

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **HaShem – Part 4: Yehovah**

In our HaShem series, we have already revealed some possible pronunciations of the Tetragrammaton; a couple that we may agree with, one being Yahweh, and the other being Yihweh. If you have watched our teachings, you may note that we do favor Yahweh in pronunciation, at least, for now. Does this mean we believe that pronunciation to be 100% definite? No, that pronunciation has its own set of fair criticisms.

In our attempt to do the best we are able, we are still, at this time, favoring Yahweh. That of course is always subject to change as there is no shortage of study and passion from all sides on this subject. Because we will often refer back to previously covered material, we hope that you have already watched the previous parts of the HaShem series. If you have not, please consider doing so before proceeding.

In this part of the HaShem series, we are going to closely examine the pronunciation Yehovah, and for whatever it is worth, share some our concerns for those who might take interest.

#### **YEHOVAH AS THE LEAST LIKELY VALID PRONUNCIATION**

While Yehovah has been on our list of possible pronunciations of the name, after further study, we have come to the conclusion that Yehovah is perhaps the least likely possible pronunciation. We have come to realize that both Yehovah and Yehovih are possibly the only two pronunciations that have overwhelming evidence against their validity, regardless if one favors the *waw* or the *vav*. If one favors the *waw*, the pronunciations would be Yeh-ho-wah and Yeh-ho-wee. Yet our concerns would still be just the same.

That may be a little frustrating for some to hear. There is currently a massive promotion underway that suggests that the pronunciation debate is over. How exciting indeed that would be if that was true. However, the most esteemed Hebrew language scholars are not buying it despite the supposed evidences.

The pronunciation of Yehovah has been growing in popularity because of the passion and promotion behind it. We have been watching the debate with interest for years. For those that have watched our *vav*

versus *waw* presentation earlier in this series, it should be understood that we do favor the *waw* versus the *vav*.

### **We will be dominantly using the *vav*, not the *waw*, in this teaching.**

Because most proponents of Yehovah subscribe to the *vav* instead of the *waw*, we will also simply use the *vav* rendering to produce Yehovah in this teaching only for the purpose of simplicity and avoiding the awkward redundancy of having to continuously state both the *waw* and the *vav* pronunciations.

For those who subscribe to Yehovah, please be aware, we encourage all to study out this subject the best that one is able. Scholars are still unsettled on this topic. We should be patient with one another as we all attempt to work toward the same goal. If one is hard set on the Yehovah pronunciation, who are we to argue? There are numerous Hebrew experts that are more than willing to express their disagreement and reasoning. We are only offering our perspective for whatever that is worth, and our perspective is derived from closely examining the research on all sides.

Before we dive deep into the promoted support for Yehovah, we feel it necessary to cover some foundational material.

### **Why is there a pronunciation debate?**

Before the middle ages, with a few exceptions, Hebrew was not written with vowels. When Hebrew text was read, the vowels were inserted by the reader, because they knew which vowel sounds were to be included with every word. Because Jewish populations were gradually adopting languages of their surrounding cultures, an interest in inserting the vowels in the text to preserve spoken Hebrew grew paramount. A Jewish group called the Masoretes took on this task. One of their outputs of such work was the Aleppo Codex in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, which inserted vowel markings in the Hebrew text. Unfortunately, a great deal of this codex was destroyed in a fire. A similar complete Masorete codex was found that was supposedly copied from the Aleppo Codex. That codex is called the Leningrad Codex.

In these manuscripts, the vowels inserted into the Tetragrammaton were not consistent. There are several variations of the spellings of the name. Remember that, because it is important.

The Jews adopted the ineffable name doctrine long before the work of the Masoretes. The ineffable name doctrine restricted the name from being said. Evidence of the beginnings of this practice existed about 300 years prior to Yeshua and eventually became the dominant position on the pronunciation of the name. The ineffable doctrine restricted the name from being said. The ineffable doctrine combined with the multiple spellings of the name in the manuscripts with vowel pointings, has generally led most scholars to believe that knowing how to pronounce the name has been lost. At minimum, it's rather difficult, if not impossible, to absolutely prove how to correctly pronounce the name. That position has not changed.

This is also important. The source of the pronunciation, Yehovah, is directly from the Aleppo and Leningrad codices. However, Yehovah is simply one of several spellings found in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.

## **MASORETES TETRAGRAMMATON PRONUNCIATIONS - EENY MEENY MINY MOE**

Why are there multiple spellings of the name in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices?

In order to answer this, we need to discuss a scribal practice called *ketiv qere*.

The Masoretes invented a system of marginal notations called “*ketiv*” (kay-teev), which means “*what is written*” and “*qere*” (ker-eh) which means “*what is to be read*.”

This well-known reading system served a purpose. At some point in history, rabbis adopted the ineffable name doctrine. This doctrine taught that the Tetragrammaton should not ever be pronounced.

Because it is against the ineffable name doctrine to say the name, the Masoretes then had a problem in attempting to insert vowels into the TANAKH.

If they were to insert vowels into the Tetragrammaton they would inadvertently not only enable others to once again say the name, but perhaps also even cause it as the Scriptures were read.

The best way to avoid this is to use the perpetual *ketiv/qere* method.

This system would write a word one way and then indicate that it was to be read a different way.

As mentioned before, there are several different spellings of the name in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices. Transliterated they would be:

Yehvih (Yehwih) as Yēhwih & Yəhwih  
Yehovih (Yehowih) as Yēhōwih & Yəhōwih  
Yehvah (Yehwah) as Yəhwāh  
Yehovah (Yehovah) as Yəhōwāh

It is nearly universally agreed upon by Hebrew scholars that the vowel markings in the Tetragrammaton in the Masoretic codices are intended to be a perpetual *ketiv/qere*.

Here are a couple of esteemed Hebrew scholars that subscribe the usage of *ketiv/qere* for the Tetragrammaton include:

Professor Steven E. Fassberg, Ph.D  
*Professor and Scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*  
*Dead Sea Scrolls Expert*

and

Professor Emmanuel Tov Ph.D  
*Professor and Scholar at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem*  
*Dead Sea Scrolls and Septuagint Expert*  
*Recipient of the Emet Prize and Israel Prize in Biblical studies and research*

That would mean that these Hebrew scholars, just as most Hebrew scholars, would not agree with arbitrarily selecting one pronunciation from these codices as valid, such as Yehovah, out of the list of the different hide-the-name pronunciations that are found in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices.

