

There is a great disagreement on how the Hebrew name of God should be pronounced. The Hebrew alphabet only has consonants, no vowels. When words are pronounced, vowels are used, but the Hebrew alphabet itself contains no vowels. The vowel sounds are kept in memory. A Jewish child learns how to speak by listening. In school, children learn proper spelling of words and how those words are pronounced, so that when he sees a word he knows how it is spoken. Someone who has learned English from a child can do the same thing. For example, read this sentence: Gd blss yu.

In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Up to that time, a standard copy of the Old Testament had been kept in the Temple. Since the Temple was destroyed, groups of scribes kept the Scriptures safe and preserved the traditional pronunciation of the words until the era of printed texts. A group of scribes known as the Masoretic Scribes worked from about the 6th century to the 11th century to preserve the Old Testament and the traditions related to it, including how the words are pronounced. They kept these traditions in a set of notes called the Masorah. By the 9th century they had developed a system of vowels to preserve the Biblical pronunciation in a written form. They wrote these vowels as a system of dots and dashes that are still used today.



יש וזו מלש חתמה על בשרה את מנכבת התרבות בסין, שהייתה חסיד של רצח והחמרה והרס התרבות המסורתית. כעת היא מוזכרת אנו בעיצומה של המנכבת תרבות וזמה באר"ב
 יום שני 14 | 11-מסלטיקה | 2021 | 22 בדצמבר

בארה"ב מתחוללת
 כת תרבות גדולה בדומה

I know there are some who believe the vowel points were a part of Hebrew when the Scriptures were given starting by about 1450 BC and that they are inspired. For purposes of this study, I have chosen to accept the traditional view, since the question has little bearing on the issues in this chapter.

Nevertheless, the fact is that currently the Hebrew alphabet only has consonants. The vowel points are not considered to be part of the alphabet. Often publications in Israel (see the above issue of Epoch Times in Fig. 1) have no vowels. This has been true for centuries.

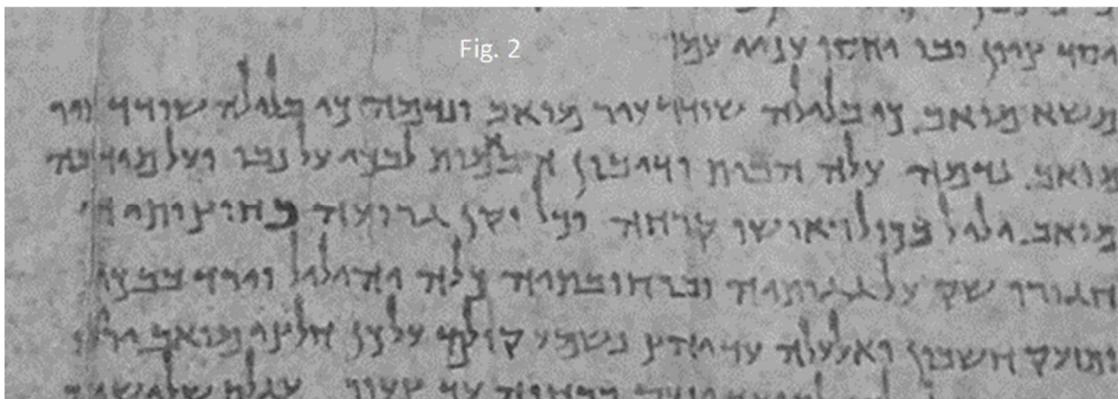


Fig. 2



Fig. 2 shows the Great Isaiah Scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls, no. 1QIsaa, estimated date 100 BC ¹. There are no vowel points. Clearly, Hebrew was written at that time without vowel points.

Fig. 3 ², opposite, is the Gezer Calendar written in archaic Hebrew letters. It is dated 10th century BC. Archaic Hebrew was also an alphabet with all consonants, and this example has no vowel points.

God's Name

God revealed His name to Moses in Exodus 6:3, 13, 14

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them ... And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

God's name is said to be Jehovah in the King James Version. It is spelled in Hebrew with four consonants, written below. Hebrew is written right to left.

יהוה spelled, yod-hey-vav-hey, in English YHVH.

(Some say the V should be W.)

When the vowel points supplied by the Masoretic scribes are written with this name, it looks like this.

יהוה transliterated into English as YeHoVaH, Jehovah.

In reverse order, the vowels are יְוָה and the vowels mean the following: e, o, and a. The first *consonant* of the name of God is pronounced like a y, the second like an h, the third like a v, and the last is like an h, which is silent at the end of a word. So, if you put all the letters and vowel points together you get Y-e-h-o-v-a-h or, as it is in the KJV, *Jehovah*. In the early modern English of 1611, the letter J was pronounced like a Y. If you look in a copy of the Hebrew Old Testament from which the KJV was translated, you will find the name written with the vowels exactly as it is above. Scholars call the Hebrew consonantal name the *tetragrammaton*, meaning four letters. We will call it *the name of God* or *the Name*.

This would seem to settle the question, would it not? Not at all. It is only the beginning of the controversy. This is a matter of great disagreement. During the Reformation (1500-1700), most Bible teachers believed the proper way to pronounce the name was Yehovah or Jehovah. However, today most Hebrew scholars and some Jewish Rabbis insist that Jehovah is *not* the correct way to pronounce the name. Many of them say it should be pronounced Yahweh. This all begins with a story. That story is below, and all the scholars of the Yahweh opinion seem to agree with it. Even many who accept the name as Jehovah believe the story, too.

