

[The following are a few quotes that I found helpful from an article called “Sacred Name Concerns” To view some of the Hebrew text in this article properly you will need to have the “BST Hebrew” font loaded on your computer. If you don’t have this font the following is a link where you can download it at:

http://www.student.northpark.edu/pemente/heb_fonts/bsthebrew.zip]

“How many of you have been told that if you do not use Hebraic names and terms for the Father and the Son that your prayers will neither be heard nor answered? How many of you have seen people forget the love and compassion of our Savior, and whose faith is now tied up in pronouncing His name “correctly”?

Sadly, these sorts of occurrences are becoming more and more commonplace in certain sectors of the Messianic community. As our Heavenly Father is in the process of restoring His people, many have taken the message of Torah obedience and have abused it. They have removed the message from its original, First Century Jewish context, and are doing things that are foreign to the orthopraxy of the Apostles. In so doing, they have brought disrepute to the Messianic movement and a foul spirit into the camp. They have defamed the Name of God, rather than respecting it.

For centuries, Satan has done his best to divide those who claim to believe in the God of Israel, Creator of Heaven and Earth. In our day, the enemy is trying to stall or discredit the restoration of Israel. Unfortunately, our enemy’s tactics have all too often succeeded. One such issue that Satan has used to divide the Body of Messiah in recent days has been the Sacred Name controversy. He has done his job quite well.

Some are not familiar with what the Sacred Name issue is, while others are all too knowledgeable. 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 came from, and concerns that we have in regard to this divisive subject. Our goal is to gain a scholastic perspective that encourages Believers to follow the example of the Apostles, who lived within the framework of Second Temple Judaism. We are concerned about the credibility of the Messianic movement, and we believe that there is a strong lack of Biblical scholarship in this area.

[What Is the Issue?](#)

In regard to the Father’s name, the issue at hand is one in which a person has to decide whether or not it is appropriate to verbalize the proper name of our Creator which is given to us in the Hebrew Bible. It is composed of the four Hebrew characters yud (y), hey (h), vav (v), hey (h): **yhwh**, equivalent of

the English characters YHVH or YHWH. These make what is commonly called the "tetragrammaton," a term meaning "a word of four letters."

In almost all 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. However, 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 with 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" or "Yehovah", however no complete certainty attaches to this pronunciation. "Yahweh" or "Yehovah" are the most common forms used by theologians today for **יהוה**, other than "YHWH" or "YHVH".

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 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 **יהוה** not as LORD, but HASHEM, meaning "the Name." Its translators tell us, "In this work, the Four-Letter Name of God is translated 'HASHEM,' the pronunciation traditionally used for the Name to avoid pronouncing it unnecessarily."

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." 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' (hashem) could be synonymous with 'God.'"

The primary debate surrounding this issue has many factors. How do we pronounce the name YHWH? What does the Third Commandment truly tell us? Should we 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 name YHWH to be saved.

The Creator Has a Name

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

"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.'"

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. He 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.'" Another possible meaning of YHWH is "Eternal One."

"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).

As before mentioned, 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, so substitutions were used for it, such as Adonai (אדני), meaning "my Lord," or HaShem (השם), meaning "the Name." Whenever YHWH would appear in a Biblical text, Adonai or HaShem would likely be pronounced instead. It is important to note that both of these titles appear independently in the Hebrew Scriptures to refer to God.

Most Jews who returned from captivity in Babylon considered it blasphemous to speak the Divine Name, and some in the Messianic movement likewise believe it is blasphemous to verbalize it. The Talmud states in b.Sanhedrin 56a, "the Sages maintain: [Blasphemy] with use of the ineffable Name, is punishable by death: with the employment of substitutes, it is the object of an injunction." Post-exilic Judaism has historically maintained that if a person were to curse using the name YHWH in a sentence, he 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 spoken in the First Century. The intention was to disallow instances where pagan individuals such as Pharaoh would curse using the Divine Name. This is something often not realized by many today who insist on its usage.

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; cf. Deuteronomy 5:11). Within Christianity, this command is usually interpreted as meaning that we are not to curse using the name of our Heavenly Father or that of His Son. 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." You should not find any Believer who disagrees with this interpretation.

In some Jewish translations of Scripture, the verse is sometimes 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 under God's authority. Nahum M. Sarna remarks, "The tradition demands that we 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."

This translation reflects an interpretive tradition that equated misusing the name of God to swearing falsely in His name. The Hebrew that is commonly rendered as "in vain" is l'shav (אִשָּׁו). 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."

