

# Torah Observant "SHOMER MITZVOT"

שומר מצוות

A Series on Practical Messianic Living and Apologetics (halakhah)  
By Torah Teacher Ariel ben-Lyman HaNaviy

## *What's in a Name?*

(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

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**Excursus: Linguistic Superstition And The Sacred Name Only Movement**

Why do some people write the name of God without the "o" (as in "G-d) or why do some spell the title "LORD" with a dash (as in L-RD)?

\*May it be noted that my personal preference is to use all of the letters when writing "LORD," "God," and such. But due to sensitivities I have often used "HaShem" as a reference for the Tetragrammaton Name of God in my commentaries. For the sake of this commentary however I will break with personal tradition and omit the required vowels in Part One.

### **Part One: Traditional Understanding**

Based on the words in Deut. 12:3-4, the Rabbis deduced that it is forbidden to erase the name of G-d from a written document. Since any paper upon which the name of G-d name was written might be discarded and thus "erased," the Rabbis forbade explicitly writing the name of G-d, except in Holy Books, with provisions for the proper disposal of such books.

According to Jewish Folklore, G-d has 70 names. However, only one of these names is the ineffable name, which cannot be erased or pronounced. Further, of the 70 names, seven may not be erased but they can be pronounced on certain occasions (such as when reading the Torah). The other names may be erased and pronounced, but still must be treated with respect. The Talmud (Shevuot 35a-b) makes it clear that this

prohibition applies only to seven Biblical names of G-d and not to other names or attributes of G-d, which may be freely written. The prohibition was later codified by Maimonides (Mishneh Torah, Yesodei HaTorah 6:1-2). The practice of writing "G-d" is supported in Shut Achiezer, 3:32, and, where it is endorsed and accepted as the prevailing custom. Rambam cites Deut. 12-03:04, which states "and you shall destroy the names of pagan gods from their places. You shall not do similarly to G-d your Lord." The intent of this is to create an atmosphere of respect for G-d's name vs. pagan gods names.

As a result of this, people acquired the habit of not writing the full name down in the first place. Strictly speaking, this only applies to Hebrew on a permanent medium, but many people are careful beyond the minimum, and have applied it to non-Hebrew languages, hence, "G-d."

One explanation is that using G-d is a reminder that anything that we may say about G-d is necessarily metaphorical. Spelling out the Name (even in a language other than Hebrew) would imply that one could speak meaningfully (not just metaphorically) about G-d.

However, the Shach (Yoreh De'a 179:11) ruled that "God" spelled in a foreign language does NOT have the status of a "shem" and thus may be erased, lehatkhila. There is a story about Rav Soloveitchik (z"l) intentionally writing GOD on the board while teaching a class and then just as deliberately and intentionally erasing it, so as to demonstrate by his own example that this was not halachically a problem.

Conservative and Reform practice is to use "God." However, even some who are not strict (or even observant) in general will write "G-d," to emphasize that Jewish conceptions of G-d are meant.

Note: There is one exception to the destruction of G-d's name. In Numbers 5:11-31, the Suspected Wife Ceremony (Heb: Sotah), a man who suspects his wife of adultery (with witnesses seeing a forbidden seclusion) brings his wife to the temple. The Priests test the woman by pronouncing the horrible Biblical curse. After reading the curse it is written on parchment and dissolved in water (which the woman drinks). If she is guilty she dies and otherwise the couple gets their marriage back. Thus, G-d actually allows the ineffable name to be dissolved in water that the woman drinks. As the Talmud notes: G-d allows the ineffable name to be erased for the sake of bringing peace between a husband and wife.

## **Part Two: A Messianic Understanding and Application**

In Hebrew thought, a name implies a reputation. In Hebraic thought the name is the embodiment of the character of an individual, based upon who they are, what they have done, or in the case of humans perhaps the circumstances surrounding their birth. In Exodus 3:15 HaShem tells Moshe that the God of their fathers Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov is to be remembered forever as **"Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh!"** Now here is where slight

difficulty arises. According to the literal Hebrew text, this "name" is to be "remembered" forever. To be sure, HaShem tells Moshe in the latter part of verse 15, that this is his (HaShem's) "name" forever. The word translated "forever" is not spelled using the usual lettering that Torah readers are accustomed to. The usual spelling of "forever" in Hebrew, transliterated letter-by-letter as "o-l-a-m," is comprised of the Hebrew letters, "ayin-vav-lamed-mem." However, in this verse, the word "forever" is spelled "ayin-lamed-mem." The "vav" is NOT present.

The rabbis would have us to believe that this word can be pronounced "ah-lem," owing to the fact that originally, the Hebrew Scrolls contained no "vowel markings" facilitating the correct pronunciation. This subsequent rendering of the letters "ayin-lamed-mem" means "secret," or "unspoken." Hence, the traditional understanding is that HaShem is instructing Moshe to teach the Children of Isra'el that the God of Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov is "YHVH," and that we are NOT to mention his name aloud. Moreover, this "silence" is to be "remembered" forever. Don't get me wrong here! I am NOT suggesting that we lose all reverence for the Holy Name of "YHVH" (supposedly pronounced "Yahweh," and other times supposedly pronounced "Jehovah." In actuality, neither one of these pronunciations may be etymologically correct). What I am saying is that because of the above assumption on the part of our ancients, we may have temporarily lost the correct, original pronunciation of these four letters. Some, today feel that unless we somehow recapture the original rendering of these four letters, that we are somehow in error in addressing our God as "LORD." I believe that this is an unnecessary distraction as well. In all reality, we may just have to wait until Messiah returns to earth to teach us the correct way to say it. In the mean time, I believe that we DO have something just as powerful and acceptable to "YHVH."

According to **Yeshua's** own testimony in John 10:30, he and the Father constitute an "echad," that is, they are "one." This Hebrew word "echad" is best understood as describing a "composite unity." This means that one revelation of the unity doesn't detract from the other part (or parts) of the same unity. In plain English: **Yeshua** is **ONE** with the Father in such a way as to share the exact same **Purpose, Will, and Glory** with the Father, but **Yeshua** never detracts any of these attributes away from the Father. To be sure, **Yeshua** did just the opposite—by his life of servitude, he brought clarity of meaning to the **Purposes** of the Father; he correctly defined the divine **Will** of the Father by becoming obedient even unto death; and he demonstrated the majestic **Glory** of the Father by being raised from the grave! **Yeshua** never usurped any authority from the Father, and this is proved not only in his very own words recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, but also in the very same chapter mentioned above (see Phil. 2:6). So we find that the Torah sometimes uses language that stretches the limits of our finite understanding of the nature and name of HaShem, in relation to the nature and name of the Messiah, yet the Torah remains foundationally true! I believe that HaShem wants us to come to the awesome realization, through the Ruach HaKodesh, that the "name" of the LORD is **Yeshua**! If you don't believe me, read the rest of Philippians where the Torah teaches that one day, everyone will acknowledge that **Yeshua** is **ADONAI**, to the glory of God the Father! This word "adonai" is the Greek word "kurios," which can be translated "sir" or "lord" depending on the context. Since Sha'ul is quoting

from the TaNaKH book of Isaiah, then the context demands the rendering "LORD." In fact, to further the seeming controversy, Isaiah 45:23 is specifically referring to **ADONAI** the Father! This means that the verse in Philippians is hinting that **Yeshua** will be acknowledged as **ADONAI** without explicitly stating that **Yeshua** IS the Father. We must be careful not to put something into the text that is not there.

