YiSh-Ma*'. The Yi at the beginning of a verb means "he."

The verb "*shma*" means "hears."

Together, this means "he hears."

The 'eL at the end of the name literally means "mighty one" ...or often translated as God in the English.

Putting the verb and noun together we have "God hears."

Now that these rules have been established, we can apply such to YHWH.

YHWH can be broke down a couple ways to what we have looked at earlier.

The "v" represents a vowel.

YvH-WvH

or

Yv-Hv-WvH

The *yod* and the *waw* are both at the beginning of the syllables, and therefore will function as consonants.

So further analysis requires knowing what noun or verb consists of YHWH.

The only option available is the verb *ha-wah* (HWH), meaning "to exist."

The prefix of the *yod* carries the meaning of "he."

So YHWH means "he exists."

Now we need to determine the vowels that go into the word.

YHWH, as a verb, is never used in the TANAKH, there exists a closely related word, YHYH which conveniently also means "he exists."

It is found many times in the TANAKH. One example is in Genesis 1:29, where it is pronounced *YihYeh*.

Genesis 1:29

And God said, "Behold, I have (YiHYeH) given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food."

If we use those vowels in YHWH, we then have *YiHWeH*.

While the positions of the vowels are mostly defined by the rules of pronunciation, there are exceptions

to which vowels are used.

Therefore it is entirely possible that YHWH may have different vowels.

Some possible pronunciations are:

Yeh-WaH
Yah-WeH
YiH-WeH
Ye-Ha-Wah
Ye-He-Weh
Ye-Ho-Wah

...and many more possibilities.

Because Yahweh has the most evidence, and because it is a well-accepted scholarly position, 119 Ministries has adopted Yahweh as a possible, if not most likely, pronunciation of Y-H-W-H. We revealed some of the reasoning in part 2 of this series if you have not watched it already.

While YihWeh is a possibility and is founded on the verb used in His name, most already understand that Yah is likely the first syllable of our Creator's name.

For example, the Hebrew word Hallelu-Yah generally means "praise Yah."

The shortened form of Y-H-W-H as Yah is used about 50 times in the TANAKH, first occurring in a song in Exodus 15:2.

The names Jeremiah, Elijah, and Isaiah all contain Yah as a component of their name, relating back to our Creator's name.

So while the pronunciation of Yihweh may have served as a logical derivative of the verb that YHWH is based on, if the first syllable of Yih is replaced with the first syllable of His name as Yah, then what do we have?

Yihweh becomes Yahweh.

By simply using a combination of a form of the verb Yihweh along with Yah as the first syllable of His name given to us in multiple ways through multiple witnesses in the TANAKH, we generate Yahweh.

This is significant, because as covered in part 2 of this series, the pronunciation "Yahweh" agrees with Josephus and other Greek transliterations of the pronunciation of His name, which is evidence that is over 2,000 years old.

Whether the pronunciation of Yahweh is right or wrong, we do not know. It is not possible to know for certain. All we know is that no one can claim to know with 100% confidence either. There exists many educated guesses, such as *Yahowah*, or *Yahovah*, as other popular educated guess, which we will discuss later in this series.

Regardless, Yahweh appears to have the most evidence, and going with the most evidence is the best

that one can do on this subject.

These are just educated guesses based on facts we know about the Hebrew Language, and all of this holds up as long as the rules for the Hebrew language have been consistent throughout the language.

The only way to know the pronunciation for certain is if we actually had a recording during the time of Moses, which of course is not going to ever happen.

The only other answer to this dilemma is to wait for the return of Yeshua our Messiah, as he is certainly well equipped to sort this out for us.

This leads us back to some of the material we covered in the first teaching of the HaShem series.

Exodus 9:16

That my name (shem) may be declared throughout all the earth.

Some take this verse to mean that we should be correcting and rebuking others on how to pronounce YHWH based on our own understanding. However, as we illustrated, short of having an audio recording of Moses, no one can speak with 100% confidence as to the most valid pronunciation.

More importantly, the Hebrew word *shem*, translated as *name* in Exodus 9:16, does not mean what many assume it means.

Shem is the root of *Ne-She-Mah*, meaning breath.

In ancient Hebrew, our breath is more than just the air in our lungs, it is our character. It is what makes you...you.

This is why Hebrew names are also words. These words often reflected in the character of that individual.

To further illustrate this, let's read Numbers 6:24-26:

Numbers 6:24-26

YHWH bless you and keep you;
YHWH make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
YHWH lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

These are all characteristics of YHWH. They are the *shem* of YHWH.

Now let's read the next verse keeping character in mind.

Numbers 6:27

So shall they put my name (character) upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.

By YHWH meaning "He exists" ...YHWH is simply stating in Exodus 9:16 that there will be a day in which all will know that He exists, that His authority and character, or *shem*, will be known by all.

Exodus 9:16 has nothing to do with the pronunciation of His name.

Yet, even if someone wanted to make Exodus 9:16 all about the pronunciation, it must be realized that such is reserved for a future time, in which our Messiah Yeshua will make obsolete all of these pronunciation debates void and worthless. It is not currently possible to know for certain the pronunciation.

So when some adamantly correct and rebuke others about the pronunciation of YHWH, or to us Yahweh, even to the point of making it a salvational issue, is it the character that is being taught?

Is that individual creating unity, in the Body, or creating chaos?

Just something to consider.

We pray that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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