This Tetragrammaton vowel pointing list really boils down to two similar spellings. Yehvih is the shortened or abbreviated form of Yehovih. Yehvah is the shortened form of Yehovah.

Most Hebrew scholars suggest that in using *qere perpetuum*, that Yehvih/Yehovih points to saying *Elohim*, and that Yehvah/Yehovah points to saying *Adonai*.

The reason for the two different approaches is simple. Sometimes the Scriptures could read YHVH Elohim, and other times it could read YHVH Adonai. In the instances of YHVH Elohim, they would insert vowel pointers indicating one should read Adonai Elohim. In the instances of YHVH Adonai, they would insert vowel pointers indicating one should read Elohim Adonai. This method prevented the reader from awkwardly saying Elohim Elohim, or Adonai Adonai, which would be blatantly redundant and silly.

It is universally agreed that the different spellings for the name in the Masorete texts were intended to hide the name. There is no other possible reason that several different spellings were offered.

Now, this is important.

In order to hide something, what is the one thing that must be true?

Answer: in order to hide something, you have to have it.

You cannot hide something that you do not have.

We do not know of any credible Hebrew scholar that disagrees that Masoretes were intentionally trying to hide the name by employing several different spellings.

This means that Yehvih is hiding the name, not revealing it.

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This means that Yehvah is hiding the name, not revealing it.

This means that Yehovah is hiding the name, not revealing it.

So, any spelling of the Tetragrammaton that appears in the Leingrad/Allepo codices is actually evidence against them being valid pronunciations.

So, why have some selected Yehovah out of the list of spellings that the Masoretes used to hide the name?

Yehvah/Yehovah are the most common occurrences in the Leningrad/Allepo codices.

Because of this, Yehovah with the fuller vowel pointing, has become the most popular pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton. This the same methodology that the Jehovah's (Yehovah's) Witnesses used to adopt the naming of their theology back in 1931. So...nothing new.

Consequently, there are many known Jewish letters and manuscripts written after the Leningrad/Allepo

codices that select Yehovah as the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton.

This is not much different than how many today believe that the Messiah's name is Jesus instead of Yeshua, only because it is written so many times as such. Ask a modern Christian pastor what the name of their Messiah is, and they will likely respond with Jesus, because that is what their Bible says. Ask a Hebrew speaking Jew a couple centuries after the creation of the Leningrad/Aleppo codices were created on how to say our Creator's name, and they might say Yehovah, because that is the longer form of the dominant spelling found in the TANAKH. Consequently, historical Jewish manuscripts can be found that cite Yehovah as the name, but only AFTER the Leningrad and Aleppo codices were written, NOT before.

There is one particular Hebrew scholar that is leading a quest to find many of these manuscripts that cite the Yehovah spelling. But, it does not matter how many of these are found, because every source of Yehovah being used in said manuscripts are sourced from and after the Leningrad/Aleppo codices. So all manuscripts that contain Yehovah, are due to the source of the Leningrad and Aleppo codices.

Such manuscripts are simply regurgitating a common spelling found in the vowel pointing of the Masoretes. Thus, if the Masoretes spellings are not valid pronunciations, then all manuscripts containing Tetragrammaton spellings citing those codices are also invalid.

Evidence is only as good as its source.

Let us say that again because it is important.

Evidence is only as good as its source.

So allow us to explain that problem more clearly. If the source of Yehovah is just one of many pronunciations found in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices, and the pronunciations found Leningrad/Aleppo codices are a known mechanism in the agenda to keep the name hidden, then there is nothing to be excited about. In fact, it is to be expected and nothing more groundbreaking than the Jehovah's Witness process that we entertained maybe one hundred or so years ago. Today, we just simply have more of the same.

If we were to print more English bibles with the name, Jesus, does that make the name of our Messiah as Jesus any more valid? Of course not. But we would have more evidence, right? No.

All spellings of the Messiah's name as Jesus, all go back to the King James Version bible. Likewise, all spellings of Yehovah go back to the Masoretes Leningrad and Aleppo codices.

Again, all of these sources point back to the original spelling(s) found in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices. So, it does not matter if we find 100, 1,000, or 10,000 historical manuscripts using Yehovah or any other pronunciation found in the Masorete texts.

It is universally agreed that the authors of the Leningrad/Aleppo codices were attempting to hide the true pronunciation of the name. There is no other explanation as to why they would use multiple pronunciations if that were not the case.

As mentioned earlier, in order to hide something, one must have it.

So we would agree that the authors of the Leningrad/Allepo codices did, at least at one time, know the pronunciation of the name. Their goal was to hide the name in its entirety. To hide it, they had to know it. The multiple spellings that they offered were a natural consequence of that agenda.

Because of this agenda, we would strongly reason that none of the spellings in the Leningrad/Allepo codices reflect an accurate pronunciation of the name. Their goal was not to allow anyone to say the name, or even to write it. Thus, it can be reasonably concluded that none of the spellings in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices can be accurate pronunciations.

Yehvah/Yehovah and Yehviah/Yehoviah would all be the least likely pronunciations out of all existing theories because these only exist as an invention in order to serve the hiding of the name, not the exposing of the name.

### **THE YEHOVAH AS AN ACCIDENT IMPOSSIBILITY**

It is sometimes said that the "o" was accidentally inserted into Yehvah to form Yehovah, thus revealing the spelling of the name.

There is no proof of this and would be contradictory to the painstaking error proofing methods employed by Hebrew scribes over thousands of years.

In addition. Yehviah also has a form that occasionally inserts an "o" making it no different than the "o" inserted occasionally in Yehvah.

Yet, few are arguing that Yehoviah has an "o" accidentally inserted into it. Is it not interesting that in the codices Yehvah has a version with an "o" forming Yehovah, AND Yehviah also has a version with an "o" forming Yehoviah...but supposedly the "o" in Yehovah was an accident that occurred nearly 50 times and is somehow more important than Yehoviah?

Yet, that is what is being said.

