

STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES...



BUT NAMES WILL NEVER HURT ME!

A look at the Name we call our Heavenly Father

by Larry and June Acheson

*I am אֲנִי־אֵל!
That is My Name:
and My honour will I
not give to another,
neither My praise to
graven images!*

— Isaiah 42:8

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“The Names Have Been Changed...”

Several years ago, on a popular television program entitled *Dragnet*, a very austere voice would advise all viewers, “The story you are about to see is true. The names have been changed to protect the innocent.” This show was a drama depicting the everyday challenges faced by two police officers working their beat in Los Angeles, California. Why were the names of innocent people changed for this program? Why didn’t they provide viewers the *actual names* of each person involved?

We know why. A name identifies who a person is. When a crime is perpetrated, the first question on everyone’s mind is, “Who did it?”, or as the popular expression goes, “Whodunnit?” We all want to know who the guilty party is so he can be identified, then apprehended so he can “get his due.” But what if the police arrest the wrong guy? What if the media then plasters his name everywhere for all to see? How would *you* like to be falsely accused and have everyone believe that *you’re* a criminal, while all along you are completely innocent? Or how would you like it if a hardened criminal learns that *you* are the person who tipped the police off about a crime that he committed, and he learned your name by watching *Dragnet* from the comforts of his cell? How would *you* feel, knowing that in a few months this man will be up for parole? Would you feel safe?

But let’s examine this name-changing game from the reverse angle. Suppose you had saved someone’s life or had done some other deed worthy of recognition. How would you feel *then* if the media changed your name? How would you feel if you knew that everything you had worked so hard for in your lifetime—all of your achievements, all of your good deeds—was credited to someone else’s name? As for *your* name, no one even recognizes it. Would that make you feel important?

The Creator of the universe has a Name, but somehow man has seen fit to change that Name. All of His accomplishments, all that He has ever done, has been credited to another name, or more specifically, a *title*. Few people know what Name it is that our Creator gave to Himself, and even fewer see the need to call upon that Name. Yes, everyone likes to be given the recognition they feel they’ve earned, and they appreciate it when their name is spelled and pronounced correctly in the process. The Creator’s Name, though, is a different matter. Or is it?

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"STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES, BUT NAMES WILL NEVER HURT ME!"

by Larry and June Acheson

Introduction

Have you ever heard this before? The more common expression is, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but *words* will never hurt me!", but when name-calling became the issue at hand, I remember using the above line on more than a few occasions! I remember all too well those childhood days when I came home from school, my day ruined by some classmate who thought so little of my feelings that he called me an objectionable name. I remember how angry I felt, and of how I wanted to "get back" at him. Many times I would just think of an equally offensive name that I would apply to the offender, but all that accomplished was to initiate a battle of who could think of the most offensive name! Upon my return home from school, I would slink into the house, crushed and defeated. But worse than that, I felt **rejected**. I knew that name-calling was just another way of saying, "I reject you as a person. You could crawl into some hole and die, and no one would even miss you."

My parents, at least, provided a safe haven for me! They were sympathetic to my plight, but as much as I wanted my dad to accompany me to school so he could rip the culprit's face apart, it just never happened. The best my parents could do was to offer some advice on how to deal with any future encounters. Their advice usually came in the form of how to respond to the name-caller, and the most common retort that they encouraged me to use was, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but *names* will never hurt me!"

The only problem with this response is that it's a LIE! Maybe it's designed to make the other person THINK that name-calling doesn't hurt, but deep down inside, I was **still** hurting big time! When someone calls us an offensive name, what he is *really* saying is, "I think so little of you, and have so little respect for you as a person that you don't even *deserve* to have a name worthy of respect!" And regardless of our attempt to politely inform him that "names will never hurt me," we know that our self-esteem has indeed been damaged.

1. It's All About Respect!

I'm an adult now. Things haven't changed much, either. People *still* like to be treated with respect, no matter how much they may try to downplay it! The most significant way for us to show a person how much we respect him or her is by remembering that person's name, and then, consequently, politely addressing him or her by that name. I've been guilty of forgetting many peoples' names. I have often *thought* that I knew someone's name, but was wrong. Usually when this occurs, they will gently correct me. Sometimes, though, I've been set straight in a very harsh tone! One of the more polite ways they have responded to my error is to say, "I don't care whatcha call me, as long as you don't call me late to dinner!"

But that, too, is a lie. You see, I have seen the look of sadness on the faces of people whose names I *should* have known, but forgot. I work in an office where we find jobs for people. We have what is known as a "high turnover rate," which means that a lot of our employees eventually move on to something else, and we recruit others to replace the ones that we lose. It is not uncommon to have five applicants per day in our office. These same individuals will frequently return to our office the following day for various reasons, such as computer training. With so many people coming through our doors on such a regular basis, it becomes quite a challenge to remember everyone's name! The other day, a lady walked into our office. I recognized her face, but I just couldn't place her. I studied her for a few seconds in an attempt to jog my memory, but it didn't do any good. I had forgotten who she was. She didn't waste any time in saying, "You don't know who I am, do you!?" I had to admit defeat. But once she gave me her name, I knew *exactly* why she had returned, and she left there happy. Nevertheless, I know that I lost an opportunity to make a good impression when I failed to remember who she was.

We looked at each other for a few seconds, and his face became coated with a look of amazement. "How did you know my name?" he asked, grinning. He was obviously very pleased that someone knew him by name.

I work in different offices for the same company all over the Dallas area. One Friday, which was my first week at that particular office in over a year, I kept busy handing out checks to the employees as they came straggling in after their work day had ended. As the day drew to a close, I noticed that I only had six checks left to distribute. Five of them were for women, which meant that *one* was for a man. Not knowing any of the employees by the names on the checks, I decided that if a guy came walking in, I was going to have some fun. Sure enough, the door opened, and in walked a man whom I had never met.

"Hey, Billy, how ya' doin'?" I'll bet you're here for your check!" I announced. I fumbled through the checks as if trying to find one for him, sorted it out, and exclaimed, "Here it is!"

We looked at each other for a few seconds, and his face became coated with a look of amazement. "How did you know my name?" he asked, grinning. He was obviously very pleased that someone knew him by name.

I replied, "How could I *not* know the name of one of our best workers!?"

Each Friday when Billy came in to pick up his check, he walked in with a big grin on his face. We would chat about how his job was going, the weather, and other important things! Billy became my friend, and it all started because he found someone who made him feel special. He was made to feel special because I called him by his name when he didn't expect it. I know he expected to walk into our office that day and have someone ask him what his name was before handing him his check, but instead he was greeted by a total stranger who knew him by name!

I have just described two people with whom I have interacted in the past year. Which of those two individuals came away from our office having experienced the most pleasant reception — the woman whose name I had forgotten, or the man whose name I knew, even though we had never met? The lesson here is that we ALL like to be treated with a level of respect. Nowhere does it state that being treated with respect must of necessity require our remembering a person's name, but it sure helps! If you want to convey how much you respect an individual, the very least you will do is call him or her by name, or more specifically, by the name that he or she wishes to be called.

It is “common courtesy” to call someone by the name they wish to be called.

Reader, I may not know *you* by name, but I want you to know that I respect you as a person. Once I know who you are, I will do my best to address you by the name that you wish to be called. That is, as I understand it, a part of the rules of proper etiquette. It is “common courtesy” to call someone by the name they wish to be called. This act of common courtesy is even recognized by the company I work for. You see, when new applicants come by our office, they are interviewed before they leave. We review the application, read back the name written there to make certain it is pronounced the way that it looks, and then we ask the applicants if that is the name by which they wish to be called, or if there is some “nickname” that they would prefer for us to use. It is all a part of our commitment to demonstrate that we *respect* them so much that we will address them by the name they wish to be called.

Well, let's not focus on what *people* say, let's focus on what our Heavenly Father says! Is His Name important to Him? Would He like it just a little bit more if we addressed Him by a certain Name?

Hopefully, I have laid sufficient groundwork here to demonstrate how important our names are to us. But let's go several steps higher. Let's consider the case for our Heavenly Father's Name. Some people say it's “God.” Some say it's “The LORD.” Some say that it is a different name in each language. Still others say that however it is we pronounce His name doesn't matter, so long as we know His character. They maintain, “It is not merely a certain set of sounds or vocal vibrations that is important, but the meaning and power behind the name.”¹ Well, let's not focus on what *people* say, let's focus on what our Heavenly Father says! Is His Name important to Him? Would He like it just a little bit more if we addressed Him by a certain Name?

