

The Name of God—a commentary

Many years after the use of the name “Yeshua” became a popular replacement for the Saviour’s name, I am still using the American form of the Greek word, “Jesus.” I was once again scolded for my use of this name, or more accurately, for my lack of the use of the names Yeshua and Yehovah. So I took the time to go back and review the name of God again.

As I found before, the deeper I look into this topic, the less clear it becomes. Here are a few notes on the Names of God. See if you can understand why I am not convinced that we should worry about which name to use for either God the Father or the Son. These are some of the names that we find for “God.”

- *Elohim* is the plural title of the Godhead.
- *Adonai* is the title of “lord” and is used in the Bible for other people besides God.
- “I AM” [*Hayah* = to exist, existing (a verb); the self-existent one (noun)] is what God calls Himself in both Old and New Testaments. (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58)
- “Michael” [*Mikyael* = who is like God] is the Lord’s name when in the position of Prince or Chief Captain of the Heavenly Host. (Daniel 10:13, 21; Daniel 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7)
- *Yeshua* is considered by some a better pronunciation than Jesus (see point 2 below).
- *Jehovah*, incorrectly, is considered to be the name of the Father (see point 1 below). This name could be pronounced Yehovah if you want to reject the letter J, or YHWH [yode-hay-vov-hay] if you also want to reject the vowels, or Yaweh if you want to reject both J + vowels but still want to be able to speak the name.
- *Yehovah* also gives His name as:

**“The LORD, The LORD God [*Jehovah, Jehovah El*], merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.”
—All this is His legal name that He placed on the covenant document. (Exodus 34:6-7)**

- And while in Exodus 34, don’t forget, “My name is Jealous [*qanna*].” (Ex. 34:14)
- He is “The Prophet” sent by God. (Deut. 18:15-19; Luke 9:35; John 6:14; John 7:40)
- He is Shiloh in Genesis, the Amen in Revelation, Rabboni in the gospels, Wonderful Counselor the Prince of Peace in the prophets. From beginning to end He is the Alpha and Omega, or in Hebrew, the *Aleph Tov*.
- “His name shall be called *Immanuel*—God with us.” (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23)
- He is called, “Faithful and True,” “The Word of God,” and in the end He will be called by a new name.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called The Word of God.” Revelation 19:11-13

Whether correctly or not, we often associate these names with the Father:

- “The Most High God” [*Elyon Elahh* or *Elohah*] (Luke 8:28 and numerous)
- The “Ancient of Days” [*Attiyq Yom*] (Daniel 7:9, 13, 22)
- “The high and lofty One” whose name is “Holy” [*Qadosh*] (Isa. 57:15)
- “The Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 21:22; Num. 24:16)
- “He who sits on the throne” from Rev. 4 & 5.

Don’t be offended if I left out your favorite. Both Father and Son have many names, which makes it hard to know which name(s) to call them, which spelling to use or whether or not to include vowels or jots or tittles.

Is there a clear-cut answer to the problem of the name of God? Does the Lord say explicitly in the Bible to call Him by any one of those names? The only instances I know of are when the angel told Joseph to use *Iēsous* at Christ’s birth. (Matthew 1:21) And when Jehovah spoke to Moses, He said,

“I am Jehovah. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [*EI Shadday*], but by My name Jehovah I was not known to them.” (Exodus 6:2-3)

“And *Elohim* said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, “I AM [*hayah*] has sent me to you.”’” (Exodus 3:14)

(By the way, *hayah* is the root word of the name *Jehovah*.)

In our human condition, no matter which name we use, we are bound to get it wrong in someone’s opinion. Our only hope is to rely on Jesus to make every utterance acceptable to God and not try to label Him using our own form of righteousness.

Is it possible that SOME of this name distinction is our own man-made concern? Yes, the letter “J” is not part of the Hebrew language, but it is present in today’s English which is the language that I speak. Who said I need to use the Hebrew language when I say God’s name?

And when I pray to the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus, the Father does not rebuke me or reject my prayer—nor does Jesus when I speak to Him. To me this is evidence that this topic may be less of an issue with God than it is for us. Who asked us to worry about God’s name?

More than this, God’s name is continually growing as He accomplishes mighty works. Each act adds to His name. “*The Lion of the Tribe of Judah*” speaks volumes about what He has done for our salvation. And aren’t His work, accomplishments and character more definitive than a name?

My father, who is named Paul after the Apostle, still answered Grandma when she called him “Pat-Paul-Perry” (her three sons-in-law) because he knew she was talking to him. Does God know when we are speaking to Him? He does if we really know Him. *“Let him who glories, glory in this: that he knows and understands Me, the one true God.”* (Jeremiah 9:23) Are we going to bring down the Most High God who inhabits Eternity and compartmentalize Him into ONE NAME?

