119 MINISTRIES

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Can We Transliterate Biblical Names?

Welcome to perhaps the most heatedly debated topic in all of Hebrew Roots theology. Can we transliterate Biblical names?

We do find it unfortunate that "LORD" in all capital letters replaced the Y-H-W-H that is commonly known as the tetragrammaton. That is not transliteration, but blatantly replacing the name of our Creator with a different word.

This is why in nearly all of our teachings, we will make a point of verbally changing "LORD" (when in all capital letters) back to His name when reading the Scriptures.

Now, we do pronounce his name close to the way we believe it may have been originally pronounced…however, that is simply our opinion. We can do no better than reviewing all evidence and generate a conclusion, but we cannot prove it. We could be totally wrong.

No one can prove it.

Unless one had a method of audibly recording the name so long ago, there is no way to know for sure, and to that, all credible Hebrew linguistic scholars agree.

So, though we offer our opinion on the matter, it is just simply that. We stop short of correcting anyone on the different variances of spelling and pronouncing, and we a have deep concern for anyone who is overly adamant that they have it all figured out…and we are even more concerned for the types that go on the warpath and beat down anyone who does not understand the spelling or pronunciation of the name like they do.

What this teaching is about is the practice of transliteration. For example, when people move from one country to another country, the differences in languages might cause a person to transliterate their name differently, so that it is easier for others to speak it. It often depends on how difficult it might be for a name to be pronounced in a new country with a different language.

You will also find that we do not say our messiah's name as Jesus too often, and if we do, it is only as a

reference and serves as an opportunity to share his Aramaic or Hebraic equivalent as Yeshua.

We do this because this is how he would have normally been referred to in the first century. Yeshua is also easy for us to say. However, in the first century, a Greek would have a hard time saying Yeshua, because they did not have the "sh" sound. Yeshua's name was transliterated into Iesoús.

We do not have any problem with transliterating names. We certainly find more meaning and value in the original Hebrew, but we stop short of saying that transliterating a name into another language is wrong. For instance, Shaul transliterated his name into the Greek as Paul. A few hundred years before our Messiah, a group of Jews translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, today it is called the Septuagint, or the LXX, which also included transliterating all of the names. It was common practice even before Yeshua to transliterate names into other languages.

The name Yehoshua was transliterated into the Greek the same way our Messiah's name was transliterated into the Greek. It is not because there is a relationship to the Greek god Zeus. They followed simple Hebrew to Greek transliteration rules. If there was a really linguistic relationship between the Greek transliteration of Yeshua and Zeus, then the transliteration would have been spelled differently.

For more information on that subject, we recommend the teaching "Why it is OK to Say Jesus".

Also, a straight transliteration of Yehoshua to English actually would have been Joshua.

But because Yehoshua went from Hebrew (Yehoshua) to its linguistic cousin Aramaic (Yeshua), then to Greek, Latin, Old English, and then finally on to English…the sequence of transliterations evolved into what we hear today as Jesus.

Joshua would have been a better straight, or direct transliteration, Jesus is a poorer attempt based on an unfortunate evolution of transliterations that happened over 2,000 years through multiple languages.

So, we do not disagree with transliterations. As we said, Paul transliterated his own name. The Septuagint transliterated every name in the Old Testament Scriptures. And it is very possible that our Messiah may have transliterated his own name into Greek when speaking to a Greek individual, just like many transliterate their names today by moving to another country and to another language.

Why? Because phonetically, a person who could only speak Greek could not usually say Yeshua, as we have already mentioned, there was not a "sh" sound in their standard phonics. So, to save others embarrassment, you would transliterate your name for them…like Paul did….to make it easier for them.

In summary, there is value in the original Hebrew or Aramaic names, and basically no value in the transliterated forms, other than they are easier for others to say….which of course, is the whole point of transliteration. The actual Hebrew or Aramaic names actually have meaning behind them, and that is a good thing.

Many are going to disagree with the idea of transliterating names, however, we teach the Torah. And we expect that you would want to as well, and the Torah does not say anywhere that transliterating a name is wrong, thus, we cannot say it's wrong either without adding to the Word of God, without violating Deuteronomy 4:2.

So, when someone uses the name Jesus, though Yehoshua or Yeshua or similar form would be more historically accurate, it is not something we can correct another person on…we can let them know that the more accurate spelling and pronunciation, to the best that we are able. But, we do not need to beat each other up over the matter.

There is one more issue related the name. Some believe that we are not to reveal the tetragrammaton, YHWH, or His name at all, and only refer to our Creator as *HaShem*, which simply means "*The Name*" in Hebrew. Sometimes this is due to a misunderstanding or belief that one is "profaning" His name by saying it.

Of course, if this was true, we would not find His name in the TANAKH nearly 7,000 times.

Name in Hebrew, or *shem*, literally means character or authority.

To profane the name of YHWH means to banner YHWH as your authority in your life with your mouth, but then live contrary to His instructions.

In such a situation one makes void, or worthless His instructions or Torah in front of others, it's profaning his name.

It makes His authority out to be worthless in front of others. It has nothing to do with how often or in what way we say or write out His name in terms of actual spelling or pronunciation.

Due to time constraints, we were forced to be very brief on this subject.

This subject actually deserves a stand-alone teaching on the matter.

For more on this subject, please see our teaching series titled "HaShem."

If there is one take away that we can encourage you to consider on this topic is please, be kind, considerate, and understanding when discussing this with others on this topic.

This topic often does more harm than good in the Body…and frankly, it simply is not necessary.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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