We as believers in Messiah know in our spiritual intellect (our new man) that **Yeshua** is the Father veiled in flesh, yet the Torah never comes right out and tells us that **Yeshua** is God (the Father). Moreover, we will not find a text that states that God (the Father) is **Yeshua**. Rather, the Torah uses unique language such as that which is found in Exodus chapter 3 to reveal to us the intimate character and identity of our otherwise unfathomable God. Moshe becomes privy to the revelation that would someday be fully realized in **Yeshua**: that HaShem's name is to be forever remembered as "**Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh**," the God who IS and WILL BE the deliverer of Isra'el!—and that his Son is also the great I AM! To be sure, our Messiah posses these unique qualities otherwise found solely in HaShem! This is a wonderful revelation indeed!

### Part Three: Did Avraham Know HaShem's Name?

The opening statement of Exodus chapter 6 says,

**"God spoke to Moshe; he said to him, "I am ADONAI. I appeared to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov as *El Shaddai*, although I did not make myself known to them by my name, *Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh* [ADONAI]" (6:2-3).**

In Hebrew it reads,

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו  
אֲנִי יְהוָה

וַאֲרָא אֶל־אַבְרָהָם אֶל־יִצְחָק וְאֶל־יַעֲקֹב  
בְּאֵל שְׁדַי וְשְׁמִי יְהוָה לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם

**"Vay'daber Elohim el-Moshe vay'omer, "Eylayv Ani YHVH. Va'era el-Avraham el-Yitz'chak v'el-Ya'akov b'El Shaddai u'sh'mi YHVH lo nodah'ati lahem.""**

Now if you take HaShem's statement at face value alone and compare it to the words spoken to Avraham in B'reshet (Genesis) 15:7, there seems to be a contradiction. Indeed, as we examine the original Hebrew texts, we shall notice something peculiar.

In B'reshet 15:7, HaShem states,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אֲנִי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ

מֵאוּר כַּשְׂדִּים לָתֵת לְךָ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
לְרִשְׁתָּהּ

**("Va'omer eylahv "Ani ADONAI (YHVH) asher hotzeytecha mey-Ur-Kasdim lateht l'kha eht-ha'aretz hazot l'rish-ta.)**

**[ADONAI said to him, "I am ADONAI, who brought you out from Ur-Kasdim to give you this land as a possession"**

As you can see from my transliteration of the Hebrew text, HaShem addresses Avraham here using the name "YHVH!" How can this statement, that HaShem did not reveal his name "YHVH," then be true? In fact to complicate the matter, in his conversation with HaShem, during the "negotiations" about destroying S'dom and 'Amora (see B'resheet 18:20-32), we find Avraham specifically addressing HaShem as "YHVH" four times! Our answer lies in what we discussed above in Part Two. For teaching purposes, I shall repeat a small part of that portion.

In Hebrew thought the name is the embodiment of the character of an individual, based upon who they are, or what they have done, or as we are learning in the case with HaShem, what they will do. In Sh'mot 3:14, HaShem reveals his nature to Moshe in a way that has never been done before in the Torah, up till this point. HaShem tells Moshe that his "name" shall be referred to as,

אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה

**"Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh [I Am/will be what I Am/will be]."**

HaShem continues in verse 15 to say that the God of their fathers Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov is to be remembered forever as **"Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh!"** This appears to be very strange until we understand that HaShem is about to deliver his people in a way that he has never before performed. Not only is he going to do this, but he will forever be remembered for this deliverance! This is why the phrase **"I Am"** is not really the best rendering of the Hebrew phrase **"Ehyeh."** Rather, the phrase carries with it the idea that HaShem is about to perform a mighty work, never before witnessed by his people (i.e. **"I Will Be"**)!

Rashbam as cited by Bekhor Shor confirms the possible translation of "he causes to be":

**Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh** This phrase has variously been translated, "I Am That I Am," "I Am Who I Am," and "I Will Be What I Will Be." It clearly evokes YHVH, the specific proper name of Isra'el's God, known in English as the Tetragrammaton, that is, "four consonants." The phrase also indicates that the earliest recorded understanding of the divine name was a verb derived from the stem *h-v-h*, taken as an earlier form of *h-y-h*, "to be." Either it expresses the quality of absolute Being, the eternal, unchanging, dynamic presence, or it means, "He causes to be." *YHVH* is the third person masculine singular; *ehyeh*

is the corresponding first person singular. This latter is used here because name-giving in the ancient world implied the wielding of power over the one named; hence, the divine name can only proceed from God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

This explains why HaShem can make a seemingly odd statement like the one he made in the opening two verses of Part Three: he had not yet been revealed to his people, including Father Avraham, as "the God who delivered you from the bondage of Egypt." Why was this title important? HaShem was revealing an aspect of his character that would later play a very important role in the identity of the Jewish People as a Nation. This title would also serve as a reminder to the surrounding nations that "with a great out-stretched arm, ADONAI almighty delivered his beloved people!" To be sure, the reference of HaShem as the "God who delivered [them] from the bondage of Egypt" would become a "household" name of sorts. Fast-forward in the book of Sh'mot to the "Ten Commandments" (Sh'mot 20:1, 2) and see if you can find this phrase used to identify HaShem. Thumb through the rest of your **TaNakh** (Old Testament) and you will find that this phrase use numerous times.

As believers in Messiah Yeshua, we know that this is one of the primary character traits of HaShem, which unifies the Messiah and the Godhead as an "echad," that is as "one." The name of the Messiah comes from the Hebrew name "Y'hoshua," which itself stems from the Hebrew name "Hoshea." Both of these names are composites of the two Hebrew words for "God" and "will save," respectively. When we combine this knowledge with the fact that it is "YHVH" who offers us salvation from sin THROUGH Yeshua the Messiah, then we can begin to understand the significance of the type and shadow that the Exodus from Egypt plays in our lives as new creations.

So, we have now explained how that Avraham did not know this aspect of HaShem, embodied in the name "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh," rather, you could say that Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov knew HaShem as the "covenant-keeping God." Instead, HaShem chose to reveal himself in this manner to the man Isra'el's offspring. Moreover, in the opening few verses, HaShem informs Moshe that he has remembered his covenant with Avraham, Yitz'chak, and Ya'akov (6:5), which I believe provides a very nice tie-in to both of HaShem's "reputations."

