

# The Unspeakable Name of God in Kabbalah

Dear Chaverim,

The vowelized vocalization of the four-letter, Ineffable Name of God, the Shem HaMeforash, YHVH, was known *only* by the High Priest of the Temple in Jerusalem, and uttered by him only *once* each year, on Yom Kippur, and then, *only* in the Holy of Holies. So holy, so powerful was this secret name that anyone other than the High Priest who uttered it would die -- and even he could be struck down by God if he mispronounced it for some reason.

As a result, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies alone on Yom Kippur with a rope tied around one ankle; thus, in the event that he should be struck down by YHVH for mispronouncing the Shem HaMeforash, the secondary priests could pull him out of the room so that he could pass on the vocalization of the Name to one priest before he expired.

With the final destruction of the Temple and the resultant passing of the office of the Kohain Gadol (High Priest), the true vocalization of YHVH, the most-high "Name," was lost. Only the "High-Priest-To-Come," which is to say the Messiah, would know its true pronunciation and be authorized to speak it. Thus, Jesus prays to God, "I have made your Name known to the men you took from the world to give to me" (John 17:6) and uses his privileged knowledge of the Shem HaMeforash as proof of his Messianic office by declaring to his disciples, "The works I do *by my father's Name* are my witness [that I am the Messiah]" (John 10:25), and "Whatever you ask for *in my name* I will do" (John 14:13)

Viewed within this context, Sabbatai Zevi's "strange gesture" of publically uttering the forbidden YHVH can be seen as his proclamation that he was, indeed, the Chosen One of God, the Messiah of Israel and the world. The exact nature of his vocalization of the four vowels has been lost, or kept as a secret by the 300-year old Turkish "Donmeh," descendants of the families who followed Sabbatai into Islam over three centuries ago and continue to covertly worship him as the Messiah, while

overtly practicing Islam. (There are an estimated 10 to 15 thousand such Believers in the world today, mostly in the Levant, who are only recently beginning to surface as a "lost species" of Judaism.)

Nevertheless, there are numerous possible ways in which the Shem HaMeforash could have been vocalized by AMIRA"H -- and these, by tradition, were transmitted from the last Kohain Gadol to the great Kabbalists of his time, and from them to their successors down through history who preserved them in the ancient Kabbalistic amulets they prepared.

In the second post of this series, I will describe a number of these Secret Names of God preserved in Kabbalistic amulets down through the ages, many of which were used for "magical" purposes by so-called "Practical" Kabbalists -- practioners of the ancient, Left-Hand Path of Esoteric Judaism.

Raising up the Holy Sparks together,

Dear Chaverim,

In the first part of this series I discussed the background to the mystical and "practical" (i.e., magical) meaning of the Shem HaMeforash (Ineffable Name of God) and its secret transmission through the Kabbalah since its loss at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, and its subsequent passing of the institution of the Kohain Gadol, or High Priest, who was the only living person to know the true vocalization of the consonants, YHVH. Here, after giving a brief background, I will describe some of the possible Shem HaMeforashim proposed by Kabbalists.

## BACKGROUND

The Kabbalists have been searching for the Ineffable Name through the transmissions they have inherited from their predecessors over nearly two and a half millennia. As a result, they are able to put forward several Names of God of increasing complexity. Some of these names have been known since at least the first century, although in some instances both the origin and the source of the actual names themselves have disappeared from knowledge. (See *Hebrew Magic Amulets* by T. Schrire, Berman House, 1982.)

Various methods have been adopted by Kabbalists at different times to enable them to reconstruct and/or remember these lost Names of God. Some of these names, because of their great age, have acquired a certain degree of sanctity to Kabbalists, but the Rabbinate has never been prepared to accept them. Rashi, for example, the great commentator of the 11th century, and no sympathizer of Kabbalah, flatly states about at least two such elaborate names, "These they [the rabbis] did not explain to us!" (Kidushin 71a)

# ANCIENT RENDERINGS OF THE SHEM HAMEFORASH

## The Monogrammaton, or Single-Letter Name of God

This is usually the single-letter "Heh" (H) of the Hebrew alphabet. It has the gematria of 5, which corresponds to the heirosamos, or mystical wedding of God and Man. This is often found repeated five times, as HHHHH, which has the plus-one gematria of 26, or the sum of the Hebrew letters of the Tetragrammaton, YHVH. That is:

$[Y=10] + [H=5] + [V=6] + [H=5] = 26$

The other single-letter name of God is the Hebrew letter "Daled" (D), which has the gematria of 4 the alchemical number of wholeness which is also equal to the Hebrew word, "Avoh," meaning "I will come," spelled:

$[Aleph=1] + [Bait=2] + [Aleph=1] = 4$

## The Digrammaton

There are two such names, the first consists of the Hebrew letters Yud-Yud (YY), and the second of Yud-Heh (YH). "YY" has the gematria of 20, corresponding to the Hebrew word, Yadoh, "His hand;" and "YH" has the gematria of 15, corresponding to "bigdoh," or "His garment."