HALOT offers several different applications of the word shav (אִשָּׁו), 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." "It designates anything that is unsubstantial, unreal, worthless, either materially or morally". Obviously, what the Third Commandment is trying to communicate to us is that we are not to 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 reveals His proper name to Moses on Mount Sinai, He says, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'The LORD, 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 3:15). No honest theologian denies the fact that in the Hebrew source text of Exodus 3:15 the name YHWH appears. Thomas B. Dozeman remarks in the New Interpreter's Study Bible, "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."

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 was probably originally pronounced 'Yahweh,' but in Second Temple times, as an expression of reverence, Jews began to avoiding uttering it, substituting 'adonai' and other surrogates." 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."

While certainly recognizing that our Creator has a name, YHWH, both 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 "YHVH" 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 that Yeshua the Messiah lived in, and from which the early Messianic community arose. Regarding the name of God and whether or not we should use the name YHWH, we should determine whether or not He ever spoke it.

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.'"

In the Greek source text, Isaiah 61:1 is quoted directly from the Septuagint, the Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible from approximately 300 B.C.E. The LXX rendered the name YHWH as kurios (kurios) or "Lord," the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Adonai. In the synagogue at Capernaum, Yeshua would have read this text 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). 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." 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 say, 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever'" (m.Yoma 6:2).

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 spends more time calling His Father, "Father" or "Abba," than referring to Him as God or Lord. If Yeshua considered not speaking the name YHWH aloud to be an error of the Second Temple Judaism that His ministry existed in, 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. As Messianic Believers who are trying to return to the theology 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 this issue regards the pronunciation of the name YHWH. To many Jews, this is considered "the unspeakable name of God." Part of this is due to the fact that the exact pronunciation of the Divine Name has been contested, having been lost in antiquity.

It is notable that most Sacred Name Only organizations cannot agree upon the exact pronunciation of YHWH. Each has its own theory about how to pronounce our Heavenly Father's name. Renderings range from the common forms "Yahweh" and "Yehovah", to "Yahveh", "Yahuweh," "Yahuveh," "Yahvah," and "Yahueh," just to name a few. Many just choose to write it as "YHVH" or "YHWH".

"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." "There are some in the Messianic community who believe that they know what the correct way to say the name of God is. The problem with this is that the pronunciation of His name has been debated for centuries, and one of the reasons why 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 it 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 respect 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?

Of course, the debate does not stop there. Many people who advocate usage of the Divine Name believe that you must know the name YHWH in order to be saved. This is not what the Scriptures tell us. Although the proper name of the Holy One of Israel is YHWH, and it is important we recognize what this name is and the supreme holiness attached to it, there is no mandatory requirement in Scripture that a person must know this name to be saved. However, there are some that like to use the Scriptures to make us think so.

Proverbs 30:4 asks us a rhetorical question: "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!" Some believe that the text of this verse makes it necessary that one must know the name YHWH and the original Hebrew name of the Messiah to be saved. But this is not what the verse tells us. Proverbs 30:4 speaks of the majesty of our Creator and the greatness of our Heavenly Father's and His Son's names, not that a person must know these names to be saved.

Notably of the Sacred Name Onlyists we could ask: If it is required to know the correct names to be saved, which form of the names must we know?

In Romans 1:18-20 the Apostle Paul writes, "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."

Paul tells us that no person on Planet Earth is excused from not hearing the good news of salvation in the Messiah or the revealed nature of the Creator in His creation. In theology this is usually referred to as natural revelation, or the witness of God in the world. This means that a person living in a remote jungle, who has never heard of the name YHWH or even has read or seen a Bible will be held accountable on Judgment Day for his or her sin. No person must know the proper name of the Creator to be saved because that is not what the Word teaches. If it were truly the case, then why does this Scripture imply otherwise?

However, one thing that we do know is that it is absolutely necessary to call upon the One True God, whose proper name is YHWH, to be saved (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). If the Messiah is not YHWH made manifest in the flesh, then He is incapable of being our Redeemer.

Any student of the Bible should know that the proper name of God is YHWH. However, there is no Scripture which says that a person must know the proper name of God to be saved.

Our Father In Heaven

It is important that we emphasize that the Apostolic Scriptures are replete with admonitions on how we are to call our Creator Father or Abba (Romans 8: 15; Galatians 4: 6), as the Messiah wanted us to have an intimate father-child relationship with God, not a strictly formal king-subject arrangement, or one where we are in constant concern over saying His name correctly.

We all need to remember that the Messiah Himself prayed, "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6: 9). Examine the following text of Scripture, 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).

