

INTRODUCTION TO THINGS MESSIANIC

**An Introduction for Newcomers
to the Messianic Movement**

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Introduction to Things Messianic

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
CJSB: Complete Jewish Study Bible (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: New English Bible (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*

- NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
- NIV: New International Version (1984)
- NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
- NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
- NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
- NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
- NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
- NT: New Testament
- OT: Old Testament
- REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
- RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
- t. Tosefta
- Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
- Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
- TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
- TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
- TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
- UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
- v(s). verse(s)
- Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
- Vul: Latin Vulgate
- YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
- WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

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Sacred Name Concerns

How many of you have been in some sort of religious setting, where you have heard someone use the words God, or Lord, or even Jesus Christ—and then someone gets up and publicly chastises the person? Have any of you ever been told that if you do not use Hebrew names and terms for the Father and the Son that your prayers will neither be heard nor answered? How many of you may have directly witnessed various people forget the love and compassion of our Savior, and whose faith is now tied up in pronouncing His name “correctly”? These sorts of occurrences are quite commonplace across the independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement—and it definitely affects people in the Messianic community as well.

Some are not familiar with what the Sacred Name issue is, while others are all too knowledgeable. In this article we will discuss various aspects surrounding this debate, including: what the Divine Name of God is, various interpretations and views of the Third Commandment, titles for our Creator used in Scripture, where the English name Jesus really comes from, and concerns which many have in regard to what can be a very divisive subject. Our goal is to gain a scholastic perspective which encourages Believers to follow the example of the Apostles, who lived within the framework of Second Temple Judaism. Many of today’s Messianic people believe that there has been a strong lack of Biblical scholarship in this area, both linguistic and historical.

What is the issue?

In regard to the Father’s name, the issue at hand is that one has to decide whether or not it is appropriate to verbalize His proper name which is given in the Hebrew Bible. It is composed of the four Hebrew letters *yod, hey, vav, hey*: equivalent of the English letters YHVH or YHWH. They

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compose what is commonly called the Tetragrammaton, a term meaning “a word of four letters.”

In almost all major English Bible translations of the Tanach or Old Testament, the Tetragrammaton has been rendered as “the LORD.” Some Jewish Bibles use the term “HASHEM” meaning “the Name.” Customarily in Bible translation, proper names are always transliterated, meaning that their sounds are communicated as closely as possible from one language into another, but titles are always translated. Yet in the case of the name YHWH, most English Bibles have rendered it as a title. The preface to the New American Standard Bible states the following:

The Proper Name of God in The Old Testament: In the Scriptures, the name of God is most significant and understandably so. It is inconceivable to think of spiritual matters without a proper designation for the Supreme Deity. Thus the most common name for the Deity is God, a translation of the original *Elohim*. One of the titles for God is Lord, a translation of *Adonai*. There is yet another name which is particularly assigned to God as His special or proper name, that is, the four letters YHWH (Exodus 3:14 and Isaiah 42:8). This name has not been pronounced by the Jews because of reverence for the great sacredness of the divine name. Therefore, it has been consistently translated LORD. The only exception to this translation of YHWH is when it occurs in immediate proximity to the word Lord, that is, *Adonai*. In that case it is regularly translated GOD in order to avoid confusion.

It is known that for many years YHWH has been transliterated as Yahweh, however no complete certainty attaches to this pronunciation.¹

As Exodus 20:7 reads in the NASU: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.” If the Tetragrammaton were transliterated into the text, as it is in the New Jerusalem Bible, then the verse reads, “You shall not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, for Yahweh will not leave unpunished anyone who misuses his name.” “Yahweh” is the most common form used by theologians today for the Tetragrammaton, other than just the letters YHWH. Many scholastic works and commentaries will use the form “Yahweh” in their description of Ancient Israelite religion.

This Christian Bible translation says that the name YHWH is rendered as LORD because of Judaism’s reverence for the Divine Name of the Supreme Deity. The NASU translators followed a long-standing tradition

¹ NASB Text Edition (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, 1997), iv.

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of not pronouncing the name of God founded centuries ago in Judaism. One widely respected Jewish translation of the Tanach (Old Testament), the ArtScroll Tanach, renders YHWH/YHVH not as LORD, but HASHEM, meaning “the Name.” Its translators state, “In this work, the Four-Letter Name of God is translated ‘HASHEM,’ the pronunciation traditionally used for the Name to avoid pronouncing it unnecessarily.”²

A third, but more liberal view of why YHWH is not used in most Bible translations, is stated in the preface to the Revised Standard Version. It says, “the use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom he had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.”³ Some may take issue with the statement that it is “entirely inappropriate for the universal faith” for our Creator to be designated by a proper name. However, it is historically accurate that the speaking of the name of God aloud was discontinued in Judaism long before the time of Yeshua, as commonly speaking the name of God was considered synonymous with defaming it. Martin Rose comments in *ABD* that “Judaism had secured that the divine name should not be profaned any more. The divine name, once the ‘distinguishing mark’ of divine presence and immanence, had become the essence of God’s unapproachable holiness so that in the Jewish tradition ‘the Name’ (*haššēm*) could be synonymous with ‘God.’”⁴

The primary debate surrounding the issue of the Divine Name has many factors. How is the name YHWH to be pronounced? What does the Third Commandment truly communicate and mandate? Should people even be using the Divine Name?

Secondary debates include what the given Hebrew name of the Messiah is, and whether or not it is necessary to know the specific name YHWH for a human being to experience eternal salvation.

The Creator Has a Name

No honest Christian or Jewish theologian will disagree with those who strongly point out that our Creator indeed has a name. He first revealed His name to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15:

² Nosson Scherman and Meir Zlotowitz, eds., *The Stone Edition Tanach* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, Ltd., 1996), xxv.