#### **Part Four: How Should the Name Be Pronounced?**

(Please note that I am not attempting to suggest any singular particular pronunciation and use of the Name at all times. I am of the persuasion that the Ruach HaKodesh touches the hearts of his children in a personal and special way. To be sure, this may indeed be varied at times. The Name is not a "magic formula" designed to be used in incantations (see Excursus on 'Sacred Names Only' below for more on this). Indeed as the Torah teaches, the Name is a "Strong and Mighty Tower" that we should run to! Please read the next section responsibly.)

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<sup>1</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *JPS Commentary to Exodus* (Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 17-18

Etymology has to do with the origins and uses of words. Webster's dictionary defines etymology as,

: the history of a linguistic form (as a word) shown by tracing its development since its earliest recorded occurrence in the language where it is found, by tracing its transmission from one language to another, by analyzing it into its component parts, by identifying its cognates in other languages, or by tracing it and its cognates to a common ancestral form in an ancestral language

I state that "Yahweh" and "Jehovah" may be etymologically incorrect. How so? James Trimm did not help me on parts 1-3; however, he has allowed me to quote him on much of the subject material over the next few pages.

#### HOW IS THE NAME PRONOUNCED?

The general belief at large is that the Divine Name is pronounced "JEHOVAH." Where did this pronunciation come from? Is it accurate?

A popular theory that has been circulating, as of late, has it that the name YHWH is actually four vowels IAUE. This theory is based largely on a statement made by Josephus in describing the headpiece of the High Priest. Josephus writes:

In which [headpiece] was engraved the sacred name. It consisted of four vowels.<sup>2</sup>

At first this statement seems to support a four-vowel theory. However on closer examination it is clear that this is not what Josephus is saying. Josephus is not supplying information about the pronunciation of the name. In fact in Antiquities 2:12:4 Josephus states that it would not be lawful for him to do so. Josephus is instead referring to the four letters YHWH that appeared on the High Priest's headpiece. But why would Josephus term these four consonants as "vowels"? As discussed earlier the Hebrew letters YUD, HEY and VAV (which make up YHWH) have no equivalents in Greek. They are generally transliterated in Greek with Greek letters that happen to be vowels. The reason for this is that when the Greeks borrowed the Phoenician/Paleo-Hebrew alphabet they used leftover consonants that did not occur in their language and used them as symbols for vowels, as Robert Whiting writes:

When the Greeks adapted the Phoenician writing system to their own language... they made a very significant change. They created signs for vowels and used them each time a vowel occurred. ... The Greeks did not invent new

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<sup>2</sup> Wars. 5:5:7

signs for the vowels but simply converted some of the Phoenician signs that they did not need for their own language into vowel symbols.<sup>3</sup>

As a result Hebrew YUD became the Greek vowel IOTA; Hebrew HEY became Greek vowel EPSILON and Hebrew VAV became Greek vowel UPSILON. For this reason Josephus writes that the four letters which appeared on the High Priest's headpiece were four "vowels." To the Greek speaking audience of the Greek edition of Wars of the Jews, the four letters on the High Priest's headpiece were in fact four vowels.

Some who have supported the idea that the name of YHWH is four vowels have also pointed to the use of the letters YUD, HEY and VAV in Hebrew as vowels. However the use of these letters as vowels in Hebrew is a later revision of the language. Moreover each of them serves as a vowel only when paired with a consonant, as a result none of these letters is ever a vowel when it initiates a word or syllable. Hebrew was originally a syllabary in which each letter symbolized a consonant vowel pair with the vowel being ambiguous. As Robert Whiting writes:

The Semitic peoples of Syria and Palestine developed purely syllabic writing systems... their signs expressed consonants plus any vowel.<sup>4</sup>

It was not until the ninth century B.C.E. that the Hebrew letters YUD, HEY and VAV began to double as vowels (and then only when paired with consonants). As Ellis Brotzman writes:

From about the ninth century on, certain consonants came to be used to indicate vowels. These "helping" consonants are called *matres lectionis*, literally "mothers of reading."<sup>5</sup>

Thus prior to this time the letters YUD HEY VAV HEY (YHWH) stood for four Hebrew consonants. Even in later Hebrew an initial YUD can never represent a vowel.

The Hebrew TaNaKH was originally written like all ancient Hebrew, without vowels. When the Masoretes (traditionalists) added vowels to the Hebrew text in the Middle Ages they came across a serious problem. The name had been "kept secret" and "hidden" for hundreds of years. Since the text contained only consonants in its written form, the vowels were generally unknown. In order to create vowels for the written name and continue to keep the name "secret" and "hidden" the vowels for Adonai were translated into the word YHWH. Later the vowels for Eloah (God) were used creating YEHOWAH. These vowels for YHWH actually violate the rules of Hebrew grammar since they use the W as a consonant and a vowel at the same time. Since in Modern Hebrew the Hebrew letter WAW (later called VAV) is pronounced "V" in place of its

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<sup>3</sup> Robert M. Whiting, *The New Book of Knowledge "Alphabet" article* (The Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago, Vol. 1), p. 193

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ellis R. Brotzman, *Old Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 40

ancient pronunciation "W," YEHOWAH became YEHOVAH. This became transliterated in the original KJV English as IEHOVAH and later when the J was added to English IEHOVAH became JEHOVAH. However the J and the V in "Jehovah" are incorrect, as are the vowels E-O-A, which actually come from ELOAH. In fact only the two letters H-H are correct. The correct pronunciation of YHWH has however, been preserved.

The first evidence for the true pronunciation of YHWH is found in the Hebrew text itself in those Hebrew names of which the Divine Name forms a part. Now when a Hebrew name in the TaNaKH begins with part of the divine name, the vowels are given as E-O. Some examples are:

Yehoshaphat (Jehoshaphat) YEHO- Shaphat

Yehoshua (Joshua) YEHO- Shua

In these names the incorrect vowels from YEHOWAH have been transplanted into their names. However when we look instead at names which end with part of the Divine Name we find completely different vowels in the Masoretic text. Some examples are:

Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) Yesha- YAHU

Yiramiyahu (Jeremiah) Yiremi- YAHU

Eliyahu (Elijah) Eli- YAHU

Moreover the "tri-gramaton" (the first three letters of YHWH) appear by themselves in the TaNaKH and always with the vowels being YAHU. Finally the Hebrew word Hallelujah (praise-Yah) has the first portion of the divine name with the vowels YAH.

Another source for the correct pronunciation of the name of YHWH is the Peshitta Aramaic text. The Peshitta is an Aramaic text of the Bible used by Aramaic speaking Assyrians, Syrians and Chaldeans. These Aramaic-speaking peoples became Christianized in the first century C.E. By the fourth century (long before the Masorites of the ninth century) these people created written vowels for the Aramaic text. When they added vowels to names that begin with part of the divine name they got names like YAHOSHAPHAT rather than YEHOSHAPHAT.

