

# הקשר היהודי שלך

## Your Jewish Connection

Brought to you by the Lifelong Learning Committee – *Written by Linda S Trapasso*

### Do You Know Tetragrammaton?

So what is the Tetragrammaton (“four letters” in Greek)?

The [Collins English Dictionary](#) states that the [Hebrew](#) name for G-d, [revealed](#) to [Moses](#) on [Mount Sinai](#) ([Exodus 3](#)), consisted of the [four consonants](#) [Y H V H](#) (or [Y H W H](#)) and was/is regarded by [Jews](#) as too [sacred](#) to be [pronounced](#).

“This commandment refers spe-

**“Fear this glorious, awesome Name of G-d your Lord” - (Deuteronomy 28:58)**

cifically to the ten Hebrew names by which G-d is designated in the *Torah*. According to Jewish Law, the only time one is allowed to pronounce these names is during prayer or study, with the exception of one – the Tetragrammaton (the four-character name) – which is G-d’s highest emanation in creation. The only place where the Tetragrammaton was allowed to be pronounced as it is written was in the Temple in Jerusalem. It was pronounced by the priests in their daily blessing in the Temple, as well as ten times during the Yom Kippur service in the public confessions. There is a tradition that after Shimon the Saint died in 291 BCE, its use in the daily priestly bless-

ing was discontinued because the Divine Presence was no longer manifest in the Temple and the regular priests felt themselves unworthy. Only the High Priest continued to pronounce it in the Yom Kippur service but in a low voice so that it would be drowned out by the singing of the other priests and no one unworthy would learn it.” ([JewishAnswers.org](#))

“In the *Torah*, three names are used for the Divine Presence: א-ל-ה-י-ם – Elohim – G-d; ה' – YHVH – pronounced euphemistically as *Adonai*, and translated euphemistically as “The Lord,” or in more gender neutral terms, “The Eternal;” and א-ה-י-ה – *Ehyeh*, which is actually the first-person future tense of the verb “to be.” Of these, it is only the third which is new, as the first two are introduced in the Book of Genesis in G-d’s communication with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this first theophany [with Moses], G-d self-identifies as א-ה-י-ה א-ש-ר א-ה-י-ה – *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* – “I will be what I will be.” ‘ ([Union Temple](#))

From a different viewpoint, [Joel M. Hoffman](#), [The Jerusalem Post](#), wrote how Jews invented vowels and created the name of G-d. “...The Tetragrammaton is unique in ancient Hebrew, in that its pronunciation seems divorced from its spelling. It also seems to lack any plausible etymology, and is unattested in similar ancient languages. Now we

know why. The Hebrews paid homage to the vowel letters that made it possible to spread the word of G-d by using those letters to refer to G-d. IN SUM, the Hebrews modified the Phoenicians’ system by using three letters both as consonants and as vowels. They thus gave the world the alphabet. Then they used one of their vowels to create the names of their progenitors and their G-d. They used a combination of all three letters to create what would become the most important way of writing G-d’s name...”

No matter how you look at it, now you know Tetragrammaton.

Alan J Green, MD

Certified Mohel

מוהל מוסמך



22 Chester Street, Nashua NH 03064

603-440-3444

[www.mohelnh.com](http://www.mohelnh.com)