

Ridiculous Word Pictures / Hebrew Word Pictures, by Nehemiah Gordon

I have been asked to prove that Hebrew word-pictures are utter nonsense, that the pictures represent sounds and not ideas. I could point you to ANY grammar of the Hebrew language and it will confirm this. However, I would be happy to prove it. Take even the simplest example and you can see the word-pictures don't work. Aleph-Bet [AV-father] = bull of the house > strong one of the house > father. Makes sense, right? The only problem is switch around the letters and you get Bet-Aleph [BA] = arrive, enter. Is that the bull entering the house? LOL!

The biggest problem with the word-pictures is they are entirely arbitrary. You can make them say whatever you want them to say. The most ludicrous word-picture I have ever heard is that if you read Yod-He-Vav-He backwards, you get "Behold the nail, behold the hand". Now why in the world would you read it backwards?! On top of that, Vav actually means "hook", but "hook" does not fit the theology of those creating word-pictures, so messianics imbue it with the meaning "nail". This is a major flaw of the word-pictures.

To make word-pictures work messianics imbue each letter with numerous meanings. Originally, the Hebrew letters were pictures that represented sounds, not ideas. The Hebrew letters were pictures of one simple thing. However, look at any modern list of word-pictures and you will find all kinds of meanings attached to each letter that have no basis in reality.

I created a word-picture myself of the name Yeshua using these lists published by some of the top teachers in the Hebrew Roots movement: Yod – hand; Shin – tooth, destruction; bet – house, became man; ayin – eye, judgment. This is utterly absurd because where do you get Shin meaning "destruction" or Ayin meaning "judgment"? Where in the entire Hebrew language do you get Bet meaning "Became man"? However, I don't need to prove my case, I can just neatly copy the meanings from the lists published by other people who are "experts" in word-pictures. Based on these brilliant teachers we can safely say that Yeshua means: "The hand of destruction that became man to bring judgment." If we really want to get into the Sod level of interpretation, we can point out that Shin is the first letter in "Satan" and conclude that Yeshua really is: "The hand of Satan that became man to bring judgment." Is this totally offensive not to mention utterly ridiculous? That's what "behold the nail, behold the hand" sounds like to Jews! In fact, if you want to guarantee that a Jew will either laugh at you or be offended, tell him Yod-He-Vav-He is really a cipher for Jesus because if you read it BACKWARDS it means, "Behold the nail, behold the hand." Now prove to me that Yeshua does not mean "The hand of destruction that became man to bring judgment".

Good luck! Ridiculous use of Hebrew grammar: <https://menashedavid1.wordpress.com/aleph-%d7%90-tav-%d7%aa/>

<https://menashedavid1.wordpress.com/aleph-8-tav-7/ridiculous-word-pictures/>

Paleo-Yahweh, by Nehemia Gordon

One of the great puzzles of our times is the correct pronunciation of the name of our heavenly Father YHVH. Many scholars insist the true name is Yahweh but the Anchor Bible Dictionary admits this is nothing more than a "scholarly guess". Most investigators dismiss the form Yehovah even though it has been preserved in the Masoretic text, the Hebrew version of the Tanach accepted by all Jews throughout the world. It is usually argued that Yehovah is nothing more than the name YHVH with the vowels of Adonai. But in reality YHVH with the vowels of Adonai (A-O-A) would be Yahovah not Yehovah (the "i" at the end of Adonai is not a vowel in Hebrew).

Recently I was presented with a novel theory that the true name is Yahuwah. The proof for this theory, I was told, is that this is how the name was pronounced in "Paleo-Hebrew". For those not familiar with this term, the Paleo-Hebrew script is the earliest known form of the Hebrew alphabet. When the Jews came back from Babylonia around 516 BCE they gradually began to replace Paleo-Hebrew with the Aramaic script. By the 3rd century BCE Paleo-Hebrew was only used for Torah scrolls and most day-to-day writing took place in the Aramaic script. Hebrew writing to this day still uses a form of that Aramaic script.

Paleo-Hebrew appears as late as 135 CE on Jewish coins, but other than this ceremonial use it all but disappeared. By the 3rd century CE Paleo-Hebrew was but a distant cultural memory and the Rabbis were no longer even sure whether the Paleo-Hebrew or the Aramaic script was the original Hebrew alphabet. The Babylonian Talmud contains an almost comical discussion in which the Rabbis debate this very question. In the Talmudic, the Aramaic script is called "Assyrian Script" and Paleo-Hebrew is called "Hebrew Script". The names of these two scripts, "Assyrian" and "Hebrew" should have been a clue as to which was the original Hebrew writing system. Nevertheless the Rabbis concluded in their profound wisdom that Moses actually wrote the Torah in the Assyrian script!