³ *Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1952), v.

⁴ Martin Rose, “Names of God in the OT,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1010.

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"Then Moses said to God, 'Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." Now they may say to me, "What is His name?" What shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you.'" God, furthermore, said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, "The LORD [YHWH], the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations'" (Exodus 3:13-15, NASU).

The proper name of our Creator was revealed to Moses as he was preparing to go back to Egypt with His help to free the Israelites in slavery. Moses needed a name to distinguish YHWH from the pagan gods of the Egyptians. The *Jewish Study Bible* comments that while the name "YHVH is [often] represented by the word LORD...it is connected to the verb *h-y-h*, 'be' or 'become,' most likely in a causative sense, 'he who causes to be.'"⁵ Another possible meaning of YHWH is simply "Eternal One," or perhaps even "Transcendent." We see that Moses used the name YHWH in His encounters with Pharaoh:

"And afterward Moses and Aaron came and said to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD [YHWH], the God of Israel, "Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness.'" But Pharaoh said, 'Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and besides, I will not let Israel go'" (Exodus 5:1-2, NASU).

As previously noted, most English Bibles use the title "the LORD" in place of YHWH. In instances such as these, did the Pharaoh of Egypt verbally speak the name YHWH? From the text alone, it is likely that he did. As history later records, the Jewish Sages who returned from Babylonian exile did not wish God's name to be brought to shame, as misusing God's name was believed to have been one of the significant reasons which caused the exile. Substitutions were used for the Divine Name, such as *Adonai*, meaning "(my) Lord," or *HaShem*, meaning "the Name." Whenever YHWH would appear in a Biblical text, *Adonai* or *HaShem* would likely be pronounced instead. Yet, it is important for a Bible reader to note how both of these titles appear independently in the Scriptures to refer to our Creator.

⁵ Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2142.

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Most Jews who returned from captivity in Babylon considered it blasphemous to speak the Divine Name, and much of this does continue in a great deal of the Jewish community to our modern day. The Talmud states how the “sages say, ‘On account of using the ineffable Name, one is subject to the death penalty, but as for euphemisms, one is subject to the admonition [not to do so, but not to the death penalty if he does so]’” (b.*Sanhedrin* 56a).⁶ Post-exilic Judaism has historically maintained that if a person were to curse using the name YHWH in a sentence, one was to be given the death penalty. If it were just a curse with a title used in place of the Divine Name, then it was not worthy of death. This is one of the reasons why the proper name of God was not affluently spoken by the First Century C.E. The intention was to disallow instances where pagan individuals such as Pharaoh would curse using the Divine Name.

The Third Commandment

From most Bibles, the Third Commandment reads: “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain” (Exodus 20:7, NASU; cf. Deuteronomy 5:11). The standard Christian interpretation of these verses is that one should not use titles like Lord or God or the name Jesus Christ as a slur. This includes using derogatory slurs involving titles given to God as a curse. Jack S. Deere reflects on this interpretation, observing, “This command forbids using God’s name in profanity but it includes more. The third commandment is a directive against using God’s name in a manipulative way (e.g., His name is not to be used in magic or to curse someone). Today a Christian who uses God’s name flippantly or falsely attributes a wrong act to God has broken this commandment.”⁷ You should not find any sincere Believer who disagrees with this interpretation.

In some Jewish translations of Scripture, the Third Commandment is rendered as, “You shall not swear falsely by the name of the LORD your God; for the LORD will not clear one who swears falsely by His name” (Exodus 20:7, NJPS), meaning that one is not to take a false oath in His name or by God’s authority. Nahum M. Sarna explains in the *Etz Hayim* Torah commentary that this means, “The tradition demands that we

⁶ *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary*. MS Windows XP. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005. CD-ROM.

⁷ Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, eds., *Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 272.

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neither swear falsely in court nor use God's name in vain. We, therefore, refrain from using the traditional names for God in secular writings or conversation, much less in voicing profanities.⁸ The NJPS translation reflects an interpretive tradition which equated misusing the name of God to swearing falsely in His name. The Hebrew clause commonly rendered as "in vain" is *l'shav*. Sarna explains that this means "for nothing, in vain," but indicates it is also ambiguous, commenting, "The ambiguity broadens the prohibition and allows for the proscription of both perjury (by the principals in a lawsuit, swearing falsely) and unnecessary or frivolous use of the divine name."⁹

HALOT offers several different applications of the term *shav*, including "worthless," meaning "to utter a name in vain, unnecessarily to abuse a name in an evil way (in a magic ritual or an oath)"; "worthless, unrestrained."¹⁰ "It designates anything that is unsubstantial, unreal, worthless, either materially or morally" (*TWOT*).¹¹ Obviously, what the Third Commandment was intended to communicate is that one not misuse the name of God. It is to be treated with great respect and it commands authority. This includes using it inappropriately as a slur, as it is commonly interpreted by Christianity, and using it falsely in oaths as it is widely interpreted by Judaism.

Some, however, believe that the Third Commandment is violated by those who refuse to use or speak the name YHWH, and by rendering YHWH with a title such as "LORD" or "HASHEM" in English Bible translations. Is the Third Commandment broken when people do not speak the name YHWH?

When our Creator revealed His proper name to Moses on Mount Sinai, He said, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations" (Exodus 3:15, NRSV). No honest commentator denies the fact that in the Hebrew source text of Exodus 3:15 the name YHWH/YHVH appears.¹² Thomas B. Dozeman remarks in the *New Interpreter's Study Bible*,

⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, "Exodus," in Nahum M. Sarna, "Exodus," in David L. Lieber, *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001), 444.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 2:1425.

