



The Sinaitic Light

The Name of Christ

Study Article No. XV

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This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) Yahoshua (Christ).

Objective and Learning Outcome

Objective:

The objective of this study is to learn the biblical name of the Messiah, that is to say his birth name.

Learning Outcome:

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Understand the origin of Jesus;
2. Understand what transliteration means;
3. Understand what Yeshua, Yahoshua, Yehoshua and Yahshua means;
4. Understand why the Messiah's name was changed from a Hebrew name to a Greco-Latin, Anglicized name;
5. Understand how errors are created due to transliterations;
6. Understand the origin of the Septuagint;
7. Understand what books were translated into Greek, and what Torah means

Introduction

The name of Jesus is the most recognizable name in the world because he is the most historically attested man in the world. So, the name of the Messiah is in a very basic sense unarguable, or so it would seem. This article asks the question, “Is Jesus the Messiah’s name”? In other words, was the name “Jesus” given to the Messiah at birth? This article would respectfully say no. Jesus was not the name given to the Messiah at his birth, neither was it the name the angel Gabriel instructed his mother Mary to name him. If one just considers his family’s name it should engender questions. For example, Matthew writes, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?” (Matt. 13:55). Matthew was a Hebrew Israelite writing to a Hebraic audience. The names he publishes are an anglicized (*the practice of modifying foreign words, names, and phrases in order to make them easier to spell, pronounce, or understand in English*) vocalization of their Hebrew names, ethnic names they would have been called in the first century by their contemporaries.¹

Mary is the anglicized version of Miriam מִרְיָם, which means “rebellion” (Ex. 15:20). James is the angelized name for Yachob יַעֲקֹב, which means “to supplant” (Gen. 25:26). Joseph is an anglicized elided name of Yehoseph יְהוֹסֵפֶת, which means “Yah adds” (Ps. 81:6). Simon is the anglicized name of Shimeon שִׁמְעוֹן, which means “heard” (Gen. 29:33). Judas is the anglicized name for Yehudah יְהוּדָה, which means “Yah be praised or Yah be thanked” (Gen. 29:35). The Messiah’s cousin, John the Baptist, carries an anglicized name. His name was originally pronounced Yehochanan יְהוֹחָנָן, which means “Yah is gracious” (2 Kin. 25:23). The Messiah’s family carried Hebrew names and were referred to by these names because they have meaning and were significant tribal names. Some of them like Yehoseph, Yehudah, and Yehochanan are called theophoric names, which means “names that have God’s name ‘Yah’ embedded in them”.²

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Jesus is a Latinized transliteration for the Hebrew name Yeshua. Yeshua is the *theoretical Hebrew name ascribed to the Messiah* (1 Chron. 24:11; Neh. 12:26) and Joshua represents an anglicized transliteration for Yeshua. Transliteration represents the process of transferring a word from the alphabet of one language to another. This process is done when a language does not have a letter in their alphabet to produce the correct sound a foreign word makes. For example, Jesus is the Latinized name for Christ’s Greco name, Iesus. Iesus was created by Hellenistic Hebrew scribes (Hebrews who adopted Greek culture) in Alexandria Egypt who needed to help the Hebrew population in Greco-Egypt read the Bible. After living in Egypt under Greek rule, and being acculturated in Greek language and art, the Hebrews *in Egypt* lost the ability to read Hebrew fluently. They were confined to Greek, so the scribes translated, and in many cases, transliterated the Hebrew Bible into Greek for them. This Bible became known as the Septuagint

¹ What does anglicize mean?

² Cite two Hebrew names and their anglicized versions.

³ What does Yehudah mean?

