

יהודה

**WHY I USE
THE NAME
YEHOVAH**

**The purpose of this presentation
is to explain in specific,
concrete terms
why I use the name Yehovah
when referring to the God
of the Hebrew Scriptures.**

PREMISES

In any discussion it is helpful to begin by defining our underlying assumptions.

The following explanation is based on three fundamental principles:

**The written text of Scripture
faithfully records God's revelation
to mankind.**

**The written text of Scripture
faithfully records God's revelation
to mankind.**

**The Hebrew text is reliably preserved
in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.**

**The written text of Scripture
faithfully records God's revelation
to mankind.**

**The Hebrew text is reliably preserved
in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.**

**These key sources faithfully communicate
the essential elements of
God's revelation and instruction,
including His personal name.**

**What is so significant about
these two ancient codices?**

**They are our most
trustworthy witnesses
to the text
of the Hebrew Scriptures.**

**The Aleppo Codex is the 'Crown Jewel'
of Hebrew manuscripts.**

**It belongs to a group of documents
from Tiberias, recognized by scholars
as the most accurately preserved
biblical texts.**

**Although a portion of the
Aleppo Codex has been lost,
it is acknowledged to be
the most accurate of all
extant biblical manuscripts.**

**The Leningrad Codex,
also from the Tiberian group,
is the oldest known complete,
vocalized* Hebrew manuscript.**

***A vocalized manuscript is one
that contains vowel points.**

**THE
FUNDAMENTAL
QUESTION**

**Opinions about this topic differ widely,
and discussions tend to generate
more heat than light.**

**But when it comes to the name
of the Creator, there is
one fundamental question
that cannot be ignored.**

The question we must ask is . . .

What is
ACTUALLY WRITTEN
in the Hebrew
Scriptures?

**After all, if we can't rely on
the text of Scripture as we have it,
we're left with nothing more than
a hodgepodge of conflicting
theories and speculation.**

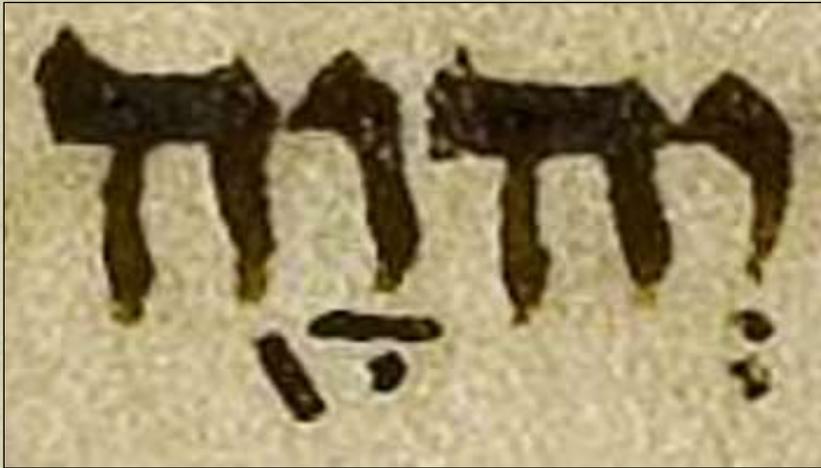
Non-biblical resources are often helpful in clarifying historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts, but they neither nullify nor supersede the written text of Scripture.

**What follows in this presentation
is based directly and exclusively
on the Hebrew Scriptures
as we have them,
not on tradition, conjecture,
or extrabiblical sources.**

**So let's look at
the primary documents.**

**First, we'll examine
the most common way
God's name is written in the
Aleppo and Leningrad codices.**

Aleppo



Leningrad



The name appears like this literally *thousands* of times in the primary Hebrew manuscripts (approximately 6,000 times just in the Leningrad Codex).

Here is a typeset version
of what we just saw.

יהוה



Notice that in addition to four
consonants—*yod, hey, vav, hey*—
the name includes two vowels.

.

**What do these
consonants and vowels
tell us about the pronunciation
of God's personal name?**



Reading from right to left, the first letter is *yod*. The vowel below it is *sh^eva*.