¹ Keith W. Stump, “What is God's Name?”, *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* magazine, January, 1986, p. 18.

In my own study on this matter, I was unable to locate a single Scripture indicating that “His Name is His character,” or that He doesn’t care what we call Him so long as we know “the meaning and power behind His Name.” I couldn’t find any Bible verses demonstrating that His Name is unimportant to Him, or that He has “many names,” as many claim. In Isaiah 52:6, for example, the Creator inspired Isaiah to write, “Therefore, My people shall know My Name: therefore *they shall know* in that day that I *am* He that doth speak: behold *it is I*.” This definitely sounds like the words of a Creator Who attaches a great deal of importance to any people claiming to be “His people” — that they know (and use) His Name! Note that the word “name” as it appears in such verses as the one quoted above is **singular**, not plural. He does **not** have “many names,” as some suggest.

Over the years, we have heard various lines of reasoning offered to justify not calling upon Yahweh by His Name, such as the one above regarding the “meaning and power behind the name” being more important than the “sound or vocal vibration.” In an extension of this same train of thought, I read an interesting commentary in an internet discussion forum regarding the Creator’s name. A visitor to the forum defended “translating” the name Yahweh as “LORD,” and offered the following rationale:

An Argument Against Retaining the Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton:

Names in modern western culture do not usually have any meaning. i.e. George or Fred or Harry are not words that mean anything- so in such cases, transliteration² is appropriate, since it is the sound of the name only that distinguishes it from another.

Conversely, in Hebrew, and other modern and ancient cultures, it was the meaning of the name that was important- not the sound of the letters.

There is no evidence that Hebrew is some pure, heavenly language (in fact, there is much evidence to the contrary!)- so your assumption that it is important to preserve the sound of the Tetragrammaton fails- because the Tetragrammaton was merely a translation of ONE of Elohim's names' into Hebrew.

Continued next page ...

² “Transliterate” means to represent a word by the alphabetic characters of another language. In other words, we transliterate a word when we carry its pronunciation over from one language to another. A quick and easy way to distinguish between “transliterate” and “translate” with regard to name usage is to examine the following French name: René Blanc. If we were to *transliterate* this name into English so as to facilitate a reader’s more accurately pronouncing the actual name, we might write it like this: “Ruhneh Blahnk.” However, if we were to *translate* this name into English, we would write “Reborn White.”

It would be like if a woman had the name "Joy". If that name was translated into Spanish, it would be "Alegría" (I think...). Now if a Chinese person were to make an issue of preserving the exact pronunciation of "Alegría" when writing the name in Chinese, it would be kind of silly, because the meaning of the name would be lost- AND there is nothing really important about the sound "Alegría", because that's not even the sound of the original name, but it was just a translation into another language from the original. But that is what you are advocating we do with the Tetragrammaton.

And O-K, it might seem strange to write TheFatherOfAMultitude everywhere the name Abraham appears; but that is only because of the mechanics of English. I really don't think we should let the mechanics of our language dictate that a name should be transliterated, just because it would be inconvenient to translate its' meaning.

I do believe the scriptures would take on a deeper meaning if the names of people and places were translated rather than transliterated. **The sound of the letters is nothing.**

The very word for "name" in Hebrew, conveys something far more substantial than the mere phonetic sound.

That is why in scripture, we read that our actions can profane Elohim's name, as in Proverbs 30:9: "Lest I be full, and deny [thee], and say, Who [is] the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God [in vain]".

Notice Revelation 9:11 "And they had a king over them, [which is] the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue [is] Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath [his] name Apollyon."

Here, I would say Elohim is setting an example for us to follow, because the inspired Scripture itself translates a Hebrew name with a Greek name that does not replicate the sound of the Hebrew "Apollyon", but rather its' meaning.

Can you see my point?³

On the surface, the above argument might seem very persuasive, and indeed, it falls right in line with the typical responses we have seen when it comes to defending "Lord" and "God" as appropriate names for the Almighty. I appreciate the above author's contrasting the Hebrew name *Abaddon* with

³ Taken word for word from a posting submitted on June 30, 2005 in a forum thread titled "**replacing and restoring words in translations**," which may be read by accessing the following URL:
<http://www.elijah.com/forum2/Forum10/HTML/002412.html>

the Greek *Apollyon*, as found in Revelation 9:11. I can see how someone might construe the different name-renderings in different languages as a validation for *translating* names as opposed to *transliterating* them. However valid the above author's point may appear to be on the surface, though, there are at least two points to consider: 1) If we were to literally apply such a translation rule to each and every name, everyone's name would be different from one language to another to the point that the "sound" marking the actual identity of the person would eventually become lost in a sea of translations. This difficulty may never affect you if you never leave the country or if you never interact with anyone who speaks a different language. If you do, however, you will find yourself having to adjust (translate) your name with each different language. (Best wishes with your passport!) You may not even have much difficulty doing this with your *first* name, but you will very likely encounter problems translating your *last* name! 2) I believe the point made by the Apostle John when he penned Revelation 9:11 is that of carrying across from one language to another the *significance* of the name, which means "destruction." Readers of Revelation 9:11, whether they understood Hebrew or Greek, were certain to understand that they'd better beware of the angel of the bottomless pit! In this instance, the meaning of the name is important enough that readers need to know what it *means*.

The principal idea the above author attempts to convey is that the *meaning* of a name is more important than its sound. In the spirit of preserving *meanings* of names rather than their pronunciation, the above author's name, according to a web site dedicated to meanings of names, is "Battle Worthy."⁴ This seems like a glorious name to have; however, just because someone is given the name "Battle Worthy" does not mean he will grow up to *be* battle worthy! This is another reason why we need to be careful to not allow the meaning of a name to supersede its pronunciation. It is the *pronunciation* of a name that we use in identifying who people are. The *meaning* of a name is secondary because it doesn't always reflect the characteristics of the one bearing the name. In the case of the name *Yahweh*, there is no question as to whether or not the meaning "fits the Person" because, after all, *Yahweh* is the name the Creator of the universe *gave to Himself*, and He should know a thing or two about His own nature! Moreover, if this same Creator commands that a man be given a certain name, we can trust that the meaning of the name he is given will *also* "fit the person"! However, when *men* give names, such cannot always be the case. A notable example illustrating this truth is the name given to the Sioux Indian chief, Sitting Bull. Everyone familiar with American history immediately recognizes the identity of the man named "Sitting Bull," but this name hardly defined his character.

Upon finishing my review of "Battle Worthy's" forum argument, I read a short, yet concise, response offered by another forum participant named Chuck Baldwin. Chuck demonstrated that an argument like "Battle Worthy's" may *seem* reasonable and even factual, yet be very misleading. Here is Chuck's response:

⁴ I looked up the meaning of the name the author gave to his reading audience by accessing the following URL:
<http://www.behindthename.com/>

An Argument FOR Retaining the Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton:

I think you're forgetting that the purpose of a person's name is not to completely describe the person, but to identify him. When you hear that "sound" (which you so vehemently belittle), you know exactly who is being referred to.

For a name to do what you suggest, it would have to be so long that it would be totally impractical to use it. The Almighty's name (by your standard) would be something like "TheForgiverHealerDeliverer ShepherdKing ... ShieldCreatorAlmightyAllknowing ... Allwise Loving JustRighteous ... EverlivingOne". (The "..." is for everything i may have left out). Can you imagine vocalizing the above monstrosity every time you encountered the simple Name "YHWH" in the Scriptures?

The WORD "YHWH" when translated/demoted to a mere Title, only describes ONE of the Almighty's attributes, albeit a very important one - He Who Lives Forever.

But the NAME "YHWH", being the "sound" that personally identifies the Almighty, implicitly describes ALL of His attributes (like the lengthy "Name" given earlier). His Name means Him, including everything you know about Him. And the more you learn about Him, the more His Name "YHWH" means (to you).

I hope you get the point.⁵

Chuck Baldwin has the right idea. Names are what we use to identify ourselves – to distinguish one person from someone else. In fact, that is why I asked Chuck for his permission to quote him in this study – to give credit where it is due. If I didn't list the *name* of the individual who gave such a thought-provoking answer, how could I possibly give him credit for having written it? If we should translate *Chuck's* name into some other set of words with different vocalizations, we would only succeed in confusing his identity, if not losing it entirely. In the same way, if we should only remember Chuck as "writer of the argument in favor of retaining the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton," with no mention of his actual name, no one will know the *identity* of that "writer." His identity would be lost within the myriad of other "argument writers."

