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ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2

Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set (UCS)

ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2 *N 1807*
Date: 1998-07-06

Title	**Israeli Response to the Tetragrammaton Proposal, N 1740**
Source	**SII Committee 1109**
Date	**July 7th, 1998**
Compiled by	**Jonathan Rosenne**
Reference	**ISO/IEC JTC1/SC2/WG2 N1740 dated 1998-05-09**

The Israeli national body opposes the referenced proposal for the reasons explained below.

The proposed entity is not a character. Hebrew is an alphabetic rather than an ideographic script.

The basic premise of the proposal is incorrect. The proposal assumes that there are several textual representations or spelling variations of a single word. However, the several spellings of the name of god are not at all synonymous or equivalent. YY is not the same as YHVH and the two are not equivalent. The D' and H' are substitutes or euphemisms. Moreover, many people consider all the variations, including the various pointings, to be meaningfully different.

The various spellings are not even pronounced the same way.

Part of the justification for the proposal involves "plain text search". In Hebrew, plain text search is not a serious option anyhow, due to the lack of standard orthography, the extensive use of prefixes and suffixes, internal declinations, and partial pointing. Prefixes are used for functions that are considered separate words in most languages, such as and, to, as, from and the definite article, and even in the most superficial plain text search one would prefer to ignore these prefixes. Searching in Hebrew is an interesting and complex issue, but definitely not a character coding matter. The proposal does not provide meaningful relief to the search problem and even makes it worse because it mixes up two distinct words and their substitutes.

On a more practical level, were the proposal to be accepted, how would it be pointed and accented? How would one indicate to which of the four (or two) letters does each point and accent belong?

And who would use it? In biblical texts it is customary not to change the spelling (the example of Psalm 117 in part F is not the customary or Masoretic text used in Jewish Bibles). In prayer books too they would not change, because it is considered that the variations are meaningful. And in other texts the use is rare - most commonly the H' or D' substitutes are used.

To C.5b: This clause claims that the proposed entity is a unique sign. This claim is adequately contradicted by several examples in part E of the proposal.

To C.6a: If the proposal were to be accepted, the right place for it is in the FBxx block.