Probably the early Israelites actually pronounced the name Yahweh. But by the end of the pre-Christian era, a fear of misusing God's name developed (based on Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 5:11) to such a degree that pious Jews avoided speaking the divine name out loud. When it appeared in the Hebrew Scriptures read in the synagogue, they would substitute the word "adon or "adonay, meaning "lord, master"...To this day, orthodox Jews avoid even spelling God, and render it G-d out of reverence. They refer to YHWH as the Ineffable Name, the Unutterable Name or the Distinctive Name. The first step in the transition from Yahweh to Jehovah was the substitution of Adonai for Yahweh when the Scripture was read. ³

This story is generally known and accepted, although some add one thing or another to it. The story is that the Jews would not *speak* the name. Rather, when they came to the name, יהוה, they would *speak* Adonai or Adon instead (meaning Lord). They did not remove or change the sacred name in the written Scriptures. They would merely *speak* a different word when they saw the name of God written in the text. Yet, according to many, this somehow morphed into a plan of the Jews to change the *written* name into something it was *not*. Thereby, corrupting their own Scriptures.

Dr. J. B. Rotherham states in the preface of his Bible concerning Jehovah: "Erroneously written and pronounced Jehovah, which is merely a combination of the sacred Tetragrammaton and the vowels in the Hebrew word for Lord, substituted by the Jews for JHVH, because they shrank from pronouncing The Name ...

The Encyclopedia Britannica (Micropedia, vol. 10) says:

"Yahweh-the personal name of the [El] of the Israelites ...The Masoretes, Jewish biblical scholars of the Middle Ages, replaced the vowel signs that had appeared above or beneath the consonants of YHWH with the vowel signs of Adonai or of Elohim. Thus the artificial name Jehovah (YeHoWaH) came into being. Although Christian scholars after the Renaissance and Reformation periods used the term Jehovah for YHWH, in the 19th and 20th centuries biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh, thus this pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was never really lost. Greek transcriptions also indicate that YHWH should be pronounced Yahweh." ⁴

The Masoretes *invented* the vowel pointing and these commentators are saying that there was a conspiracy of the Rabbis and scribes to hide the name of God, so that they would be prevented from speaking it in vain. There are Jews today who also believe this. The web site, Hebrew 4 Christians, says this about the name of God.

The Third Commandment (Exodus 20:7) states, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." ... On account of this, the Masoretes ensured that the Name of the LORD would not be taken in vain by substituting the vowel marks for Adonai and putting them under the letters ה-ו-ה-י in the running text (this is called Qere ... [what is to be read] as opposed to Ketiv [what is to be written]). The Hebrew text, then, contains the Ketiv but uses the vowels of the Qere and this has led to the obviously incorrect pronunciation of the Name as "Jehovah" (in older English, "J" had a "y" sound). ⁵

This same website had some comments about the alternative name embraced by many modern scholars and Jews, Yahweh.

It was later speculated that perhaps the Masoretes reversed the vowels for Adonai when applied to the letters יהוה in the running text, so some attempted to "correct" the pronunciation by pronouncing the Name as "Yahoveh" or "Yahveh." This, too, is incorrect (though the construct form "Yah" probably is part of the original pronunciation (e.g., see Psalm 68:4; Isaiah 26:4)). Note that Yahweh is most likely also an incorrect transliteration, since there is no "w" sound in Hebrew. ⁶

The Modern Doctrine of the Hebrew Name of God

Modern Hebrew Scholars have built up a consistent narrative about what happened to the name of God and how it is to be pronounced. Below I have summarized the major points we have been taught so far.

1. The Jews developed a tradition of not speaking the sacred name of God. When they were reading the Scriptures and came to this name, they would say Adon or Adonai.
2. The Masoretic Scribes sought to keep the name from being desecrated by taking the vowel points of Adonai and applying them to the sacred name.
3. Because of this, the true pronunciation may be lost and the best pronunciation is Yahweh.

Is all this true? Is there historical evidence or other basis for teaching this? We will accept the first point to be true. This should be self-evident, because the Jews admit it and, even today, they practice this tradition, although it is uncertain when the tradition began. However, point two and three are open to debate. Point three depends on point two. So, is there historical evidence for point two? Is it real history, or could it simply be a scholarly fantasy like the theory of Westcott and Hort that an official revision of the Greek New Testament took place in Syria in the 4th century, thereby producing the Byzantine or Traditional text type? The official revision theory has absolutely no historical evidence to confirm it. Likewise, I have searched for historical evidence to confirm point 2 and found none. All I have found are dogmatic assertions with no documentation.

The LSB Stand

The LSB translators and John MacArthur agreed to use Yahweh to transliterate the Sacred Name of the Lord, rather than translate it to LORD as the KJV did.

Names of God: In the Scriptures, the name of God is significant and understandably so. Traditionally, the translation “God” renders the Hebrew word Elohim. Likewise, the word “Lord” is a translation of Adonai. In the LSB, God’s covenant name is rendered as Yahweh. The meaning and implication of this name is God’s self-deriving, ongoing, and never-ending existence. Exodus 3:14–15 shows that God Himself considered it important for His people to know His name. The effect of revealing God’s name is His distinction from other gods and His expression of intimacy with the nation of Israel. Such a dynamic is a prevalent characteristic of the Scriptures as Yahweh appears in the OT over 6,800 times. ⁷

So, which is it? Is the name Jehovah, as it was generally accepted until the rise of the modern religious liberal movement in the 1800’s? Or is it Yahweh, which is now generally accepted by liberal and evangelical scholars? At the outset of our investigation, let it be understood that neither Jehovah nor Yahweh are translations. Jehovah is a transliteration of the Hebrew name as it is generally found in Hebrew texts. A transliteration is taking the letters of a word in one language and putting them directly into letters of another language. For example, the Greek word for God is θεος and is transliterated into English as theos. Yahweh is a transliteration of יהוה.

Has God allowed the Name to be Hidden?

Before determining how to pronounce the name, we should know that God has not hidden it and it is not lost. We can learn that by going no further than the Scriptures themselves. We can know God’s attitude about His name, because He tells us.