¹¹ Victor P. Hamilton, "shav," in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:908.

¹² Heb. YHWH Elohei avotei'khem...zeh-sh'mi l'olam.

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"The name YHWH, translated as 'Lord' in the NRSV, is the third-person masculine singular form of the verb. It translates 'he is' or 'he will be.' Speaking the name YHWH actually poses a question: He will be what? The answer to the question requires further reading of the book of Exodus, where the future actions of God for Israel are recorded, providing the content of the divine verbal name: YHWH will be savior, healer, revealer, covenant maker, etc."¹³

Jeffrey H. Tigay, in *The Jewish Study Bible*, identifying that the Creator indeed has a name, reflects on the tradition of why Jewish people over the centuries have avoided saying it. He remarks, "The *LORD* is actually a translation of 'adonai' (lit. 'my Lord') because that is what Jews now pronounce whenever the consonants YHVH appear. YHVH was probably originally pronounced 'Yahweh,' but in Second Temple times, as an expression of reverence, Jews began to avoid uttering it, substituting 'adonai' and other surrogates."¹⁴ The *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* mirrors these remarks, adding, "When the high priest addressed God in the Temple's Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he uttered this name. When the priests blessed the people in the Temple, they used this name. By the third century B.C.E., God's name had become so hallowed that it could not be pronounced outside of worship, and the term *adonai* (my lord) was regularly substituted."¹⁵

While certainly recognizing that our Creator has a name, YHWH/YHVH, both the Jewish and Christian traditions have avoided its pronunciation due to its extreme holiness. The rendering of YHWH as "the *LORD*" is identified in the preface to most major English Bible translations. In scholastic circles, however, it is not uncommon to see forms such as YHWH or Yahweh used to refer to God, as Jewish and Christian theologians do plainly recognize that our Creator has a name. However, in Second Temple Judaism the name of God was not spoken aloud. As Messianic Believers, we must recognize that this was the same Second Temple Judaism in which Yeshua the Messiah lived, and from which the early Messianic community arose. The Messiah, in fact, instructed His Disciples to follow the lead of the Pharisees in these sorts of matters (Matthew 23:2-3). Regarding the name of God and whether or not we

¹³ Thomas B. Dozeman, "Exodus," in Walter J. Harrelson, ed., et. al., *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, NRSV (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 90.

¹⁴ Jeffrey H. Tigay, "Exodus," in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 112.

¹⁵ "God, names of," in Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, eds., *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 259.

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should use the name YHWH, we should determine whether or not He ever spoke it. *We should follow the example of Yeshua and His Apostles.*

Yeshua's Handling of the Name of God

Objectively examining the Apostolic Scriptures, **there is not a single instance** of the Messiah ever verbalizing the name YHWH, either directly, or with Him quoting from the Tanach. Consider Luke 4:17-19, which includes a direct quotation from Isaiah 61:1 and 58:6:

"And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD'" (Luke 4:17-19, NASU).

In the Greek source text, Isaiah 61:1 is quoted directly from the Septuagint, the Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible from approximately three centuries before Yeshua. The LXX rendered the name YHWH as *Kurios* or "Lord," the Greek equivalent title of the Hebrew *Adonai*. In the synagogue at Capernaum, Yeshua would have read this text aloud with *Adonai*. While the following verses in Luke 4:28-32 indicate that most in the synagogue thought He was blaspheming, **they do not indicate that He was blaspheming because He verbalized the name YHWH**. On the contrary, they were dismayed because of Yeshua's words "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21, NASU). *EJ* indicates that "The prohibition against the pronunciation of the name of God applies only to the Tetragrammaton, which could be pronounced by the high priest only once a year on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies...and in the Temple by the priests when they recited the Priestly Blessing."¹⁶ The Mishnah reflects these traditions that existed in the Judaism of Yeshua's day:

"And the priests and people standing in the courtyard, when they would hear the Expressed Name [of the Lord] come out of the mouth of the high priest, would kneel and bow down and fall on their faces and

¹⁶ Louis I. Rabinowitz, "God, Names of," in Cecil Roth and Geoffrey Wigoder, eds., *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972), 7:682.

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say, 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever'" (m. *Yoma* 6:2).¹⁷

There was a protocol for using the proper name of God, and it is clear that Yeshua adhered to it during His Earthly ministry. In the Gospels Yeshua actually is seen spending more time calling His Father, "Father" or "Abba," than referring to Him with the titles God or Lord. If Yeshua considered not speaking the name YHWH aloud to be an error of the Second Temple Judaism in which His ministry functioned, then there would be plenty of evidence in the Apostolic Scriptures supporting this, including charges of blasphemy against Him for verbalizing the name YHWH. **But these things do not appear.**¹⁸ As Messianic Believers who are trying to return to the theology and practices of the First Century Believers, who operated within the context of Second Temple Judaism, we must recognize that while our Heavenly Father has a proper name, it was not used by Yeshua or the Apostles. We must have the same kind of respect for the holiness of the name YHWH that they had.

Can we know with certainty how to pronounce the Divine Name?

One important key to the debate surrounding the name of the Creator, actually regards the pronunciation of the name YHWH itself. To many Jews, it is considered "the unspeakable name of God." A major part of this is due to the fact that *the exact* pronunciation of the Divine Name has been contested, having been lost to antiquity.

It is notable that most Sacred Name Only organizations you will encounter **cannot agree** upon the exact pronunciation of YHWH. Each has its own theory about how to pronounce the Divine Name. Renderings range from the common forms "Yahweh" and "Yahveh" to "Yahuweh," "Yahuveh," "Yahvah," and "Yahuah," just to name a few. Many just

¹⁷ Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 275.

