# ELOHIM OR ELOHAYIM

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## Abstract

The Hebrew language consists of a series of pictograph letters that have no vowels, all the letters are consonants, but at that time people could still read and understand them. After the Israelites were colonized for more than 1000 years by other nations, the Jews could no longer read and interpret it, especially the Tanakh (Jewish holy book), so that debates arose among one another. Then to solve this problem, in the 10th century bc Jewish scholars (called masoretes) took notice, scrutinizing every utterance said by the rabbis, when they read the Torah in the Synagogue. Then vowel signs (niqud) were made, namely qamets (a) , patakh (a), tsere (e) , kholem (o), qibbud (u), khireq (i), sureq (u). With the existence of niqud, everyone can read and understand what is written in God's Torah. בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם (Beresyit bara' 'elohim 'et hasysyamayim we'et ha'aret)all these words are given a niqud. But there is one question about the wordאלהיםshould it be read 'elohim by adding niqud e, o, i (אֱלֹהִים )or read another. Because if you pay attention to grammarHebrew, then saidאֱלֹהִיםim denotes the plural, but im in Genesis 1:1 is the singular form, as opposed to elohim in Exodus 20:3. The plural Elohim are the gods (gods), while the singular 'elohim is the God of the universe. We also find the final shapean im which shows something broad like mayim, syamayim. Actually mayim, syamayim bdoesn't end in im, but ayim. So that 'elohim should not use the word 'im but elohayim, just like mayim, syamayim and so on. So one can clearly distinguish whether this is the God of the universe or the gods. There are also those who explain that im which is singular is plural qualitative while im which is plural is im quantitative.

## Introduction

Hebrew is a pictograph language (picture script) which consists of 22 consonants and does not have vowels (a, e, i, o, u), making it difficult for ordinary people to read. As a result, many perceptions arise, whether to read it this way or what it means like this. If you just read it wrong, then the meaning is different, so that debates arise between each other. But in the days before the Israelites were ravaged by the Assyrian armies, they understood how to read, because every day they spoke Hebrew in pictograph form. But after the Israelites were successively occupied by foreign kingdoms, such as Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Arabia (more than

1000 years) who used their own language (Aramaic, Farsi, Greek, Latin, Arabic) to replace Hebrew, making the Israelites themselves no longer familiar with their language. So when they find their own language, they have to relearn it. (FN), while the alphabet used is the Aramaic alphabet, which is now called modern Hebrew and is used by Biblia Hebraica. Actually, Hebrew has vowels which are also used as

consonants, namely the letters ו, ה, and י. But toward the end of the first millennium in response to what Muslims were doing with the Koran—Jews began to develop various systems for marking vowels explicitly. One of these systems is the Tiberian System, and it has been in use for the last thousand years or more. which is now called modern Hebrew and is used by Biblia Hebraica. Actually, Hebrew has vowels which are also used as consonants, namely the letters ו, ה, and י. But toward the end of the first millennium in response to what Muslims were doing with the Koran—Jews began to develop various systems for marking vowels explicitly. One of these systems is the Tiberian System, and it has been in use for the last thousand years or more. which is now called modern Hebrew and is used by Biblia Hebraica. Actually, Hebrew has vowels which are also used as consonants, namely the letters ו, ה, and י. But toward the end of the first millennium in response to what Muslims were doing with the Koran—Jews began to develop various systems for marking vowels explicitly. One of these systems is the Tiberian System, and it has been in use for the last thousand years or more.[1]

To overcome this, Jewish scholars (masoretes) took the initiative to create vowel signs so that the Jews could read God's Torah correctly. About 700 years after the birth of Christ, the masoretes began to study the pronunciation of the Hebrew language by paying attention to the pronunciation of the Jewish rabbis in the Synagogue, then forming and making vowel signs such as a (patakh), a (qamets), e (tsere), u (qibud), u (segol), i (khireq), o (kholem). These marks are placed under the consonants. With the existence of niqud, ordinary people can read it and interpret it well.

