

The Pronunciation of the Name

by Nehemia Gordon

One of the effects of the ban on the name is that the exact pronunciation has become obscured. For nearly a thousand years the name was not used in daily worship and today we are faced with the question of how to pronounce it. Some of the better-known suggestions are Yahweh and Jehovah. But why the confusion and what is the true pronunciation of the name?

The problem with the pronunciation of the name stems from the fact that the Hebrew language records vowels and consonants with two separate and distinct sets of symbols. The consonants are written as letters and the vowels as dots and dashes. For example the word *yeled* יָלֵד "child" is written with the consonants *yld* ילד and the vowels *e e* יֵ. When it comes to the name it is widely believed that the vowels were systematically replaced with the vowels of the word *Adonai* (Lord). So modern scholars deliberately ignore the vowels of YHVH which are actually written in the Hebrew text of Scripture and attempt to reconstruct what the "original" vowels were based on all kinds of external arguments and speculations. As a result, scholars arrive at different conclusions as to how the name was originally pronounced. One of the most popular theories is that the name was pronounced Yahweh and there is a virtual scholarly consensus concerning this name. However, this consensus is not based on decisive proof. The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* explains: "The pronunciation of *yhw* as Yahweh is a scholarly guess."¹ If "Yahweh" is a wild guess, what do we really know about how the name was pronounced? And what of the argument that the vowels of YHVH in the Hebrew text are really the vowels of *Adonai* as scholars universally claim?

Contrary to popular belief the name YHVH itself has not been suppressed from the written text of Scripture. In fact, the consonants of the name YHVH appear some 6828 times in the Hebrew text of Scripture. But what of the vowels? Are they really the vowels of *Adonai*? To understand this problem we must consider an ancient Hebrew scribal practice called Kere-Qetiv, "the read (*Qere*) and the written (*Ketiv*)". *Qere-Ketiv*

¹ "Yahweh", *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, D.N. Freedman, et al, (eds.), New York 1992, vol. 6, p.1011

occurs when a certain word is written in Scripture one way (*Ketiv*), but a note in the margin of the biblical text indicates that it is to be read as if it were written another way (*Qere*). For example, in Gen 8:17 we find the word הוצא *hotsie* ("take out"). In the manuscripts of Scripture this word is marked with a small circle over it which refers the reader to a note in the margin. The note in the margin says "היצא קרי" "read it *haytze*". So הוצא *hotsie* is written in Scripture with a Vav but the marginal note says to read it היצא *haytse* with a Yod. As in most cases of *Qere-Ketiv* the marginal note does not change the meaning of the verse, since both *hotsie* and *haytse* mean "take out, remove". So why read a word differently than how it is written if it does not change the meaning? Apparently, many of the *Qere-Ketivs* were formed when the Temple scribes compared two or three ancient manuscripts of Scripture. The scribes found slight differences between the manuscripts and left one form of the word in the body of Scripture while the other they recorded in the margin. The significance of *Qere-Ketiv* for the question of the divine name is that the *Ketiv*, the form written in the body of Scripture, is always written with the vowels of the *Qere*, the way the word is read. In the example above the word is written הוצא with the consonants of *hotsie* הוצא but the vowels of *haytse* היצא!² The argument concerning the name is that YHVH has the consonants of the name but the vowels of *Adonai* and this is presented as fact in every introduction to Biblical Hebrew and every scholarly discussion of the name.

There are two problems with this scholarly consensus. The first is that in all the other instances of *Qere-Ketiv*, the word which is read differently than the way it is written is marked by a circle in the biblical manuscripts. The circle refers the reader to a marginal note that says "read it such and such". So in the instance of the name we would expect there to be a circle over the word YHVH with a marginal note instructing us "read it *Adonai*" But no such note exists! YHVH appears 6828 times in the Hebrew text of Scripture but it is never identified as a *Qere-Ketiv* by either a scribal circle or a marginal note. In response to this scholars insist that YHVH is a so-called *Qere Perpetuum*. They claim that when a word is always read differently than the way it is written the scribal

² It is worth noting that in most modern printings of Scripture the word is written in the body of Scripture with no vowels while the *Qere* is written in the margin with its own vowels. This modern method is a deliberate departure from the ancient scribal practice.

note is omitted. Now it is true that in such instances that the scribal note is sometimes left out. But in the other instances of *Qere Perpetuum* the scribal note appears sometimes and is omitted other times for brevity. Yet nowhere in Scripture is there an instance of *Qere Perpetuum* in which the word written one way but read another way *always* lacks a scribal note. If we were to apply the *Qere Perpetuum* rule to YHVH it would be unique in this class of Qere-Ketiv since it *never* has a scribal note saying "read it *Adonai*", not once in the 6828 times the word appears.