This is why it is well understood that Yehviah and Yehvah are simply shortened forms of Yehoviah and Yehovah, which are also presented in the codices. Both Yehviah and Yehvah, both offer an option of an "o".

Because some have been forced to be academically honest and admit that scribes would not have allowed a mistake of accidentally revealing the pronunciation of the name, it is also sometimes said that the placement of the "o" in Yehvah (creating Yehovah) in the codices is perhaps intentional.

This can be quickly dismissed because intentionally placing a correct pronunciation in the codices would lead others (even Gentiles) to occasionally pronounce the name.

This would be a massive offense to their faulty understanding of what it means to profane the name and completely contradictory to their agenda.

They are not going to hide the name by *giving* the name. How would that even make sense? Also, this would not afford any explanation as to why Yehovah is the supposedly the correct pronunciation and why Yehoviah is not, when both longer form spellings are present in both codices.

Like the Jehovah's Witnesses, a subscription to Yehvah/Yehovah is apparently simply discarded over Yehvih/Yehovih, only because of its slight dominance in the texts.

This is where it gets very interesting.

So, if the authors of the Leningrad/Aleppo codices were attempting to hide the name, in which nearly every Hebrew scholar agrees, then it is interesting to note which possible Tetragrammaton prefix and suffix they never used in their attempt to hide the name.

They never used "Yah" or "weh." You will never find those two present in any vowel pointing Hebrew manuscript in reference to the Tetragrammaton. Ever.

Again, the prefix "Yah" is never used with vowel pointings for the Tetragrammaton, and the suffix "weh" is never used with vowel pointings for the Tetragrammaton.

The prefix "yeh" is used, and the suffixes "vih" (wih) and "vah" (wah), but interestingly enough, not Yah and vey, or "Yah" and "veh." Yah-veh or Yah-wey is then not offered in any form directly connected to the Tetragrammaton in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices.

Is that bad for the Yahweh pronunciation? No, actually, quite the opposite.

There is a reason for this. If you are going to hide the name, you are not going to use any part of the true pronunciation in your attempt to hide it. You don't hide something by telling someone where it is! You hide something by actually not revealing it, any of it!

By process of elimination of the prefix and suffix they did not use, a spelling left standing is Yah-weh.

Interestingly enough, as mentioned previously in this series, this also agrees with historical witnesses and evidences that date far prior to the more modern and recent Leningrad/Aleppo codices.

However, if Yah-weh actually occurred in the Leningrad/Aleppo codices, then that would be ample evidence against Yah-weh and we would have to discard it as a possibility.

But, since Yah-weh does not occur in Hebrew manuscripts with Masoretes vowel pointings and because multiple ancient Greek transliterations do support it, such a pronunciation still falls into the camp of being most likely. Consistent with the idea that Yehovah is an invention of the Masoretes as a means to hide the name, we also do not see any ancient Greek transliterations evidencing such a pronunciation of Yehovah.

Does that prove the Yahweh pronunciation? No. We would suggest that anyone claiming to "know" the pronunciation is misguided and divisive, doing more damage than good. All theories on the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton are educated theories.

Because we can reasonably assume that the Masoretes knew how to pronounce the name, and that their clear agenda was to hide the name, then the following pronunciations are the only possible pronunciations with overwhelming evidence against them. Those would be:

Yehvih (Yehwih) as Yēhwih & Yəhwih  
Yehovih (Yehowih) as Yēhōwih & Yəhōwih

Yehvah (Yehwah) as Yəhwāh  
Yehovah (Yehovah) as Yəhōwāh

The topic of pronouncing the name is one of the most attention-grabbing topics that exists in the faith, and to some, that is appealing. If a teacher is not recognizing the fact that we cannot prove the pronunciation of the name, then that is a cause for concern.

Yes, we all want to know without a doubt on how to pronounce the name, and some day we will. Scripture declares it. But that time has not yet arrived.

While we respect and admire those who step out and reveal their opinion, keep in mind, that the best minds and most educated in the Hebrew language, with access to all of the supposed evidences of each position, have not arrived to any conclusive position. To us, for whatever it is worth, that is the respectable position, which is no definitive position.

## **THE JOSEPHUS CONTRADICTION**

As discussed earlier in this series, Josephus mentions that written on head piece of the high priest was the four vowels of the Tetragrammaton.

Josephus knew the letters of the Tetragrammaton. And it is generally believed that given who Josephus was, he likely knew how to pronounce the Tetragrammaton accurately.

Josephus was a first-century Romano-Jewish scholar and historian who was born in Jerusalem. He was born to a father of priestly descent and a mother who claimed royal ancestry.

Josephus referred to the name as four vowels.

*“A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue ribbon, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraven the sacred name [of the Almighty]: it consists of four vowels.”*

The War of the Jews, Book 5. 5. 7.

Most are not so bold to say that the first century Jewish historian with priestly ties did not know how to pronounce our Creator’s name.

The problem for Yehovah here is that Josephus says that the name is four vowels...well, Yehovah has three vowels. That is a big problem for the Yehovah pronunciation.

So, what Yehovah proponents have suggested is that Josephus was referring to the ancient Greek phonetic transliteration of the pronunciation of the name...which were also four vowels.

IAUA (iota, alpha, upsilon, alpha)...pronounced Yahweh.

We don’t see how this solves their problem. This would have Josephus agreeing that the pronunciation of the name is Yahweh. Yahweh is not the same pronunciation as Yehovah.

Either way, the Josephus testimony hundreds and hundreds of years before the first appearance of



Yehovah is just one of the major damaging evidences against Yehovah.  
There is more to consider.

While IAUA (Yahweh) is certainly a known ancient pronunciation of the name by those in the faith preserved in the Greek, was it the Greek version of the name that was written on the head piece of the high priest?

How many actually believe that Greek letters, instead of Hebrew letters, were written on the head piece of the high priest?

Hopefully not many.

Josephus stated the letters that are engraved on the golden crown of the high priest.

The letters that are engraved on the crown of the high priest are Hebrew letters, not Greek letters.

Josephus was saying that the Hebrew Tetragrammaton for the name consists of four Hebrew vowels. But wait, Hebrew doesn't have any vowels, right? Wrong.