As well as giving the niqud sign, the masoretes also developed a more precise Hebrew grammar. But this is not a new grammar, the masoretes still follow the traditional interpretation according to their predecessors. Indeed, what these masoretes are doing is very helpful for people who want to study the Hebrew Bible. Even so, what the masoretes are still doing is not a revelation, so there is a possibility that it must be corrected.[2]


**Research methods**

This journal was written inspired by the writings of Mark Rosenblit in an article entitled The First and Second Names of God which is a collection of articles in the

[1] [1]Michael Carasik, Biblical Hebrew Learning a sacred Language, Virginia: The Great courses. P. 10

[2] Chaim Bentorah "Hebrew word study perplexed beth vav shin – devotionals" Sept 7 2022

Ancient Hebrew Research Center[3]. But before that, the writer had thought about this, when teaching Hebrew at Bible College in Surabaya. Because of this similarity, we try to research it and write it down in a journal. The research method is a historical qualitative approach. This research specifically examines events in the past, namely reconstructing something that has happened in the past and explaining it in the present.[4]As for the stages, after studying the writings of Mark Rosenblit, start looking again at Hebrew grammar and studying its forms. Then start looking for literature related to the masoretes and writing in ancient times. And what is the history of that writing and also the history of the Hebrew language. Then with the existing grammar, start rearranging the name 'elohim, whether it should still be read 'elohim or 'elohayim. Some of the books that become references include:

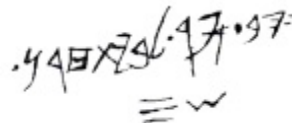Development of the Hebrew language from the beginning

(quoted from Ancient Hebrew Language and Alphabet by Jeff A Benner pp. 10-14)

The Hebrew alphabet is written using the Semitic alphabet. There are three basic stages of development, namely the initial stage, the middle stage and the final stage.
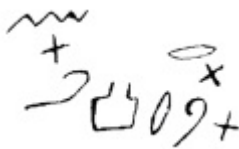


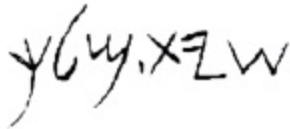**fig. 1 - Ancient Semitic pictographic inscription on stone boulder c. 1500 BCE**

The early Semitic script was a pictograph (fig. 1) where each letter represented an object. For example, in Figure 1, the top left corner is a picture of water representing the letter M. The second letter from the bottom right is a picture of a shepherd's staff representing the letter L.



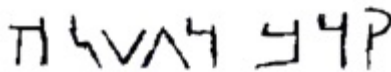**Fig. 2 – Hebrew inscriptions on pottery c. 900 BCE**

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[3]https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/name-god/first-and-second-names-of-god.htm
[4]https://ideproposalkrip.blogspot.com/2019/05/penelitian-kualitatif-dinding-historical.html

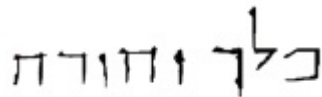**Fig. 3 – Moabite inscriptions written on stone c. 900 BCE**



**Fig. 4 – Ammonite inscriptions in rock c. 900 BCE**



**Fig. 5 – Aramaic inscriptions written on a stone incense altar c. 500 BCE**

Middle stage Semitic script (fig. 2) is the evolutionary form of the pictograph script to a simpler form and is used by various Semitic groups including Hebrew (fig. 2), Moabite (fig. 3), Ammonite (fig. 4), Aramaic (fig. 5) etc.



**Fig. 6 – Aramaic inscriptions written on stone plaques c. 20 CE.**
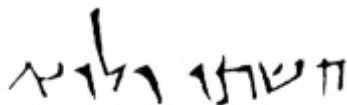


**fig. 7 - The Hebrew inscriptions found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 200 BCE**

בראשית ברא אלחים

**fig. 8 – Modern Hebrew script from the Hebrew Bible**

The Aramaic script of the Aramaic language in Babylon evolved into a late Semitic script (fig. 6). When the Hebrews were captive to Babylon, they adopted the Aramaic script (fig. 7) and it is still used today (fig. 8).

**fig. 9 – Hebrew Pictographs from the Dead Sea Scrolls 100 BCE**

While the majority of Hebrew texts in the first century BCE and into the first century CE were written in late Semitic or Aramaic script. The Middle Ages of the Semitic script did not disappear. It is still used in such works as there are on Jewish currency, some religious texts such as those found in the Dead Sea Caves. (fig. 9).

**fig. 10 – The Samaritan script**

The Samaritans lived in the land of Samaria, an Israelite religion. When the Israelites were exiled to Babylon, they were not transported with the Israelites. As a result of their exile, they are the only ones who retain a script (fig. 10) that is similar to the Middle Semitic script that is still used today in Samaritan communities.