Further evidence as to the original pronunciation of YHWH can be found in ancient transliterations of the name into Egyptian hieroglyphics, which had written vowels. Although this author is not aware of any case in which the entire name of YHWH has been found transliterated into Egyptian hieroglyphics, there are cases where the abbreviated name (the first portion of the name) has been found transliterated in hieroglyphics. Budge's AN EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC DICTIONARY give two transliterations that occur in Egyptian glyphs. The first is given on page 15 column A and is "IA" or "YA." The other is on page 142 column A and transliterates in English as

"IAA" or "YAA." This supports the fact that the original pronunciation of the first syllable of the name was "YA."

Another source of evidence for the correct pronunciation of the name of YHWH can be found in ancient transliterations of the name of YHWH into cuneiform script, which unlike Hebrew script, had written vowels. In 1898 A. H. Sayce published the discovery of three clay cuneiform tablets from the time of Hammurabi which contained the phrase "Jahweh (Jehovah) is God."<sup>6</sup> Now obviously the text read "Yahweh" and not "Jahweh" as was common to transliterate it in the 19th century. (This author believes this cuneiform should be examined to see if it reads YAHUWEH rather than YAHWEH).

A further source for evidence in cuneiform is the Murashu texts. The Murashu texts are Aramaic texts written in cuneiform script on clay tablets found at Nippur. These texts date back to 464 to 404 B.C.E. and contain many Jewish names transcribed in cuneiform with the vowels. Many of these names contain part of the divine name in the name. In all these names the first portion of the name appears as YAHU and never as YEHO.<sup>7</sup>

Transliterations of YHWH also occur in ancient Greek texts. Although late by comparison to the hieroglyphic and cuneiform evidence, these Greek transliterations also contain the name with vowels. The following chart shows a list of Greek transliterations of YHWH (in English), their date and their source:

Transliteration	Source	Date
IAO	Qumran LXX	First century
IAOUE	Clement of Alexandria	150 – 212 C.E.
AwOUhEI	Greek Papyri	?
law	Theodoret	?
lah	Origin	250 C.E
law	Epiphanius	380 C.E.

(NOTE: "OU" are pronounced together in Greek as "oo" as in "zoo")

Now transliterating the name of YHWH into Greek is not easy. This is because certain Hebrew letters/sounds do not occur in Greek. Among these are the letters YUD (Y); HEY (H) and VAV (W) the very letters that make up the name in Hebrew. When transliterating these letters into Greek substitutions are made. Consistently the Hebrew letter YUD (Y) is transliterated into Greek as IOTA (I). Thus all of our Greek witnesses agree that YHWH begins with YA. The next letter HEY (H) is impossible to write in Greek. Some of the Greek sources have attempted to transliterate it with OMEGA (which I have transliterated with a "w" and which is pronounced "o" as in "no." Origin has tried to use ETA for this letter (I have transliterated it with an "h"). ETA as a

<sup>6</sup> A. H. Sayce, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 62

<sup>7</sup> M.D. Coogan, *Patterns in Jewish Personal Names in the Babylonian Diaspora*, (Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. IV, No. 2), p. 183f

character descends from the Paleo-Hebrew HEY but is pronounced "ey" as in "they." Clement and the Greek Papyri agree that the next vowel is "oo" as in "zoo." Clement gives the final syllable as "E" and the Greek Papyri has "hE" which agrees with a Hebrew termination of "-eh" Thus it is evident that the Greek transliterations are consistent with a Hebrew pronunciation of "YAHUWEH."

It is clear when examining the many sources that the pronunciation of YHWH can be recovered as YAHUWEH sometimes abbreviated as YAHWEH, YAHU or YAH. This is attested to by the Yahwitic names of the Masoretic text, the Peshitta Aramaic and the Marashu texts. The true pronunciation of YHWH is also preserved in ancient transliterations of the name written in Egyptian Hieroglyphics, cuneiform and Greek, all of which had written vowels.

The restoration of the use of the name of Yahuweh with its correct pronunciation is as prophetically significant as the restoration of the ancient sect of the Nazarenes. Such a restoration of the name of Yahweh to his people is promised in scripture:

**For then will I turn to the people a pure language, That they may call upon the name of YHWH... (Zeph. 3:9)**

**Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know my name is YHWH. (Jer. 16:21)**

**Therefore my people shall know my name... (Is. 52:6)**

There is also great prophetic significance to the fact that the name has been preserved, in part through archaeological digs, as the scriptures prophecy:

**And you shall be brought down, and shall speak out of the ground, and your speech shall be low out of the dust... (Is. 29:4)**

**Truth shall spring out of the earth... (Ps. 85:11)**

We are living in wonderful times, as Yeshua tells us:

**...You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahuweh!" (Mt. 23:39)**

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## **Excursus: The Messiah's Hebrew Name - "Yeshua" Or "Yahshua"?**

Dr. Daniel Botkin explains the Hebrew linguistics of the names "Yeshua" and "Yahshua" and how "Yahshua" is a mistransliteration by Sacred Name advocates to fit an erroneous interpretation of John 5:43 and how "Yeshua" is far more accurate. He also clearly establishes the fact that the English name "Jesus" has absolutely no pagan connection and is simply a derivation of "Yesous," the Greek transliteration of "Yeshua." Most important, Dr. Botkin addresses that slander and criticism surrounding the name controversy is entirely non-Scriptural and not glorifying to the Holy One of Israel. His article has been reproduced in its entirety for you below.

The Messiah's Hebrew name is usually transliterated as either Yeshua or Yahshua. Under normal circumstances I would not bother to write an article about something as trivial as the difference between the vowel sounds "e" and "ah." There is a need to address the subject, though, because some people who use the Yahshua form say untrue things about those who use the Yeshua form. The opponents of the Yeshua form claim that this pronunciation is the result of a Jewish conspiracy to hide the Savior's true name. Those who call the Messiah Yeshua are accused of perpetuating a Jewish conspiracy and "denying His name" or "degrading Him" by their use of the Yeshua form. If you have never read or heard these outlandish accusations, you probably will eventually. From time to time I receive personal letters to this effect.

The proponents of the Yahshua form claim that the Messiah's name was the same as Joshua's (Strong's #3091). The only problem is that neither of these Hebrew spellings of Joshua's name can possibly be pronounced "Yahshua." The third letter in Joshua's name (reading from right to left) is the letter vav (w) and a vav cannot be silent. The letter vav must be pronounced as either a "v" or an "o" or an "u." (In the case of Joshua, it takes an "o" sound, giving us "Ye-ho-SHU-a." Strong's confirms this pronunciation.) For a name to be pronounced "Yahshua," it would have to have a highly unusual Hebrew spelling, and no such name exists anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. You don't have to just take my word for it, though. Dr. Danny Ben-Gigi says of the Yahshua form that "there is no such name in Hebrew" and that "people invented it to fit their theology."<sup>8</sup> Dr. Ben-Gigi is an Israeli and the former head of Hebrew programs at Arizona State University. He is the author of the book *First Steps in Hebrew Prayers*, and he designed and produced the "Living Israeli Hebrew" language-learning course. Dr. David Bivin, a Christian, says that the Yahshua form "is rooted in a misunderstanding."<sup>9</sup> Dr. Bivin is a renowned—albeit controversial at times—Hebrew scholar and teacher and author of *Fluent Biblical Hebrew*.