The pronunciation of a person's name, then, is a key to retaining his or her identity. This also applies to our Creator, as expressed by Willem A. VanGemen in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

⁵ Taken word for word from a posting submitted on June 30, 2005 in a forum thread titled "**replacing and restoring words in translations**," which may be read by accessing the following URL:
<http://www.elijah.com/forum2/Forum10/HTML/002412.html>

“The practice of rendering the name of the Lord, Yahweh, by a title (“the LORD”) keeps us from sensing the richness of Israel’s religious experience and practice. The title lacks the emotive quality affected by the relationship between God and his people. The Lord had revealed his *name* (YHWH or Yahweh) to Israel. They knew not only that God has a name but also the pronunciation of the name: the four sacred letters—*YHWH* (Tetragrammaton).”⁶

Curiously, Mr. VanGemeran appears to be lamenting the fact that our society has chosen to substitute “the LORD” in place of Yahweh, yet he seems dutifully bound to accept this cultural statistic over that of his own sound reasoning, as reflected by his liberal use of “God” and “Lord” throughout his commentary. Other scholars likewise express the understanding of how important a name is when it comes to distinguishing the One we worship from the idols worshipped by various cultures. This understanding is presented in Walther Eichrodt’s *Theology of the Old Testament*:

“It is easy enough to show that in ancient Israel the reality of other gods beside Yahweh was still a fact to be reckoned with. The very fact that a particular name was chosen for Israel’s own God, however lofty the conception of his nature displayed in the meaning of this name, proves that men felt the need of special nomenclature to distinguish this God of theirs from the other gods, whose existence must therefore have been assumed without question.”⁷

Clearly, then, we need to know the name of the Almighty in order to identify Him and to distinguish Him from the idols worshipped by other cultures. The alternative to retaining the pronunciation of the Creator’s name is obviously *not* retaining it. It is by not retaining the pronunciation of a name that it becomes lost or forgotten. Yahweh wanted His name to be **declared**, not forgotten, throughout all the earth, as He plainly stated in Exodus 9:16:

16 And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to show thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth!

If we declare the name *Yahweh*, can we forget it?

⁶ From *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, Frank E. Gaebelin, Gen. Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991, p. 15 (the quotation is from Willem A. VanGemeran’s introduction to his commentary on Psalms).

⁷ From *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, by Walther Eichrodt, translated by J. A. Baker, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA, 1975, pp. 220 – 221.

2. How Could We Forget His Name?

It only stands to reason that if one knows the Name of the Creator, but does not *use* it, he will eventually *forget* that Name, or at least cause his descendants to not learn it! To borrow the expression, “If you don’t *use it*, you *lose it*!” This is exactly what Yahweh rebuked the so-called “prophets” for doing in Jeremiah 23:26-27:

26 How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

27 **Which think to cause My people to FORGET MY NAME** by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten My Name for Baal!

Does our Creator want us to forget His Name? Judging by this verse, it appears He *does not*! He wants us to **remember** His Name! We actually **honor** Him by remembering His Name and reverently calling upon that Name!

Many verses of Scripture demonstrate our Creator’s desire for us to know and use His Name. For example, in Jeremiah 10:25, a **curse** is pronounced against those who do **not** call upon the Creator’s Name:

25 Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy Name: for they have eaten up Jacob, and devoured him, and consumed him, and have made his habitation desolate.

King David, in a parallel verse of Scripture, wrote nearly the same, exact words in Psalms 79:6:

6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon Thy Name.

Certainly, even a child can discern from these verses that calling upon our Creator by His Name is not some frivolous act. It is done out of our heartfelt desire to acknowledge Him as our Heavenly Father, as the Almighty ruler of the universe! Just as certain verses reveal curses for *not* knowing and calling upon His Name, other verses confer **blessings** upon those who DO choose to call upon Him by His Name! For example, we read from Psalms 91:14 that ...

14 **Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known My Name.**

Another supportive Scripture can be found in Psalms 69:35-36:

35 For the Almighty will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.

36 The seed also of His servants shall inherit it: and they that LOVE HIS NAME shall dwell therein.

Abraham, one of the most revered believers of all time, called upon the Name, as we read in Genesis 13:3-4:

3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai;

4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of Yahweh.

3. Did Abraham really know Yahweh by name?

Even though the verse cited above plainly reveals that Abraham called on the name *Yahweh*, which means he spoke the Name, some folks deny this obvious fact!⁸ They do so by citing a verse in Exodus. Shown below is Exodus 6:2-3:

2 And the Almighty spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* Yahweh:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by El Shaddai, but by My name Yahweh was I not known to them.

At first sight, it appears that Exodus 6:2-3 contradicts Genesis 13:3-4. How could Abraham call upon Yahweh *by name* if he didn't know Him by the name Yahweh? I have read several explanations offered to explain this apparent contradiction, none of which really make any sense. For example, Boaz Michael of *First Fruits of Zion*, in an "eDrash" dated in 2005, wrote:

If we remember that in the Torah, a name signifies an attribute or attributes, then this passage becomes a little easier to understand. Thinking along those lines, it appears that what God is telling Moses is that He appeared to his forefathers as El (God), El Shaddai (God Almighty), or Elohim (God), thereby revealing those particular aspects of His nature to them. However, the attribute of His nature signified by the Name *YHVH* had not, until then, been revealed. What was that particular attribute?

The patriarchs knew Him as a great, mighty, and powerful God. They knew Him as a God who made promises, but He never related to them as a God who fulfilled those same promises! God gave some far reaching promises to the patriarchs, but they were never brought to complete fulfillment before them. As it says of the patriarchs in the book of Hebrews, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises." (Hebrews 11:13)

Now, as God sends Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh, He is about to begin to bring the fulfillment of some of those promises to pass. Hence, He will now reveal the meaning of His Name, *YHVH*, so that all can see that He is a God who keeps His covenant promises. He was revealing the true meaning of His Name! He is the promise keeping God.

Therefore, the Holy Name of God (*YHVH*), is understood to imply His unchanging, covenant keeping, promise fulfilling nature. It is the meaning of who He is. That is why we must never suppose that He has abolished His covenant, changed His mind, or forsaken His people. To do so would be a violation of His own Name.⁹

I believe a reasonable summary of the above commentary would be that, in the author's estimation, Abraham did not "know" Yahweh as a Mighty One Who fulfills His promises, and therefore did not have as "complete" of an understanding of His nature as Moses did. Quite frankly, I believe this explanation is nonsense. In fact, according to Yeshua the Messiah, Abraham seems to have

⁸ Those who don't believe Abraham really "knew" Yahweh by name also need to explain how he could name the place where he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice *Yahweh-Yireh* if he didn't really "know" Him by name (*c.f.*, Gen. 22:14).

⁹ From the online eDrash article entitled "What's His Name?" by Boaz Michael, 2005. The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: http://ffoz.org/TorahClub/edrash/archives/print_000133.php

seen a lot more of Yahweh's "unchanging, covenant keeping, promise fulfilling nature" than the above author is willing to give him credit for! Notice what Yeshua said in John 8:56:

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

According to Boaz Michael of *First Fruits of Zion*, Abraham never knew Yahweh as an Almighty Who fulfills His promises. I believe the words of Yeshua sufficiently refute this understanding. The above author's commentary is also rendered all the more untenable when we consider the fact that, according to Genesis 26:5, Abraham obeyed Yahweh's voice, kept His charge, His commandments, His statutes and His laws. In fact, according to Genesis 15:6, Abraham "believed in YHWH; and He counted it to him as righteousness." Boaz Michael seems to expect us to believe that Abraham had this intimate relationship with Yahweh, he obeyed Him fully, and put his trust in Him ... yet Abraham didn't really "know" Yahweh as a Mighty One who fulfills His promises, so Abraham didn't really "know" Yahweh. We find this interpretation of Exodus 6:2-3 to be unacceptable.

