

The Use of Messiah's Name

It is interesting how people will change someone's name in translation. In France, I would introduce myself as Frank, not Francois. *Frank* is my name regardless of what country I am in, or how the language is written.

It is possible when writing a name in another language that there are not equivalent sounds available. Thus, a name may be written slightly differently in that language. Even so, I would attempt to teach people how to say my name as it was given.

One should not get hung up on another's incapability. A friend of mine was raised in another country and her native language is not close to English. She never has pronounced my name correctly and it does not bother me. Accents do vary a pronunciation. When she "incorrectly" addresses me, I still know she is talking to me, and it would be rude to ignore her until she got it right.

Most people are familiar with the fact that *Jesus* is not the given name of the Messiah. *Jesus* is an English transliteration of a Latin transliteration of a Greek transliteration from either an Aramaic or abbreviated Hebrew name of the Messiah. The name in English has gone through three transliterations just to make it to our ears. It would be good to restore the Hebrew heritage to the thinking of Christianity. The use of Messiah's true name is an avenue by which this can be accomplished.

It is rather well accepted that Yeshua is the name given to the Messiah at birth. I personally believe this is not exactly correct, yet is a possible option. I will admit that the Peshitta uses the spelling **ישוע**¹ which would be transliterated to English from Hebrew as *Yeshua*. If the Peshitta was written in Hebrew that would settle the question; but the Peshitta is written in Syriac, a derivation of Aramaic. Thus, the transliteration into English is *Eshoo*. Yes, this gets complicated.

Yeshua as a name is Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew. Since the Babylonian captivity, both languages have used the same letters and script. Syriac uses a different script than Aramaic, but the words are basically the same as the Aramaic of that time period.

The Hebrew name *Yehoshua* is the equivalent of the Aramaic name *Yeshua*. *Yehoshua*, translated into English, would be *Joshua*. It is a combination of the first three letters of the name of God and the root of the Hebrew word *yasha* meaning *saved*, hence the meaning *YHWH is salvation*.

Yeshua is also a Hebrew word that is not used as a name.² This word is a variant of the word *yasha* (saved) pronounced in such a manner that the beginning yod (י) is the prefix *ye* making it an imperfect tense, masculine gender, third person word, meaning, *he will save*. It should be noted that this form is never used in the Old Testament as a word. *He will save* as a phrase in the Old Testament is *yoshea*, the hiphal or causative form of the word.

This brings to mind the verse Matthew 1:21 which Messiah was named. It says, "... call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people..." This might lead one to believe that it would read, "... call his name Yeshua, for yeshua his people..." This is a possibility, but it would be

¹ Because Hebrew is more familiar to the average reader, most Syriac Texts will be transliterated into Aramaic or Post Babylonian Hebrew script rather than using the Syriac (Estrangela) script.

² Joshua (Yehoshua) is one time called Jeshua (Yeshua) in Nehemiah 8: 17. The time period of this book is immediately after the captivity in Babylon. Babylon's language is Aramaic. [For this reason part of Daniel was written in Aramaic. This is why the high priest of that day, in Ezra and Nehemiah was called by his Aramaic name Jeshua (Yeshua) rather than Joshua.] Later in Zechariah 3 when this same high priest is referred to, he is called Joshua (Yehoshua) the Hebrew equivalent. Since Hebrew began to use the Aramaic script during their captivity in Babylon, it is hard to know when they are using an Aramaic spelling rather than a Hebrew spelling, especially since Hebrew does have a word spelled the same way.

switching languages in the middle of the sentence. There is no more support for that option than there is for this alternative, "... call his name Yehoshua for *yoshea* his people...." This would be consistently using Hebrew throughout the sentence and both *Yehoshua* and *yoshea* are from the same root word making a Hebrew pun.

The Syriac reads, "... she will call his name Eshoo

(ישוע){שחב}¹ "...for he will save his people...." In the text box to the right is this phrase from the Peshitta in interlinear format reading from right to left. The English is above a Hebrew transliteration which is above the appropriate Syriac word in Estrangela script. Due to differences in grammar, the words are not in a readable order for English.



Notice that the pun disappears in Syriac because *he will save* is not one word, nor is it from the same root word as *yeshua*. This phrase would have to be written in Hebrew to have the pun make sense. Thus, I believe the text and His name were given in Hebrew rather than Aramaic.

Historical documents extant today state that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew.³ Irenaeus is recorded as saying, "Matthew, indeed, produced his gospel written among the Hebrews in their own dialect..."⁴ Irenaeus, a second century Christian, knew of Matthew being written in Hebrew. This is not the only record of the Gospel of Matthew originating in Hebrew.⁵

There are several prophecies that point to Messiah's name as Yehoshua. In Zechariah 3 we find prophetic statements concerning a special High Priest. In this prophecy the name given to the high priest is Joshua, which in Hebrew is *Yehoshua*.

(NKJV Zechariah 3:1) "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! *Is* this not a brand plucked from the fire?" 3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. 4 Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

(NKJV Zechariah 3:8) "Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, You and your companions who sit before you, For they are a wondrous sign; For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. 9 For behold, the stone That I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone *are* seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription,' Says the LORD of hosts, 'And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. 10 In that day,' says the LORD of hosts, 'Everyone will invite his

³Some scholars state that the word *Hebrew* is actually referring to Aramaic, the language of the Hebrews. By the second and third centuries this was true, but debatable in reference to Matthew.

⁴ Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Cruse, p. 164

⁵ The following early church leaders are recorded in "Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History," Cruse, as saying Matthew was written in Hebrew. Clement p. 89 Papias p. 106, Pantaenus p. 166, Origen p. 215

neighbor Under his vine and under his fig tree.' "

There was a high priest during the time of Ezra to whom this text refers. This high priest is being used as a type for the Messiah. The setting was the rebuilding of the temple; the Hebrews involved had returned from a seventy year Babylonian captivity. It should be of no surprise that this high priest's name was Aramaic, the language spoken in the Babylonian Empire, rather than Hebrew. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak about this priest, and in every case his name is spelled with the Aramaic spelling (ישוע). However, in the prophecy in Zechariah the spelling of his name is recorded in the Hebrew spelling (יהושע), indicating the name of this prophesied high priest to be Yehoshua. By the first century Yeshua may have developed into a slang or shortened version of Yehoshua much like Jim is a short form of James. In English we recognize the *proper name* is James not Jim, consequently the *proper name* for Messiah is Yehoshua.

There are several other indications to substantiate my claims. However, I do not wish to claim that the way one pronounces His name is relevant to one's salvation, nor should it be a test for acceptance of someone as a brother or sister in Messiah. I am compelled to let you decide the pronunciation for yourselves. If this is important, I am confident that our Father can reveal the information to whom He desires.

Considering this, I will not change a valid quote from a version of the Bible just to make it fit my theology or preference. When quoting someone, the exact wording will be left intact when referring to the Messiah. May our Father bless you in your search for truth.