## The Trigrammaton

These are Yud-Yud-Yud (YYY), Yud-Vauv-Yud (YVY) and Vauv-Heh-Vauv (VHV). The first has the gematria of 30 = Yadayin ("His hands"); the second is 26 = YHVH; and the third is 17 = Chait ("sin").

## The Substituted Tetragrammaton

There are three Kabbalistic methods for substituting one Hebrew letter for another to arrive at the same but different rendering of a word, phrase or sentence. These are Notarikon, Temurah-Atbash, Temurah-Albam, Temurah-Avgad, and, as we have indicated above, Gematria.

**Notarikon.** The initial letters of each word in a sentence, phase, paragraph etc. alone are used. This "compresses" the text and, thus, even adds to its mystical power.

**Temurah** There are basically three forms of Temurah: "Atbash," in which the first letter is substituted for the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the second for the next-to-last, the third for the third-from-the-last, and so forth; "Albam" in which the first Hebrew letter is replaced by the 12th, the second by the 13th, etc.; and "Avgad" in which each letter in the Hebrew alphabet is replaced by the one succeeding it so that, in English for example, a=b, b=c, c=d, etc. There are other forms of Temurah, such "Aich B'Char," but these are too complicated to describe here. Thus, by "Atbash" the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, becomes MEM-TZADI-PEH-TZADI; by "Albam" it becomes SHIN-AYIN-PEH-AYIN; and by "Avgad" it becomes KUPH-CHET-VAUV. The gematriot for these three Temurim are, respectively: 300, 250, and 34 -- which correspond to the Hebrew words Yetzir ("Formed," as in Sefer Yetzirah), Nair ("Lamp", as in Nathan of Gaza's pseudonym, "The Holy Lamp") and B'Lev ("The Heart," as in Yakov Leib Frank).

\* \* \* \* \*

In the next post of this series, I'll describe the 8-, 12-, 14-, 42-, 45-, and 72-letter Names of God and their Kabbalistic significance.

Raising up the Holy Sparks together,  
Dear Chaverim,

In my last post, I described the origin and esoteric meanings of the One-, Two-, Three- and Four-Letter names of God in Kabbalah -- that is, "H", "Y-Y" ("Y-H"); "Y-Y-Y" ("Y-V-Y", "V-H-V"); and "M-Tz-P-Tz" ("Sh-Ay-P-Ay," "K-V-Z-V"), respectively. Here I will describe the Eight-Letter name and its construction.

Before that, however, let me briefly explain why it was and is important for Kabbalists to know the true Shem HaMeforash. Imagine that you have entered a room full of people and you see your new friend George standing way across the room, with his back to you. You want to get his attention so you call to him, but having forgotten his name for the moment, you shout, "Harry!" He doesn't turn around. So you try, "Bob!" Still no response. You go through every name you can think of until you finally shout, "George!" Sure enough, he turns around and waves to you.

BACKGROUND

This mystical name of God is spelled with the Hebrew letters, YUD-ALEPH-HEH-DALED-VAUV-NUN-HEH-YUD (YAHDEVNHY). It is to be found particularly in Kurdistan where it is used extensively in metallic Kabbalistic amulets. (See *Hebrew Magic Amulets*, T. Schrire, Behrman House, 1966.) It is always written in large and beautiful Ashuri characters in contrast to the rest of the amulet's inscription which is usually in Kurdistani local script.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF THE EIGHT-LETTER NAME

The Eight-Letter Name of God is a combination of the Hebrew letters in the Tetragrammaton, YHVH, alternating with the four letters of the Hebrew word for "Lord," or "Adonai," spelled ALEPH-DALED-NUN-YUD. Thus, when combined, we have the name:

1 = YUD [Tetragrammaton]

2 = ALEPH [Adonai]

3 = HEH [T]

4 = DALED [A]

5 = VAUV [T]

6 = NUN [A]

7 = HEH [T]

8 = YUD [A]

#### MYSTICAL MEANING OF THE EIGHT-LETTER NAME

This powerful name can be pronounced, "Yad On-Hey" or "Yad V'Heh," which can be taken to mean "Hand of God." It is often used in combination with the even-more powerful 22-letter Kabbalistic name, "Anaktam Pastam Paspasim Deyonsim" (which I will discuss in a later lecture) as a protective amulet against the Evil Eye and the dangers of Lilith, the Mother of Demons, during childbirth. The holiness of this name is said to be increased by virtue of its gematria of 91, which is equal to that of the Hebrew words Omain ("Amen") and HaElohim ("The God[s]").

I'll discuss the other Kabbalistic names of God, and their meanings, in subsequent posts.

Raising up the Holy Sparks together,