And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (Ex. 9:16)

My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. (Deut. 32:2-3)

When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:22)

And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried: (Deuteronomy 21:5)

And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee. (Deuteronomy 28:10)

Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. (Ps. 75:18, 19)

Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that doth speak: behold, it is I. (Isaiah 52:6)

Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: 12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: 13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD. (Psalms 148:11-14)

God judged Pharaoh so that His name would be declared in all the earth. He wants His name published and greatness ascribed to Him. Prophets must speak in the name of the LORD. His servant must serve in the name of the LORD. God wanted all the people of the earth to know that Israel was called by His name. His name will be known and blessed forever. God has never hidden His name. His name has never been lost. He has preserved His name along with His word. It was known and is known and will be forever known.

The Use of Adonai

We have accepted the fact that the Jews spoke “Adon” or “Adonai” (which is the plural of Adon) when they saw the sacred name in the Scriptures. But, did they also write the vowels of Adonai in the sacred name to hide the true pronunciation? First, the historical evidence does not support this. That is not to say that they were unconcerned about the abuse of the sacred name. They did attempt to prevent the speaking of the name when the Scriptures were read, but not in this way. Before I reveal just what they did do, let’s look closer at the question of whether they truly used the vowels of Adonai or Adon at all or not. Below is a comparison of the sacred name with Adon and Adonai with the vowel points. Pay careful attention to the vowel points. You do not need to know Hebrew to see the difference.



Adonai



Adon



Yehovah

There are differences in these three words regarding the vowel points. Yehovah has three vowels, but Adon only has two. The sheva (:) at the beginning of Yehovah is sometimes silent, but it is pronounced with an e sound at the beginning of a word. Add to the fact that Adon has only two vowels, the further fact that those vowels are reversed in Yehovah. What about Adonai? It has three vowels like Yehovah, and the second two vowels are the same and in the same order as those in Yehovah. However, the first vowel in Adonai is different from the first vowel in Yehovah. The differences between these words tend not to support the assertion that the vowel points of Adon or Adonai were used in the sacred name.

Nevertheless, the Masoretic scribes apparently did have a plan to prevent the sacred name of God from being spoken when the Scriptures were read. One can begin to see what they did from the very manuscript used as the basis of the Hebraica Stuttgartensia Old Testament and its successor, Biblia Hebraica Quinta. That manuscript is the Leningrad Hebrew manuscript from 1008 AD. A portion from it is below showing how they wrote the sacred name.



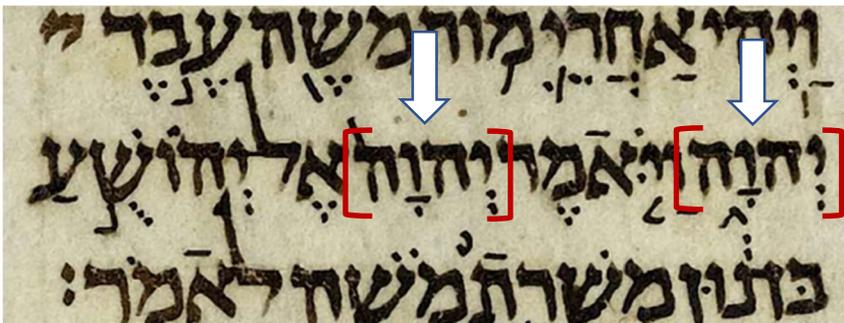
Fig. 4

The sacred name has four letters. Hebrew words start with a consonant. They are divided into syllables consisting of one or two consonants and a vowel making words in the following patterns CVCV or CVCVC or CVCCV or CVCCVC. The last pattern is what one may think he is seeing in the Leningrad manuscript ⁸ (Fig. 4) with the name of God being written YehVaH. That is, with the middle vowel of Jehovah being absent. However, when the CVCCVC pattern appears, the final consonant in the first syllable, CVC, normally has a silent sheva (:) underneath it to show that it is the end of a syllable. This would be under the first Hey in God's name, thus, יהְ. So, if we are really seeing the CVCCVC pattern, the last consonant of the first syllable, ה, should have a silent sheva beneath it and read thusly יהְהָ, but it is never written this way when the word appears in ancient Hebrew manuscripts. The absence of a silent sheva indicates that there should be a vowel after the first Hey, ה. Therefore, this word exhibits a missing vowel. Yeh?VaH is what we see. This makes the name *unpronounceable* in Hebrew.

So, when a reader encountered the name and saw that he could not pronounce it, he was reminded to substitute Adonai or Adon in its place. By this method the scribes (no doubt, in collusion with Rabbis) sought to ensure that the sacred name would not be spoken when the text was read.

The same phenomenon occurs in the Aleppo manuscript, *but with a twist*. The Aleppo manuscript was written in Tiberias in 930 AD and later transferred to Aleppo, Syria. It was damaged during riots that broke out in Syria after the UN resolution to establish the nation of Israel in 1947. Later, it was smuggled out of Syria and taken to Jerusalem. About 294 out of 487 pages survive to date. Some think the Leningrad manuscript was corrected using the Aleppo manuscript.

The sacred name is written in the Aleppo manuscript thousands of times. 4000 or more times the name is missing the middle vowel. However, in a handful of occurrences of the name, *all the vowels are included*, and they



exactly match how the name is written in the Jacob Ben Chayim edition of the Hebrew Old Testament, from which the King James Version was translated. See the examples below.

Fig. 5 ⁹

The first example, in Fig. 5, is from Joshua 1:1, "Now after the death

of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying..." It reveals two of the places where the middle vowel is missing. There is a vowel under the first letter and a second vowel under the third letter, but there is no vowel above the third letter. Notice also that there is no silent sheva below the second letter, as there should be. According to Hebrew rules, this word is not pronounceable. Even if one tried to pronounce it, all he would get is Yehvah, which still does not match Yahweh. The vowels are not the same. The spelling is different. They are not the same word. Not only that, but, as we will discuss later, the Hebrew letter vav was never generally pronounced like a W, but rather like a V. Today in Israel, the vav is pronounced like a V. Vav is the third letter in the Name of God. So, what we find in these manuscripts does not justify rejecting Jehovah in favor of Yahweh.