I do not know of a single individual that knows Hebrew well enough to actually read it and understand it and converse in it who uses the Yahshua form.

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<sup>8</sup> Love Song to the Messiah newsletter, March 1999, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> "The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles," *Jerusalem Perspective* Nov.-Dec. 1991, p. 12.

Please do not misunderstand. A person does not need to know Hebrew and Greek linguistics in order to be spiritual. However, if a person is going to take it upon himself to instruct others about subjects of a linguistic and Hebraic nature, he should know the Hebrew language and he should know some basics about linguistics. This is especially true if he is going to use his Hebrew-based linguistic teachings to accuse his brethren of being part of a "Jewish conspiracy" to "deny the true name of the Messiah."

To people who actually know Hebrew – people like Dr. Ben-Gigi, Dr. Bivin, and others – it is very obvious that those who insist on the Yahshua form know very little about the Hebrew language. The only Hebrew that most of these self-appointed scholars know is what they can learn from a Strong's Concordance.<sup>10</sup> Strong's is a great study tool and a fine place to start, but it is not a means by which a person can learn the Hebrew language.

The English form Jesus is derived from the New Testament Greek name "Yesous." According to Strong's, Yesous (Strong's #2424) is "of Hebrew origin" and can be traced back to Joshua's Hebrew name, Yehoshua (#3091). But how do we get the Greek Yesous from the Hebrew Yehoshua? Someone armed with nothing more than a Strong's Concordance may have difficulty answering that question. Someone who reads the Bible in Hebrew, though, knows that the name Joshua sometimes appears in its shortened form, Yeshua in Neh. 8:17 it is apparent even in English: "Jeshua the son of Nun." (The letter J was pronounced like a Y in Old English.) Strong does not tell the reader that the Greek Yesous is actually transliterated from this shortened Hebrew form, Yeshua, and not directly from the longer form Yehoshua. The process from "Yehoshua" to "Jesus" looks like this:

Hebrew Yehoshua → Hebrew Yeshua

Hebrew Yeshua → Greek Yesous

Greek Yesous → English Jesus

There is no "sh" sound in Greek, which accounts for the middle "s" sound in Yesous. The "s" at the end of the Greek name is a grammatical necessity, to make the word declinable.

In Neh. 8:17, Joshua's name is 100% identical to the name which today's Messianic Jews use for the Messiah, Yeshua. Strong's confirms this pronunciation, and tells us

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<sup>10</sup> These teachers very heavily rely on Strong's Concordance, yet when Strong proves them wrong, as he does with the pronunciation of Yehoshua, they insist that Strong's rendering is erroneous! I have a Sacred Name publication that actually claims that Strong wrote down incorrect pronunciations because "his understanding of the Name was lacking." Anyone who wants to disprove this ludicrous assertion can simply look at Joshua's name in a Hebrew Bible and see that Strong used the very same vowel marks that are used in the Bible.

that there were ten Isra'elites in the Bible who bore this name (#3442). Therefore the shortening of Yehoshua to Yeshua predates the Christian era by at least 500 years, and cannot be the result of a Jewish conspiracy to hide the Savior's true name.<sup>11</sup> To claim that the shortened form Yeshua is the result of a Jewish conspiracy is to ignore the facts of history and the facts of the Hebrew Scriptures. The form Yeshua existed for several hundred years before the Messiah was even born. Even in the pre-Christian Septuagint, we see the Greek form IHSOUS (Yesous) in the title of the Book of Joshua. (This is also proof that Yesous has no connection to the pagan god Zeus.)

So where did the transliteration Yahshua come from? This form of the name can be traced back to the beginnings of the Sacred Name movement, a movement that grew out of the Church of God, 7th Day, in the late 1930s. I have in my files an article entitled, "A Brief History of the Name Movement in America" by L.D. Snow, a Sacred Name believer.<sup>12</sup> According to this article, "John Briggs and Paul Penn were the FIRST to pronounce and use the name Yahshua" (emphasis Snow's). This was in 1936 and in 1937, the article states. No information is given about how Briggs and Penn came up with this (mis)translation.

Later Sacred Name literature appeals to the Messiah's statement in John 5:43 as "proof" of the Yahshua form: "I am come in My Father's name," He said. In the minds of Sacred Name believers, this means that "Yah," a shortened form of Yahweh, must appear in the name of the Son. However, the Messiah did not say "My name contains My Father's name" or "My Father's name must appear inside My name" or any such statement. He said absolutely nothing here about His own name. The only "name" mentioned here was the Father's name. He said, "I am come in My Father's name," which simply means that He was coming by His Father's authority, on His Father's behalf. If we take Yeshua's statement "I am come in My Father's name" to mean that His own name must contain the Father's name, then we ourselves cannot do anything "in the Father's name" unless our own personal name happens to contain the syllable "Yah." The folly of this interpretation is also evident if the same line of reasoning is applied to the rest of Yeshua's statement: "...if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." If the logic of Sacred Name believers is applied to this half of the verse, it would be saying "a person's name must contain his own name," which is meaningless. If, on the other hand, "in his own name" means "by his own authority," then the statement makes sense.

Why is the Yahshua form used by no one but Sacred Name believers and people who have been influenced by Sacred Name believers? Probably because no such name exists in the Hebrew Bible and, to my knowledge, no such name exists in any extra-

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<sup>11</sup> There is some debate over whether or not the Jews' final shortening of Jesus' name to Yeshu was a deliberate attempt to avoid acknowledging Yeshua of Nazareth as Savior.

<sup>12</sup> This article first appeared in a publication called The Eliyah Messenger in May-June 1966, and was reprinted in 1975 in World Today Analyzed, a publication of the Assembly of Yahvah in Tahlequah, OK.

Biblical Hebrew literature. It appears that Dr. Ben-Gigi is correct when he says that people invented the name Yahshua to fit their theology.

Dr. Botkin goes on to confess, "I have read a lot of literature from writers who seek to expose the "errors" of those who refer to the Messiah as Yeshua. The only thing these writers actually expose is their lack of knowledge. I could give several examples of statements which are absolutely ridiculous. I do not have the space in this publication to give all the examples I have in my files, and I do not wish to embarrass sincere people for their honest but misguided efforts. There are some examples, though, that grossly misrepresent the facts, and some of these examples need to be exposed."

In one popular booklet published by a well-known Sacred Name organization, the anonymous author makes this statement: "Most reference works agree with Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the NT statement on page 284, which states that the name Yahoshua was shortened after the exile to the short form Yahshua." This statement makes it sound like Kittel uses the forms Yahoshua and Yahshua. I went to the library and looked at this page in Kittel's. The words Yahoshua and Yahshua do not appear even one time on this page. This can be verified by going to a library and looking up this page (Volume III).