Such sounds strange to our ears today, because we have always been told that the Tetragrammaton is four consonants and that the vowels are missing and everyone runs around trying to "find" the missing vowels.

That just might not be exactly necessary.

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it was discovered that sometimes the *yod*, *he*, *waw* and sometimes the *aleph*, were used as vowel pointers in ancient Hebrew manuscripts.

That is rather interesting, that each letter of the Tetragrammaton was also used as a vowel in ancient Hebrew.

While the Dead Sea Scrolls are rather ancient and compelling, as most manuscripts are over 2,000 years old, the discovery of the Lachish Letters, dated to about 600 B.C.E., further validates the *yod*, *he*, and *waw* being used as vowels in ancient Hebrew.

That was over 2,600 years ago.

While the occasional use of a consonant as a vowel can be seen quite early in the inscriptions, at this point, the nature of the language the *'aleph* א, *he* ה, *yod* י, and *waw* ו were used as vowels not only occasionally at the ends of words but frequently and even in the middle of words to help the reader understand how to pronounce the words.

For example the Hebrew word for "man" אִישׁ *'ish* is written with the *yod* in lines 9-10.

Though there were not yet vowels written for every syllable, what this meant for readers of the Bible is that the common spellings in Hebrew at this point included not just the consonants of the words, but in some places there were vowels written also. This made understanding the text and reading out loud easier. This helps us as well when we take Josephus into account.

Treating the Tetragrammaton as vowels, as according to Josephus, their vocalization would be like this:

Yod = ee

He = ah

Waw = oo

He = eh

As a final letter, he in a feminine name would receive an “ah” sound, but in a masculine name it is often an “eh”

In sounding out these four vowels, ee-ah-oo-eh, the first two, ee-ah, are equivalent to the syllable Yah. The last two, oo-eh, are equal to the syllable “weh”.

When all vowels are pronounced together, it sounds like ee-ah-oo-eh, or Yahweh.

The Greek transliteration also resembled this pronunciation as I-A-U-E, pronounced as Yahweh.

So, whether Josephus was referring to the Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton as being four vowels, or referring to the Greek letters of the Tetragrammaton as being four vowels...guess what...they are both pronounced as Yahweh.

Yahweh does not even sound close to Yehovah. In fact, it is not even the same number of syllables. Both the Hebrew Tetragrammaton as vowels, or the Greek Tetragrammaton as vowels, are both just two syllables.

How many syllables is Yeh-o-vah?

Three.

Three is not the same as two.

The pronunciation witness of Josephus, which was penned hundreds and hundreds of years prior to the first manuscript that ever contained Yehovah, is alarming evidence against Yehovah as a valid pronunciation.

## **THE HEBREW GRAMMAR PROBLEM**

Another way that we know that the vowels included with the Tetragrammaton in the Aleppo and Leningrad Codices are not the actual vowels for the Sacred Name is by considering a particular rule of Hebrew grammar. If you aren't familiar with Hebrew grammar, this can be a little technical, but we'll try to simplify this as best that as we can.

First, in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton is *Yod*. And the first vowel in the Tetragrammaton attached to the letter *Yod* is *sheva*. In Hebrew, you have prepositions—such as “from” or “to” or “in”—that are attached to Hebrew words. And in Hebrew grammar, whenever an inseparable preposition is attached to a word beginning with the letter *Yod* that has a *sheva* vowel attached to it, the *sheva* vowel is dropped. And also, the vowel attached to the inseparable preposition—*chiriq*—is then combined with the *Yod*.

We can see this with the Hebrew word for “Jerusalem,” *Yerushalayim*. Here is how the word is spelled with the vowels in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices:



*yerushalayim* / “Jerusalem”

Notice the *sheva* vowel under the *Yod*, which is the same vowel that is attached to the *Yod* in the Tetragrammaton. Now, here is what *Yerushalayim* looks like when the inseparable preposition “from” is attached to it as we find it in 2 Samuel 15:11:

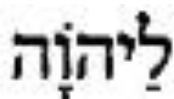


*myerushalayim* / “from Jerusalem”

As you can see, the *sheva* under the *Yod* is dropped and then combined with the *chiriq* vowel under the letter *Mem*, which forms the preposition. In the over 200 times that a preposition is attached to the word *Yerushalayim*, this grammatical rule is applied—the *sheva* is dropped and the *Yod* combines with the *chiriq* vowel of the attached preposition.

What’s interesting is that this grammatical rule not only applies to *Yerushalayim*, but every Hebrew word that begins with a *Yod* and has a *sheva* as its vowel. Therefore, if the *sheva* attached to the *Yod* in the Tetragrammaton is in fact the actual vowel and not a *ketiv-qere*, as we have proposed, this same rule would be followed. But what do we see when an inseparable preposition is attached to the Tetragrammaton? Something very telling...

In every instance where an inseparable preposition is attached to the Tetragrammaton, the *sheva* is dropped, but not once does the *Yod* combine with a *chiriq* vowel of the preposition. Rather, instead of *chiriq*, the *patach* vowel is used. Here is an example of this as we have it in Exodus 13:12:



“to YHWH”

As you can see, the *Yod* combines with the *patach* vowel under the *lamed* that forms the preposition “to.” This occurs every time when an inseparable preposition is attached to the Tetragrammaton—a *patach* vowel, not a *chiriq*, is attached to the preposition. Here are four more passages in which this occurs so you can see for yourself:

- Leviticus 23:34
- Jeremiah 3:23
- Jeremiah 4:4
- Ezekiel 46:13

But as we have said, if the actual vowel under the *Yod* is a *sheva*, as argued by proponents of the “Yehovah” pronunciation, this shouldn’t happen. A *chiriq*, not a *patach*, is the vowel that should be attached to the inseparable preposition. Thus, the first vowel of the Tetragrammaton is not *sheva* according to the rules of Hebrew grammar.

But wait! There’s more! Not only does this prove that the first vowel of the Tetragrammaton is not *sheva*, but it in fact confirms our argument: the scribes were using a *ketiv-qere*. Whenever an inseparable preposition is attached to a word beginning with a guttural letter, the *patach* vowel is attached to the letter that forms the preposition. *Yod* is not a guttural letter, but *aleph* is. *Aleph* is the first letter of *Adonai*. Therefore, the scribes were intending the reader to say “*Adonai*” by attaching the *patach* vowel to the inseparable preposition. If they intended the reader to say “Yehovah,” they would have attached a *chiriq*, not a *patach*.