Let's examine another possibility. To begin with, I find it difficult to believe that Abraham would call upon the name Yahweh and still not "know" Him by name. With this as our premise, let's examine Exodus 6:2-3 from another perspective: *Hebrew punctuation*. In Biblical Hebrew, no question marks ever appear at the end of questions, whether the questions are obvious questions or not-so-obvious ones. This is a fact that is very important in our review of Exodus 6:2-3, and this lack of Hebrew punctuation is cited by translator Jay P. Green, Sr. as one of the difficulties involved in translating the Hebrew text into English:

The original manuscripts lacked any punctuation. The Hebrew text used in this volume incorporates the punctuation supplied by the Masoretes, and the interlinear English translation generally follows this punctuation. The English translation on the side, however, adheres to the principles of punctuation advocated in *A Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). It should be noted that a question is often indicated in Hebrew at the beginning of a sentence, by other interrogative words, or sometimes only by the context.¹⁰

The above commentary is taken from a section titled "Special Difficulties in the Translation," which is found within the Preface of *The Interlinear Bible*. If the experts who translated the Hebrew text into English recognized that the lack of punctuation (including question marks) is a "special difficulty," and that sometimes you are only able to discern the question from context, then it should be obvious that they will concede that they may have missed some questions as they worked on translating the text from Hebrew to English! This, then, is one place where we believe the translators missed an obvious question. If anyone doesn't believe the translators overlooked an obvious question, then we have an obvious question that we feel deserves an answer: *How could Abraham have not known the Almighty by His name Yahweh if Scripture itself records that He called upon that very name?*

To demonstrate that June and I have scholarly support for our belief that Exodus 6:3 should have been framed as a question, we present the following commentary from *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*:

¹⁰ From *The Interlinear Bible: Hebrew, Greek, English*, Jay P. Green, Sr., General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1986, "Special Difficulties in the Translation," Preface.

3. I...God Almighty—All enemies must fall, all difficulties must vanish before My omnipotent power, and the patriarchs had abundant proofs of this. **but by my name**, etc. —rather, interrogatively, by My name Jehovah was I not known to them? Am not I, the Almighty God, who pledged My honor for the fulfilment of the covenant, also the self-existent God who lives to accomplish it? Rest assured, therefore, that I shall bring it to pass. This passage has occasioned much discussion; and it has been thought by many to intimate that as the name Jehovah was not known to the patriarchs, at least in the full bearing or practical experience of it, the honor of the disclosure was reserved to Moses, who was the first sent with a message in the name of Jehovah, and enabled to attest it by a series of public miracles.¹¹

Robert Jamieson, the scholar who composed the above commentary, understood that to balance the fact that Abraham called on the name *Yahweh* (Gen. 13:4) with the text of Exodus 6:3, translators should have presented Exodus 6:3 as a question. With this understanding in mind, let's read Exodus 6:2-3 again, only *this* time with a question mark placed in a key spot:

2 And the Almighty spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* Yahweh:

3 And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by El Shaddai, but by My name Yahweh was I not known to them?

When regarded as a rhetorical question, we know the answer to whether or not the patriarchs knew Yahweh by name is an obvious "Yes." As we have established, translators are left to place question marks at the end of what *they* feel are actual questions. However, translators are not perfect, and they are bound to miss a verse or two where the original Hebrew sentence was actually framed as a **question**. We believe Exodus 6:3 is one such verse, which alleviates any need for us to question as to whether or not the patriarchs really "knew" Yahweh by name.

Just as certain verses reveal curses for *not* knowing and calling upon His Name, other verses convey **blessings** upon those who DO choose to call upon Him by His Name!

It is clear that our Creator wants us to know, use and love His Name! It does not follow that we love His Name if we choose to call upon Him by some other name, a name derived by man. We demonstrate our love for His Name by using **that name** when we call upon Him and when we speak about Him to others, just as the believers of Old did. We *seal* our love for His Name by obeying Him in other areas as well, but that's another topic!

When King David wrote about his love for the Creator, he openly and boldly used the Creator's Name. For example, in Psalms 69:30-31, he wrote:

30 I will praise the Name of the Almighty with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving.

31 This also shall please Yahweh better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

¹¹ From *Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, by Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, Commentary on Exodus by Robert Jamieson, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1961, originally published in 1871, p. 58.

We would do well to ask, “What ‘Name’ is it that David praised?” We would do well to find out what “Name” it is, and then we would do even *better* to join David in praising that same Name!

4. Taking Away From the Word

It is common knowledge that the translators of the Old Testament, upon coming to the Name of the Almighty in the Hebrew text (יהוה)¹², chose to not provide their readers with the phonetic representation of that Name. Instead, they chose to simply render it “the LORD.” In the preface of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, for example, the translators made this very clear:

A major departure from the practice of the American Standard version is the rendering of the Divine Name, the ‘Tetragrammaton.’ The American Standard Version used the term ‘Jehovah’; the King James Version had employed this in four places, but everywhere else, except in three cases where it was employed as part of a proper name, used the English word LORD (or in certain cases GOD) printed in capitals. The present revision returns to the procedure of the King James Version, which follows the precedent of the ancient Greek and Latin translators and the long established practice in the reading of the Hebrew scriptures in the synagogue. While it is almost if not quite certain that the Name was originally pronounced ‘Yahweh,’ this pronunciation was not indicated when the Masoretes added vowel signs to the consonantal Hebrew text. To the four consonants YHWH of the Name, which had come to be regarded as too sacred to be pronounced, they attached vowel signs indicating that in its place should be read the Hebrew word *Adonai* meaning ‘Lord’ (or *Elohim* meaning ‘God’). The ancient Greek translators substituted the word *Kyrios* (Lord) for the Name. The Vulgate likewise used the Latin word *Dominus*. The form ‘Jehovah’ is of late medieval origin; it is a combination of the consonants of the Divine Name and the vowels attached to it by the Masoretes but belonging to an entirely different word.

These translators have admitted that they removed the name of the Creator and ***substituted it*** with “the LORD”! Mainstream Judaism substitutes YHWH with *Adonai*. The ancient Greeks substituted YHWH with *Kyrios*. The Latin Vulgate substituted YHWH with *Dominus*. The King James Version, as well as most others, substituted YHWH with “*the LORD*.” Is this proper? Not in the light of what Yahweh has to say in such verses as Deuteronomy 4:2:

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Yahweh your Almighty which I command you.

By removing the Creator’s name, the translators effectively “diminished” from the Word; by substituting “the LORD” in its place, they effectively added “unto the Word.”

Our Creator has made it clear, then, that He does not want His Word tampered with! Indeed, nearly every name used in the Scriptures has been left intact, pronounced nearly the same in all languages as in the Hebrew (with some minor allowances for different dialects). Even the name *Satan* has been preserved from the Hebrew! But the Name of our Creator—well, if you speak English, you are told that you can call Him “God.” If you speak Spanish, you can call Him “Dios.” If you speak Finnish, you can call Him “Jumala.” If you speak Polish, you can call Him “Bog.” The list of names

¹² This is what is known as the “Tetragrammaton” (i.e., “the four-lettered name”). יהוה is sometimes referred to as “Modern Hebrew script” or “Aramaic script.” More ancient texts contain the Tetragrammaton in what is known as *Paleo-Hebrew*. Here is how the Tetragrammaton is written in *Paleo-Hebrew*: 𐤅𐤄𐤅𐤄.

goes on and on! Was this the intent of our Creator—that we call Him “just whatever” name the local culture addresses Him by?

Here are some examples of Biblical names that are pronounced nearly the same in English as they are in Hebrew: “David” is pronounced “Daw-weed” in Hebrew; “Moses” is pronounced “Môsheh,” “Jeremiah” is pronounced “Yirmehyáhu,” “Adam” is pronounced “Aw-dawm,” “Solomon” is pronounced “Shelomoh,” and “Abraham” is pronounced “Ab-raw-hawm.” “Satan,” by the way, is pronounced “Saw-tawn” in Hebrew. These names, although they are all pronounced slightly differently in English from the way they are pronounced in Hebrew, nevertheless retain much of the same articulation from one language to the other. Why has this not been the case with the Name of our Heavenly Father?

Even the name of Satan has been preserved from the Hebrew! But the Name of our Creator — well, if you speak English, they say that you can call Him “God.” If you speak Spanish, you can call Him “Dios.” If you speak Finnish, you can call Him “Jumala.” If you speak Polish, you can call Him “Bog.” The list of names goes on and on!