Bible, meaning seventy because 70 scribes translated the Hebrew Bible, primarily the first five books of the Bible (Torah, *meaning instructions*) into Greek.^{4 5 6 7 8}

The Hellenistic scribes could read, write, and speak Hebrew as well as read, write, and speak Greek. However, they could not write the name Yeshua with the Greek alphabet, so they found equivalent letters to reproduce the name in their language. For example, there is no “Y” in Greek, so the Greeks used an “I” called the *iota* and they used the Greek vowel “eta” equivalent to the English “E” to produce the first two letters in the Messiah’s Greco transliterated name, “Ie”. There is no “sh” in the Greek alphabet, so the Greeks used the letter “s” called in Greek the *sigma* producing the word “Ies”.^{9 10}

The Greek alphabet does not have letters that sound like “oo” as in “boo”, so they used two of their letters called the *omicron* and *upsilon* to produce the desired sound “ou” as in “boo”, producing the word “Iesou”. The Messiah’s name is a masculine name. Masculine Greek names require an “s” to terminate or to close their names, so scribes used a letter in the Greek alphabet called the *final sigma* to close the Messiah’s Greek name, thereby producing the name “Iesous”, the Greco transliteration for Yeshua. The Romans (Latins) changed the name again by replacing the “I” with the “J” and dropping the “o” to introduce the name Jesus instead of Iesous. Transliterations help people pronounce words and names in foreign languages, but it loses meaning in the process. In other words, the Messiah’s Hebrew name was either Yahoshua or Yehoshua. This name means Yah saves or Yah is salvation. Yeshua is a shortened version of these two names.^{11 12 13 14}

With the previously stated in mind, one can see that the Messiah was not named Jesus. This name has been ascribed to him for nearly two thousand years, but it does not represent the name Mary was instructed to name her son. The angel Gabriel says “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Jesus does not mean Yah saves or he saves, as the meaning of his name was lost in transliteration. With the aforementioned in mind, the termination for Christ’s Latinized name becomes problematic for some. The suffix SUS in JeSUS is Latin for swine. The Latin Dictionary says, “SUS is noun, 3rd declension gender: common. Definition hog, pig, swine (“Sus,” Latin Dictionary) Webster says, “a genus of mammals . . . Comprised . . . Most of the swine” (“Sus,” Merriam Webster Dictionary).^{15 16}

⁴ What word means instructions?

⁵ Why was the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek?

⁶ What is the Greek Old Testament Bible called?

⁷ What part of the Bible was originally translated into Greek from Hebrew?

⁸ What is the Torah?

⁹ What Greek letter is used in place of the “sh” letter in Hebrew?

¹⁰ What Greek letter is used to replace the Hebrew letter “Y” in Yeshua?

¹¹ Define what transliteration means.

¹² Explain how Yeshua became Iesous.

¹³ Explain how Iesous became Jesus.

¹⁴ Why does the Messiah’s Greek name end with “s”?

¹⁵ True or False. Gabriel told Mary to name her child Jesus?

¹⁶ Does the name Jesus mean Yah saves?

Thus, the Messiah whom we call Jesus carries a Graeco-Latinized name ascribed to him in the sixteenth century (1524). Some who are naïve of transliterations may associate this name with a pig, and ascribe a Hebrew-Latin meaning to it such as, “he pig or pig”. At first glance, understanding the etymology of the name, it would seem plausible, but such a premise was not the intent of the scribes who created this name. The scribes were merely attempting to bring a Hebrew name over into the Greek vernacular, and the unintended consequences yielded a pig in the process. Prior to this name corruption, like his family, he was referred to as Yehoshua יהושוע, a theophoric name meaning “Yah is salvation” (Ex. 17:9). It would be most judicious to refer to the Messiah by this name or its Hebrew variant written herein because his name carries a profound meaning that was obviously important to God.^{17 18 19}

This assessment does not mean that anyone who has been using the name Jesus is condemned, neither is this lesson castigating or demeaning anyone who uses the name Jesus. It just appears more appropriate to call a person by their birth name, regardless of how someone may have appropriated and modified it to accord with their European culture. For support of this argument let’s examine Acts 26:14-15. “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the *Hebrew language*, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting’ [emphasis added]. Luke writes that the Messiah spoke to Paul in the Hebrew language. One cannot say Jesus in Hebrew, thus the name that was given to Paul was Yehoshua. This is the name that we should all approach the Messiah with, and exclaim out of respect and reverence to his mission and purpose. Peter says “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).^{20 21}