Fig. 6¹⁰ The second example is in Figure 6 on to the left and comes from 1 Kings 8:11, “So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.” The Name is found twice in this verse. The word on the right is the Name without the middle vowel. However, just before

that, the scribe wrote the name of God with all the vowels. It appears he forgot to remove the middle vowel and put the full set of vowels in by mistake (or perhaps he did it on purpose). The word reads יהוה – Yehovah.

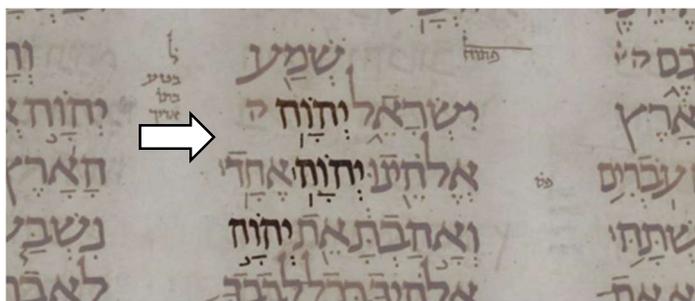
Figure 7 shows 2 kings 20:9, “And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?” YHVH, יהוה, is written twice in this verse. Where it is highlighted, it has the full set of vowels. Once more it is written יהוה – Yehovah. The O is a single dot above the vav. The two vertical dots above vav are not vowel marks. The full vowels also occur in several other places in the Aleppo manuscript including Ezekiel 3:12, Ezekiel 28:22, and Psalms 26:12. It is only written with the full vowels a few times, but when it has the full vowels, it is written Yehovah. The scribes knew how it should be written.

Fig. 7¹¹



Figure 8 is from Deuteronomy 6:4,5, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Three times the Sacred Name has the full vowels spelled יהוה - Yehovah. The fact is that most Hebrew manuscripts with vowel pointing have the name with one vowel missing.

Fig. 8¹²



However, starting in 2017, Nehemia Gordon and his research team started searching for ancient Hebrew manuscripts that contain the name of Yehovah with the full vowel points. Nehemia is a Karaite Jew, Hebrew scholar, and researcher. His web site is NehemiasWall. As of January 2018, they had found over 1000 manuscripts that have the name full vowels. These manuscripts date from 894 AD onward. The discovery was reported by the Religious News Service on January 25, 2018.

God’s name, known as the Tetragrammaton, is written in most Hebrew Bible manuscripts with one of its vowels missing, making it unreadable in accordance with an ancient Jewish ban on speaking the name. Despite this, Gordon had previously discovered five Bible manuscripts with a

full set of Hebrew vowels proving the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was known to Jewish scribes as “Yehovah.”

The project to find new evidence corroborating this discovery, began in February 2017 and in less than one year Gordon found 1,000 more Hebrew Bible manuscripts with the full vowels “Yehovah.” These included the two earliest known Hebrew Bible manuscripts with vowels, Russian National Library, Evr. II B 100 from the year 894 AD and the Cairo Codex of the Prophets from 895 AD. Gordon and his team also found the vowels “Yehovah” in three manuscripts written with the lost “Babylonian Pointing,” discovered in the Cairo Genizah in 1896. ¹³

So, what does all this tell us? It confirms that the Jews have refused to speak the name of God. It also confirms that the Masoretic scribes made a plan to prevent anyone from reading the Sacred Name. They did this by removing the middle vowel from Yehovah and making it read Yeh?vah. Nevertheless, there were times when the scribes did not remove the middle vowel and wrote the whole name. This revealed the correct way to pronounce the name. The pronunciation was never lost. *One thing you never find in the manuscripts is יהוה Yahweh.*

There is a myth going around the scholarly community that the name Jehovah was invented by a Catholic priest named Galatin or Galatinus in 1520. This myth is several hundred years old. It was apparently started by a gentleman called Drussius, also called Van Der Driesche and Johann Clemens. In his writings published shortly before his death, he expressed the opinion that Galatin had invented Jehovah. Over the years, this opinion has been accepted by scholars as a historical fact. However, this is found to be a true myth. The Aleppo manuscript and the other manuscripts examined by Nehemia Gordon’s team (and now, some by you and me) prove that the name Jehovah or Yehovah was known more than 500 years before Galatin could have invented it.

The Witness from Hebrew Names

Hebrew names often contain God’s name in a shortened form. A name may start with the first three letters, יהו, and when it does, it is pronounced Yeho. If those same letters end a name, they are pronounced yehu or Yahu, as in Netanyahu, נְתַנְיָהוּ. (Notice the pattern of Netanyahu: CVCVCCVCV. The middle syllable ends with a consonant in the middle of a word. Notice that the final consonant of this syllable in Hebrew has a silent sheva below it, indicating the end of the syllable. Remember our previous discussion at figure 4).

The three letters, יהו, come at the beginning of God’s name. If these three letters come at the beginning of Hebrew names and are pronounced yeho, then when they come at the beginning of God’s name, they are also pronounced Yeho, not Yah (as in Yahweh). Hebrew is quite consistent about this. The chart below shows a few names in the Scriptures, which start with these three letters. Notice how they are pointed. The vowel points are the same as in Yehovah. I suppose the scribes gave *them* the vowel pointing of Adonai also, just to deceive you?

Of course not.

Name	English	Reference
יהושׁע	Yehoshua	Joshua
יהוידע	Jehoiada	2 Sam. 8:18
יהושפט	Jehoshaphat	1 Kings 22:5
יהואש	Jehoash	2 Kings 12:18
יהואשׁ	Jeho’ash	2 Kings 12:7
יהויכין	Jehoiachin	2 Chron. 36:9
יהואחז	Jehoahaz	2 Kings 13:1
יהונדב	Jonadab	Jer. 35:14
יהונתן	Jehonathan	1 Chron 27:25
יהויקים	Jehoiakim	2 Kings 23:36
יהויארב	Jehoiarib	1 Chron. 24:7

Each of these names begin with these letters יהו and are pronounced Yeho. The Sacred name begins with the exact same letters, which fall under the exact same rules in Hebrew as the other names. Therefore, these letters in God’s name are also pronounced Yeho. This, along with the witness of the manuscripts, is incontrovertible proof of how God’s sacred name should be pronounced.