Down through the ages, man has recognized that names are not translated, but are *transliterated*, which means their pronunciations are carried over from one language to another. Modern day examples of this are President Hu Jintao of China, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, President Jacques Chirac of France, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, President László Sólyom of the Republic of Hungary, President Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam of India, President Mwai Kibaki of Kenya, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, President Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, President Lech Kaczyński of the Republic of Poland, and deposed President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. In relaying the news involving these men, the media does not choose to translate their names! Other famous people whose names have been left “untouched” include: the late PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, Genghis Khan, Marco Polo, François Mitterand, Adolf Hitler, Ayatollah Khomeini, Moamar Khadafy, Mikail Gorbachev, Mao-Tse-Tung, Jacques Cousteau, Bjorn Borg, Leif Erikson, Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Ponce de León, Martina Navratilova, Yasuhiro Nakasone, Napoleon Bonaparte, Ludwig von Beethoven, Yitshak Rabin, Anwar Sadat, and Nikita Krushchev. Even the notorious terrorist, Osama Bin-Laden, has a name that no one attempts to “translate” or otherwise corrupt. No one bothers even *imagining* that we should attempt to translate the above names! They are simply pronounced the same in English as they are in their respective languages of origin. Again, *why has this not been the case with the Name of our Heavenly Father?*

Although we do not wish to lay “blame” on anyone for the established practice of translating our Creator’s Name, it is common knowledge that Jews consider the Name “Yahweh” to be too holy to pronounce, perhaps in an attempt to avoid transgressing the commandment found in Leviticus 24:16, shown below:

16 And he that blasphemeth the name of Yahweh, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name, shall be put to death.

On the surface, it might appear noble to teach your children to not pronounce the Name of Yahweh in an attempt to make certain that they do not “blaspheme” it. However, it is prudent to understand that a truth which is not taught cannot be retained. In other words, if no one ever teaches you the Name of the Creator in an attempt to keep you from dishonoring it, you will simultaneously be kept from being able to **honor** that Name! How can one honor a Name that he doesn’t even *know*? This is a simple concept that is understood even by Jewish scholars, as expressed by Hayim Halevy Donin in his book *To Be a Jew*:

If the Hebrew name given at birth is never referred to by a family and is never used in the synagogue, it obviously loses all significance, and the so-called ‘naming’ was, in retrospect, a futile and meaningless exercise. In this instance, the real name of the person—even for religious documents—is the name by which he is actually called, be it an Anglo-Saxon, Spanish, French or German name.¹³

Mr. Donin rightly brings out the fact that if a name is never used, it “obviously” loses all significance (at least to those who don’t use it). If only we could all understand that this same principle also applies to our Creator’s name! Mr. Donin goes on to address parents who name their children after deceased relatives, yet never actually *use* this name. He underscores how the disuse of the person’s name honors no one, especially the deceased person after whom the child was named:

There is a widespread custom among Jews, particularly those of Ashkenazic background, to name a child after a closely deceased relative whose memory they wish to honor and perpetuate.

Although there is no religious obligation to do so, most seem anxious to follow this time-honored custom. It is a noble and worthy custom, but young parents should not deceive themselves. The custom loses all meaning and no one’s memory is really honored if the name that the child is given is never used, is forgotten by all, and the child is actually called by another name.¹⁴

Again, Mr. Donin brings out a principle against which there is no valid argument. If parents name their son William in memory of their dearly-departed Uncle William, but then they address him as “Ted” all his life, then how was Uncle William “really” honored? Answer: *He wasn’t!* In the same way, our Heavenly Father has plainly *told us* what His name is. If we choose to instead refer to Him with substitutes, is the name He gave to Himself **really** honored? If our aim is *truly* to honor our Heavenly Father, then why would we choose to accept a *substitute*?

If no one ever teaches you the Name of the Creator in an attempt to keep you from dishonoring it, you will simultaneously be kept from being able to **honor** that Name! How can one honor a Name that they do not even know?

Another scholar, Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., draws the connection between a person and his name, but he goes a step further than Mr. Donin, as he goes on to explain that removing a name serves to “extinguish that person’s identity,” and forgetting the Almighty’s name “is to depart from Him.” The

¹³ From *To be a Jew*, by Rabbi Hayim Halevy Donin, BasicBooks, 1991, p. 272.

¹⁴ Ibid.

following is taken from Mr. Wagner's article "What's in a Name?" Wagner, the international director for Bridges for Peace (BFP), an evangelical Christian organization based in Jerusalem, Israel, authored the article sometime prior to October 2003, which is when I first read it. At that time, it was available for reading on the Bridges for Peace web site. As of this writing, however, it is no longer there. In his study, Mr. Wagner addresses the importance of names in the Bible as a means of identifying people, and he issues a profound statement that we all need to consider, especially with regard to the Creator's name:

In the Bible, there is the closest possible relationship between a person and his name. To remove one's name is to extinguish that person's identity (Num. 27:4; Dt. 7:24; 12:3; Josh. 7:9; Ps. 9:5); or to forget a name breaks relationship, e.g. to forget God's name is to depart from Him (Jer. 23:27).¹⁵

The ultimate act of dishonor inflicted upon a man, *according to Scripture*, is to have his name "done away." Can we thus see that it is no trivial or inconsequential matter to replace Yahweh's name with substitutes? What exactly did the translators do when they removed the Creator's name from the Bible and replaced it with substitutes? Are we going to go along with what they did? These are questions that each of us needs to seriously ponder.

We have already addressed such substitutes as "Adonai," "Kyrios" and "the LORD." However, we should also be concerned about a substitute that is passed off by many as "the Real McCoy": the form *Jehovah*. The *New Bible Dictionary* explains how the erroneous form "Jehovah" came into being:

The Heb. word Yahweh is in EVV¹⁶ usually translated 'the LORD' (note the capitals) and sometimes 'Jehovah.' The latter name originated as follows. The original Heb. text was not vocalized; in time the 'Tetragrammaton' YHWH was considered too sacred to pronounce; so adonay ('my Lord') was substituted in reading, and the vowels of this word were combined with the consonants YHWH to give 'Jehovah,' a form first attested at the start of the 12th century AD.

The pronunciation Yahweh is indicated by transliterations of the name into Greek in early Christian literature, in the form *iaoue* (Clement of Alexandria) or *iabe* (Theodoret; by this time Gk. *b* had the pronunciation of *v*). The name is certainly connected with Heb. *hayâ*, 'to be,' or rather with a variant and earlier form of the root, *hawâ*. It is not, however, to be regarded as an imperfective aspect of the verb; the Hiph'il conjugation, to which alone such a form could be assigned, is not forthcoming for this verb; and the imperfective of the Qal conjugation could not have the vowel *a* in the first syllable. Yahweh should be regarded as a straightforward substantive, in which the root *hwh* is preceded by the preformative *y*. See L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, 1958, pp. 368f.; also L. Koehler, *Vom Hebräischen Lexikon*, 1950, pp. 17f.

¹⁵ From the article "What's in a Name?" by Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., international director for *Bridges for Peace*, p. 6. Although I printed Mr. Wagner's article from the *Bridges for Peace* web site in 2003 (www.bridgesforpeace.com), the last time I checked, his article is no longer there.

¹⁶ "EVV" is the abbreviation for "English versions."

Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only 'name' of God. In Genesis wherever the word šem ('name') is associated with the divine being that name is Yahweh. When Abraham or Isaac built an altar 'he called on the name of Yahweh' (Gn. 12:8; 13:4; 26:25).¹⁷

This informative article not only reveals the unscriptural Jewish practice of regarding the Name of Yahweh as being "too sacred to pronounce," but it also reveals the subsequent error of bringing forth the hybrid form *Jehovah*. We are then shown that the main source establishing credibility for the form *Yahweh* comes from transliterations into Greek by such men as Clement of Alexandria, a scholar who lived from 150 - 212 CE.¹⁸ We are aware that this is somewhat of a controversy as to whether or not Clement of Alexandria actually wrote out the Greek equivalent of the Creator's name as *iaoue*. Nevertheless, other sources seem to support this same pronunciation.¹⁹ In Hebrew, the name *Yahweh* is

¹⁷ From the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edition, 1982, by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, article "God, Names Of," page 430.

¹⁸ Cf. Clemens Alexandrinus, the *Stromata* Book V, Chapter 6:34, where he writes, "The mysterious four-letter name, which is put around the one (the head-band), who alone (the high priest) is allowed to enter the most holy: this name was Ιαουε, which, when translated, means, 'the one, who is and who was.'" For more information, the above quote and more may be accessed at the following URL: http://hanskrause.de/HKHPE/hkhpe_28_01.htm. Also, an in-depth discussion regarding this topic may be read by accessing the article *Iaoue* at the following URL: <http://encyclopedia.laborlawtalk.com/Iaoue>.