In summation, some Biblicists choose to use an elided pronunciation for the Messiah’s name, Yahshua, instead of the pronunciation Yeshua יֵשׁוּעַ for theophoric reasons (Yeshua does not mean Yah saves. It means saves or spuriously, he saves). The Tiberian pronunciation for the Messiah is Yehoshua יְהוֹשֻׁעַ. Jews appeared to have been returning to this name in the first century, the era of the Messiah (Ilan: 129). The Judean pronunciation for the Messiah is most probably Yahoshua יְהוֹשֻׁעַ (McCarter: 7). The difference between the two names is the prefix where Yehoshua is written with the Masoretic scribal vowel called the *sheva*, and Yahoshua is written with the Masoretic vowel called the *qamats*. Most Semitic scholars would agree that the philological vocalization of these theophoric names began and terminated with “Yah” and “Yahu” prior to the Babylonian captivity, and prior to the invention of the Hebrew vowel system. The only difference between the two names is the English vowels “e” and “a”.²²

¹⁷ What is the Latin word for pig?

¹⁸ Why do you think it is important to refer to someone by their proper birth name?

¹⁹ When was the Messiah’s name transliterated to Jesus?

²⁰ The Messiah spoke to Paul in the ____ language.

²¹ What name did Paul hear the Messiah call himself?

²² What are the two names that mean Yah saves?

In the post-Babylonian era (post-exilic), the name Yeshua was used by most people in Israel, which *probably* means he saves (1 Chr. 24:11; Ezra 2:2, Neh. 3:19). In the pre-exilic era (prior to the Babylonian captivity), the vocalization was Yehoshua or Yahoshua, meaning Yah saves. These two names represent the Tiberian and Judean vocalizations pronounced in northern and southern Israel. It is also the name(s) Yah uses when referencing people who carried these names in contradistinction to the names the people were using during this period (Zech. 6:11; Hag 1:1). We prefer to use the name that Yah most likely used when referring to His people because it glorifies Him. Yahshua is the elided pronunciation for Yahoshua due to ambiguity surrounding two Hebrew vowels called the *wav holem* and *wav shureq* that produces either an “o” or “oo” sound (Skinner: 122). Nevertheless, Yehoshua, Yahoshua and Yahshua means “Yah saves,” and are the names we use to represent this action to the Father’s glory as it was intended.^{23 24 25}

Closing

Jesus and Jesus are transliterations that loses its theophoric fidelity viz., Yah’s name is lost in the transliteration. Yet, we understand why this name exists. It exists because there were Hebrews in Egypt that only read Greek and needed to understand the Bible in their language, so it was necessary to transliterate words for them from Hebrew into Greek so they could read the Bible. Today, we can produce sounds and words in our own vernacular with very little restrictions, therefore, it seems injudicious to continue with a tradition that negates the Messiah’s true name and his mission.

This study was not written to suggest that people who have called on the name Jesus and are calling on the name Jesus are bad people, worshiping Satan or a pig. The reality is that we have practiced a theology and doctrine that we have inherited from family members and our environment. What we know of Yah is that He is merciful, kind, understanding, and is willing to forgive our ignorance. This lesson was written to demonstrate that the name “Jesus” was not his birth name, and it is appropriate as worshipers and Biblicists to bestow upon our priest and intercessor the name that Yah gave him. The Messiah’s name is efficacious because it represents his purpose and mission. His name also glorifies the Father, the one who sent him, Yah.

There is much more to discuss on this subject. If you have questions about this study or others, join us in fellowship, prayer, praise, and study every Saturday at 11:30 am or, call us for a consultation pertaining to this subject and any other you might find intriguing. We are a Messianic Judaic assembly teaching the doctrine of Messianic Sinaiticism, keeping Yah’s word in the faith of Yahoshua (Rev. 12:17; 14:12-13) and proclaiming Yahoshua’s gospel to the world and to those who are seeking Yah’s truth without interpretation or church tradition. May the blessings of the Most High be with you and thank you for reading our article.

²³ True or False. Yahshua means Yah saves.

²⁴ The names of the Messiah were pronounced differently in southern Israel than in northern Israel.

²⁵ True or False. Yah did not refer to the priest, Joshua (Jeshua) as Yeshua. He referred to him as Yehoshua?

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