This is conclusive proof that the Masorete scribes were using a *ketiv-qere* and not teaching us the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton.

As it pertains to the position of Yehovah, interestingly enough, the prevailing Jewish Hebrew language scholar position is that it is one of the few pronunciations that actually cannot be correct.

## **TO PRONOUNCE OR NOT TO PRONOUNCE?**

Does that mean we should not try to understand how to pronounce His name?

While we understand the reasoning of those who subscribe to such a position, we don’t think so. We do not take issue with pronouncing the name in the way one believes it to possibly be pronounced.

Like a child learning how to speak and learn his own father’s name, our Creator intentionally placed and revealed his name to us nearly 7,000 times in the TANAKH. We are his children and we believe he smiles in our interest to attempt to not only understand, but attempt to speak it. Those of you with children understand this. Someday, we will all be equipped with certainty on this topic, and until then, let’s all do the best we are able with the reasoning afforded to us. However, to those who decide to not even attempt to pronounce the name, we certainly do understand and respect that reasoning.

Despite the material covered in this teaching, we know and understand that some will be adamant about the Yehovah pronunciation. We would like to make clear that we believe that a person should pronounce the name as their studies lead them to say it.

This is one of those teachings that many may strongly disagree with. As we have said in the past, if you watch 119 Ministries teachings long enough, eventually there will be something that we say that is disagreeable to you or perhaps even offends you. The only way for us to avoid anyone disagreeing with us or not offending others is for us to stop producing teachings. Instead, when it comes to this topic and other hot button topics like this, we need to encourage healthy and kind discussions with all in the faith. We are all going to be spending eternity together, so, let’s be kind to each other, so that we do not have to spend eternity apologizing to one another. There is always the more pressing matter, which is our focus, bringing others into the faith, and teaching others how to walk it out the best that we are able.

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

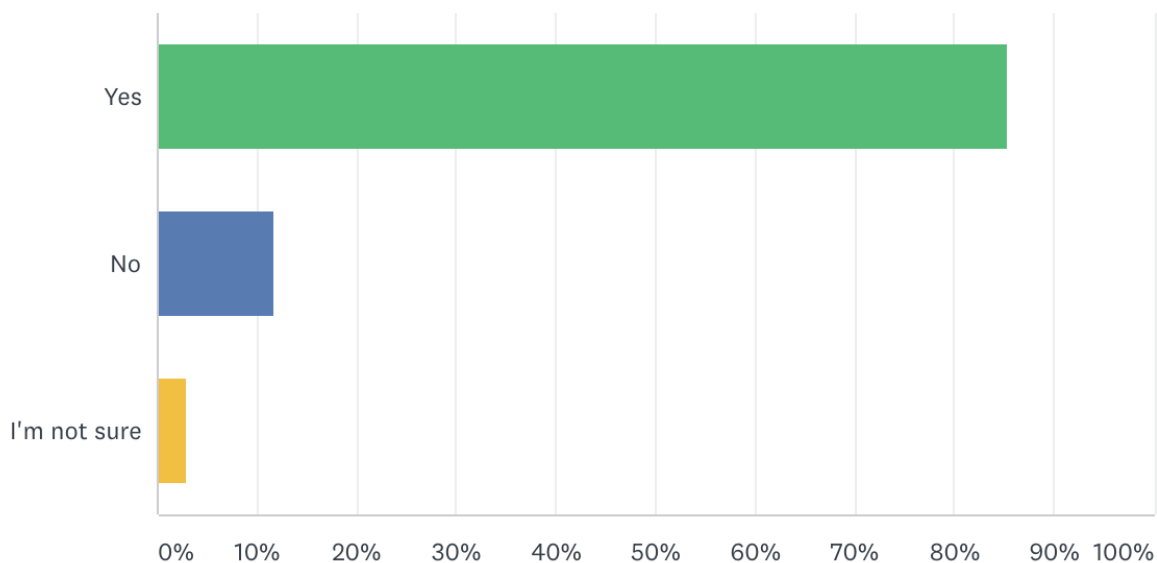
Controversial topics and teachings often produce questions. Questions are good. It shows that people are interested in learning from each other and are engaged. How horrible would it be if teachings did not cause discussion and questions?

While we have suggested a couple of possibilities on the pronouncing of the name in this series, we have not formed a teaching to extrapolate on all of the data points that would form and reveal the pronunciation examples we have offered. We have not found a pronunciation that does not have some possible valid criticisms.

More importantly, as our Hashem Series teachings on the subject indicate from the beginning, it is our understanding that we cannot state with high confidence on how to pronounce the name today.

We really only have high confidence on examples on how the name is not pronounced.

Normally the agreement rate of 119 teachings range from about 70-80%, depending on the subject matter. Because of its controversial and its emotion triggering nature, we expected the agreement rate for this teaching subject to be on the lower end, if not below average. We were surprised to actually see the agreement rate to be above 80%.



Regardless of the high agreement rate, like other controversial subjects and teachings we have released in the past, it is often helpful to follow up with any subsequent questions we receive.

We would like to take an opportunity to briefly answer some of the questions we have received specific to the material covered in this teaching.

**Do you believe that God is powerful enough to preserve His Holy Name in His Holy Word for His Holy People, to whom He committed the oracles of God?**

Absolutely. His name (shem), meaning character or authority, is most certainly preserved in the Word ([see Hashem Part 1](#)). Whether He preserved it or not in pronunciation is another matter entirely.

While all understanding and proclaiming His name is certainly important to our Creator, the timing of this occurring is through His timing, not ours

To assume that any lack of clarity on how to pronounce His name is due to some deficiency in the power of God is to assume we fully understand God's plan and timing with the world recognizing and proclaiming His name.

We are not so bold to declare we fully understand God's mind on this matter. We also would be concerned with any suggestion of any lack of absolute clarity on how to pronounce the Name should be interpreted as a mark against the power of God.