¹⁹ When it comes to determining how a certain name is pronounced in Hebrew, I can think of no better means of validating the pronunciation than by looking into how that name was/is transliterated into another language. In the case of the Tetragrammaton, I am aware of two transliterations in the Greek language (besides the one I've already mentioned as being used by Clement of Alexandria). Those two Greek transliterations are *Yahu* and *Iabe*, as reported by Theodoret and Epiphanius. William Smith, in his *A Dictionary of the Bible*, published in 1863, offered the following information pertaining to some forms of the Tetragrammaton found in Greek writings:

In Greek writers it appears under the several forms of 'law (Diod. Sic. i. 94; Irenaeus, i.4, §1). 'leuw (Porphyry in Eusebius, Praep. Evan. i.9, §21), 'laou (Clem. Alex. Strom. v. p. 666), and in a catena to the Pentateuch in a MS. at Turin laoue; both Theodoret (Quaest. 15 in Exod.) and Epiphanius (Haer. 20) give Iabe, the former distinguishing it as the pronunciation of the Samaritans, while 'Aia represented that of the Jews. Of these forms, 'law= and 'laou/ may both have arisen from יְהוּ (yāhū), the second element in so many Hebrew proper names; 'leuw/ is perhaps an attempt to render a pronunciation יְהוֹה (Yehwōh) which might have succeeded יְהוָה (Yahwāh); cp. יְהוּ, Jehu, Assyrian Ya-u-a. 'Aia has the look of a Greek imitation of אֲהִיָּה ('āhyāh or 'ehyēh), "I am" (Ex. iii.14), but another MS. reads 'la/, that is, apparently, יָה, Jah (Yāh), which occurs in the O. T. as an independent Name; while Iabe/ seems to preserve the pronunciation יְהוָה (Yahwāh or Yahwēh), as nearly as Greek writing allows.

It should be noted that more than one Greek writer reported the transliteration *Iabe*, and they didn't even belong to the same generation. Epiphanius lived from 315 - 403 CE and Theodoret lived from 393 - 457 CE, and both reported the same Greek transliteration of *Iabe*. It is well-attested that the Greek *b* was the equivalent of the Latin *v*, which in turn was pronounced the same as the English *u*. Moreover, according to the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 25, p. 50, and the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 161, Samaritan poetry employs the Tetragrammaton and then rhymes it with words having the same sound as Yah-oo-ay. Some folks will regard the Samaritans as an unreliable source of information, and that is their prerogative. Nevertheless, I find it highly unlikely that they would deliberately modify the pronunciation handed down to them. I find the following quotation to be very interesting. It comes from page 312, footnote #4, of the 1911 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, a comment which is in turn based on information found in the tractate Sanhedrin of the Talmud:

The Samaritans, who otherwise shared the scruples of the Jews about the utterance of the name, seem to have used it in judicial oaths to the scandal of the rabbis.

If the above information is true, it would indicate that the Samaritans did indeed retain the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton and shared the Jewish avoidance of pronouncing it ... *except* in cases involving judicial oaths. It does not seem reasonable to believe that they would, to the scandal of the rabbis, continue to use the Tetragrammaton in judicial oaths, but corrupt its pronunciation in the process. Finally, I believe it is noteworthy that one of the "greats" among Hebrew scholars, Wilhelm Gesenius (1786-1842), regarded the Samaritan pronunciation as a basis for his conclusion that the Tetragrammaton is pronounced "*Yahweh*." This information comes from Gesenius' Hebrew dictionary in which he proposed vowel pointing the Hebrew characters as יְהוֹה, which is pronounced *Yahweh* in English. His proposal was based

spelled with the four Hebrew characters known as the “Tetragrammaton”: יהוה. This form of the Tetragrammaton is written in what is known as “modern Hebrew” or the “square Aramaic script.” The Creator’s Name has also been preserved in “Paleo-Hebrew,” which is an older Hebrew form of writing that pre-dates the Babylonian exile. The Tetragrammaton, written in *Paleo-Hebrew*, looks like this: . Some ancient scribes, when converting the text of Scripture from *Paleo-Hebrew* to modern Hebrew, showed such reverence for the Tetragrammaton that they chose to preserve it in its original form, with the original Paleo-Hebrew characters left intact. The result was a *Paleo-Hebrew* Tetragrammaton in the midst of an otherwise modern Hebrew text. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, was found a group of Psalms known as “The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll.” Although the actual text was composed using the modern Hebrew, the scribe who copied it preserved the Tetragrammaton by carefully writing it out in its original *Paleo-Hebrew* form. One of those Psalms contains, almost word for word, the first five verses of Psalms 140:1-5. Shown below is a rendering of how part of verse four appears in that scroll. In English, the following words are translated, “Guard me, O Yahweh, from the hands of the wicked, from the [violent] man”:

שומרני יהוה
מידי רשע מאיש

Notice how the scribe who transferred the words from the original *Paleo-Hebrew*, when he came to the Tetragrammaton, he revered it so much that he *left it alone*. He respected the Name too much to change it! But as time progressed, obviously, it became acceptable to preserve the Name by using the modern Hebrew characters. It is our feeling that, with this change, a loss of sense of reverence of the sanctity of the Heavenly Father’s name was experienced.

We know that King David regularly employed the Creator’s Name, both in his writings and in his speech. If using the name *Yahweh* suited King David, then certainly it should suit anyone as serious about his faith as he was! Many of us learned and even memorized the 23rd Psalm, so we know the first verse of this Psalm reads, “The LORD is my shepherd” At least that’s the way it reads in today’s popular versions of the Bible. However, when we go to the Hebrew text, we know that King David did not *actually* write “The LORD” in *any* of the Psalms he authored! Instead, he wrote, “**Yahweh** (יהוה) is my shepherd.” If we want to claim the Creator as our Shepherd, should we not want to know Him by Name, just as King David did?

How, then did Judaism come to regard the name *Yahweh* as being “too sacred to pronounce”? We know they admit that in the beginning there was nothing wrong with speaking the name *Yahweh*. A. Cohen, in *Everyman’s Talmud*, makes the following assertion in acknowledgment of this fact:

On the other hand, there was a time when the free and open use of the Name even by the layman was advocated. The Mishnah teaches: ‘It was ordained that a man should greet his friends by mentioning the Name’ (Berakhot IX.5). It has been suggested that the recommendation was based on the desire to distinguish the Israelite from the Samaritan,

upon the report from Theodoret pertaining to the Samaritan pronunciation. This information is taken from the first part of the article on JHWH in Gesenius’ *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das alte Testament*, 1915. We offer detailed information into why we are personally persuaded that the Tetragrammaton is pronounced *Yahweh* in our study titled [Pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton](#).

who referred to God as 'the Name' and not as JHVH, or the Rabbinite Jew from the Jewish Christian.²⁰

Cohen's assertion is substantiated by the *Encyclopædia Judaica*, where we read the following:

At least until the destruction of the First Temple in 586 B.C.E. this name was regularly pronounced with its proper vowels, as is clear from the Lachish Letters, written shortly before that date.²¹

The fact is, then, Jewish scholars understand that, from the earliest of times, believers called upon the Almighty by Name. However, they *now* teach that there is no life in the hereafter for those who dare to utter the Name.²² ***What happened?***

²⁰ From *Everyman's Talmud*, by A. Cohen, orig. pub. in 1949, p. 25.

²¹ From the *Encyclopædia Judaica*, vol. 7, 1971, article "God, Names of," p. 680.

²² The Mishna (Sanhedrin 90a) states that "one who utters The Name with its [proper] lettering" has no portion in the world to come.