Dr. Botkin continues, "This same Sacred Name organization which misrepresents Kittel's also misrepresented a Jewish author. In a magazine article written by this organization's main leader, a lengthy segment is quoted from a book published by KTAV, a Jewish publishing house. When copying this quotation for his magazine article, this Sacred Name author freely used Yahshua, making it appear that the Jewish author used that transliteration in his book. I got the book from the library, though, and discovered that "Yahshua" did not appear in the book. I wrote to this Sacred Name leader asking for an explanation. I told him that unless he had some other explanation, I could conclude one of three things: either he deliberately misrepresented the facts, or he did it accidentally, or the book I got from the library was a different version from his, in which case I would owe him an apology. My letter was sent September 1, 1997, and I am still waiting for a reply. I will not embarrass this man by mentioning his name or the name of his ministry. It is not my intention to embarrass anyone.

"I am not writing this article to persuade people to quit saying "Yahshua." If people want to continue using a mistransliteration that was erroneously contrived by early Sacred Name pioneers who didn't know Hebrew, it really doesn't matter to me. I don't think that the substitution of an "ah" sound for an "e" sound matters much to the Lord, either. What does matter, though, is the spreading of false accusations against Messianic Jews and others who called the Messiah "Yeshua."

Paul warned Timothy about "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising [suspicions]" (1 Tim. 6:4). Unfortunately, this is an accurate description of what goes on among many people in the Sacred Name movement. Personally, I would rather fellowship with non-contentious people who call

the Messiah "Jesus" than with contentious people who insist that everyone call Him "Yahshua."

## **Excursus: Linguistic Superstition And The Sacred Name Only Movement**

By Dr. Daniel Botkin

Let me begin by saying that I am in favor of the reverent and proper use of the Sacred Names. In our congregation, we utter the Name every Sabbath when we face Jerusalem and say the Shema: "Hear, O Isra'el, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is One." Every day throughout the week, I utter the Name in private prayer more times than I can count. However, I avoid using the Name in casual conversation, because I truly do regard it as a Sacred Name which should be used only in a sacred context.

The issue I wish to address is misrepresentation of that "Name." To distinguish between those who (like me) are not opposed to using the Sacred Name in a sacred context and those whom I call "hardcore" advocates, I will refer to the latter as "Sacred Name Only" groups.

In these Sacred Name Only groups (hereafter SNO), I have witnessed some adherents using the Name in a lighthearted manner in casual conversation, even while joking around. However, my main complaint against the SNO movement is not the use or non-use of the Name per se, but the fact that their linguistic superstition about "God" and "Lord" unnecessarily separates brethren from one another. Their linguistic superstition discredits SNO advocates and gives Christians and Jews an excuse to reject everything else that is being restored through the Messianic movement--the Sabbath, the Feasts, the dietary laws, etc. Paul warned Timothy about teachers who are continually "doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings [suspicions]" (I Timothy 6:4). I cannot think of a more accurate description of the SNO movement which has been driven by linguistic superstition since its inception.

Linguistic superstition is the belief that saying certain "negative" words will produce negative results, and saying certain "positive" words in just the right way will produce positive results. This sort of belief system is most apparent in occult magic. Practitioners of occult magic believe that certain words have an inherent power or force within them which can be harnessed and utilized when the words are pronounced in a precise, prescribed manner. The seven sons of Sceva believed this. When they saw Paul doing miracles in the name of Yeshua, they tried to cast out a demon by saying, "We adjure you by Yeshua whom Paul preacheth." The demon in the man replied, "Yeshua I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Then, the man leaped on them and gave them a good beating (Acts 19:13-16).

You would think that Bible Believers would know better than to get entangled in linguistic superstition. Sadly, that is not the case. We have seen linguistic superstition manifested by some Christians in the "Word of faith"/ "positive confession" movement. Now, we are seeing linguistic superstition of another sort being manifested in the Sacred Name Only movement.

The Sacred Name movement itself began in the late 1930s as an offshoot of the Church of God, Seventh Day denomination, its main focus being (as the phrase "Sacred Name"

suggests) the use of God's Hebrew name. In most SN literature, God's Hebrew name is transliterated as "Yahweh" (though at least 38 other variant spellings exist among various proponents). Jesus' Hebrew name is usually mistransliterated as "Yahshua" (though at least 55 other variant spelling exist among SN believers).

Hard-core SNO proponents are afraid to utter the words "God" or "Lord" when referring to the Creator. They insist that He must be addressed by His Hebrew Name. Most SNO literature gives a reader the impression that knowing the correct pronunciation of God's Hebrew name is more important than knowing God Himself.

Much of what I have read in SNO literature is dangerously close to the occult thinking that existed in first-century Gnosticism. The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity (pg. 27) says this: "Heretical Gnostic systems combined magic and astrology with the Bible. The Hebrew name of God, IAO [the Greek transliteration of YHWH- DB], fascinated sorcerers by its vowels, always crucial in ancient magic."

Like first-century Gnostic sorcerers, many SNO believers seem equally fascinated by the Hebrew name of God, and have made a fetish out of the Sacred Name. This in itself is not sorcery, of course, but it is a step in that direction. Rotherham's Emphasized Bible, a translation which has greatly influenced the SNO movement, says in its introduction that "the name Yahweh has some inherent meaning of great force" and speaks of "some self-evident force" contained in the Sacred Name (pg. 26, 28). This sort of thinking can lead to linguistic superstition and worse. Noted Hebrew scholar David Bivin, in an article called "The Fallacy of Sacred Name Bibles," writes: "The use of correct formulas and correct pronunciations is very important in magic rites, but not in one's relationship with the God of Isra'el" (Jerusalem Perspective, Nov.-Dec. 1991, pg. 12; reproduced with permission in this Herald Issue).

The SNO movement has produced a mixture of good and bad fruit: on the positive side, it has done a lot to help people see that the Sabbath, the Feasts, and the dietary laws are still valid for New Covenant Believers--on the negative side, it has spawned a lot of rotten fruit. Does the good fruit outweigh the rotten fruit or vice versa? We will let God be the Judge of that. We do not wish to judge, but to warn against the poison of rotten fruit.

The purpose of this article is not to attack or embarrass or publicly humiliate anyone. The sole purpose of the article is to expose error. For this reason, SNO writers and sources will not be cited.

Some minor errors in a person's thinking can be relatively harmless. Unfortunately, some of the errors in the SNO movement are not harmless. The proof of this statement is in the rotten fruit the movement has borne. This unhealthy fruit is primarily a glaring lack of love for the brethren. We all know the importance of loving one's neighbor as one's self; we know that the fruit of the Spirit is love; we know about I Corinthians 13. Yet if it were not for a few loving SNO friends whom I know personally, I would have to

conclude from SNO literature that SNO believers hate the brethren. And I have been reading SNO literature regularly since the mid-1980s.