We have peace and confidence in knowing, that someday, according to the prophets, at our Messiah's return, that His name will be proclaimed by all, when He causes it to happen, not us.

**This teaching claims that the Aleppo codex is the oldest manuscript using the Yehovah spellings. Would it not be more accurate to state that the Cairo Codex of the Prophets (Codex Cairensis), written by Moshe Ben Asher in the year 895AD, would have been the first?**

No, not likely. While that may have been understood to be true at one time, and we considered this, there is now compelling data that suggests a dating of the 11th century is more likely.

The more accurate dating of the 11<sup>th</sup> century would place the Cairo Codex of the Prophets well after the Aleppo and Leningrad codices. Because of this, we are confident of our statements in our teaching Hashem - Part 4.

**The Hebrew University Bible Project: Ezekiel, p.xli, note 116:** *"It was recently proven conclusively that the scribe and the naqdan (vocaliser) of the Cairo Prophets codex cannot be identified as Moshe Ben-Asher, and cannot be dated to 895 but rather to the 11th century CE. Cf. M. Beit-Arié et al., Codices Hebraicis litteris exarati quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes (Monumenta palaeographica medii aevi. Series Hebraica; Paris/Jerusalem: Brepols, 1997) 25-29; D. Lyons, The Cumulative Masora: Text, Form and Transmission (Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press, 1999 [4]-7 (Hebrew).*

**How is it known that it was prohibited to write the Name correctly?**

The usage of the perpetual ketiv/qere for the tetragrammaton would be more than sufficient evidence. We would recommend consulting highly accomplished peer reviewed Jewish/Hebrew scholars. To assist in this quest, we might suggest the following:

Professor Steven E. Fassberg, Ph.D, Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
Professor Emanuel Tov Ph.D, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

In the world of Hebrew scholarship, there are scholars, and there are super scholars. Both Fassberg and Tov would qualify as super-scholars. For example, Emanuel Tov's accomplishments in the field of Biblical Hebrew have placed him in the top 0.5% in the world.

Any suggestion by any individual that the Masoretes did not employ *ketiv/qere* in writing out the tetragrammaton would leave these scholars, and similarly accomplished scholars, absolutely stunned and not worthy of such a proponent of being taken seriously.

For example, a response from Fassberg related to his thoughts on Yehovah yielded the following:

*The pronunciation you mentioned is a mistake. The Hebrew consonantal text is YHWH and no one really knows how that was pronounced in Old Testament times. At a later date (the latter half of 2nd millennium CE) Masoretes added vowel signs to the consonantal text. Whenever the Tetragrammaton was written, they added the vowel signs of the word "adonay", which means "My Lord" - there was a taboo on pronouncing the Divine name and one was supposed to read the word "adonay - my Lord." Much later some started reading the vowel signs together with YHWH and came up with the nonsensical word Jehovah (Yehovah).*

As another example, Emmanuel Tov mentioning that the Masoretes used a "perpetual Qere" in reference to the tetragrammaton:

The employment of "*kuvrio*" in that translation for the Tetragrammaton probably reflects the same custom that was later **reflected in the Masoretic "perpetual Qere."**

<http://www.emanueltov.info/docs/papers/14.KetivQ.tue2008.pdf?v=1.0>  
(Accessed 04/08/18)

The world's top Hebrew peer reviewed super-scholars would agree that the presence of Yehvih, Yehovih, Yehvah, and Yehovah spellings in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices are not pronunciations, but instead, *ketiv/qere*.

So while we cannot definitively prove how to pronounce the name of our Creator, we can declare with confidence that Yehvih, Yehovih, Yehvah, and Yehovah are all eliminated as valid possibilities.

**There are some today mass promoting an idea that the Aleppo and Leningrad codices actually contains the name of our Creator due to several instances of scribal error. It is then taught that if the tetragrammaton is written as a scribal error that the name cannot be blotted out. It is supposedly through this process that the correct pronunciation of the name was revealed many times in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices and is consequently available to us today. How would you respond to this claim?**

This is a good question. We presented this question to Emanuel Tov, PhD of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He then instructed us to contact Jordan S. Penkower, PhD at Bar-Ilan University as perhaps the world's most equipped individual to be able to answer such a question.

Here is the response by Jordan S. Penkower, PhD.

*In the Middle Ages, we find two options:*

*(1) the scribe drew a rectangle around the Tetragrammaton, to signify its erasure, and then wrote the correct word above it, or in the margin.*

*(2) the scribe cut out the Tetragrammaton, and then attached another small piece of parchment, and wrote the correct word on the replacement patch.*

*As to the idea noted below, there is never an end to hypothetical conjectures. They remain as such.*

Prof. Jordan Penkower

In this, we learn two things. First, in the rare instance that a scribal error did contain an error related to the tetragrammaton, there were two possible means that could be employed to address the error.

One of these ways involved cutting the name out and replacing a version of the tetragrammaton without an error. So, to say that Yehovah as a valid pronunciation was accidentally written several times and it was then forced to be left in the codices is an invalid understanding.

Secondly, the idea that a true pronunciation is found in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices is referred to as only hypothetical conjecture, meaning an "opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information."

What exactly is the lacking information not applied in the forming of Yehovah as the valid pronunciation of the Name? ...the reality that the spellings of the tetragrammaton found in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices are not pronunciations, but instead, the function of *ketiv/qere*.

**The Talmud says that we are not to say the Name as written but in the kingdom to come we will say the Name as written. Wouldn't this indicate that Yehovah is a valid pronunciation as it is written?**

We would agree that in the coming Kingdom (Messiah's return) Messiah Yeshua will clarify how to pronounce the tetragrammaton as it is currently written. This does not indicate that the mention of "as it is written" refers to one of the several written variant spellings found in the Masoretic texts. There are also other manuscripts in which the tetragrammaton is "written" without more modern man-made vowel points.

More importantly, the fact that the Talmud suggests that it will be the coming Kingdom that we will be pronouncing the name (which agrees with the Prophets). Because there is no Torah prohibition in pronouncing the name, and it is in the coming Kingdom that all in the faith will be proclaiming his name, we suggest that there is no real way (with confidence) to rush His timing on when this will occur.