Please notice that in the Scriptural quotation above there is no mention of the word "Lord," where most SNO advocates would insert YHWH. In this prayer, the Messiah clearly calls 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 clearly tells us that YHWH is to be our Heavenly Father and that His name is holy. But what must be noted is that the Messiah never once speaks the Divine Name in the Gospel accounts.

There is no direct quotation of the Messiah Himself ever saying YHWH short of inserting the tetragrammaton into the Greek New Testament, which is certainly not supported by conservative 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 prays "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world." The Greek verb *phaneroō* (*fanwerō*) means "to cause to become known, disclose, show, make known" (BDAG). However, both the Hebrew word *shem* (-X) and the Greek word *onoma* (*ονομα*), 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 character to them.

What About "God" and "Lord"?

It is notable that many people who use the name of God tend to forget that our Father has many titles that are used complimentary and independently of the Divine Name YHWH. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the most notable titles that are used are Elohim (ֱלֹהִים) and Adonai (אֲדֹנָי). In the Greek Scriptures, their counterparts are Theos (Θεός) and Kurios (Κυριός). These titles in English correspond to "God" and "Lord."

Sacred Name Only advocates often have a field day in attacking people who use the 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 Believer. This claim is 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 Mount Olympus. However, arguments against Kurios and Theos lose weight when we see that the Jewish Rabbis who translated the Hebrew Tanach into Greek 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.

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 (אֵל), 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." So, if we are to reject God and Lord as titles, we must do the same for Elohim 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.

We must also consider some more facts. A shortened poetic form of "Yahweh," Yah (יְהוָה), that also appears in the Hebrew Tanach, was possibly used by pagan societies that pre-dated the Israelites. The IVP Bible Background Commentary tells us, "There are a number of possible occurrences of Yahweh or Yah as a deity's name outside of Israel, though all are debatable." But even if true, we certainly do not conclude that YHWH is a pagan name because the pagans may have used derivations of it. Furthermore, in 2 Samuel 5:20, David describes the God of Israel as Ba'al (בַּעַל), which was the name of a Canaanite deity. But note that, "In the early years the title Baal seems to have been used for the Lord (Yahweh)" (New International Dictionary of the Bible). Is this an error on David's part? We do not believe so.

There is no substantiable evidence that makes "God" and "Lord" pagan titles. Otherwise, titles such as the Hebrew Elohim, and possibly even the name YHWH itself, are likewise pagan.

What Is the Hebrew Name of the Messiah?

Surrounding the Sacred Name issue is what the original given Hebrew name of the Messiah was. Virtually every Christian scholar will agree that He did not go by the name "Jesus," simply because the English language did not exist 2,000 years ago.

The Messiah, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), was Jewish in a purely First Century context which 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 Believers alike is the name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ). The Hebrew יֵשׁוּעַ is used in all modern Hebrew translations of the New Testament.

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, and the vast majority of people in the Messianic community. Some SNO proponents, but not most, also use it. Just as SNO organizations disagree over the exact pronunciation of YHWH, 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 SNO groups is יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, which is the Hebrew form for Joshua's name, Yehoshua, although they seldom render it as Yehoshua.

A general census of SNO organizations will show that most believe 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 says "I have come in My Father's name." On this basis, those who use these forms say that the Messiah came in His Father's name of "Yahweh," thus His name is "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."

The second part, "if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him," is usually accredited as being a prophecy of the coming antimessiah/antichrist. If the antimessiah is to come in his own name, must he have the first syllable of his own name in his? 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. Other examples from historical antimessiah figures would be NapNapoleon BonBonaparte or JosJoseph StalStalin.

Some try to argue that "Yah," the contracted poetic form of "Yahweh," is the "family name" of God, and thus the name "Yah" must appear in the Messiah's

name. The problem with this interpretation is that it does not align with Jewish names of the First Century. If indeed the Messiah were to come in "His Father's name," as inferred by SNO advocates, then the Messiah's name should actually be Yeshua ben YHWH (חַיְהוּא בֶן יְהוָה [YXy]) or Yeshua bar YHWH (חַיְהוּא בַר יְהוָה [YXy]), "Yeshua, son of YHWH," not the erroneous "Yahshua."

There are some problems that arise when asserting that "Yah" must appear in the name of the Son. What the Messiah is talking about is that He comes in the authority of His Father, not that "Yah" must be in His actual designative name. And we believe that the Messiah coming in His Father's authority or character is something that is overlooked by many who emphasize the "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 [YX-hy, 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 Messianics for the Hebrew name of the Messiah—forms validated by linguistic scholars and accepted by Jews, Christians, and Messianics alike."