The second problem with the claim that YHVH has the vowels of *Adonai* is quite simply that it does not! The vowels of *Adonai* אָדֹנָי are A-O-A (hataf patach - cholam - *kamats*). In contrast, the name YHVH is written יהוה with the vowels ^e---A (sheva - no vowel - *kamats*). Now in every other instance of Qere-Ketiv, the Ketiv, written in the body of Scripture, has precisely the vowels of the Qere, while the Qere itself is written without vowels in the margin of the biblical manuscript. But the vowels of YHVH are clearly different from the vowels of *Adonai*! YHVH is written Y^eHVaH יהוה but with the vowels of *Adonai* it should have been Yahovah יהוה!

How is it that the scholarly consensus missed this factual evidence? Up until recently printers of the text of Scripture have freely modified the name YHVH. In many printings of the Hebrew Scriptures YHVH is written with no vowels at all while in other printings it is in fact written as Yahovah with the vowels of *Adonai*. However, when we check the earliest complete manuscripts of Scripture we find that YHVH is written Y^eHVaH. This is how YHVH is written in the Ben Asher manuscripts (Aleppo Codex and the Leningrad Codex³) which preserve the most accurate *complete* text of Scripture. Modern printings which accurately reproduce the ancient manuscripts, such as *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS), and *Hebrew University Bible Edition* (HUB) also contain the form Y^eHVaH. Today we do not need to rely on these printing since the important Bible manuscripts have been published as lithographic editions with photographs reproducing the actual pages of the manuscripts themselves. In these photographs it is clear that the

³ Leningrad Codex is also known as LB19a, and is now available as, *The Leningrad Codex; A Facsimile Edition*, D.N. Freedman (editor), Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1998.

name YHVH is written repeatedly as Y^eHVaH and not with the vowels of *Adonai* as YaHoVaH.

Before considering the vowels of Y^eHVaH actually documented in the text of Scripture, we must briefly consider the scholarly consensus concerning Yahweh. As already mentioned, scholars disregarded the vowels of YHVH in the biblical manuscripts and look to outside sources to try and recover the original pronunciation of the name. The primary source for this reconstruction is the writings of Theodoret of Cyrus, a so-called Church Father who lived in the 5th Century CE. Theodoret writes concerning the name YHVH:

"The Samaritans call it IABE while the Jews AIA"⁴

The form AIA (pronounced A-Yah) indicates that the Jews called God by the abbreviated form of His name יה *Yah* which appears numerous times throughout Scripture. The form *Yah* follows an ancient practice of taking the first and last letter of a word to express an abbreviation. So the first and last letters of YHVH produce the abbreviation *Yah*.⁵ But how did the Jews get AIA from *Yah*? One of the characteristics of late Hebrew is the increase of *prosthetic Aleph*. *Prosthetic Aleph* is an aleph added to the beginning of a word in order to ease pronunciation. For example, in post-Biblical Hebrew, the common biblical word מוֹל *t'mol* becomes *etmol* מוֹלֵא with a prosthetic Aleph.⁶ The *e-* of *etmol* simply eases pronunciation. The *prosthetic Aleph* existed in Biblical times and thus the forms **rba* (four) and **tsba* (finger) were pronounced *arba* and *etsba* even in the time of the Bible. But in post-biblical times prosthetic Aleph became rampant and could be added to almost any word. So AIA is simply *Yah* with a *prosthetic Aleph* added to the beginning of the word to ease pronunciation. Theodoret of Cyrus is telling us that the Jews of his day called God by the name A-Yah.

By Theodoret's time the pronunciation of the name was supposedly suppressed among Jews by the ban of Abba Saul. Because of this scholars give more weight to the

⁴ καλοῦσι δὲ αὐτὸ Σαμαρεῖται IABE, Ἰουδαῖοι δὲ AIA. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Question 15* in Exodus 7

⁵ This type of abbreviation is very common in Greek. For example, KE is a very common abbreviation for Kourie, *Lord*.

