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Gertoux, Gérard

The Name of God Y.EH.OW.AH Which is Pronounced as It Is Written I_EH_OU_AH

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Certain issues need to be examined at least once a generation, if only to remind ourselves why the current consensus is what it is. The pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is one of those issues. In the book under review, Gérard Gertoux, a French engineer, takes issue with the current consensus and contends that it is incorrect. With excruciating detail and tortured logic, Gertoux passionately argues his point.

This work is a revision in English of the author's thesis at the Institut Catholique de Paris. The French stamp on the work is apparent not only in the extensive use of French sources but in the transliterations throughout the work, which are into French rather than English. This proves one of the more frustrating aspects of the work, as too many times the French-style transliteration obscures rather than clarifies the argument, and in the case of the Egyptian evidence it leads Gertoux to erroneous conclusions.

Gertoux's divides his work into four parts: part 1, "The Name," a rambling prologue that tries to describe the importance of names in the biblical tradition and asserting that there was a controversy between Jesus and Satan about the use and possibly pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (1–55); part 2, "Historical Record," a survey of the use and pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton in history (57–195); part 3, "Conclusion," a vehement plea for the rejection of the current consensus (197–224); and part 4, "Appendix," which is actually a number of appendices covering a variety of historical excursions (225–95).

In the first part, the author lays out four different methods for determining the pronunciation of any given name in Hebrew. He calls these (1) the etymologies method, (2) the sources method, (3) the onomastic method, and (4) the letters method. His etymologies method reconstructs the vowels using Masoretic vowels applied to an etymology (38–40). His sources method uses the vowels of the Septuagint (40–42). His

onomastic method is to reconstruct the vowels based on the Masoretic vowelizing of similar names (44-54). Finally, his letters method is to assume that any letter that can be a *mater lectionis* is such (42-43).

In the second part the author traces the history of the pronunciation from Adam to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to Zedekiah, from Zedekiah to Simon the Just, from Simon the Just to Jesus, from Jesus to Justin, from Justin to Jerome, from Jerome to the Masoretes, from the Masoretes to Maimonides, from Maimonides to Tyndale, and from Tyndale to the American Standard Version. This is Gertoux the storyteller at his best.

In the conclusion, Gertoux argues for his own letters method and tries to make it clear why he thinks that the pronunciation of the name is important, claiming that salvation itself is at stake.

The appendices cover matters on glossary and chronology (227-36), etymologies of Hebrew names (237-48), abbreviations for *nomina sacra* in Greek manuscripts (249-50), problems with the pronunciation of Egyptian names (251-64), the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton in the Mesha Inscription (265-78), the issue of whether shortened forms preceded or followed the longer forms (279-84), religious trials in the first century (285-91), and the dates of changes between Hebrew and Greek numbering systems (293-95).

A decent editor could have fixed some of the book's obvious flaws. Errors of fact abound, and it would be pointless to attempt to correct them all. One wishes that less effort had been put into the Paleo-Hebrew fonts and more into fixing the transliterations used throughout the book.

The book raises serious doubts about whether Gertoux controls any of the languages necessary for his study. Assertions such as "Hebraic language . . . favors a vocalic reading of proper names instead of a consonantal reading (Aramaic)" (42) and errors in his transliteration chart (230) do nothing to assuage our doubts. Most of the relevant Egyptian evidence was passed over in silence, and what was used was often misconstrued; his appendix on the subject should be ignored. The Akkadian evidence was also underutilized. One wonders about his grasp of Greek phonetics when he asserts that "iotacism . . . led mainly to the confusion of the sounds" iota, epsilon, eta, and alpha-iota (40). Examples could be multiplied ad nauseum, but possibly the best example of Gertoux's failure to master his languages is his advocacy of what he calls his letters method. Gertoux's letters method assumes that there is only one way to vocalize any particular consonantal skeleton, which is not the case. Thus his method is fundamentally flawed.

The correct method for determining the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton cannot proceed solely on the basis of spellings in languages with only consonantal skeletons. The only way to determine the vowels is by recourse to languages and scripts that preserve the vowels. For Hebrew, that means carefully examining Akkadian transcriptions for the seventh century B.C.E. and Greek for the third. Masoretic vowelizing shows pronunciation after the turn of the era. The three systems together can help to determine a phonetic trajectory, which does not seem to me to point where Gertoux thinks it does.

While I agree with Gertoux that the current consensus is unconvincing, I found his arguments more passionate than persuasive, and thus I also find his conclusions ultimately unconvincing.