**In the teaching, it is stated that "In every instance where an inseparable preposition is attached to the tetragrammaton, the *sheva* is dropped, but not once does the *yod* combine with a *hiriq* vowel of the preposition. Instead of *hiriq*, the *patach* vowel is used." Are there instances of LaYehovah in**



**the codices where the *yod* retains the *sheva* and the *lamed* is pointed with the *patach*? Can 119 really claim that the *sheva* is always dropped?**

First of all, we do maintain that we are correct in our statement that, in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices, the grammatical rule is always followed—that is, the sheva under the Yod is dropped and the Yod combines with the vowel of the preposition (or vav conjunction).

There are examples referring to other, much later codices (Not the Aleppo and Leningrad codices) where the sheva is not dropped. Here is an example that is often offered (perhaps as late as the 16th Century) and it is using entirely different vowelation and accents than what we find in the Ben Asher manuscripts (Leningrad and Aleppo).

Thus, such an example is not very helpful for the Yehovah position as it is so far removed on the timeline from the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.

**The prefix *Yeho* is often found in Hebrew names. Wouldn't this indicate with certainty that *Yeho* is a valid component of the pronunciation of the name?**

The essence of this question, is founded on one of the most convincing supportive arguments for the *Yehovah* pronunciation, at least on the surface. Ultimately, what we find, is that evidence shows that *Yeho* is not likely a component of our Creator's name.

First, let's examine why some understandably believe *Yeho* might be a component of pronouncing the tetragrammaton.

As one example, our Messiah's name *Yeshua*, comes from the fuller Hebrew name *Yehoshua*. *Shua* means salvation. It literally means that "*Yeho* is salvation and most understand that the *Yeho* points back to the tetragrammaton of our Creator's name as YHWH. Therefore, the argument goes, *Yeho* must be part of our Creator's name.

There exists a short list of Hebrew names that begin with *Yeho*. Each of these names are theophoric, meaning, the *Yeho* component of each name refers back to the tetragrammaton. This leads some to believe that our Creator's name must include *Yeho* as a component of the pronunciation of the name. It is a logical conclusion.

Because the Aleppo and Leningrad codices include a spelling of the tetragrammaton that includes *Yeho* as *Yehovih* and *Yehovah*, and because *Yehovah* appears more often, some have said... "that's it" that is the pronunciation of the name, Yehovah." However, we already reviewed in this teaching how we know that the Masoretes were not revealing the pronunciation of our Creator's name, either purposefully, or on accident. It was simply *ketive qere*.

But what about "*Yeho*" being theophoric?" Is there any value to that as being a component of our Creator's name?

Perhaps, but for at least two reasons, it is not likely.

It is easy to see where *Yeho* would fit as part of pronouncing the tetragrammaton. *Yeho* contains a *yod* and a *hey*. The tetragrammaton as YHWH begins with a *yod* and a *hey*. Thus, some have reasonably

suggested that the *Yeho* is the first part of pronouncing the tetragrammaton, taking the place of the *yod* and the *hey*.

The problem is that *Yeho* is not the only component of Hebraic theophoric names. There also exists *Yah* or *Yahu* at the end of many names that also point back to the tetragrammaton.

For example, *Eliyahu*, or Elijah, ends in *Yahu*. In English, the *El* stands for God, and *Yahu* points back to our Creator as part of the tetragrammaton. In essence, it means *Yahu* is God or God is *Yahu*.

*Yah* or *Yahu* also both contain a *yod* and a *hey*. As already mentioned, the tetragrammaton as YHWH begins with a *yod* and a *hey*. Thus, some have reasonably suggested that the *Yah* or *Yahu* is the first part of pronouncing the tetragrammaton, taking the place of the *yod* and the *hey*.

Both *Yeho* and *Yah* or *Yahu* are considered theophoric in this regard, and function in a similar way.

Interestingly enough, unlike *Yeho*, *Yah* also stands alone in the TANAKH in referring to our Creator's name. To see this in the Hebrew, an example would be Psalm 68:4.

Many are also familiar with Hallelujah, which literally means praise Yah, the component of *Yah* once again referring back to the tetragrammaton, the full name of our Creator.

All of this shows that the Scriptures place much more emphasis on *Yah* or *Yahu* as a component of pronouncing the tetragrammaton, instead of *Yeho*.

In the effort to discern the proper pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, the presence of both *Yah* or *Yahu* and also *Yeho* has frustrated many. Both are used in a theophoric manner, in the same way, and both also contain a *yod* and a *hey*, as the first two letters of the tetragrammaton.

Both cannot be correct, so in the pronunciation debate, one has been forced to adopt one and discard the other. This should make a person uneasy, because regardless of which one is chosen, one has to be discarded, either *Yeho*, or *Yah* or *Yahu*.

The discerning heart and mind might be inclined that there is a bigger problem here, and we are also inclined to agree.

We should not have to choose between *Yeho*, or *Yah* or *Yahu*.

We see several Greek sources also pointing to *Yah* or *Yahu* as a component of the name. Most importantly, this was well before the Masoretes invented *Yehviah*, *Yehoviah*, *Yehvah*, and *Yehovah* as just *ketiv qere* references to the tetragrammaton, which seemed to confuse many, centuries down the road.

So, what is going on here? Is it *Yeho* or *Yah/Yahu*?

Doesn't it strike you as odd that both *Yeho* and *Yahu* are theophoric? We are not aware of anyone really anyone solving this problem, so the problem simply exists, and the debate between *Yeho* and *Yahu* rages on...

Why do both *Yeho* and *Yahu* exist as theophoric names? Both cannot be right. How does it even make sense? It doesn't make sense!

Guess what. There appears to be a solution.

How many are aware that languages are not static?

Geographical seclusion, influence by other languages, the nature of time, and other factors, eventually produce different dialects of the same language. So words and names can be similar, but not pronounced exactly the same. Sometimes these changes in dialects become dominant, and former pronunciations can die out.

Many Hebrew names are pronounced slightly differently. We already gave one example with *Yeshua*, the shortened form of *Yehoshua*. Some dialect differences are widely known, such as the *waw* verses the *vav*, which we cover earlier in this series. There are countless other examples that can be found in the scriptures, as both words or names.

Let's bring this a little closer to home.