The *yod* is pronounced like Y, and the *sh^eva* adds a very brief sound of short E.

So the first syllable is pronounced Y^e-.

יהוה

Next we have *hey*, which sounds like H, but it has no vowel associated with it.

So far we have the pronunciation Y^e-h?-.

(The question mark indicates that we don't yet know which vowel will go in this position.)

**This missing vowel is significant
because it violates a rule
of Hebrew grammar.**

More on that in a moment.

יהוה

The third consonant is *vav*,
which sounds like V,
and its vowel is *qamatz*,
pronounced like the A in 'father.'

That gives us the pronunciation
Ye-hv-va-.

יהוה

And the final *hey* adds another H sound.

יהוה

So the most common form
of God's name
as written in the Hebrew Scriptures
would be pronounced Y^e-h_?-vah.

Now a word about the missing vowel.

**Hebrew grammar requires that
every consonant in a word
(except the final one)
must have a vowel associated with it.**

**Anyone well-versed in the grammar
and pronunciation of biblical Hebrew
would immediately notice
a missing vowel.**

This apparent ‘mistake’ stems from the rabbinic prohibition of speaking God’s personal name.

By omitting the middle vowel the reader is prompted to say Adonai (‘Lord’) instead of reading the name as it is written.

Most English Bibles perpetuate this practice by substituting the title LORD for God’s name.

**What we have seen so far
is quite revealing.**

**It gives us, in perfectly clear terms,
two-thirds of the pronunciation
of God's name.**

All that is lacking is the middle vowel.

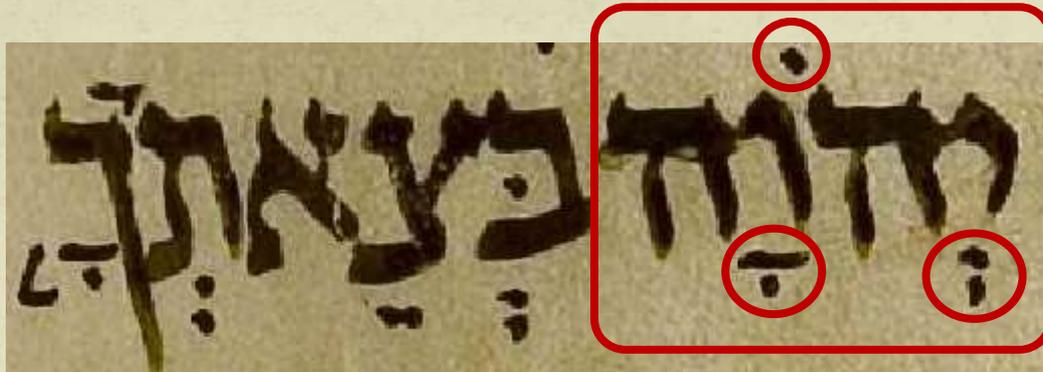
Fortunately, both of the primary Hebrew manuscripts provide a clear and compelling answer to the question of the missing vowel.

The fully vocalized name of God occurs *dozens* of times in the Aleppo and Leningrad codices.

Let's see what these two witnesses tell us.



This high-resolution photograph of a page from the Aleppo Codex contains the text of Judges 4:10–5:10.



Here we've zoomed in on a portion of Judges 5:4. Notice the word outlined in red.

It is the name of God with its four consonants and all three vowels.

**For the sake of visual clarity,
here is a typeset version
of God's name with
all three vowels.**

יְהוָה

**Here, also in the Aleppo Codex,
the red rectangle highlights the name
as it appears in Ezekiel 28:22.**



**We can clearly see four consonants
and three vowels. In this case there is
also an accent (in the blue oval).**

Again, for the sake of visual clarity,
here is a typeset version
of God's name as it appears in
Ezekiel 28:22, with four consonants,
three vowels, and an accent.
(We will discuss the accent later.)