¹⁸ About as close as things get to Yeshua verbalizing the Divine Name appears at Yeshua's trial when He claimed to be the "I AM," and was considered blaspheming by the high priest (Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:70-71). *Ego eimi*, appearing in the Gospels for many of His "I AM" statements, was used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew *ehyeh asher ehyeh* where God revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:13-14).

Consult G.M. Burge, "I am' sayings," in Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), pp 354-356.

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choose to write it as YHVH or YHWH. (And yes, some even insist on just using the Hebrew letters of *yod, hey, vav, hey.*)

Scholars have debated for centuries over the exact pronunciation of God's name, based on available linguistic evidence and testimonies from ancient history. But all that anyone can provide is a best guess. B.W. Anderson summarizes the following in *IDB*:

"In the earliest Hebrew the sacred name appeared as a four-letter word or tetragrammaton: YHWH..., without any vowel signs. Since the vowels were added very late, at the time of the fixing of the MT text..., the OT itself gives no clue to its original pronunciation. Some help, however, is given by the early church fathers. Theodoret of Cyrus (fourth century A.D.) testifies that the Samaritans, who shared the Pentateuchal scripture with the Jews, pronounced the name [*Iabe*], and Clement of Alexandria (early third century A.D.) transliterated the 'name of four letters' as [*Iaoue*]. Moreover, Egyptian Magic Papyri from the end of the third century A.D. attest to the patristic spelling, especially that of Theodoret. Following these hints, modern scholars believe the approximate pronunciation was 'Yahweh.'"¹⁹

"Yahweh" has become the most common pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton in the scholastic community, but no complete certainty can be attached to this pronunciation. There are some variant pronunciations such as "Yahuweh" or "Yahoweh" which some prefer. A default position is to represent the name of God by the consonants YHWH or YHVH. We can, however, be confident that "Jehovah" (or "Yehovah") is not the correct pronunciation of YHWH. As Anderson details,

"[This is a]n artificial form, often attributed to Petrus Galatinus in *ca.* A.D. 1520, which results from the combination of the consonants of the Tetragrammaton...with the substitute vowel reading which was introduced in the sixth-seventh centuries A.D...Of the various substitutes that were employed, the chief was 'Adonai' ('Lord'), the vowels of which the Masoretes as a rule added to the consonants 'YHWH' to indicate that 'Adonai' should be read. The combination of the two—the Tetragrammaton and the vowels of 'Adonai'—yields the artificial name."²⁰

¹⁹ B.W. Anderson, "God, names of," in George Buttrick, ed. et. al., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:409.

²⁰ B.W. Anderson, "Jehovah," in *Ibid.*, 2:817.

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Because the Hebrew language has no vowels, the Masoretes, whose job it was to copy the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures, added special markings underneath letters to indicate vowel sounds. For the name YHWH/YHVH, the vowel markings for *Adonai* or “Lord” were applied, so the cantor in the synagogue would read *Adonai*. Some early Christian Bible translators applied the vowel markings for *Adonai* and came up with the name “Jehovah.” There are still a fair number of Christians who use the form Jehovah, albeit in error. The scholastic community today, in contrast, is more likely to use the form “Yahweh,” or simply YHWH / YHVH.

There are some in the Hebrew Roots movement who believe that they know what the correct way to say the name of God actually is. The problem with this is that the pronunciation of His name has been debated for centuries, and one of the reasons why religious Jews today do not use it is because His name was only spoken aloud by the high priest in the Temple on *Yom Kippur*. Perhaps today we might not view not speaking God’s name in such a sense, seeing the name YHWH or forms such as “Yahweh” used in academic journals and publications. But considering the debate over how God’s name is pronounced, it would be best to follow historical precedents, knowing that our Father has a name, but treating it with the respect and holiness that it deserves.

Is it necessary to know the Divine Name to be saved?

Sadly, debates over this issue do not stop. Many people who staunchly advocate usage of the Divine Name believe that you must know the name YHWH/YHVH in order for a human being to have eternal salvation. Is this actually what the Scriptures tell us? Although no honest Bible reader can deny how the proper name of our Creator is YHWH/YHVH, and that it is important for people to recognize what this name is and the supreme holiness attached to it, **there is no mandatory requirement in Scripture that a human being must know this exact name to be saved.**

Proverbs 30:4 asks some rhetorical questions: “Who has ascended into heaven and descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has wrapped the waters in His garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name or His son’s name? Surely you know!” (NASU). Some stridently conclude that the text of this verse makes it absolutely necessary that a human being must have specific knowledge of the name YHWH/YHVH and the original Hebrew name of the Messiah to be saved. But this is not what Proverbs 30:4 communicates, as this verse

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speaks of the majesty of our Creator and the greatness of our Heavenly Father's and His Son's names—not that a human being must know these specific names in order to possess eternal salvation. It may be *important* for a person to know the Hebrew names of the Father and the Son, but being aware of the significance or importance of a matter is different than having specific knowledge lest one be subject to eternal punishment. For in Hebraic thought, one's "name" also concerns reputation, power, and authority.²¹

A significant difficulty, if a human being is required to have specific knowledge of the name YHWH/YHVH to possess eternal salvation—is what form of *yod, hey, vav, hey* one is supposed to know. The Sacred Name Only movement does not agree on the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton. Should people know: Yahweh, Yahveh, Yahvah, Yehovah, Yahuweh, Yahuah, or some other yet to be proposed derivation?

In Romans 1:18-20 the Apostle Paul communicated,

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:18-20, NASU).