5. The First Directive to Not Speak the Name is Given by a Heathen Nation

If Judaism is willing to admit that, from the earliest of times, the ancient believers freely spoke the name *Yahweh*, then why do they now teach the opposite? This is not an easy question to answer. The best we can do at this time is research and speculate to the best of our ability based upon the information we have thus far obtained. We have attempted to share our findings with various scholars in order to validate our conclusions, but it is not easy to find an attentive audience, much less any scholars who care to join us in our quest for answers,²³ so we turn to as many resources as we can find. The closest thing we have had to a response was the result of an inquiry I sent in October 2003 to Clarence Wagner, Jr., who is the international director of Bridges for Peace (BFP), an evangelical Christian organization based in Jerusalem, Israel. Mr. Wagner had authored an eye-opening study entitled “What’s in a Name?”, from which we have already quoted in this study. In that same article, he brought out some information that we believe corroborates our findings, which in turn supports our own theory as to what led to a complete Jewish reversal with regard to their stand on the Creator’s name. For this reason, I shared our findings with Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., in an attempt to see if he had additional insights to offer. I never received a response from Mr. Wagner; however, I did receive a reply from his publication assistant, who stated, “It seems that you have done a good bit of research. I found the same reference you did and nothing more.”²⁴ What research did I do that resulted in such a commendation?

To answer this question, I would like to share the same explanation that I offered to a Jewish woman with whom I used to work. This woman was very nice, and we got along very well, but we respected each other's religious views too much to ask any questions for a considerably long time (which probably explains why we got along so well!).

²³ This includes Boaz Michael, founder and president of First Fruits of Zion (www.ffoz.org). First Fruits of Zion is “an educational ministry dedicated to proclaiming the Torah and its way of life, fully centered on Messiah, to today's people of God.” After a presentation that Mr. Michael gave on the Hanukkah story, I shared with him the fact that one of Antiochus Epiphanes’ decrees imposed upon Judaism was that of forbidding the mentioning of the Name, a decree which was later repealed by Judah Maccabee when he and his small army gained the victory. Mr. Michael seemed interested in this historical note, and in fact he gave me his business card along with a request for me to e-mail him my references pertaining to this account, which I did on 11/20/2004. He responded to that e-mail two days later, but only with a “thank you” and a comment that he would forward it to someone named Daniel, with whom he would discuss the matter. I have not heard from him since 11/22/2004, and I notice that his site continues to justify using “Adonai” in place of the Tetragrammaton, as can be noted from their glossary’s definition of “YHWH,” as follows: “**YHWH** – in this publication, when authors wish to use or make reference to the four-letter Name of God, יהוה, YHWH is used. Traditionally, this Name is not pronounced as it is written, but substituted with either Adonai or Hashem.” While this definition doesn’t seem to indicate opposition to the Name, at the same time it is worth noting that Boaz Michael does not himself refer to the Almighty as YHWH, opting instead for the substitute “Adonai,” as can be noted from an online study pertaining to Hanukkah entitled “My Sheep Hear My Voice,” which he authored in 2005. Here’s an excerpt to illustrate what I mean: “Truly, the Festival of Lights has taught our ancestors a myriad of truths over the years. It has implored us to [be] a people that are truly ‘on fire’ for Adonai, our God.”

²⁴ From an e-mail received on 10/30/2003 from Charleeda Sprinkle, Publications Assistant, Bridges for Peace, Jerusalem, Israel. In my e-mail inquiry, I presented the historical fact that it was a Roman practice to remove original names from public monuments (which would include *Yahweh*) and substitute them with new ones. Knowing this to be true, I suspect that there was a Roman mandate given at some point in time against speaking or writing the Name. In her response, Charleeda explained that, in her attempt to answer my question, she asked several people at Bridges for Peace and even called a professor at one of Jerusalem’s Bible colleges. The professor whom she called told her he could find the record of such a prohibition, but he explained that it would require several hours of research, which he did not have the time to do.

One day, for no apparent reason, Debbie expressed an interest in why I used the Creator's name (even though I had been careful to not do so in her presence). She was very surprised when I told her that the first decree to not mention the Creator's name was directed *at* the Jews, not *by* the Jews ... and this decree was given at the hands of a heathen nation. To her credit, Debbie asked me where I had obtained this information. I was impressed by her request because I had found that usually when I made this remark, the conversation pretty much ended without the other party wanting to know more. Thus, I shared with Debbie what I am about to share with you:

Virtually all Jews are familiar with the story behind the observance of Hanukkah, of how a small army of Jews, against all odds, overcame and defeated the much larger and better-equipped Syrian army, which was led by the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes.²⁵ *Hanukkah*, a Hebrew word meaning *dedication*, commemorates the dedication of the temple after having been cleansed from the swine that Antiochus Epiphanes had ordered to be sacrificed there. Until Judaism won this victory, Antiochus Epiphanes had subjected them to unimaginable atrocities, including frying alive a mother and her seven sons for refusing to eat pork (II Maccabees 7). **It is recorded in the Talmud that among the decrees of Antiochus Epiphanes (in c. 168 B.C.E.) was one forbidding the mention of "the Name."** The Talmud also records that when Judah Maccabee and his men gained the victory over the Syrian army (marking the initial Hanukkah observance, which took place in 165 B.C.E.), he *repealed* that decree. In other words, Antiochus Epiphanes and his Syrian counterparts did not want anyone to speak the name *Yahweh*, and he had mandated that it not be spoken. By repealing this decree, the Jews of that time period underscored that there is nothing wrong with speaking the Name. This is significant, as this is evidence that, at least by the 2nd century B.C.E., Judaism supported speaking the name *Yahweh*. This evidence contradicts the conclusions offered by most references, however, as the typical references we have found explain that Judaism stopped speaking the Name during the 3rd century B.C.E., or some 100 years before the Maccabean victory over Antiochus Epiphanes' army. If this is true ... if Judaism had *already* stopped speaking the Name when Antiochus Epiphanes began his "reign of terror," then why would he have imposed a decree mandating that it not be spoken?

The Talmud's reference to the Jews repealing Antiochus Epiphanes' decree is found in Rosh Hashanah 18b - 19a, where we read the following:

R. Aha b. Huna raised an objection [from the following]: 'On the third of Tishri the mention [of God] in bonds was abolished: for the Grecian Government had forbidden the mention of God's name by the Israelites, and when the Government of the Hasmoneans became strong and defeated them, they ordained that they should mention the name of God even on bonds, and they used to write thus: 'In the year so-and-so of Johanan, High Priest to the Most High God', and when the Sages heard of it they said, 'To-morrow this man will pay his debts and the bond will be thrown on a dunghill', and they stopped them, and they made that day a feast day.'²⁶

²⁵ Antiochus Epiphanes is also known as Antiochus IV (c. 215–163 B.C.E.). He was ruler of the Hellenistic Seleucid Empire from 175–163 B.C.E.

²⁶ Quoted from Rosh Hashanah 18b - 19a, as found on pages 76-77 of *The Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Mo'ed, translated into English with notes, glossary and indices under the editorship of Rabbi Dr. I. Epstein, published by The Soncino Press, London, 1938. Note: We do not normally recommend reading the Talmud, except for gleaning historical information.

We know, then, that at least by 165 B.C.E. pious Jews were calling upon the Almighty by Name. This truth is apparently very difficult for the average Jewish person to accept, at least based upon the few experiences I have had in sharing this information with them. In addition to Debbie, who did not feel led to pursue our conversation any further, I have shared the above information with another Jewish woman, only this time the communication was via an internet forum discussion. Rather than accepting the obvious understanding that the above Talmud reference to “the Israelites” literally *meant* the Israelites, she insists that it “must” be a reference to the Jewish legend that only the high priest was permitted to speak the Name, and even then it was only on the Day of Atonement that he could do so.²⁷ Thus, in her opinion, the reference to “the Israelites” in Rosh Hashanah 18b - 19a is actually a reference to the high priest! This is how strong her bias is. However, when we carefully examine the Talmudic reference from an unbiased perspective, it is clear that the reference to “the Israelites” was *just that* ... a reference to *all* of Yahweh’s chosen people, not just a select few from a select tribe. To Judah Maccabee and his fellow Jews, then, there was nothing at all wrong with calling upon the Name. Thus, the initial decree to not speak the Creator's name was directed AT the Jews by a heathen nation ... and it was a decree that Judaism of that time period utterly *rejected*.

However, this still does not answer the question as to how and why Judaism would *later* “change its mind” and revert back to honoring a heathen decree. Judaism has, in fact, collectively allowed a heathen decree to evolve into an acceptable, and even mandated, Jewish tradition. Should we not be alarmed by this turn of events? Should we not wonder what happened after 165 B.C.E.? How did the Name called upon by the ancients become “too sacred” to mention? How did Judaism come to accept the notion that it is more “reverent” to *not* utter this Name than to imitate what the early believers practiced? Since relevant data from the time period following the death of Judah Maccabee is so sparse, we can only piece together what we believe is a reasonable chain of events ... a chain of events that, as I mentioned earlier, seems reasonable to the *Bridges for Peace* representative!