The Bible says, *“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established”* (2 Corinthians 13:1). We have seen two witnesses to God’s name. The manuscripts reveal how the scribes sought to keep the name from being pronounced by removing the middle vowel, O, and we have seen how the scribes left all the vowels in at times revealing how the name is supposed to be pronounced. The second witness is how names are pronounced when they begin with the same three letters that begin God’s name. Both the Sacred Name and the other names are pronounced the same. This also confirms that the middle vowel missing in the manuscripts is -O-.

We have seen two witnesses. We are about to see a third.

The Witness of Vav

Vav is the third consonant in the name of God. There are different opinions about how to pronounce vav. In Israel the pronunciation is like an English V. Hebrew scholars and teachers say the ancient pronunciation was like an English W and they call the letter Waw. In the word Yahweh, the w is from vav. *If the scholars are wrong, Yahweh is misspelled.*

Most scholars agree that the ancient pronunciation of the letter was more like a “W” and less like the “V” that it currently has in the Modern Hebrew language. This assertion has a lot of support if we simply look around at modern use in other Semitic languages. In Arabic, for example, only the “W” sound exists, and the “V” sound does not exist. Among certain Jewish pronunciations, the original still holds true, as Yemenite Jews to this day pronounce the Vav as a “W” in specific cases. When Hebrew is written with pronunciation markings (nikud), a Vav without any markings is pronounced like the “V” in “very,” a Vav with a dot in the middle is pronounced “oo,” as in “fool,” and a Vav with a dot on top is pronounced “o,” as in “go.”¹⁴

The Jewish oriented ministry, Time of Reckoning, has a response to this.

There are scholars who teach that because Hebrew and Arabic are Semitic languages the Hebrew letter ם vav must have been pronounced waw [w] in ancient Hebrew, as it was in Arabic, instead of vav [v]. Although, it is true that both languages are closely related they are not identical and letters from one do not necessarily vocalize the same way in the other. It is also true that vav is vocalized by the Jews in most Arabic-speaking communities as the semivowel [w], i.e. waw; but in some communities of Syria and Egypt, as well as in northwest Morocco, it is vocalized as [v] and in the communities of northeast Morocco the vocalization [w] has the variant [v]. In the Aramaic-speaking communities the same letter is vocalized as [w] while in the Persian-speaking communities the realization is identical to that of soft ן bet, [v]. In all Ashkenazi communities Jews vocalize vav as [v], not waw [w]. Therefore, we can notice that all realizations of vav as waw [w] come from Arabic influence; they are not Hebraic.¹⁵

Another perspective was expressed by Professor Ben Tziyyon on the web site, Virtual Yeshiva Discussion Forum.

The earliest Hebrew grammar texts that were produced in a European language were published in Austria and hence were written in German. The Hebrew letter ם (vav) was transliterated by the letter W in those grammar texts because the letter W has the same sound in German as the letter V has in English. Unfortunately, though, the transliteration scheme was overlooked when these grammar books were subsequently translated into English, and consequently the use of the letter W to represent the Hebrew letter ם (vav) was never corrected to the letter V. From this simple oversight has grown the unshakeable conviction among many Christians that the Hebrew letter ם (vav) “originally” sounded like the English letter W “because books written by Jews say so” and, however many times they are told that this is not the case, they flatly refuse to accept it.¹⁶

There are several reasons that vav equals V.

Transliteration in European Translations

Reason One is transliteration in European Translations.

The Eastern Roman Empire or Byzantine Empire lasted for about one thousand years. In 1453 AD, the Muslim Ottoman Empire conquered the Byzantine Empire and took the capital, Constantinople, later renaming it to Istanbul. The Byzantine empire was a place of great learning. It was the seat of spoken Greek and many Jewish scholars lived there. Many Jews already lived in Europe, but when the Byzantine Empire fell, many more Jewish scholars fled to western Europe where some of them became teachers. This was a great influence on the Renaissance, which got well underway in the late fifteenth century. So, knowledge of Hebrew was fresh in the early Renaissance and came from the Jews themselves. Even Martin Luther sought out the help of Rabbis when he was translating the Old Testament into German from Hebrew. It was published in 1534.

The Tyndale Bible was first published in 1526 and it transliterated God's name *lehovah* in Exodus 6. The letter I was pronounced like a Y and U was both pronounced V and later changed to look like V. Therefore, it was pronounced *Yehovah*. The Bishops Bible of 1569 used the same. Later, the Geneva Bible and the King James used the same name. Tyndale translated on the European continent. The translators of the Bishops Bible and the KJV were in England. The translators of the Geneva Bible were in Geneva, Switzerland. The translators of each of these four Bibles had learned that the Hebrew letter vav was to be pronounced as a V. Therefore, vav was understood to be a V sound as far back as before 1526.

Further evidence of this can be seen in how the King James translators translated Hebrew names. The Hebrew name **לֵוִי** is found in many places in the Old Testament. It is transliterated *Levi* (Gen. 29:34). The letter vav was transliterated as a V in the KJV. Then, there is the name **יָוָן** in Genesis 10:2, transliterated *Javan*. The vav is again given a V sound. Then there is the word **לֵוִיָּתָן**, *Leviathan*, in Isaiah 27:1. Again, the vav is transliterated V and given a V sound. Tyndale also did the same in Genesis 10:2 and 29:34 in 1526. The same thing occurs in Martin Luther's German translation of the Old Testament, published in 1534. In Genesis 10:2, Martin Luther wrote *Javan*. In Genesis 29:34, Martin Luther wrote *Levi* and in Isaiah 27:1, he wrote *Leviathan*. All of this confirms that the understanding of translators in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was that vav was pronounced with a V sound (and they generally learned Hebrew directly or indirectly from Hebrew speaking Jews).