⁶ The forms מוֹלֵא even appears occasionally in the Tanach but in post-biblical Hebrew becomes the norm.

pronunciation of the Samaritans reported by Theodoret. Theodoret says that the Samaritans pronounce the name YHVH as IABE (pronounced Ya-be). Now if we were to translate this directly back into Hebrew we would get something like יהֶבֶ Yabeh. This example highlights some of the problems with using Greek transcriptions to precisely reconstruct Hebrew pronunciation. First, we must observe that ancient Greek did not have an H sound in the middle of words. So the first H in YHVH, whatever the vowels attached to it, would be dropped by the Greek. Secondly, Greek did not have a W or a V sound. So the third letter of the divine name must also be dropped or distorted by the Greek. Finally the vowels of ancient Greek were much different than the Hebrew vowels system. Biblical Hebrew had 9 vowels which do not have exact correspondents vowels in Greek. For example, Hebrew's *vocal Sheva* (pronounced like a short *i* in "bit") has no equivalent in ancient Greek. So whatever Theodoret of Cyrus heard from the Samaritans, his mission of transcribing the name in Greek was hopeless.

What of the form IABE? Most scholars claim that the B in IABE is a distortion of a Hebrew Vav and that the first He of YHVH dropped because Greek does not have a H sound in the middle of a word. As a result most scholars translate the Samaritan IABE back into Hebrew as *Yahweh* יהוה. This is the "scholarly guess" of which the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* spoke. The reason this pronunciation is given so much credence is that it is assumed that the Samaritans were not yet under the ban of the Rabbis and still remembered how to pronounce the name in the time of Theodoret. But is this the best explanation of the Samaritan IABE? It turns out that the ancient Samaritans called God יהֶבֶ *Yafeh* meaning, *the beautiful one*. Now in Samaritan Hebrew the letter Pe is often replaced by B. So what probably happened is the Samaritans told Theodoret that God is called *Yafeh*, "the beautiful one", but in their corrupt pronunciation of Hebrew it came out as *Yabe*. This seems supported by the fact that the Samaritans did in fact adopt the ban on the name, perhaps even before the Jews. Instead of pronouncing the name YHVH the Samaritans call God שֶׁמָּה *sh^ema*. Now *sh^ema* is usually understood as an Aramaic form of *hashem* meaning "the name", but we cannot help but observe the similarity between the Samaritan *sh^ema* and the pagan אֲשֶׁמָּה *ashema*, which according to 2Ki 17:30 was one of the gods worshipped by the Samaritans when they first came to the Land of Israel

in the 8th century BCE.⁷ So already c.700 BCE the Samaritans called upon Ashema and not YHWH.

The scholarly consensus adds a second proof to support the alleged Samaritan pronunciation of Yahweh/ IABE. They point out the connection between the name of YHVH and the root HYH to be. This connection is explicitly made in Ex 3:13-14, where we read,

"(13) And Moses said to God, Behold when I am coming to the children of Israel and say 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you', and they say to me, 'What is His name?', what should I tell them? (14) And God said to Moses, *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* (I am that which I am), and He said, thus shall you say to the children of Israel, '*Ehyeh* has sent me to you'." (Ex 3:13-14)

So Moses asks YHWH what name he should give the Israelites when they asked about God. YHWH replies that Moses should say that he was sent by *Ehyeh* which is a verb from the root HYH, *to be*, meaning "I am". Immediately after declaring Himself to be *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*, YHVH further explains that His eternal name is YHVH:

"(15) And God said further to Moses, thus shall you say to the Children of Israel: 'YHWH the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you, this is my name forever, this is my mention for every generation'" (Ex 3:15)

But how can YHVH be related to HYH, *to be*? In Hebrew the letters Vav ו and Yod י are *weak* letters which are sometimes interchangeable with one another. For example, the word *yeled* יָלֵד (*child*) has a variant form *valad* וָלָד in which the usual *Yod* is replaced with a *Vav*. We find a similar replacement in the root HYH *to be*. The present tense of the verb HYH *to be* is הֵוֶה *hoveh* (Ecc 2:22) with the *Yod* being replaced with a *Vav*. This replacement seems to happen especially in names. Thus in Hebrew *Eve* is called חַוָּה *Chayah*, "because she was the mother of all that lives (יָ חַיָּה)" (Gen 3:20). So in Eve's

