

THE TETRAGRAMMATON

What is the name of God? Dr. G Hunt, author of the book "*Beware This Cult*" quotes, "***There is considerable evidence to suggest that his name is, in fact, pronounced Yahweh***". This remark was made in reference to the Jehovah Witness' use of the name "Jehovah" for God's name. Based on in-depth research of the name "Yahweh", the serious Bible scholar would come to an opposite view than Dr. Hunt. In actual fact, there is no agreement on the correct spelling or the pronunciation of God's name by the foremost Jewish scholars or theologians.

The word tetragrammaton, comes from the Greek "tetragrammon", which means "*a word of four letters*". The tetragrammaton refers to the four consonants of the sacred Hebrew name of God, which has been written in several ways when using English characters: **YHWH, JHVH, YHVH, IHVH, JHWH**. Moses Maimonides, the famous Hebrew Rabbi, physician and philosopher (1135-1204) writes in his book "*The Guide For The Perplexed*", Chapter LXI of Part I: "**It is well known that all the names of God occurring in Scriptures are derived from His actions, except one, namely, the tetragrammaton, which consists of the four letters, *yod, he, vau* and *he* [ie.YHVH]. This name is applied exclusively to God, and is on that account called *Shem ha-meforash*, 'The nomen proprium.' It is the distinct and exclusive designation of the Divine Being...**" Maimonides further states in the same chapter: "**...even the name *Adonay*, 'Lord', which has been substituted for the Tetragrammaton, is derived from the appallative 'lord'.... The derivation of the name, consisting of *yod, he, vau* and *he* is not positively known, the word having no additional signification. This sacred name, which, as you know, was not pronounced except in the sanctuary by the appointed priests, when they gave the sacerdotal blessing, and by the high priest on the Day of Atonement, undoubtedly denotes something which is peculiar to God, and is not found in any other being ... the majesty of the name and the great dread of uttering it, are connected with the fact that it denotes God Himself, without including in its meaning any names of the things created by Him ... No other name is called *shem ha-meforash* except this Tetragrammaton, which is written, but is not pronounced according to its letters." Underlining added for emphasis.**

What we establish from the writings of Maimonides is that the Tetragrammaton is not pronounced according to its letters. It is an established fact that the Hebrews discontinued the indications of the vowels in describing the name of God and eventually the original pronunciation became irretrievably lost.

The two revised versions of the American (1901) and English (1885) Bibles used the word "**Jehovah**" for the Tetragrammaton. They did this by

adding the vowels from the word "**Adonai**" to the Tetragrammaton Y-H-V-H. The English translators anglicized it, so that the first vowel of the **A-O-A** became an "**E**". However, there was no authority from any scriptural source for the vowels to be used from the word Adonai to arrive at this name Jehovah.

The Tetragrammaton, as previously stated, refers to the four (4) consonants of the Hebrew name of God. The vowels that were to be used with the consonants were made up of small markings, which are called points. These small vowel points do not appear with the consonants '**YHVH**' form in modern Hebrew, thus resulting in the loss of the original pronunciation of God's name. The reason given by Jewish scholars for removing the points was the Hebrews considered the name too sacred for them to speak so they discontinued using the vowel points.

A few theologians say that 'Yahweh' (using the consonants YHWH) is the correct term to use, but others will only say they believe Yahweh to likely be closer to the proper pronunciation. In reality, no one can be sure of what vowel points should be used. Thus, most scholars and theologians refrain from positively stating any form of pronunciation for the Tetragrammaton consonants with interpolated vowel points.

The summation of this study on whether God's holy name is 'Yahweh' is no one knows for certain what the subtracted vowel points are, thus, we cannot know what the original pure Hebrew pronunciation would be in utterance. All that we know is that the four letters (Tetragrammaton) are *yod, he, vau* and *he*.

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