

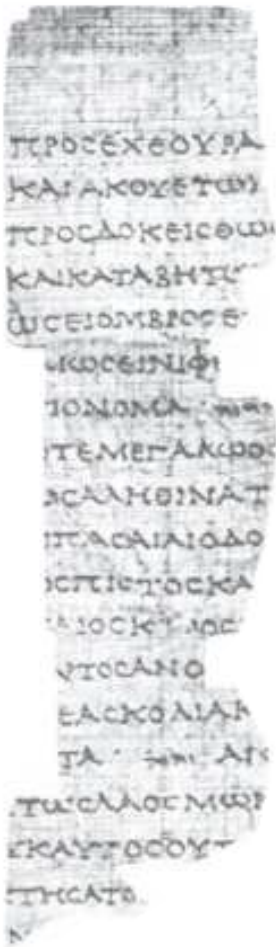
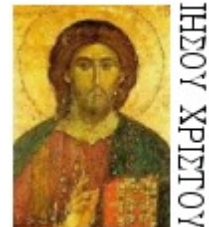


Is Jesus a good Jewish Name?

Origins of the name "Jesus" and the title "Christ"

The most important ancient translation of the Tanakh is the "Translation of the Seventy" (otherwise known as the Septuagint or LXX), which was originally produced by 70 Jewish translators for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt during the third and second centuries B.C.E.

The title "seventy" refers to the tradition that the translation was the work of 70 separate Jewish sages who served as translators...



Although the Septuagint is useful for doing certain types of biblical research, it is a *translation* of the Hebrew text (targum) and therefore should *not* be given linguistic priority over the original Hebrew. That being said, the Septuagint provides valid insight about the usage of Hebraic concepts as translated into the Greek for Jews of that time.

For example, consider the word "Christ." This word comes from "christos" (χριστός) the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "Messiah" (הַמָּשִׁיחַ). Both words literally mean "Anointed One."

If you perform a word search in the Septuagint for the words "christos" (χριστός) and "christan" (χριστόν) - the nominative and accusative singular of *christos* (Christ), respectively (there are other references in the genitive case and as participles, but these are sufficient), you will find the following references:

- Leviticus 4:5, 6:15, 21:12
- 1 Samuel 24:7, 24:11; 26:9, 11, 16, 23
- 2 Samuel 1:14, 16; 2:5; 19:22; 23:1
- Lamentations 4:20
- Amos 4:13
- Psalm 19:7; 20:6; 88:39
- 2 Chronicles 22:7



LXX:

πνεῦμα προσώπου ἡμῶν χριστὸς κυρίου

For example:

Masoretic:

רוּחַ אֲפִינוּ מִשִּׁיחַ יְהוָה

"The breath of our life, the LORD's anointed...." (Lamentations 4:20)



Implication

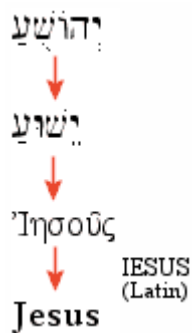
In light of this, we have *textual evidence*, that Greek-speaking Jews before the advent of Jesus referred to the Messiah as *christos* - that is, as "Christ." And later, in Hellenistic Greece during the time of Jesus, when some Jews came to believe that they had found the Messiah, they naturally would refer to him as *ho christos* (ὁ Χριστός) - "the Christ."

My point here is simple. "Christ" is a good *Jewish* designation for the term "Messiah." I raise this issue merely to demonstrate to those who are caught up in the "Sacred Name" movement or to those who feel it is necessary to refer to the "Messiah" and disparage the use of the word "Christ" that there is no need to be pedantic in this regard: "Christ" means "Anointed One" in exactly the *same way* that the word "mashiach" (מָשִׁיחַ) does.

What about the name "Jesus"?

Now what about the name "Jesus"? Do we have a transliteration problem here? Are we missing some important linguistic information? Need we get fussy about this and insist on referring to the Lord as "Yeshua" (or some variant) and drop the name "Jesus"?

The name Yeshua (יֵשׁוּעַ) comes from Joshua's Hebrew name, *Yehoshua* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ) which sometimes appears in its *shortened* form, Yeshua (e.g., 1 Chron. 24:11; Neh. 8:17). Now Yeshua, when transliterated into Greek, comes out as Ἰησοῦς (pronounced YAY-soos), with the final sigma (ς) being necessary in the nominative case to designate a proper name. In Latin the name is rendered as **IESUS**, though in *old* English, the "y" sound was rendered as "j," and thus we obtain "JESUS":



To quibble that Yeshua's name was incorrectly transliterated is like complaining that the Jews are called "Jews," rather than the more precise term "Yehudi," a word that was likewise transliterated from the Greek *Ioudaios* (Ἰουδαῖος) and ultimately into the English word "Judean." In like manner we shouldn't speak about Judaism but perhaps should call it "Yoodaism"?

Nu, so what?

The so-called "Sacred Name" movement that purports that the "true name" of the Messiah is "YAHushua" or "YAHoshua" (or some variant thereof) is founded on *faulty linguistics* and esoteric doctrine. These people think that the sacred Name (YHWH) is best rendered as YAHWEH, and suppose that since Jesus said He came in His Father's Name (John 5:43), YAH (יָה) must somehow appear in the spelling of this name. Hence we have YAHshua, or YAHoshua, or some other unsubstantiated and aberrant spelling.



The Name above all Names

As a matter of grammatical fact, the *interpolation* of the phoneme YAH comes at the expense of the original Masoretic text and standard Hebrew usage. Some in this "sacred name" movement go so far as to believe that you can only be saved if you pronounce the Name YHWH correctly! As a friend of mine pointed out, this teaching is inherently anti-semitic, since in order for this to be true, the "rabbis" must have corrupted the text and deceived the people. Moreover, this implies that Greek New Testament text has been corrupted as well, since it does not directly contain the sacred name....

According to the late Dr. David Flusser, Professor of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, "Yeshua" was the third most popular male name during the Second Temple period. I think that is surely appropriate, since Jesus "came in disguise" - without announcing his greatness - not unlike King Solomon who secretly wooed the Shulamite woman... Ultimately the Messiah was born to die as a criminal on the cross, not to sit in velveted chairs before the religious world. The Name YAH is surely a valid Biblical Name, though it refers to YHWH (יהוה) and it is understood in light of God's redemptive power and saving acts. Yeshua - short for *Yehoshua* - therefore means "YHWH saves." The name Yehoshua - like the name Judah (יהודה) before it - explicitly uses YHWH as an embedded morpheme. In this connection I might add that it was Yehoshua who was chosen by God to take Israel into the realm of promise, not Moses.

My point here is simple. Let's not get so hung up on our pronunciation of Hebrew terms that we become linguistic snobs -- or worse -- *gnostics*! For those raised with the Latin-based alphabet in English speaking countries, "Jesus Christ" is an adequate title for the Savior and LORD, though it should be understood to refer to His status and role as the anointed King of Israel and the world...

The Scriptures speak of the "Name above all Names" and apply it directly to the Savior: "so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD (i.e., is YHWH, יהוה) to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

ישוע *Yeshua is YHWH*

אֲנֹכִי אֲנֹכִי יְהוָה וְאֵין מִבְּלַעַדִּי מוֹשִׁיעַ:

I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior. (Isaiah 43:11)