⁷ We cannot help but suspect that the origin of *hashem* is the pagan אַשְׁמָה *ashema*, one of the original gods worshipped by the Samaritans mentioned in 2Ki 17:30.

name the Yod of *chay* יָחַי is replaced by a Vav of *Chavah* חַוָּה. We should not conclude that Vav and Yod are always interchangeable but rather when a Hebrew root has a V/Y in it, sometimes the other letter can make an appearance in its stead. So linguistically there is no problem with YHVH being derived from HYH *to be*. This is why YHVH presents Himself to Moses as *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* (I am that which I am), which is a veiled allusion to His name YHVH presented in the following verse.

Building on Ex 3:14-15, modern scholars argue that the name YHVH must be the *piel* or form of the verb HYH, *to be*. In other words, they understand YHVH as a simple verb meaning "He that causes to be". Now the *piel* or *hifil* form of YHVH, claim the scholars, is Yahweh יְהוָה. However, this explanation is very problematic. The reason has to do with the Hebrew verbal system. Hebrew has seven verbal patterns called *conjugations*. Each conjugation takes a given root and changes it slightly, thereby imbuing the root with a different shade of meaning. Some roots can be conjugated in all seven conjugations while others can only be conjugated in a few of the conjugations. In fact, most roots can only be conjugated in 3-4 conjugations while it is rare to find a root which is conjugated in all seven. This may sound arbitrary but this is simply the reality of Hebrew grammar. For example, the root Sh.B.R. in the Qal conjugation means "to break", in the *piel* conjugation "to smash", etc.. All in all the root Sh.B.R. can be conjugated in six of the seven conjugations. But it simply does not exist nor can it exist in the seventh conjugation (*hitpael*). Now the verb HYH, *to be*, from which the name YHVH derives, only exists in the 1st (qal) and 2nd (nifal) conjugations in Biblical Hebrew. This means that the scholarly assumption that YHVH is the *piel* or *hifil* form of HYH *to be* is impossible since this verb does not exist in those conjugations. In other words Yahweh is a non-existent verbal form in Biblical Hebrew. So why do modern scholars universally identify the name YHVH as some fictitious verb that defies the rules of Hebrew grammar? There is a twofold reason for this. Firstly, the non-existent pi'el or hif'il form would result in YHVH meaning "he that causes to be". This fits in perfectly with the theological preconceptions of modern scholars. Secondly, the *piel* or *hifil* form Yahweh fits in with the testimony of Theodoret concerning the Samaritan pronunciation of the name.

The attempt to reconstruct the vowels of YHVH by forcibly identifying it as an impossible pi'el or hif'il verb is hopeless for another reason. Most Hebrew names contain verbs in them. However, one of the characteristics of names is that the verbs which form part of the names do not follow the standard verbal patterns. For example, the name Nehemiah, in Hebrew N^cchemyah ("YHVH comforts"), contains two elements: the verb "N^cchem" (*he comforts*) and the name "yah" (abbreviation of YHVH). But the verb part of the name Nehemiah, "N^cchem", does not follow the standard verb pattern which would have been "Nichem". It is a rule of biblical Hebrew that when a verb is incorporated into a name its vowels are freely modified. Another example of this is the name Joshua, in Hebrew *Y^ehoshu'a* meaning "YHVH saves". Again this name contains two elements, the verb *yoshi'ia* ישיא meaning "he saves" and the name of God Y^cho- (short for YHVH). The verb *yoshi'a* (*he saves*) is modified when incorporated into the name Joshua/*Y^ehoshu'a*. The Yod of *yoshi'a* (*he saves*) drops and the vowels are completely modified creating the form *-shua*. The form *-shua* can only exist in a personal name while the form verbal form *yoshi'a* would be unusual in a name. Indeed, it is the norm for verbs to be modified when incorporated into names. So the name YHVH could easily contain the verbal root HYH without this dictating its vowels. The attempt to force a grammatical verb-form on a name goes against the rules of the Hebrew language.