The Apostle Paul asserted that no human being on Planet Earth is excused from not hearing the good news of salvation in the Messiah—or the revealed nature of the Eternal Creator in His creation. In theology this is usually referred to as natural revelation, or the witness of the Creator present in nature. This means that a person living in a remote jungle, who has never heard of the name YHWH/YHVH, or even has read or seen a Bible—much less heard about His plan in choosing and restoring Israel—will be held accountable on Judgment Day for his or her sin. **No human being must know the specific, proper name of the Creator to be saved—because that is not what the Word teaches.**

However, one thing that each of us should be astutely aware of is that it is absolutely necessary to call upon the One True Supreme Deity of the Holy Scriptures—whose proper name is YHWH/YHVH—in order to

²¹ Consult Walter C. Kaiser, "*shem*," in *TWOT*, 2:934-935; and similarly for the Greek Scriptures, H. Bietenhard, "*ónoma*," in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp 694-700.

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possess eternal salvation (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). *None of can deny this.* This especially involves the nature of the Messiah. If the Messiah is not YHWH made manifest in the flesh, then He is incapable of being our Redeemer (cf. Philippians 2:5-11; Isaiah 45:23).

Any good student of the Bible should know that the proper name of God is YHWH/YHVH. However, there is *no verse which says that a human being must have specific knowledge of the Divine Name in order to possess eternal salvation.*

“Our Father in Heaven”

It is important for students to recognize how the Apostolic Scriptures are replete with admonitions on how the Messiah’s followers are to call upon our Creator as *Father* or *Abba* (i.e., Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6), as the Messiah wanted His disciples to have an *intimate* father-child relationship with God—not a *strictly* formal king-subject arrangement, or one where a person would be in constant concern over pronouncing His “name” correctly. (Although, Messiah followers are certainly to revere and honor God as King!) We each need to remember how the Messiah Himself prayed, “Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9, NASU). Examine what the Messiah instructed, from what is commonly called “the Lord’s Prayer”:

“Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. *For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen*’” (Matthew 6:9-13, NASU).

Please notice that in the Scriptural quotation above there is no mention of the title “Lord,” where most Sacred Name Only advocates would insert YHWH. (That is, they would insert YHWH into their reading of the passage from a standard English version, or from one of the many so-called “restored name” versions available on the market today.) In this prayer, the Messiah called His Father, “Father.” From this portion of text, one can see from our Savior’s own words that using the Divine Name is something not to be taken lightly. The Messiah directed His disciples that YHWH is to be regarded as their Heavenly Father, and that His name is holy. But what must be noted is that the Messiah *never once* spoke the Divine Name in the Gospel accounts.

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There is no direct quotation of the Messiah Himself ever saying YHWH—short of inserting the Tetragrammaton into the Greek New Testament, which is not supported by any kind of trustworthy textual criticism. The closest that anyone can get to supporting the premise that the Messiah used the Divine Name could come from John 17:6, where He prayed, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world” (NASU). The Greek verb *phaneroō* means “**to cause to become known, disclose, show, make known**” (BDAG).²² However, both the Hebrew *shem* and the Greek *onoma*, which mean “name,” also represent the character and substance of the Holy One of Israel. In actuality, when the Messiah said that He manifested the Father’s name to His Disciples, He was speaking of manifesting the Father’s true character to His Disciples. This view is reflected in the NIV rendering of John 17:6: “I have revealed you [also NLT] to those whom you gave me out of the world.”

What about “God” and “Lord”?

It is notable that many Sacred Name Only advocates who affluently use the Divine Name YHWH, tend to forget that our Creator has many titles which are used complementary and independently of the Divine Name YHWH. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the most notable titles which one encounters are *Elohim* and *Adonai*. In the Greek Scriptures, their counterparts are *Theos* and *Kurios*. These titles in English correspond to “God” and “Lord.”²³

Sacred Name Only advocates often have a field day in attacking people who use the English titles “God” and “Lord.” It is often said that these words are of pagan origin and should have no place whatsoever in the vocabulary of a true Messiah follower. This claim is frequently made on the basis that God and Lord have also been titles of pagan deities. This claim is made even more so for the Greek titles *Kurios* and *Theos*, which were used in Ancient Greek as titles for the deities of classical Greek

²² Frederick William Danker, ed., et., al. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1048.

²³ Another notable title, particularly used of Yeshua in the Apostolic Scriptures, is *Despotēs*, usually rendered as “Master.”

There is a noticeable trend among some in today’s Messianic movement, who do not believe in speaking God’s Divine Name in deference to Jewish tradition, to replace references to Yeshua as “Lord” (*Kurios*) in English Bible quotations with “Master.” Why this is the case is uncertain, but a likely reason is that it is a reflection of a low Christology, and with wanting to purposefully disconnect any connections between the Lord Yeshua and the LORD God.

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religion. However, arguments against *Kurios* and *Theos* lose significant weight when we see that the Jewish Rabbis who translated the Hebrew Tanach into Greek, with the Septuagint, had no problem using them in reference to the Holy One of Israel. In fact, when the Apostles went into Greek-speaking lands, this is *exactly* what they called the God of Israel—because these were the same terms used by a Diaspora Judaism in the Mediterranean, which even employed the Septuagint as a main Bible version.

If we are to reject titles such as God and Lord because they might be used to refer to pagan deities, then we must hold the Hebrew titles of *Elohim* and *Adonai* to the same standard. Not surprisingly, both of these titles have been used to refer to *pagan deities* every bit as much as YHWH. TWOT explains that *El*, the singular form of *Elohim*, “is a very ancient Semitic term. It is also the most widely distributed name among Semitic-speaking peoples for the deity, occurring in some form in every Semitic language, except Ethiopic.”²⁴ So, if a Bible reader is to reject God and Lord as titles, then they must do the same for *Elohim*—precisely because *Elohim* is used to refer to pagan deities, and *El* is used in almost every Semitic language to refer to deities *other than* YHWH.