The amazing thing is that the Hebrew scholars responsible for the modern English versions *know this!* When you examine Genesis 10:2, Genesis 29:34, and Isaiah 27:1 in the LSB and NIV and others, you find an incredible thing. You *do not* find *Jawan*, *Lewi*, and *Lewiathan*. No, it is not written like that. When the translators encountered the Hebrew vav in those names, they transliterated the vav as a V! They wrote *Javan* in Genesis 10, *Levi* in Genesis 29, and *Leviathan* in Isaiah 27. But, in God's name, they made the vav a W and wrote *Yahweh*. This is inconsistent and dishonest. There is absolutely no excuse for this kind of inconsistency.

The Hebrew Language

The Hebrew alphabet is the second reason you can know that vav is a V. There are two letters in Hebrew that sound like V. The first is Bet, which is the second letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It has two forms and two sounds and two names. Bet **בּ** has a dot inside it and sounds like an English B. Vet or soft Bet **ב** has no dot and sounds like an English V. The other letter is the third letter in God's name, vav **ו**.

There is a word in Hebrew that can be spelled two different ways. Each way it is spelled, it means the same and is pronounced the same. The word is **גַּב**, *gav*, spelled gimel vav. It means *back*, as in the back of a human. It can be found in eight places in the Old Testament. One of those times was Prov. 10:13, "a rod *is* for the back of him that is void of understanding." The same word is given a variant spelling in Ezekiel 43:13, "and this shall be the higher place of the altar." The word translated *higher place* in this verse is **גַּב**, gimel vet, *gav*, and it also means *back*, but **גָּב** means more than *back*. That is why it translated "higher place" in Exek. 43:13. However, it does mean *back* and is so translated in Ps 129:3 and Ezek. 10:12, according to Strong's Hebrew Dictionary.¹⁷ Therefore, it is a

synonym of גַּב, *gav*. It is also translated *back* in Daniel 7:6 in the Aramaic section of Daniel 1-7. It is usually marked as Aramaic at this place, but it is a Hebrew word. Apparently, it is a Hebrew word loaned to Aramaic.

The point of all this is that we have one word which is spelled two ways. The fact that it is spelled with a *vav* and also with a *vet*, gives us a clue as to how *vav* is pronounced. *Vet* ׀ is definitely pronounced as a *V*. This indicates that *vav* was also pronounced as a *V* in ancient Hebrew.

There are other similar examples from ancient Hebrew. The following example comes from the Mishnah, which is the collection of oral traditions embodying the authoritative interpretations of the Torah. Nehemia Gordon says this about the example.

Another later proof that *vet* and *vav* were interchangeable to ancient Hebrew speakers is found in the Mishnah (AD 200) relating to the spelling of the town of Yavneh. The *v* in *Yavneh* is sometimes spelled with a *vav* and sometimes with a *vet*. These spelling variants are found in the *Mishnah* RH 4:2 (Kaufmann MS. A50 76v) and *Avot* 4:4 (Kaufmann MS. A50 171v). Another example of the interchangeable *vav-vet* is found in the same MS where the word *geese* is sometimes spelled with both letters (Shabbat 24:3 and Hullin 12:2).¹⁸

Nehemia Gordon also gave an example from a Jewish poet who wrote in the sixth century.

Further proof that the ancient Jews pronounced *vav* with a *v* and not a *w* are found in some Jewish poetry from the 6th century AD by Elazar Kalir and Yanai Israel. For example, Kalir (who lived in Tiberias, Israel) rhymes (via alliteration or the repeating of consonantal sounds) the words *Levi* and *navi*. *Levi* he spells with a *vav* and *navi* he spells with a *vet*. What makes this poem so compelling is that he uses words containing the letter *vet* eight times, and the ninth time he uses a *vav* in place of a *vet* (in the word *Levi*). The rhyming in this poem would make no sense at all to have nine *v* sounds and then a *w* sound if *vav* were pronounced as a *w* instead of a *v* (MS Oxford, Bodleian 2714, fol52a) This poem is actually based on Jer 23:8–9, which prophesies the ingathering of the exiles. Similarly, Yanai in one of his poems rhymes *y'chaveh* (tell) with *ye'aveh* (swell). The former word is spelled with a *vav*, while the latter word is spelled with a *vet* (MS Cambridge University, Taylor-Schechter H17–4).¹⁹

All of this, along with the understanding of the translators long ago, gives strong evidence that the original sound of the *vav* is *V* not *W*. *That means Yahweh cannot be the right name of the creator, because it is misspelled!*

Yahweh, a Horrifying Connection

It was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that *Yahweh* became popular among Hebrew Scholars, most of whom were Gentiles. At first it was promoted by liberal scholars. Now evangelical scholars have embraced it to the point that John MacArthur approves its use in the Legacy Standard Bible. Where did it originate? The LSB Preface gives this answer.

The translation “*Yahweh*” is substantiated by scholarly reconstruction as well as by historical discussions in Theodoret, Epiphanius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Aquila. Consequently, those latter individuals affirm the usage of God’s covenant name in the period of the early church. Preserving this in translation foundationally records what is present in the OT text.²⁰

Several names are mentioned in this quote: Theodoret, Epiphanius, Clement, Origen, and Aquila. Who are they? Theodoret was a bishop and theologian of the school of Antioch. He lived from 393 to 458 AD. Epiphanius was a Christian bishop who lived from 310 to 403. Clement was the head and a teacher at the so-called Christian school of Alexandria, Egypt, a school that mixed Greek philosophy with Christianity. He lived from 150 to 215 AD. Aquila of Sinope was a second century Jewish scholar who translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek. Only a few fragments of this work remain. Finally, Origen was a scholar and theologian of Alexandria, who also taught in the school there. He lived from 184 to 254 AD. Some think he was one of the greatest Christian scholars

who ever lived, and others think he was the one of the greatest heretics. Bear in mind, all examples of God's name from these men come from Greek, not Hebrew.