יהוה

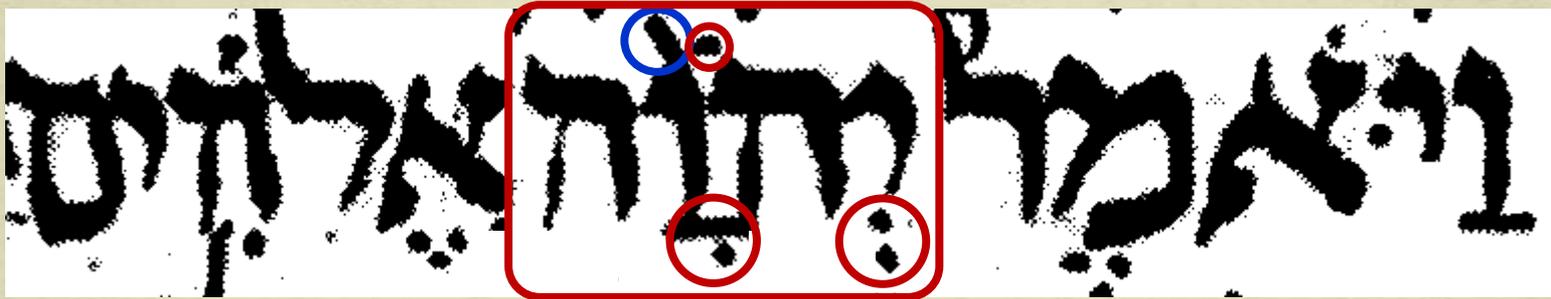
**In a moment we'll learn just what
these examples tell us.**

**But first, let's look at the second great
witness to the Hebrew text of Scripture:
the Leningrad Codex.**

This is the text upon which nearly all Bibles are based, whether in Hebrew or translated into other languages.

This time, we'll look at an example from the book of Genesis or B^ereshith.

In this slide we've zoomed in on a portion of Genesis 3:14.



Again, the word outlined in red is the name of God with its four consonants, three vowels, and an accent.

**Here is a typeset version of what
we saw in the previous slide:
four consonants,
three vowels, and an accent.**

יְהוָה

We have now seen examples of the fully vocalized name of God in both of the primary Hebrew manuscripts, with its four consonants and three vowels:

יהוה
יְהוָה

**What does all this tell us
about the name of the Creator?**

יהוה י

As we explained earlier, the *yod*
and *sh^eva* are pronounced Y^e-.



Next, we have the *hey*, but instead of a missing vowel it has a *holem* above and to the left.



The image shows the Hebrew word 'יהוה' (YHWH) in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The word is composed of four letters: 'י' (Yod), 'ה' (Hey), 'ו' (Vav), and 'ה' (Hey). A red square highlights the first dot above the second 'ה' (Hey), which is the vowel sign for 'holem'. A red rounded rectangle highlights the second 'ה' (Hey) and the 'ו' (Vav) that follows it. Below the 'ו' (Vav) is a small black dot, and below the second 'ה' (Hey) are two black dots, representing the vowel signs for 'holem' and 'shva' respectively.

Hey is pronounced like H,
and the *holem* adds the
vowel sound of long O.

So the second syllable is pronounced -ho-.

**Combining the first two letters
and their vowels
we have the pronunciation
Ye-ho-.**



יהוה

The third consonant is *vav* with a *qamatz* (like the A in ‘father’) and the final *hey* adds an H sound.

יהוה

**So the last syllable is pronounced
-vah.**

**Combining the four consonants
and three vowels
yields the pronunciation
Y^e-ho-vah.**

There is one final key to the correct pronunciation of God's personal name.

The accent tells us where to place the emphasis. As we saw in both codices, the accent is written over the vav.



**The testimony we've seen from
the Aleppo and Leningrad codices
is conclusive.**

**It tells us that the personal name
of God is Y^ehoVAH
(with the emphasis on the last syllable).**

This indisputable evidence from the most important Hebrew texts precludes names like Yahweh, Yehiweh, Yahwah, Yahowah, Yahuah and other nonscriptural forms.

The truth is that none of these hypothetical names is attested anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.