Indeed, many SNO proponents do not even consider the brethren their brethren. Christians who do not use the Hebrew names are often regarded as lost at best and as devil worshipers at worst. One large SNO organization printed these words in a newsletter last August: "Christianity calls 'God's' Son by the name 'Jesus'. Thus, those worshiping 'this son' are committing spiritual adultery!!" This is from one of the more tolerant SNO organizations. Other SNO writers have flatly stated that Christians who use the words "God," "Lord," and "Jesus Christ" are actually worshiping Satan.

SNO believers do not fare much better when it comes to loving their own. One well-known SNO leader who has been around for decades admits this. He writes: "The Sacred Name movement has been characterized by knowledgeable observers as 'a bunch of splintered, divided sects'; and this is EXACTLY what I found." (Emphasis his.)

A Christian reader hearing about this for the first time might well be asking the questions: "These people think that I'm actually giving homage to the devil when I pray to 'God' or 'the Lord'? All the worship I've given to God all these years has really gone to Satan, simply because I didn't address God by His Hebrew name?"

For the benefit of those who want an explanation of how this convoluted idea developed let me explain.

## **SNO History**

SNO believers reject the English words God and Lord because these are words which, when not capitalized, can refer to pagan gods and to human lords. SNO believers think it is disrespectful at best or Satan worship at worst to refer to the Creator by these generic titles. However, the Hebrew equivalents of these two words, *elohim* and *adonai*, are also generic words that often refer to false pagan gods and to human lords. Yet the Creator refers to Himself as *elohim* and *adonai* hundreds of times in the Hebrew Scriptures. If He is not offended by the generic titles in Hebrew, why should He be offended by the equivalent generic titles in English? English even has the added advantage of capitalizing the G- or the L- to distinguish the true Creator from the false pagan gods and the human lords. If the Creator is offended by generic titles, wouldn't He be more offended by the "uncapitalizeable" *elohim* and *adonai* than He would be by a capitalized God and Lord?

SNO supporters imagine a linguistic connection between the English God and Hebrew Gad ("luck, fortune"). Because the pronunciations of these two words are very similar, they claim that "God" is the god of good luck. However, the fact that two words in two different languages sound the same is not proof that the two words are cognates. On the contrary, such is usually not the case. For example, Spanish *con* ("with") has no connection to English *cone*; German *nein* ("no") has no connection to English *nine*; Hebrew *ki* ("because") has no connection to English *key*; Yiddish *teler* ("plate") has no

connection to English teller; Russian tut ("here") has no connection to English toot, etc., etc.

Concerning the SNO believers' ban on God because of its similarity to Gad, noted linguist and Hebraist Isaac Mozeson, author of THE WORD: The Dictionary That Reveals the Hebrew Source of English, wrote this in a personal letter to me: "If the word Gad were so terrible per se, there would be no tribe of Isra'el or prophet of King David by that glorious name. It seems I agree with you on these issues."

SNO believers avoid using even the Hebrew Adonai because of its similarity to the Greek god Adonis. Some refuse to transliterate Adonai, even though Scripture uses this word over 200 times to refer to the Creator. I have even seen one SNO Bible that translated Adonai as "Yahweh." This is not honest translation; it is deliberately misrepresenting what the Hebrew Scripture really says. Isaac Mozeson wrote (in the letter previously mentioned): "I don't shun the Hebrew ADoNe (master, lord) + suffix AI simply because Adonis is a pagan god or because the Brits have a House of Lords."

### **If They Borrow It, We Can't Use It?**

The Hebrew Bible refers to the Creator as Adonai over 200 times. It is linguistic superstition to avoid a word that the Hebrew Bible freely uses. Yes, it is possible that the Greeks borrowed the Hebrew Adonai and used it to refer to their god Adonis. So what? We know that Yahweh is the true Adonai/Elohim/Lord/God. The fact that pagans use some of the same nouns for their idols is no reason for us to stop using the words. If the pagans were to say that their gods are "good" and "strong," would SNO believers feel a need to avoid these two adjectives and use different synonymous adjectives such as "beneficent" and "powerful"?

Most SNO literature substitutes Mighty One and Master for God and Lord. However, the terms mighty one and master are every bit as generic as god and lord. This is evident even in SNO literature, which refers to false gods as "mighty ones," the only difference being capital letters. This is not spiritual progress; it is simply re-inventing the wheel.

### **The Brit Chadashah Is Silent...**

The New Testament (Brit Chadashah), by its glaring silence on the "Name" issue, also refutes SNO teaching. If avoiding generic titles and using the Hebrew names is so vital to one's salvation and spirituality, why do the New Testament writers consistently refer to God by the generic Greek titles Theos and Kurios (words which can also refer to pagan gods and to human lords)? And why do they consistently refer to the Messiah by the Greek form of His name, Iesous Xristos? The New Testament writers could have written the Hebrew characters into the Greek script, but there is no solid evidence that they did any such thing. They used Theos and Kurios, just as the Hebrew Scriptures use Elohim and Adonai.

It is very important to note this: Even when they were directly quoting Old Testament Scripture, the New Testament writers used the generic Greek titles as substitutes for the Sacred Name. Many Old Testament verses which contain the Sacred Name are quoted in the New Testament, yet the Sacred Name itself never once appears in the New Testament. A generic title is substituted every single time. If the New Testament is to have any bearing whatsoever on our theology, we cannot ignore the fact that the New Testament writers used generic titles as substitutes for the Sacred Name.

The only argument SNO proponents can use to try to refute these facts is to accuse "wicked scribes" of changing the New Testament manuscripts. Some go so far as to claim that the entire New Testament was originally written in Hebrew, complete with the Sacred Name, of course. History tells us that Matthew originally wrote his gospel in Hebrew, but there is no reason to suppose that the rest of the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew. On the contrary, when one considers the fact that the epistles were addressed to congregations composed primarily of Greek speaking believers who knew little if any Hebrew, the idea seems ludicrous. To accuse wicked scribes of tampering with the text is circular reasoning, and has no basis in historical or linguistic fact.

Theories have been put forth to try to debunk the Greek New Testament. Some SNO proponents have claimed that Paul could not have known Greek well enough to write his epistles in that language. Jews did not learn Greek, we are told by SNO writers. We know from Acts 21:37 that Paul knew Greek well enough to converse in it. I also found this information in a pamphlet: "The Oxyrinchus Papyri shows that even Jewish children could read and write Greek. The Greek language was common in Palestine, even though the vernacular was Aramaic and the Sacred tongue was Hebrew." It is very ironic that this information appears in a pamphlet written by the late A.B. Traina, the man who is regarded by some as the "granddaddy" of the SNO movement.