Further Thoughts:

1. To some people the problem of the name of God seems cut and dried: the Father is *Yehovah* and the Son is *Yeshua*. But this problem of the Lord’s name is not that simple. Besides, this is not what the Bible reveals for the name, *Yehovah*.

When God the Father spoke from atop Mount Sinai, He did not give us any name that we could call Him. But He did say that He would send His “Angel” (messenger) before the people to lead them.

Exodus 23:20 “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.” (also Exodus 23:23; 32:34; 33:2.)

Who was this “Angel” who went before the people to lead them into the land flowing with milk and honey?

Exodus 14:18-19 “And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD [H3068 *Yehovah*] when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel [H4397 *malak* angel/messenger/representative] of God [H430 *Elohim*], which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.”

These passages tell us a couple of things. A) There is a distinction between the One who spoke from Sinai and the One who led in the wilderness. B) It was the Father Himself who spoke from atop Sinai. And C), “*Yehovah*” is not the name of the Father as we have always been taught, ***but the name of the pre-incarnate Jesus who led the camp in the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud and whose glory rested above the Mercy Seat!***

Does the rest of the Bible support this? Yes. Paul said, “*For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 10:4) And Jesus Himself said, “*Before Abraham was, I AM.*” (John 8:58) Jesus was *Jehovah* who led the people through the wilderness and satisfied their thirst from the Rock. He was the I AM who appeared to Moses in the burning bush and existed before Abraham. (And there is so much more evidence of this!)

2. The Bible clearly gives the name that Christ was to be called. Matthew 1:21, 25.

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS [G2424]: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

Jesus, in Greek, according to Strong's Concordance:

G2424
Original: Ἰησοῦς
Transliteration: Iēsous
Phonetic: ee-ay-sooce'
Thayer's Definition: Jesus = "Jehovah is salvation"
Strong's Definition: "Of Hebrew origin [H3091]; Jesus (that is, Jehoshua), the name of our Lord and two (three) other Israelites: - Jesus."

Jesus, in Hebrew from Strong's:

H3091
Original: יהושע יהושוע
Transliteration: yehôshûa` yehôshûa`
Phonetic: yeh-ho-shoo'-ah
Strong's Definition: "From H3068 and H3467; Jehovah-saved ; Jehoshua (that is, Joshua), the Jewish leader: - Jehoshua, Jehoshuah, Joshua."

This H3091, *Jehoshua*, is pronounced with four syllables, accent on the third as: **yeh-ho-SHOO'-ah**. This word is credited as the Hebrew origin of the Greek name, JESUS. This word is translated at least three different ways in the Old Testament, not to even mention that the same spelling is translated as "Joshua" and "Hosea." As a real surprise, **Strong's doesn't even list H3442 Yeshua as the origin for the name Jesus!**

The closest pronunciation of G2424 *Iēsous* is the Latin form: hesoos' or *hesus* (spanish pronunciation). Some people are afraid this sounds too much like, "Hey, Zeus." But is the Greek god really what is on your mind when you are speaking to Jesus—even if you did use the Spanish pronunciation?

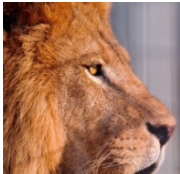
3. It has to be mentioned that names help us identify people. The name "Jesus" is known the world over as the Son of God. When we start using other names, can we expect that the common person is going to know who we are talking about? Does it sound trendy within our own circles to use these Hebrew names for Jesus and His Father, while possibly alienating other people outside the circle?

I also worry that, within our own churches, when we start using a bunch of Hebrew words and acronyms, we put people on the defensive before they even have a chance to listen to anything else we might want to share. At that point, only those in the inner circle will even listen to us. As in any other type of communication, we have to ask the question, Who is our target audience? Do we just want to yak among ourselves? Or are we trying to lead others to salvation?

I feel that by scolding or correcting our brethren on the “correct” name for Jesus, we are actually saying, “This is the definition of our group and you must conform to this name to be on the inside.”

Well, I choose to be on the Lord’s side.

We want to treat God with reverence and awe. I get that. But it may not be so easy to define His name. The most respect we could show to God would be to present Him with righteous characters. Perhaps we should spend more time studying that topic and less time reproving our brethren on spelling or pronunciation or other things God has not directed us to worry about. Hopefully you can see why, no matter how much I know about this subject, the less qualified I feel to talk about it, or to insist that any one name of God is correct. At this time, on the topic of God’s name, I am standing still to see the salvation and direction of God. ■ MAM



A Lion Has Roared

—*Lifting our eyes to behold the beauty of God.*

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