Before concluding, we need to mention one additional detail.

There is another way God's name is written in the biblical text.

It occurs some 300 times and is a little different from the form Y^ehovah.

It is written like this:

יהוה

The vowel *ḥiriq* under the *vav*
has the sound of long E.

The resulting pronunciation is
Y^ehovih.

**This is not actually God's name,
but another example of
the rabbinic prohibition
of speaking the name Y^ehovah.**

**The rabbinic rule is to say Adonai
whenever one sees the name Y^ehovah
written in the text.**

However, when God's name and the title Adonai appear side by side, the reader is faced with an obvious problem—the awkward repetition 'Adonai Adonai.'

In such cases the reader is supposed to use Elohim (meaning 'God') as a replacement for God's name rather than the usual Adonai.

To prompt the reader to make this substitution, the final vowel of the word Elohim (*ḥiriq*, long E) was inserted into God's personal name, creating the altered form Y^ehovih.

The following verse illustrates this practice:

**‘For I have no pleasure in the death
of anyone who dies,’ declares
the Lord GOD [Adonai Y^ehovih].
‘Therefore, repent and live’
(Ezekiel 18:32, NASB).**

**This is one of the ways the ban
on pronouncing the name of God
continues to exert its subtle influence.**

We saw earlier that the most common method of suppressing the pronunciation of God's name is to omit the second vowel.

In this case, even though the form Y^ehovih is also intended to prevent the reader from pronouncing God's name, it nonetheless preserves the missing second vowel—*ḥolem* (long O).

**The pronunciation of God's name
is a highly-charged subject.
For some, the use of that name
as preserved in Scripture
has even cost them their lives.**

**The name of God is not just
a trivial topic for religious
people to debate.**

**It is the bedrock of how our God
has identified Himself in Scripture
and an important part of
how we can relate to Him.**

**As we have seen, when it comes
to the name of the Creator
the biblical text testifies
clearly and explicitly
to the correct pronunciation.**

**Unfortunately, that testimony
often fails to receive the consideration
it deserves.**

Despite the fact that God's name is written more than 6,800 times in Scripture, what we see and hear most often are substitutes.

Some refer to Him as HaShem ('the Name') or Adonai ('Lord').

In English, the most common replacement is the title LORD.

**Imagine what it would be like
if we followed this practice
in our human relationships.**

**What if we addressed each other
only as 'man,' 'woman,' 'hey you,'
or 'what's your name,'
without ever saying our real names?**

Worse yet, what if we persistently mispronounced or misconstrued each other's names, referring to Jack as Jake or to Joan as Jane?

It can be annoying to have our names mispronounced. If we *all* did that *all the time*, surely it would detract from the closeness of our friendships.

**By the same token, how much
could our relationship with
the Creator of the universe
be enhanced by the proper, reverent
use of His actual personal name,
Y^ehovah?**

***It's a question that's
definitely worth asking!***

O Y^ehovah, my strength and my stronghold, my refuge in a day of trouble, to You nations shall come from the ends of the earth and say: Our fathers inherited utter delusions, things that are futile and worthless . . . Assuredly, I will teach them, once and for all I will teach them My power and My might. And they shall learn that My name is [Y^ehovah].

—*Jeremiah 16:19, 21, NJPS*

**And [Y^ehovah] will be king
over all the earth.
On that day [Y^ehovah] will be one
and his name one.**

—*Zechariah 14:9, ESV*

**The Hebrew documents used
in this presentation are available
at the following locations:**

The Aleppo Codex:

www.aleppocodex.org/newsite/index.html

The Leningrad Codex:

www.tanach.us/Tanach.xml#Home

**The Leningrad Codex
(complete download):**

www.seforimonline.org/seforimdb/pdf/264.pdf

For Further Study

The preceding presentation has barely scratched the surface of this important subject. For a comprehensive study of the name of the Creator you will want to read *His Hallowed Name Revealed Again*, by Keith Johnson. The book and companion CD are available at:



<http://bfainternational.com/store/his-hallowed-name-revealed-again/>