It would be another 1000 years until Paleo-Hebrew was rediscovered. In 1267 a Rabbi named Moses ben Nachman or "Nachmanides" was banished from Spain for defending the Jewish faith. Nachmanides made his way to the Land of Israel eventually settling in Jerusalem where he came across an ancient Jewish coin inscribed with strange letters. With the help of a Samaritan, Nachmanides was able to decipher the coin and discovered that the strange script was none other than Paleo-Hebrew. Despite the Talmud's conclusion about the Assyrian script being older, Nachmanides theorized that Paleo-Hebrew was in fact the original Hebrew writing system. His theory was confirmed in the 19th century when archaeologists began to find Hebrew inscriptions from First Temple times all of which were written in Paleo-Hebrew.

Paleo-Hebrew is not a language, it is a "script". Even when Hebrew was written out in the Aramaic script, it was still Hebrew not Aramaic. In theory one could write out any language in the script of another language without changing the meaning. For example, I could write, "hakalbah sheli meod yafah". Even though these four words are written out in English script, they are still Hebrew words. Of course, the problem with writing out Hebrew words in English script is that English does not have all of the sounds that exist in Hebrew. However, when the

Jews returned from Babylonian it was relatively easy for them to replace Paleo-Hebrew with the Aramaic script because both have the same twenty-two letters. This is because historically-speaking the Aramaic script itself developed out of the Paleo-Hebrew script. In modern terms we can think of the Aramaic script as a Hebrew "font" based on the original Hebrew alphabet. The fact that Paleo-Hebrew is original can be seen in the names of the letters. For example, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the first letter of the alphabet is called "aleph" which literally means "ox". But in Paleo-Hebrew the aleph actually looks like an ox whereas in the Aramaic script it does not.

Even though the Torah was originally written in the Paleo-Hebrew script, changing it to the Aramaic script did not change the meaning of a single word nor did it change the pronunciation of a single letter. This is analogous to taking an old English book printed in a Gothic font and re-printing it in a modern English font. The words would have the same meaning and the change in font would not affect how the words are pronounced. Because Paleo-Hebrew is simply a Hebrew font (albeit the original one), there is no such thing as a "Paleo-Hebrew pronunciation". The name YHVH was not "pronounced" in Paleo-Hebrew it was "written" in Paleo-Hebrew. Now there may be some historical question as to how Hebrew was originally pronounced, but this has nothing to do with the script used.

When it comes to the pronunciation of any ancient language there is always a degree of uncertainty. No one has an audio recording of how the ancient Israelites spoke so the only source for Hebrew pronunciation is the living linguistic tradition preserved by the Jewish people. The problem is that different Jewish communities throughout the world pronounce Hebrew differently. For example, some Jewish communities traditionally pronounce the Hebrew letter vav as V while others pronounce it as W. There is no way to know which of these pronunciations is more original and in fact it is possible that both are original! We know that there were different dialects of ancient Hebrew with vastly different pronunciations. The book of Judges tells the story of the battle between Jephthah and the Ephraimites. According to Judges 12:6 Jephthah's men were able to identify the fleeing Ephraimite soldiers based on their unique pronunciation of Hebrew. It is very possible that the different pronunciations of Hebrew by Jewish communities throughout the world preserve different dialects of Hebrew. This means that some ancient Israelites may have said V while others said W.

Some of those searching for the original pronunciation of the name YHVH cite evidence from ancient Akkadian inscriptions. If there is doubt about the original pronunciation of Hebrew, the doubt is a hundred-fold when it comes to ancient Akkadian. While Hebrew survived as a ceremonial language among the Jewish people, Akkadian was completely forgotten for 2000 years. Akkadian was deciphered in the 19th century but the precise pronunciation has never been anything more than pure conjecture based on similarities the language has to Hebrew, Arabic, and other Semitic languages.

Using ancient Greek as a source for the pronunciation of the Name is not much better than using Akkadian. There are no less than three surviving pronunciation traditions for ancient Greek. To make matters worse, the ancient Greeks themselves undoubtedly had trouble pronouncing Hebrew words. When it came to Hebrew, the Greeks were "foreigners" and they totally botched

the language as can be seen from the hundreds of Hebrew names written out in Greek letters in the Septuagint. For example, the Greeks Septuagint writes out the Hebrew name "Moshe" as "Mo-u-ses". The name YHVH must have been particularly difficult because ancient Greek did not have consonants equivalent to Y, H, or V/W which make up the name YHVH. It was a lost cause for the Greeks to pronounce the name YHVH the way an Israelite would.

From the evidence I have seen the most reliable source is still the Masoretic text which preserves the authentic Hebrew version of the Tanakh. But at the end of the day, there is some degree of uncertainty and we should not be dogmatic about something for which there is uncertainty. Whether one pronounces the name as Yehovah, Yahweh, or Yihweh it seems to me that it is the intention that matters. Our heavenly Father knows that when we call on his name, whether we pronounce it correctly or not, that we are calling upon him. As far as I am concerned, it makes no difference whether you say potayto or potahto as long as you do not say "spud"!

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