**Fig. 11 – Greek inscriptions found written on the bowl. 800 BCE**
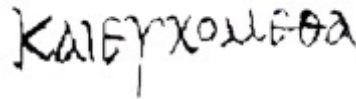


**fig. 12 – Greek Writings on New Testament Papyri 200 CE**

Around 1000 BCE, the Greek language adopted an early Semitic script (fig. 11) and began to evolve over the centuries to become the Greek script (fig. 12) used today.

From this change in stage we can see that indeed pictographs still exist but are no longer used in Bible discussions. Below is a comparison of modern Hebrew (Aramaic) and Hebrew pictographs.

Meaning of name in ancient Israelite culture

The name in Hebrew is written nesyema, which is closely related to the word nephes, where God breathed into the human nose. Check in Jeff about breath

The name of Allah that was writtenאלהיםbecomeאֱלֹהִים, which the Elohim spoke. If you look at the sentence "Beresyit bara' Elohim" then the subject is elohim while the verb is "bara' (to create) which grammatically is the perfect form, third person singular which means he has created. So the word 'elohim' which is singular. But there are those who for different reasons historically have belittled the single nature and unity of the God of Israel by asserting that nameאלהיםis plural. Basically

because of the endingים, (im). Indeed, almost all masculine plural forms end in im, although there are also those that end in im for feminine nouns, for example nasyim (female-female); arim (cities). So the ending im is not all masculine forms.

Jeff explained the use of the name 'elohim' is more interesting. He says the 'elohim in Genesis 1:1 is a 'qualitative elohim' while the 'elohim in Exodus 20:3 is a quantitative elohim. The qualitative Elohim is singular in form, but is more of a quality. This response is fine and acceptable, but our discussion is not about the plural or singular but about elohim or 'elohayim.

Name "God"אלהיםseems to be the plural masculine form of the name Allahאלוה(Deuteronomy 32:15), read Eloah. Indeed, the name elohim can be in the plural when talking about gods (called ilahs). For example, don't have other gods (Ex 20:3). The word "ilah-ilah" is elohim in the plural. Another example,,, and they will worship gods (אלהים) (Deut. 7:4). Because Christians often say 'elohim is the plural form, thus making Christians equate it with other gods. Actually the intention of Christians is not like that, but they want to explain the multiplicity of the unity of God which consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then where is the problem, did the masyorets place the vowel signs wrong in the word elohim, and if it was wrong what did it mean.

If we look at the Hebrew grammar then we find nouns that end in im (the variantיים) also of a special nature, for example paired body parts such as hands, feet, eyes, ears all ending in im. Then doubling in quantity, for example two days, two weeks, two years, two hundred, two thousand). But even if it endsים(variantיים) then it reads not im, but ayim. For example yad (hand) becomes yadaim (not yadim); regel (foot) becomes regelaim (not regelim)

There are other nouns which originally use the suffix im but are read ayim, for example mayim (water); shamayim (sky), khayim (life). These three words are read as ayim. So when this suffix is used to identify something that is on a continuum, it does not refer to something that is plural. Instead it refers to something that is beyond classification as singular or plural. Allah certainly belongs to this category. He is the highest continuum, for He is incorporeal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and eternal. And he cannot be qualified as singular or plural, but due to the fact that he has repeatedly revealed to the Jewish people and also to the world that he is single (Deut. 4:39 and 6:4; Isaiah 44:6 and 45:21-23; and Zechariah 14:9).

If so then say the nameאלהיםnot Elohim but Elohayim (continuum). On the other hand, if we say elohim, then it refers to the other gods and the nation.

Why then does the Hebrew Bible also identify God with a name that seems to be singularאלהים-- is,אלוה(Eloah)? The answer is the name eloahאלוהnot the singular form ofאלהים, for short. Just as the name Yahwe likes to be abbreviated Yah. For example HalleluYah. So the singular form of elohim is elאל(אל עליון, "El Elyon", Gen. 14:18;אל שדי, "El Shadai", Gen. 17:1;אל עולם, "El Olam", Gen. 21:33;בית-אל,

"Bethel", Gen. 28:19;לדניאל, "Daniel", -- Dan 1:6;Then why did the Mashoreth make a mistake in pronouncing elohim for God's name? Perhaps the Masoretes wanted to keep the actual pronunciation of this name secret for the same reason that they chose not to make up any pronunciation for the revealed name of God like the name YHWH. Which reads adonay or that name

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