### **Luke, New York Times Writer?**

Some SNO believers argue against a Greek New Testament by stating that the Greek text is awkward and clumsy, "poor Greek"; therefore the New Testament must be a translation of a Hebrew original—which, it is assumed, contained the Hebrew names, of course. Do these SNO believers know Greek well enough to tell that the New Testament is a poor translation of a Hebrew original? Is the Greek of the New Testament so poor that a Hebrew original must be assumed? We will let two scholars who know Greek answer the question. Dr. Brad Young, a present-day scholar of great repute, states that Paul, in his epistles, "gives evidence of his bi-lingual abilities by writing in Greek like a native."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Brad Young, *Paul the Pharisee*, (Yavo Digest 19:4, Sept. 1997), pg. 15

Robin Griffith-Jones, master of London's Temple Church and a former New Testament Oxford University teacher, says that Luke used "very sophisticated Greek. He would have been asked to write New York Times op-ed pieces."<sup>14</sup>

In 1978, George Howard wrote an article in *Biblical Archaeology Review*. Howard did not argue for an original Hebrew New Testament in this article, but he did theorize that the writers of the Greek New Testament might have written God's name in the Hebrew characters when they wrote their original manuscripts. A SNO proponent sent me a copy of this article, complete with his complimentary underlining, arrows, brackets, and exclamation marks in the margins. I marked a few more things in the article myself. In Howard's short essay, I circled the following words:

"...suggested that... suggested... argued that... It seems to me... is hardly likely that... In all likelihood...very probably... suggests that... no doubt... Perhaps... may have... Assuming this to be generally correct... In all probability... probably... no doubt... must have... impossible to know with certainty... must have been... must have taken... must have meant... must have meant... was probably... probably... suggest that... it may be that... probably... may be..."

The appearance of all these words and phrases of ambiguity on just one and one-half pages of text tells me that Howard himself is not very certain of his theory. Yet SNO people will swallow an unproven theory simply because it agrees with their doctrine.

One major reason SNO advocates misunderstand the "Name" issue is because they do not realize the broader meaning of the Hebrew word *shem* (usually translated "name"). When they read a verse that says something about "the name of Yahweh," they think mainly in terms of nomenclature, the word that is used to address someone. However, *shem* means much more than just "name" in this narrow sense of nomenclature. *Shem* also means the reputation, honor, or character of the person. Any good lexicon will confirm this. Isaac Mozeson also confirms this in his letter to me: "Also *SHeM* means 'repute' more than merely 'name.' The problems of the 'sacred name believers' will lessen when they consider this."

### **Shaming Yahweh's Reputation**

Even in English we use the word name in its broader sense: "You've ruined the family name!" Such a statement does not mean that the person has altered the pronunciation of his surname or changed it to a generic name like "Jones." It simply means that he has brought shame and reproach on the family by his behavior.

The Scriptures say many things about the name of Yahweh. There are verses that speak about misusing, blaspheming, or shaming His name. There are verses about knowing, glorifying, praising, trusting in, and speaking of the name of Yahweh. These verses are not referring to the correct pronunciation of the four-lettered

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<sup>14</sup> Robin Griffith-Jones, *Gospels According to New Book*, (Peoria Journal Star, 5/28/00)

Tetragrammaton; there are speaking about the character and reputation of Yahweh. Thus, trusting in "the name" of Yahweh means that we trust in His character and His reputation, not in the correct pronunciation of His nomenclature. A person who trusts only in the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton is reducing the name of Yahweh to nothing more than a magical incantation.

Again, touting linguistic superstition gives people an excuse to reject truth. SNO writers discredit themselves in the eyes of intelligent, thinking people by their sloppy scholarship. Some of it is so pathetic that calling it "sloppy scholarship" is actually a compliment. SNO writers often try to prove a point by making long, detailed linguistic arguments based on the details of a Hebrew word. They end up proving nothing to people who know Hebrew. All they end up doing is advertising in the most embarrassing manner possible their ignorance of linguistics and the Hebrew language.

One brother who leads a large Messianic organization based in Jerusalem once said of the SNO movement, "We have scholars in Jerusalem who have done nothing but study the Hebrew texts for their entire lives, and even they are not 100% certain how God's name is pronounced. And yet, we get letters from people in places like Arkansas telling us that they know exactly how the Name is pronounced, even though they have never studied Hebrew." (No offense to people in Arkansas. He could have named any other state.)

One thing that has been cropping up in SNO literature in recent years is the alteration of certain Hebrew words. The Hebrew word for Judah is no longer transliterated as Yehudah; now it is YAHudah. Jacob is now written YAHakob instead of Ya'akov. Jerusalem is no longer Yerushalayim; now it is YAHrushalayim (or according to one writer, YAHUWShALEM). Even Messiah is changed from Mashiach to Messi-YAH. It seems that whenever SNO people see the letter "Y" in a Hebrew word, they think that there should be an "H" after it, so they remedy the problem by restoring the missing "H" that the wicked scribes allegedly removed in their attempt to suppress the Name. Anyone who knows Hebrew can see the foolishness of this. One SNO writer (who since has declared that Yeshua of Nazareth was a false messiah), when trying to explain why Joseph's name was really YAH-sef instead of Yosef, stated that "it doesn't take much imagination" to see that wicked scribes, intent on hiding the Sacred Name, removed the "H" from the original name of YAH-sef and turned it into Yosef. Maybe it doesn't take a lot of imagination to see this, but it certainly takes some imagination to see it. It also takes complete ignorance of the fact that the yo- prefix is the common, standard prefix that is used to conjugate third- person, masculine singular, future tense verbs in this category.

One of the most bizarre allegations in SNO literature is the claim that the word Hallelujah is "a hybrid with one word of Hebrew and one word of Greek." The SNO writer who made this amazing discovery has "unleavened the hybrid" and restored the "correct" pronunciation for us. According to this SNO writer, we should be saying "Halle-atah-YaHVah" instead of "Hallelujah." This erroneous conclusion would never have occurred if the writer had known that the plural imperative is formed by adding a vav

suffix to the verb. This is something that a beginning Hebrew student learns in ulpan within the first couple weeks of study.

In another recent article a SNO brother writes about the different names people use to refer to the Messiah. This writer tells his readers that the Yeshu form used by unbelieving Jews is made up of three Hebrew letters which can form an acronym for "may his name and memory be blotted out." This information is true. The three Hebrew words are "yimach sh'mo v'zikhro." (See Stern's Jewish NT Commentary, pg. 5.) However, this SNO writer tells us that the three Hebrew words are "yiddish sh'mo w'zither." This gross mis-information does not appear in some self-published rag that is obscure and unknown to SNO people. It appears in a glossy SNO periodical that has been around since 1937.

If we want to be taken seriously as a people, if we truly want to have the Glory of Yahweh's Holy Name restored, we have to do better than we have done in the past. Our scholarship must be able to pass the test. More importantly, we must be a people whose actions truly represent the "Name," reputation, honor, and character of the One whom we claim to represent. May it be so for all who truly love His Holy Name.

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