And, Bible readers have to also consider some more (inconvenient) matters. A shortened poetic form of “Yahweh,” *Yah*, which also appears in the Hebrew Tanach, was possibly used by pagan societies which pre-dated the Israelites. The IVPBBC indicates, “There are a number of possible occurrences of Yahweh or Yah as a deity’s name outside of Israel, though all are debatable.”²⁵ If we assume there is some accuracy here, we should not then just conclude that YHWH is a pagan name because pagans in the Ancient Near East may have used derivations of it. Note how in 2 Samuel 5:20, David described the God of Israel as *Ba’al*, which was indeed the name of a Canaanite deity. Yet we also see that, “In the early years the title Baal seems to have been used for the Lord (Yahweh)” (NIDB).²⁶ Is this an error on David’s part? We should not believe so.

There is no substantial evidence that makes “God” and “Lord” pagan titles. Otherwise, titles such as the Hebrew *Elohim*, and possibly even the name YHWH itself, would be likewise pagan.

²⁴ Jack B. Scott, “el,” in TWOT, 1:42.

²⁵ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 80.

²⁶ Steven Barabas, “Baal,” in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 113.

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What is the Hebrew name of the Messiah?

Surrounding the Sacred Name issue is what the original, given Hebrew name of the Messiah was. Everyone in Biblical Studies will agree that the Messiah did not go by the name “Jesus,” simply because the English language did not exist two millennia ago.

The Messiah, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), was Jewish, He lived in the Land of Israel, and this means that He must have had a Hebrew or Aramaic name. The most common Hebrew derivation that is used today for the Messiah’s name, by both Christians and Messianic people alike, is the name *Yeshua*. The Hebrew *yod, shin, vav, ayin* is used in all modern Hebrew translations of the New Testament (notably, the Delitzsch, Salkinson-Ginsburg, and United Bible Societies versions).

Yeshua (or *Y’shua*) is the standard Hebrew derivation used for the name of the Messiah by today’s Messianic Jews and evangelical Christian community. A few Sacred Name Only proponents, but not most, may also use it. Just as Sacred Name Only organizations disagree over the exact pronunciation of Divine Name *YHWH/YHVH*, so do they disagree over the pronunciation, and Hebrew spelling, of the Messiah’s name. The preferred Hebrew spelling for the Messiah’s name by most Sacred Name Only groups is *yod, hey, vav, shin, vav, ayin*, which is the Hebrew form for Joshua’s name, *Yehoshua*,²⁷ although such groups seldom render it as *Yehoshua*.

A general census of Sacred Name Only literature will show that a majority of them promote that the original name of the Son is “*Yahshua*,” or derivations such as “*Yahushua*” or “*Yahoshua*,” which they say means “*Yah* is salvation.” They primarily base this form on the Messiah’s words in John 5:43, where He said, “I have come in My Father’s name.” From this, those who use these forms say that the Messiah came in His Father’s name of “*Yahweh*,” thus His name must be “*Yah-shua*” or “*Yahushua*” or “*Yahoshua*.”

The problem with this form is that it is based on an erroneous interpretation of John 5:43, which says in its entirety, “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him” (NASU). The second part of the verse, “if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him” (NASU), is often accredited as being a prophecy of the coming antimesiah/antichrist.

²⁷ See lexical entry in *HALOT*, 1:397.

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If the antimessiah is to come in his own name, must he have the first syllable of his own name in his name? If the antimessiah had been Adolf Hitler, then given the logic of Hitler “coming in his own name,” the antimessiah’s name would have been something along the lines of AdAdolf HitHitler.

Sacred Name Onlyists frequently argue that “Yah,” the contracted poetic form of “Yahweh,” is the “family name” of the Creator, and thus the syllable “Yah” must appear in the Messiah’s name. The problem with this approach is that it does not align with Jewish names of the Second Temple Period. If indeed the Messiah came in “His Father’s name,” YHWH, as inferred by Sacred Name Only advocates, then the Messiah’s name should actually have been *Yeshua ben YHWH* or *Yeshua bar YHWH*, “Yeshua, son of YHWH,” and not their preferred form of “Yahshua.”

There are some problems which arise when asserting that “Yah” must appear in the name of the Son. What the Messiah was actually talking about in John 5:43, was that He came in *the authority* of His Father, not that the syllable “Yah” must have been present in His actual *designative* name. Innocently, many believe that “Yahshua” is the original name for the Messiah. However, for “Yah-shua” to be an actual word in Hebrew, it would need to be spelled in Hebrew as *yod, hey—maqqef (hyphen)—shin, vav, ayin*, and no such word *has ever existed* in the Hebrew language. No Hebrew linguist has ever used or legitimized this form, and it does not appear in any reputable lexicon. “Yahshua” is a word that has been entirely fabricated to fit a false theological presupposition.

Our ministry employs the use of the standard form of Yeshua, used by the vast majority of today’s Messianics for the Hebrew name of the Messiah—forms validated by linguistic scholars and accepted by Jews, Christians, and Messianics alike.

It is also important to note that the names “Yeshua” and “Yahshua” actually have *two different meanings*. Very few have pointed out that perhaps these differences may be related to how Sacred Name Only advocates perceive whether or not the Messiah is Divine, and what the salvation He provides actually involves. When one reviews a substantial amount of Sacred Name Only literature, there is usually not a very strong emphasis on who the Messiah is and His atoning work at Golgotha (Calvary). All too often, unfortunately, many Sacred Name Only people are extremely legalistic in their approach to the Torah, and many do look to commandment keeping as a means by which they earn salvation. Seldom are the grace and mercy of our Creator emphasized in Sacred

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Name Only literature. So, it should be no surprise that Sacred Name Only advocates often circumvent the Messiah for salvation.