A web article entitled *Yahweh, Jupiter of the Hosts (18th Century A.D.)*, lists the name of God given in Greek by several ancient sources from the twelfth century BC to the fifth century AD. In most cases, the name is $\text{I}\alpha\omega$, pronounced in English as Yao. Clement and Origen used that name. Epiphanius and Theodoret used that name, but they also used the name $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$, pronounced Yave or Yahveh (the Greek β , beta, has a V sound). This last name is the most significant historically. The above article says this about Epiphanius and Theodoret.

The debate between the names of Yahweh and Jehovah came to a climax in A.D. 1707, when the German Orientalist Adrian Reland reprinted the views of several scholars, saying Yahweh was more likely. Jehovah was considered to be an invention of the Middle Ages, but Yahweh could be seen in the writings of Epiphanius and Theodoret.

But Where Did It Come From?

Epiphanius (c. A.D. 375) told us that the name $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$ was used by certain Gnostics. The Gnostics were famous for combining the stories of Greek and Roman gods with Christianity.

$\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$ was used by the Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (c. A.D. 450). But he seems to have just gotten this pronunciation from Epiphanius' book *Against Heresies*. Later, Theodoret used Iabai as the pronunciation of YHVH.²¹

$\text{I}\alpha\beta\alpha\text{i}$ (Iabai had same meaning and pronunciation as $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$) can also be transliterated Yahveh, according to its sounds.

Later in history, another player entered the story. Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842) was a German Lutheran theologian, Biblical scholar, Biblical critic, and linguist in Halle, Germany. He has been credited with making the name Yahweh popular. He published a large Hebrew and Chaldee (Aramaic) lexicon in 1829. In it, he wrote a significant article on the name of God. In part, that article said the following with this author's comments in brackets.

Others, as Reland (decad. exercitatt. de vera pronunciatione nominis Jehova, Traj. ad Rh. 1707, 8.), **following the Samaritans**, suppose that $\text{Y}\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ [Yahveh or Yahweh] was anciently the true pronunciation, and they have an additional ground for the opinion in the abbreviated forms YHW [yahu] and YH [Yah]. Also those who consider that $\text{Y}\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$ [Yehovah] was the actual pronunciation (Michaelis in Supplem. p. 524), are not altogether without ground on which to defend their opinion. In this way can the abbreviated syllables YHW [Yeho] and YH [Yo], with which many proper names begin, be more satisfactorily explained.²² (author's emphasis)

"Reland" no doubt means Adriaan Reland (1676-1818) the noted Dutch orientalist who achieved fluency in Arabic, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages. It is remarkable that Gesenius says Reland and others followed *the Samaritans* in the pronunciation of, $\text{Y}\text{H}\text{W}\text{H}$, the name of God, as Yahweh. It is clearly stated that the Samaritans pronounced the name of God as Yahweh. Theodoret also said the Samaritans used Yahweh or $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$ in Greek.

Is that significant?

The Samaritan's are a people living in Israel and elsewhere in the world, who are descended from both Israelites and gentiles. In 722 BC, Assyrian armies swept into the northern tribes of Israel and conquered their capital, Samaria. According to 2 Kings 17, the King of Assyria took the Israelite people captive and removed them from the land to Halah and Habor and the cities of the Medes. He then brought gentile people from other lands and placed them in the cities of Israel, which was also called Samaria. Lions began to attack the new inhabitants and they concluded it was because they did not know the way of the "God of the land." So, the King of Assyria sent them an Israelite priest to teach them. The result was not good.

32 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel (2 Kings 17:32-34)

Even in Jesus' day, the Samaritans had an imperfect worship. When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman in John 4, she said to Him:

20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

*22 **Ye worship ye know not what:** we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. (John 4:20-22)*

The mountain the Samaritan woman was referring to was Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans had built a temple there about the time the Jews were restoring the temple and walls of Jerusalem beginning in 536 BC (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah). About 109 BC, the Samaritan temple was destroyed by a Jewish priest, John Hyrcanus. The ruins of that temple can be found there today.

Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) conquered the Persian empire and built an empire of his own. After Alexander died, his successors divided the empire into four parts. Two of Alexander's generals were significant for the following history of Israel and the Samaritans. Ptolemy took Egypt founding the Ptolemaic Empire and Seleucus Nicator took Syria, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia, founding the Seleucid Empire. Until the Romans gained control of Syria and Egypt and Israel, the Seleucid Empire and Egypt fought for control of Israel. Several times, control of Israel passed from one to the other.

In 175 BC, Antiochus IV Epiphanes ascended the throne of the Seleucid Empire. He was a vicious persecutor of the Jews. In 168 BC, Antiochus led a second, unsuccessful, campaign against Egypt. On his return trip to Syria, he paused through Judea, a land where the Seleucid Empire held power. While there, he committed great atrocities. He killed and tortured many of the Jewish people, he looted the treasures of the temple in Jerusalem, he sacrificed pigs on the altar of the temple in Jerusalem and on other altars he had built around the country, compelled the Jews to forsake the worship of God, and many other persecutions.

Hearing of these things and knowing that Antiochus was coming their way, the Samaritans decided to become proactive. According to Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD), the first century Jewish Historian, they made some decisions and sent a letter to Antiochus. This is what it said.