We have seen that the scholarly consensus concerning Yahweh is really just a wild guess. At the same time we saw that the universally accepted "fact" that YHVH has the vowels of *Adonai* is factually untrue. The actual vocalization of the name YHVH in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts is Y^cHVaH. Clearly Y^cHVaH does not have the vowels of *Adonai*. But are these the actual vowels of the divine name? The first thing we may observe about the vowels of Y^cHVaH is that the vowel following the first *he* ה is missing. A fundamental rule of the Hebrew language is that a consonant in the middle of a word must be followed by either a vowel or a silent sheva. Now there are sometimes silent letters in the middle of a word that have no vowel or sheva (e.g. the Aleph in b^creshit בְּרֵאשִׁית). But this is never the case with a *he* ה in the middle of a word. In Biblical Hebrew, it is common for H to be silent at the end of a word, but there is no such thing as a silent *he* ה in the middle of a word. This means that by the rules of the Hebrew

language the first *he* ה in YHVH must have some vowel. So what happened to this missing vowel? Perhaps the answer can be found in another medieval scribal practice. When the biblical scribes wanted to omit a word they would remove its vowels. The medieval reader knew that when he came across a word without vowels that this was a word that was not to be read. It is possible that the medieval scribes omitted the vowel in the first *he* ה of Y^hHVaH to prevent the readers from reading the name out loud.

Another point worth noting is that in the Aleppo Codex, the most precise manuscript of the biblical text, the name YHVH gets the vowels Y^hhovih when it is juxtaposed to the word *Adonai*. It seems that the "i" (chiriq) in Y^hhovih is a reminder to the reader to read this word as Elohim (God), since reading it *Adonai* would result in *Adonai* twice in a row. However, this is not a genuine *Qere-Ketiv* in which the "written" form has all the vowels of the "read" form. Were this a *Qere-Ketiv* we would expect the vowels of YHVH to be changed to Y^hhowih הוהי (chataf segol - cholam - chiriq). Instead the vowels are Y^hhowih הוהי (sheva - cholam - chiriq). This seems to be a unique scribal practice which consists of changing a single vowel in order to remind the reader how to read the name YHVH. Now when YHVH stands by itself, it has the vowels Y^hh?vah, the solitary change to the vowels being that the vowel after *he* ה is dropped after the *He*. This prevents the reader from accidentally reading the name as it is written. In contrast, when YHVH stands next to *Adonai* the "a" (*kamats*) is changed to an "i" (chiriq) to remind the reader to read it Elohim.

What is significant about the form Y^hhovih is that there is nothing to prevent the reader from accidentally reading the name Y^hhovih. This form of the name has a full set of vowels and can be read like any other word in the Hebrew language. Now, for some reason the "Masoretic" scribes who copied Scripture in the Middle Ages were concerned about their readers pronouncing the word Y^hh?vah but not concerned at all about them accidentally pronouncing the name Y^hhovih. This must be connected to the ban on the name which the Masoretic scribes clearly accepted. The only reason the Masoretic scribes would have left the form Y^hhovih without dropping the vowel after the *he* ה is because they knew this was not the true pronunciation of the divine name. In contrast,

when they saw Y^h?vah they knew this to be the true pronunciation of the name and therefore suppressed the middle vowel.

But what is the missing middle vowel in Y^hvah יהוה? Comparing the two forms Y^h?vah and Y^howih it appears that the missing vowel was "o" (cholam). This means that the Masoretic scribes knew the name to be Y^hovah and suppressed its pronunciation by omitting the "o". This is confirmed by the fact that the scribes actually forgot to suppress the vowel "o" in a number of instances. The way scribes copied ancient writings was to read the words either out loud or under their breath. The scribe sometimes made a mistake and wrote what he heard from his own lips, even if this differed from what he read with his eyes. This is a common mistake in modern English as well. When English speakers are writing quickly or typing they often write down "know" instead of "no" or "their" instead of "there". This is not due to ignorance since most people who make this mistake know full well the difference between these homonyms. Instead this is an error stemming from how the words sound. In the case of the divine name the scribe knew that the word YHVH sounded like Y^hovah and even though he was supposed to suppress the vowel "o" he left it in, in a few dozen instances. In the LenB19a Masoretic manuscript, the earliest complete Masoretic manuscript and the basis of renowned BHS edition,⁸ the name is written Y^hovah 50 times out of a total of 6828. It is significant that no other vowel besides "o" was "accidentally" inserted into the divine name.