The names “Yahshua” or “Yahushua” point to salvation coming *directly* from the Father, whereas the name “Yeshua” points to salvation coming *through* the Son, serving as an intermediary between humanity and the Father, as the name “Yeshua” means “He is salvation.” Many Sacred Name Only adherents are very eager to talk about “Yahweh,” but are not necessarily as fervent to implore the completed work of the Messiah on the tree. The Tanach is clear that only God is our Savior,²⁸ and the Apostolic Scriptures are clear that Yeshua is our only Savior.²⁹ If Yeshua is not Elohim (God) in the flesh, then He cannot be our Savior. If His name were “Yahshua” or “Yahushua,” this would point to a Savior other than He, and could assert that He is not Elohim (God) made manifest in human form.

A large number of Sacred Name Only groups do not believe in the Divinity of the Messiah. Given this, why would one need the Messiah for salvation, when one can go directly to YHWH? Forms such as “Yahshua” and “Yahushua” can very much demean the Messiah’s place in the salvation experience. It is unavoidable that a great deal of Sacred Name Only literature has been influential over various people within in the Messianic community, who may now be seen to reject foundational Biblical teachings about the Divinity of the Messiah, or have perhaps already denied Him as the Messiah.³⁰ This is a problem, and we do not encourage people to use “Yahshua” or “Yahushua” for more reasons than just bad linguistics.

It was *Yeshua the Messiah* who was sacrificed for the sin of humanity. Again, we can emphasize how Matthew 1:21 so eloquently says, “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, **for He will save His people from their sins**” (NASU). Yeshua has been demonstrated by scholars to be the most accurate Hebrew name of the Messiah. It also implies that “He *personally* is salvation,” as one must come to faith in Him and His atoning work. Knowing the Father in Heaven *alone* is not enough in order to be redeemed.

²⁸ 1 Samuel 2:1; Isaiah 43:11; 45:15; 63:7-8; Hosea 13:4; Psalm 49:15.

²⁹ Luke 2:11; John 4:42; 1 John 4:14; 1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 3:2; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 1:1; 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 2:13.

³⁰ For a further discussion, consult the relevant parts of the author’s book *Confronting Critical Issues: An Analysis of Subjects that Affects the Growth and Stability of the Emerging Messianic Movement*.

Is the name “Jesus” pagan?

Directly corresponding to the debate over what the Hebrew name of the Messiah is, is the controversy surrounding the name which history and the majority of English speaking people know Him by: Jesus Christ. Most Sacred Name Only advocates argue that the name “Jesus” is pagan because it has Greek linguistic origins, and some have even referred to our Savior insultingly as “Gee-Zeus.” However, a study of Hebrew to Greek transliteration shows that there is no basis or justification for this.

About three centuries before the Messiah’s birth, the Jewish translators of the Septuagint had a similar problem. They were commissioned to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek for Ptolemy’s library at Alexandria, and had extreme difficulty transliterating Hebrew proper names into Greek. Unlike Hebrew to English transliteration, which is easier because English offers most of the same sounds of Hebrew; Hebrew to Greek transliteration is not as easy because it does not share some of the same sounds. It is notable that many of our proper Biblical names in English come from Greek transliterations of Hebrew words, such as Moses (Heb. *Moshe*), Phinehas (Heb. *Pinchas*), Caiphas (Heb. *Qayafa*).

Young’s Analytical Concordance (among many resources) confirms that the Greek name *Iēsous*, used for our Savior in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures, is a transliteration of His original Hebrew name *Yeshua*.³¹ The name *Yeshua* is a contracted form of the name *Yehoshua* or *Joshua*, and is used numerous times in the Tanach to refer to Moses’ successor.³² Transliteration is the process where one tries to communicate, as closely as possible, the sounds of one language into another language, often by representing words of one language in a different alphabet. This is extremely difficult when taking proper Hebrew names and communicating them in Greek. How we get from *Yeshua* to *Iēsous* (pronounced *Ee-ay-sooce*) to ultimately *Jesus* is a challenge to understand if one is armed with nothing more than a concordance, does not understand the difficulty of transliteration, and most importantly has not studied both Hebrew and Greek. When transliterating this Hebrew name (*yod-shin-vav-ayin*) into Greek (*iota-ēta-omicron-upsilon-sigma*):

³¹ Robert Young, *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 541.

³² Consult the entry by B.T. Dahlberg, “*Jeshua*,” in *IDB*, 2:867-868. Note that it includes both the Hebrew and Greek spellings.

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- *yod* (“yay”) becomes *iota-ēta* (“ye” or “ee-ay”)
- *shin* (“sh”) becomes *sigma* (“s”), as there is no “sh” sound in Greek)
- *vav* (“u”) becomes *omicron-upsilon* (“oo”)
- It is necessary for a final *sigma* (s) to be placed at the end of the word to distinguish that the name is masculine and for it to be declinable from the nominative case (indicating subject)
- the *ayin* (“ah”) sound gets dropped
- Hence, we get the name *Iēsous*, pronounced either *Ye-sooce* or *Ee-ay-sooce*

The name *Iēsous*, surprisingly to some, is actually of Jewish origin. This name is used for the title of the Book of Joshua in the Septuagint, the Ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced approximately three centuries before the Messiah. This serves as definitive proof that *Iēsous* is not of pagan origin, but rather is simply a Greek transliteration of Yeshua developed by the LXX’s Jewish translators.