To king Antiochus the god, Epiphanes, a memorial from the Sidonians, who live at Shechem. Our forefathers, upon certain frequent plagues, and as following a certain ancient superstition, had a custom of observing that day which by the Jews is called the Sabbath. And when they had erected a temple at the mountain called Gerizim, though without a name, they offered upon it the proper sacrifices. Now, upon the just treatment of these wicked Jews, those that manage their affairs, supposing that we were of kin to them, and practiced as they do, make us liable to the same accusations, although we be originally Sidonians, as is evident from the public records. We therefore beseech thee, our benefactor and Savior, to give order to Apollonius, the governor of this part of the country, and to Nicanor, the procurator of thy affairs, to give us no disturbance, nor to lay to our charge what the Jews are accused for, since we are aliens from their nation, and from their customs; **but let our temple, which at present hath no name at all be named the Temple of Jupiter Hellenius.** If this were once done, we should be no longer disturbed, but should be more

intent on our own occupation with quietness, and so bring in a greater revenue to thee.²³ (Emphasis the Author's)

Previously, the Samaritan temple had no name, but at that time they requested the temple be named "The Temple of Jupiter Hellenius" (*Hellenius* referred to Greece). By this, they hoped to avoid the fate of the Jews. Antiochus granted them the request and they escaped the persecution he had heaped upon the Jews. However, an apostate people had now committed themselves to paganism.

Jupiter was the king of the gods of the Romans, the god of the sky and lightening. He was also called *Jove*. In Latin, Jupiter is spelled *Iuppiter* and *Jove* is spelled *Iove*. The name *Iuppiter* is a combination of *Iovis* (the genitive form of *Iove*) and *Pater*. Together they mean *Father Jove*. So, the word *Jupiter* means *Father Jove*. *Jove* (or *love* in Latin) is this god's name. In classical Latin, the *I* in *Iove* is pronounced like *y* in *yes*; the *o* is like *o* in *off*; and the *v* is pronounced like a *w*. *That makes the English transliteration of Iove to be Yahweh.*

The *W* sound does not exist in Greek. Therefore, *Iove* in Greek is $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$, which is transliterated *Yahveh*. Does this Greek name look familiar? It should. It is the word *Epiphanius* and *Theodoret* used for the name of God almighty.

Let's put the facts together.

1. *Epiphanius* and *Theodoret* said the name of God in Greek is $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$, *Yahveh*. Where did this name come from? Did it come from Hebrew? No, it did not.
2. *Gensenius* said *Reland* was following the Samaritans in the use of the name, *Yahweh*. *Theodoret* also said it came from the Samaritans. The Samaritans, not the Jews, used it before *Theodoret* or *Epiphanius*. Did the Samaritans get the name from Hebrew or some other source?
3. In 168 BC, the Samaritans named their temple "The Temple of Jupiter Hellenius." They embraced the name of *Jupiter*, the King of the gods.
4. *Jupiter's* name in Latin is *Iove*, pronounced *Yahweh*.
5. *Jupiter's* name in Greek is $\text{I}\alpha\beta\epsilon$, pronounced *Yahveh* and in Latin *Yahweh*. This is the very name embraced by *Epiphanius* and *Theodoret* and modern scholars following the example of the Samaritans.

This connection implies some very scary things. First, it implies that the word *Yahweh* does not come from Hebrew, but rather from Latin and Greek. Second, this Latin and Greek name, *Yahweh*, is the name of *Jupiter*. Finally, it is not the name of God, but, in the final analysis, it is the name of a pagan god.

If this connection is correct, and I think it is ...

The LSB has replaced God's name in the Old Testament with the name of a pagan god!

The LSB Old Testament Disconnect

Is Jesus God or is He A god? When one studies the King James Bible, there is no question that Jesus is God. One simple verse settles that question. "God was manifest in the flesh... (1 Tim. 3:16). But, the LSB obscures that verse. "He who was manifested in the flesh ..." (1 Tim. 3:16 LSB). However, the problem is worse than that in the LSB.

John MacArthur and the LSB translators decided to change the centuries old practice of translating the Hebrew name of God, *Jehovah*, as *LORD*. They chose to transliterate the name by using *Yahweh*. However, *Yahweh* is the only name they used. None of the other references to God were transliterated, such as *Elohim* (God), *El* (God), *El-shaddai* (God Almighty), and *Adonai* (Lord). All of these were translated with the English words *God* or *Lord*. Also, they do not use *Yahweh* any place *God's* name is found in the New Testament. In *Matthew 3:3* there is an exact quote from *Isaiah 40:3* in the KJB, although the LSB changed it slightly. "Prepare the way for *Yahweh* ..." (Is. 40:3 LSB) "Make ready the way of the *LORD* ..." (Mat. 3:3 LSB). In *Isaiah 40:3* the word is *Yahweh*. But, in *Matthew 3:3* they used *LORD* instead. That doesn't seem very consistent. The real problem is worse than that.

The KJB does it differently, of course. Most of the time the sacred name of God is used in the Old Testament, the KJB translates it LORD with capital letters. In the New Testament, Jesus is consistently called the Lord: “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Cor. 12:3). This automatically connects Him to the LORD of the Old Testament.

In the LSB, that connection is lost. The LSB Old Testament calls God Yahweh and the LSB New Testament calls Jesus Lord (*not* capital letters). In the LSB, 1 Corinthians 12:3 says, ‘no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.’ In Matthew 3:2 in the LSB, the word LORD is spelled with all capitals indicating it is the sacred name. However, Jesus is called Lord, but *not* in all capitals. This clearly disconnects Jesus with the God of the Old Testament. This disconnect is exacerbated, perhaps explained, in John 1, when Jesus is called “the only begotten God” (John 1:18). In the LSB, Jesus is not the God of the Old Testament. He is a lesser god begotten by the God of the Old Testament. Not only is this Gnosticism, but *this is the exact doctrinal position of the heretical cult who say they are Jehovah’s witnesses and are not.*

This article was taken from the author’s booklet, *The LSB and Other Unusual Questions*, available through www.theoldpathspublications.com. Header photo: Great Isaiah Scroll QIsa example of damage col 12-13.jpg
Wikipedia Public Domain jb344tul

Notes

¹ User Jb344tul. Wikipedia. Photo of Great Isaiah Scroll facsimile, showing columns 12-13 (chapter 14-16). Licensed under Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication. Accessed 2022.

² Istanbul Archaeology Museum. Gezer calendar close up.jpg. Wikipedia. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en>. Photo changed to grayscale. Accessed Apr. 2022.

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¹¹ *Evidence ...*

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