There is other evidence that points to the missing vowel in Y^h?vah being "o". Many Hebrew names incorporate part of the divine name as part of a compound name. For example, Y^hoshua (Joshua) means "YHVH saves" while Yeshayahu (Isaiah) also means "YHVH saves". We can see that the divine name when incorporated into other names is Y^ho- when it appears at the beginning of a name and -yahu at the end of the name. Proponents of the name as Yahweh often cite the ending form -yahu as proof of their pronunciation. There are two problems with this. Firstly, the divine element -yahu is not

⁸ BHS stands for *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, et al, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart 1967/77, 1983). To date BHS is the most precise printing of the Hebrew Scriptures only rarely deviating from the Leningrad Codex. The Leningrad Codex is also the basis for the *Biblia Hebraica Leningradensia* (edited A. Dotan, Hendrickson Publishers 2001) and is used in many other editions to fill in the missing portions of the Aleppo Codex (e.g. *Keter Yerushalayim*, edited Y. Ofer and M. Broyer, N. Ben-Zvi Printing Enterprises 2001).

consistent with the pronunciation Yahweh. Instead it might suggest some such pronunciation as Yahuvah but not Yahweh. In Hebrew there is even less similarity between *Yahweh* יהוה and יהו -*yahu*. *Yahweh* יהוה is spelled with a Hebrew vowel called *chataf patach* while יהו -*yahu* has the vowel *kamats*. These are two entirely differently vowels which in ancient times were pronounced completely different. The difference between these two vowels is like the difference between the "a" in *father* (chataf patach) and the "a" in *brawl* (so roughly *kamats* in ancient Hebrew). This is only a mistake that an English or German speaker could make! Secondly, in the name YHVH, the letters YHW- are actually at the beginning of the name not the end. So if we look to names such as Joshua/ Isaiah as our model of reconstructing the pronunciation of the divine name we must choose the pattern Y^cho- which is at the beginning of these compound names, not the end. If we combine this piece of information with the form Y^ch[?]vah documented in the biblical text we get the form Y^chovah.

It is worth noting that the English *Jehovah* is quite simply an Anglicized form of Y^chovah. The main difference is that the English letter J has crept its way into the divine name. Of course, Hebrew does not have a J sound and the letter in Hebrew is Yod which is pronounced like English "Y". Another difference is that in the Masoretic text the name has the accent on the end of the word. So the name is really pronounced Y^chov**ah** with the emphasis on "vah". Pronouncing the name Y^ch**ov**ah with the emphasis on "ho" (as in English Jehovah) would quite simply be a mistake.

One question we must consider is how the Masoretes, the medieval scribes who copied the text of Scripture and suppressed the "o" in Y^chovah, could have known the true pronunciation of the name. After all, the ban on the name was supposedly in full force since the time of Abba Saul in the 2nd century CE. One of the things we know about the Masoretic scribes is that they were Karaites. We also know that there were two factions of Karaites, those that required the pronunciation of the name and those that forbade it. It is clear that the Masoretes belonged to the group that forbade the pronunciation of the name and this was why they suppressed the middle vowel from Y^chovah. At the same time they heard how the other Karaites pronounced the name so they knew how it was properly pronounced. The 10th century Karaite sage Kirkisani reports that the Karaites

who pronounced the name were based in Persia (Khorasan). Persia had been a major Jewish center ever since the 10 Tribes were exiled to the "cities of Media" (2Ki 17:6) and remained so up until the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. Because Persia was so far from the Rabbinical centers of Galilee and Babylonia, the Jews of Persia were protected from the Rabbinical innovations in the Mishnah and Talmud up until the 7th century CE. It was only when the Rabbis attempted to impose these innovations on the Jews of Persia in the 7th-8th centuries that the Karaite Movement rose up to ensure the preservation of the old ways. So it is not surprising that the Karaites of Persia preserved the correct pronunciation of the name from ancient times. It seems that the Masoretes suppressed the vowel "o" from the divine name to prevent their fellow Karaites from simply reading the name as it was written. Now when these Karaites read the Biblical text, they had to provide the vowel missing from the name themselves.