"Again, we emphasize that Matthew 1:21 says, "She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins."

Yeshua has been proven by scholars to be the most accurate Hebrew name of the Messiah. (note: The name "Yeshua" is the masculine form for the Hebrew word for "Salvation".)

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 that history and the majority of English speaking people know Him by, "Jesus Christ." Most SNO 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 there is no basis or justification for this.

Almost 300 years 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 is across languages and language families. It is notable that many of our proper Biblical names in English come from Greek transliterations of Hebrew words (i.e., Moses, Phineas, Caiphas).

Young's Analytical Concordance confirms that the Greek name Iesous (Ιησους) used for our Savior in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures is a transliteration of His original Hebrew name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ). 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. 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 Iesous (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 even most importantly has not studied both Hebrew and Greek. When transliterating the Hebrew name יֵשׁוּעַ to Greek:

- y (yud – “ye”) becomes Ih (iota-eta – “ye” or “ee-ay”)
- X (shin – “sh”) becomes s (sigma – “s” - there is no “sh” sound in Greek)
- ך (vuv – “u”) becomes ou (omicron-epsilon – “oo”)
- It is necessary for a final sigma (β) to be placed at the end of the word to distinguish that the name is masculine and for it to be declinable
- Greek requires that the א (ayin – “ah”) sound be dropped
- Hence, we get the name Iesous (Ιησους), pronounced either Ye-sooce or Ee-ay-sooce, depending on the Greek dialect

The name Iesous, surprisingly to some, is actually of Jewish origin. This name is used for the title of the Book of Joshua in the Septuagint (appearing as IHSOUS), the Ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures produced approximately 300 years before the Messiah. This serves as definitive proof that Iesous 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 Iesous 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 Iesous 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. The name Jesus is less than 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 that was originally given to the Messiah, Yeshua, but also must realize that "history happens" and the pronunciation of names change from language to language via transliteration.

Those who have a problem with the Greek name Iesous need to direct their criticism to the Rabbis who translated the Septuagint. We would challenge them to provide their own transliteration of the name Yeshua into Greek, understanding the linguistic barriers that exist, and ask them to tell us what names the Messiah was designated as having in the sign above His cross which appeared "in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek" (John 19:20).

In Old English, Iesous was rendered Iesus (pronounced Yesus). The Geneva Bible and the 1611 King James Version left all proper names in their Greek forms, so you will see names like Iesous and Noe (Noah) and Esias (Isaiah), rather than their more customary English forms. However, it was spelled with a beginning letter "I," which at the time had a "Y" sound. There was no capital "J" until later on, and when this letter began appearing in English Bibles it adopted the "j" sound that we know today and the English name "Jesus" was formed.

But the debate does not end there. Does the Greek name Iesous, as some have claimed, mean "son of Zeus"? No. First of all Iesous (Ihsouß) and Zeus (Zeuß) have two totally different spellings. Second, Zeus in Ancient Greek is not pronounced as Zoos. Its first letter, zeta (z), actually has a "dz" sound. A more accurate transliteration of Dzeus is better for the layperson who has not studied Greek. Third, the diphthongs "ou" in Iesous and "eu" in Dzeus are pronounced differently. "Ou" is pronounced as "oo," and "eu" is pronounced as "eh-uh." Fourth, the term "son of Zeus" in Ancient Greek would be huioß Dzeus (uioß Zeuß) and not Iesous. Anyone who claims that the name Iesous is even remotely connected to Dzeus is exhibiting poor scholarship.

Transliteration is not an exact science. However, it does prove that the Greek name Iesous from whence we derive the name "Jesus" is not pagan. Those who believe that "Jesus" is another god and declare that they "reject Jesus" need to examine the facts of Hebrew to Greek transliteration. They need to realize just who they are rejecting. Those who believe that "Jesus" is someone else and proclaim that "We reject Jesus" need to do more scholarly work.

The biggest evidence, of course, against the claim that the name "Jesus" is pagan is that people have been saved, delivered from demons, and prayers

have been answered through the name of Jesus Christ. It is ironic, of course, to find out that many SNO 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 them 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 believe is guilty of blasphemy.

As Messianic Believers we prefer the richness of our Savior's original Hebrew name Yeshua, and we do not overly encourage usage of the name Jesus. 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 One who we are praying to in the "name of Yeshua." Our Heavenly Father looks at our hearts and we need to be understanding. We must encourage people to use the name that was originally given to the Messiah, but also must realize that "history happens" and the pronunciation of names changes from language to language via transliteration.