In Old English, the name *Iēsous* was rendered *Iesus* (pronounced *Yesus*). However, it was spelled with a beginning letter “I,” which in the Middle Ages had a “Y” sound. The I was used for letters beginning with both “I” and “J.” Early editions of the King James Version, for example, simply transliterate the Greek *Iēsous* into English as *Iesous*. Later in the development of the English language, J’s started being used in place of I’s and it received the same sound that it has today. (In German, the closest, most widely spoken relative of English, the name *Jesus* is pronounced as *Yesous*, as J’s in German are pronounced as the English letter Y.) The name Jesus is only around 400 years old. However, its existence did not come about by some sordid conspiracy as some might errantly claim.

As Messianic Believers, we prefer the richness of our Savior’s original Hebrew name of Yeshua. But because we prefer Yeshua over Jesus does not mean that we believe that those who pray in the “name of Jesus” are not praying in the authority of the same Savior that we are praying to in the “name of Yeshua.” Our Heavenly Father looks at our hearts, and we need to understand. We encourage people to use the name which was originally given to the Messiah, Yeshua, but also must realize that “history happens” and the pronunciation of names usually changes from language to language via transliteration. The Hebraic understanding of one’s name

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relates more to power, authority, and reputation (Philippians 2:10-11), as opposed to just pronunciation.

Those who have a problem with the Greek name *Iēsous* need to focus their criticism to the Jewish translators of the Septuagint. Sacred Name Only advocates who think that *Iēsous* is an illegitimate transliteration of *Yeshua* should provide their own transliteration of the name *Yeshua* into Greek, recognizing the linguistic barriers that exist. They should also consider what names the Messiah was designated as having in the sign above His execution-stake, which appeared “in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek” (John 19:20, NASU).

Transliteration between ancient and modern languages is not an exact science. However, it does demonstrate that the Greek name *Iēsous*, from which the English “Jesus” is derived, is not pagan.

When going out into the Ancient Mediterranean to declare the good news of the Messiah to Greeks and Romans, not only did the Apostles proclaim the message in the name of *Iēsous* to diverse audiences—but Bible readers encounter at least one Diaspora Jew who was given the name *Iēsous* by his parents. In the closing greeting of Paul’s letter to the Colossians, there is a man who had a very intriguing name: “Jesus who is called Justus” (Colossians 4:11, NASU). This is a prime attestation of how in ancient times, and even frequently today, Jewish people commonly had two names: one from their Jewish heritage, and one from the environment in which they were living. Paul or *Paulos*, otherwise known as Saul or *Shaul*, also had two names (Acts 13:9). What makes the brief statement of Colossians 4:11 so intriguing, is that this Jewish man, also with the name Justus (Grk. *Ioustos*), was actually named *Iēsous*! What makes Jesus Justus significant is that it points to the fact that the name *Iēsous*, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yeshua*, was indeed used among Greek-speaking Jews as an acceptable male name. (The CJSB renders Colossians 4:11 with, “Yeshua, the one called Justus.”)

What this all points to is the fact that when individuals like the Apostle Paul went out into the Greek speaking world, to Greek speaking Jewish synagogues, referring to the Messiah with the name *Iēsous* would not at all have been something strange to them—even if they and their adherents knew it was a transliteration of *Yeshua*. The negative reaction that one can find in Jewish outreach and evangelism to the English name “Jesus” in modern times—something conditioned by centuries of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism on the part of institutional Christianity—would not have been mirrored among the First Century Jewish Believers to the name *Iēsous*. Just as there were normal Jewish men in Judea who bore the name

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Yeshua, so were there normal Jewish men in the Diaspora who bore the name *Iēsous*. The name *Iēsous* may not have been the original name which Joseph and Mary were instructed to call the unborn child (Matthew 1:21), but it was by no means something concocted in later centuries by Greeks and Romans so that they could somehow continue to worship their pagan deities.

The *biggest evidence*, of course, against the claim that the name “Jesus” is pagan is that people have been genuinely saved from their sins, delivered from demons, and prayers have been answered through the name of Jesus Christ. It is ironic, of course, to find out that many Sacred Name Only advocates will admit to being saved in the “name of Jesus.” But, it is often these same people who will slander, harass, and unfairly criticize others who likewise say they were saved in the “name of Jesus,” telling many contemporary Believers that they cannot be saved. Anyone who says that the name Jesus is pagan—while it may not be the Messiah’s original name—in light of this evidence, we should believe is guilty of blasphemy (cf. Matthew 12:31).

Today’s Messianic people prefer the richness of our Savior’s original Hebrew name Yeshua, and we do not overly encourage usage of the name Jesus. But because Messianic people may prefer Yeshua over Jesus, does not mean that we believe that those who pray in the “name of Jesus” are not praying in the authority of the Same One who we are praying to in the “name of Yeshua.” *We must reflect a Lord and Savior who embodies the ultimate love and compassion.* And, our Eternal Creator is so big and powerful, that He indeed knows when one of His human creations, is indeed calling out to Him for salvation and mercy.

SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 12

1. Have you been in a religious setting where someone has been berated or harassed because of using the English terms God, Lord, or Jesus Christ? If so, describe your experience.
2. Explain how our Creator has a name. Why do most Bibles render it as “the LORD”?
3. Why does Judaism today not use the proper name of God? Do you believe this is appropriate?
4. What does the Third Commandment state regarding the Divine Name?
5. Why do you think there is debate over the pronunciation of the name YHWH?
6. Do you believe it is mandatory that a person know the name YHWH to be saved?
7. Why do you think there is no record of the Messiah ever using the name YHWH?
8. Do you believe it is appropriate to use the English titles God and Lord? Why or why not?
9. What is the significance of the name Yeshua?
10. Do you think that “Yahshua” is the original name of the Son? Why or why not?
11. How did Yeshua become transliterated as *Iēsous* into Greek?
12. Summarize the ongoing debate regarding the Divine Name YHWH.

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