We can also easily see differences in even our own language, English. Great Britain, South Africa, Jamaica, United States, and Australia are all examples of countries that speak English. However, the variance between how different words and names are pronounced can be quite extreme at times. It can be even difficult to understand another person who is supposedly speaking English. Even in the United States, there is Boston English, New Orleans English, Southern English, New Jersey English. You can often tell where someone is from in the United States by how various English words are pronounced.

Do you see where we are going with this as it relates to the *Yeho* versus the *Yah* or *Yahu* problem?

You might be thinking, wait, what? Are you suggesting that there should not be a debate of *Yeho* verses *Yah/Yahu* at all? That at one time, there was only one valid theophoric component of Hebrew names and words?

...That perhaps the instances of *Yah* or *Yahu* should all be *Yeho*, or all of the *Yeho* should be *Yahu*?

Yes, that is what we are suggesting.

Allow us to further clarify.

What would be fantastic is if the prefix *Yeho* also agreed with the suffix of *Yah/Yahu*, and both the prefixes and suffixes were both *Yeho*. Then, there would be little debate as to the value of *Yeho* as inclusive of the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton.

The alternate is also true. It would be fantastic is if the suffix *Yah/Yahu* also agreed with the prefix of *Yeho*, and both the prefixes and suffixes were both *Yah/Yahu*. In this case, there would also be little debate as to the value of *Yah/Yahu* as inclusive of the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton.

If this was a dialect change that occurred, then it would have had to occur over a couple thousand years ago, as the usages of *Yeho* and *Yah* or *Yahu* are rather universal among all Hebrew dialects.

This dialect change would have had to occur before the House of Judah, or Jews, were scattered around the world. We would have to find evidence of this phonetic evolution occurring over 2,000 years ago.

And actually, we do.

Here is something interesting that could resolve the *Yeho* and *Yahu* contradiction.

In ancient cuneiform, it has been discovered that ancient theophoric names of those of Israel actually began with not *Yeho*, but *Yahu*.

Let us say that again.

In ancient cuneiform, it has been discovered that ancient theophoric names of those of Israel actually began with not *Yeho*, but *Yahu*.

Ancient cuneiform is unique as the first written language to contain vowels. This would mean that there should be no debate between *Yeho* and *Yah/Yahu*, that just *Yah/Yahu* are theophoric. *Yeho* would just be a mistake stemming from natural phonetic evolution.

The Murasu archive (500 BCE) from ancient Babylonia would serve as an example of this, in which a long list of business transactions with Israelites is contained in the text.

And guess what, now we have an extremely ancient record, with ancient vowel pointing, of how ancient Hebrews pronounced theophoric names.

In the ancient cuneiform text, each theophoric name actually begins with *Yahu* instead of *Yeho*.

There is a limitation to the cuneiform however, there is no "o" in the language, so in isolation it actually could have been *Yaho*, instead of *Yahu*.

However, since the Masoretic texts already offer *Yahu* as a valid suffix, and second witness *Yahu* would then appear as the most probable. We see the same agreement in ancient Greek text, which also contained vowels, as a third witness.

So, what this means is that his example and other examples are overwhelming evidence of a Hebrew theophoric name dialect change that occurred over 2,500 years ago!

While this sheds doubt on the validity of *Yeho* as a valid pronunciation, as it was possibly the result of ancient dialect evolution, it is interesting that if the ancient cuneiform serves as any phonetic value, then all of the theophoric prefixes and suffixes actually agree as *Yah/Yahu*.

The conflict is solved!

This information was not available until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We are talking about a possible dialect/phonetic change that appears to have occurred thousands of years ago, largely when the House of Judah was still intact under Babylonian rule. We are not talking about a change that occurred when Judah was extremely scattered like it has been post 70 AD. This would explain why we do not see *Yahu* as a prefix like we do 2,500 years ago, but only as a suffix.

Changes that occurred while Judah was extremely scattered would indeed result in phonetic differences in different groups. As already mentioned, a good and popular example would be the *waw* vs. the *vav*.

In that light, we would expect unity in phonetic evolution while Judah was still, for the most part, united, and that is the point in history in which this change appears to have occurred according to historical evidences.

While many Biblical Hebrew words have remained stable, because of the ancient Hebrew texts that retained constants, even in the scriptures themselves we see how earlier writings and later writings spelled words slightly different.

How much more true is phonetic evolution for vowels when vowels were not insulated from societal influence over time through written preservation (i.e. Hebrew)? Meaning this, vowels of course, in Hebrew, were more susceptible to phonetic evolution leading to different dialects, because the written ancient Hebrew language does not contain vowels.

All evidence points to the fact that *Yeho* is a more modern dialect construct derived from phonetic evolution, and that *Yah* or *Yahu* is the more ancient component of pronouncing the tetragrammaton.

The ancient cuneiform evidence shows over and over that in Judah the early pre-exilic form was *Yahu*, while the much later post-exilic form was *Yeho* or *Yehe*.

And while we are sure it is a difficult pill to swallow for some, the compelling evidence is there.

It is at this point that some might challenge deriving phonetics from ancient non-Hebrew cultures.

However, these are ancient ears that were able to hear ancient pronunciations of theophoric Hebrew names, and not only that, write them in their own language.

If we were to write *Eliyahu* using English letters, does it not sound about the same as if it was written in Hebrew?

If we were to write *hallelujah* using English letters, does it not sound about the same as if it was written in Hebrew?

Of course it does. In the same way, ancient languages could phonetically record Hebrew words and names reasonably accurately in their own languages. There are no good reasons to ignore such evidences, in fact, such evidences actually solve some problems in properly applying the value of theophoric names.

119 Ministries does not subscribe to a strong position on how the name is pronounced. We hope that is understood that is for good reason, as discussed earlier in this teaching.

We do attempt to go where the evidence leads, and we do see many attempting to do the same. It is an admirable effort, despite the differences in conclusions. The only concern we would raise is objecting to the anger and divisiveness that sometimes occurs through different presentations on this subject. We believe there is likely a reason the prophets said the nations will not know the Name until Yeshua's return. May that be sooner than later, and praise Yah for that day.

We hope that some of the questions and answers were helpful in regards to this often challenging topic.

We hope 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](http://www.testeverything.net)*

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

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