I rather imagine that Judah Maccabee's lifting the Grecian Government’s ban on speaking the Name *Yahweh* was not something that was readily recognized by Judaism – not because they didn’t *want* to resume using the Name in everyday speech, but rather because they were still restricted by their fears. Keep in mind that for over three years, they had endured witnessing the brutal killings of friends and family members who had defied Antiochus Epiphanes’ decrees ... decrees which included prohibitions against reading Torah, much less obeying it. For example, it is recorded in the books of Maccabees that within the space of *three days*, 80,000 Jews lost their lives at the hands of Antiochus

²⁷ This came from an internet forum discussion (www.eliyah.com) in the forum thread entitled “Specifically, how?” The woman, whose screen name is “Rivkah,” submitted a posting on 02-19-2005 at 08:48 PM in answer to the quotation I had furnished from Rosh Hashanah 18b - 19a. She wrote, “The references you gave say nothing about the common people SPEAKING the Name in casual use.” She added, “Yom Kippur – at the end of the ten days of prayer and teshuvah, all these holies came together as the Kohen Gadol entered Kodesh HaKodashim and spoke the Name of our El-him...and you want to convince me that I should use this Holiest of Names of our Creator in casual everyday usage?? I, as daughter of my father, of his father, and of his father, and so on, have the Mesorah passed down from Har Sinai and do not need to consult any other source.” In other words, she is unwilling to forsake the tradition of her fathers. The question is, how far back does the tradition of her fathers go? Does it go back to the days of Judah Maccabee? The evidence we have seen strongly indicates that it does not. Moreover, as we will see in this study, the legend she describes pertaining to the high priest (Kohen Gadol) being the only person allowed to speak the Name is apparently just that ... a legend. As we have already read, Jewish scholars testify that, in the beginning, the free and open use of the Name, even by the layman, was advocated, not discouraged. It was *man*, not Yahweh, who altered this understanding. We need to remember that not only was it *man* who did this, but it was *heathen man*.

Epiphanes.²⁸ This is in addition to multitudes that were killed and tortured later.²⁹ Moreover, we need to consider the fact that although Judah Maccabee and his men had gained the victory, enabling the Jews to cleanse the temple, the war was far from over. In fact, Judah Maccabee was himself eventually killed in battle.³⁰ Certainly, then, the act of Judah Maccabee repealing the decree of the Grecian Government could not have given Jewish families peace of mind about freely using the Name. Consider, then, the sociological circumstances in which Jewish families found themselves.

As a parent who loves his children, I want to take every step necessary to ensure their safety and well-being. If, as a parent, I knew that teaching my young children the Creator's name could eventually mean their death sentence, I can well imagine devising fanciful tales designed to persuade them that that they shouldn't speak it ... such as the one about how the Name could only be spoken once a year by the high priest in the Holy of Holies. I'm not saying this is what I would necessarily do, but I am saying I can imagine a parent doing such a thing out of concern for preserving his progeny. By the way, the teaching that the Creator's name was only spoken once a year by the high priest in the Holy of Holies is a teaching that has no foundation in Scripture, and even *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* questions the authenticity of this "tradition."³¹

As history unfolded in the timeline of Judea, we know the Jews were eventually subjects of the Roman empire.³² How receptive was the Roman government towards the religion of Judaism? How tolerant was the Roman empire of the name *Yahweh*? This is an area where much information seems to be missing. During the days of the apostles, it is unclear to which extent Judaism as a whole used the Name, whether it be in everyday speech or in writing. We do know that 3rd century theologian Origen, in his commentary on the Septuagint text of Psalm 2:2, wrote, "In the most accurate manuscripts, the Name occurs—yet not in today's Hebrew [characters], but in the most ancient ones."³³ If we remember that the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the original Hebrew Scriptures, Origen's comment here takes on special meaning. He explained that, in the otherwise Greek text, the Name *Yahweh* was written in Hebrew characters ... not in today's (modern) Hebrew characters, however, but in the most

²⁸ Cf., II Maccabees 5:13-14, where we read, "Thus there was killing of young and old, making away of men, women, and children, slaying of virgins and infants. And there were destroyed within the space of three whole days fourscore thousand, whereof forty thousand were slain in the conflict; and no fewer sold than slain."

²⁹ One example of this can be found in II Maccabees 5:26, where we read about Apollonius (a governor under Antiochus Epiphanes) slaughtering "great multitudes" as they celebrated the sabbath: "And so he (Apollonius) slew all them that were gone to the celebrating of the sabbath, and running through the city with great weapons slew great multitudes."

³⁰ Cf., I Maccabees 9:18. Also of interest is information offered in the article "Jerusalem: Life Throughout the Ages in a Holy City," by Yisrael Shalem: "Seleucid armies continued to invade Judea, and they reconquered Jerusalem in 162 B.C.E. Judah Maccabee was killed in battle two years later, and his brother Jonathan, who assumed the leadership, fled the country. Only in the year 152 B.C.E. was Jonathan able to return home. Though the city was capital of the Maccabean (Hasmonean) dominion for the next 89 years, many battles were still fought in Jerusalem." The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: http://www.biu.ac.il/js/rennert/history_4.html.

³¹ Cf., *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1988, p. 781, where we read, "According to Jewish tradition, it [YHWH] was pronounced but once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement when he entered the Holy of Holies; but on this point there is some doubt."

³² We know that Judea became subjects of the Roman empire in 63 B.C.E., when Pompey occupied the Upper City of Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount, entered the Holy of Holies, and destroyed the walls of Jerusalem. For more information, see *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, article "Jerusalem," Doubleday, New York, David Noel Freedman, Ed.-in-Chief, 1992, p. 758.

³³ From *Origenis Opera Omnia (The Complete Works of Origen)*, Origen's commentary on Psalm 2:2, arranged by Caroli and Caroli Vicentii Delarue, as contained within volume 7 (section 1104), of *Patrologiae Cursus Completus (Complete Writings of the Patristics)*, edited by J.P. Migne, published in Paris in 1862.

ancient ones. To understand the significance of this comment, we must remember that the Hebrew which was written prior to the Babylonian Captivity was written with different characters than the Hebrew later adopted while in Captivity (commonly referred to as “Aramaic Script”). As mentioned previously, the name *Yahweh*, in Aramaic script, is written יהוה. In the “most ancient” Hebrew referred to by Origen, also known as *Paleo-Hebrew*, the Name is written יהוה. Thus, the 3rd century scholar Origen told his readers that the most accurate manuscripts of his day contained the *ancient* Hebrew form of the Name, i.e., יהוה. While Origen recognized the superiority of the texts containing this *Paleo-Hebrew* form of the Name, it is also worth noting that during Origen’s day the practice of substituting *Kyrios* in the Greek text and *Adonai* in the Hebrew text was well underway and in vogue.³⁴

Buoyed by the fact that Judaism was likely not yet recovered from its Grecian-imposed fear of teaching the free use of the Name to their children, I believe Roman occupation cemented their fears, converting anxiety into phobia. We have already learned that the heathen Greeks wanted no part of the worship of *Yahweh*, and in fact banned mentioning this Name. Their Roman counterparts do not seem to have brought with them any more respect for the Name, yet what I have not been able to find in my quest for answers is an actual Roman decree banning the mention of the name *Yahweh*. Instead, I have found what I believe are strong clues that not only *speaking*, but *writing* the Name may have had dire consequences. In fact, I believe the available evidence supports the understanding that the heathens who occupied Judea wanted all memory of the name *Yahweh* eradicated. To illustrate this understanding, let’s first remember that, according to Scripture, the ultimate dishonor for a man was to have his name “done away,” as demonstrated by the daughters of Zelophehad, who took steps to preserve their father’s name. This account appears in Numbers chapter 27:

1 Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hephher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh the son of Joseph: and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah.

2 And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes and all the congregation, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, saying,

3 Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against *Yahweh* in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons.

4 Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father.

The daughters of Zelophehad understood the dishonor of having a name “blotted out” from memory, and they took the necessary steps to prevent their deceased father from being disgraced in this manner.

Not only is the dishonor of having a name “done away” an understanding conveyed by Scripture, it was also an understanding from heathen cultures as well. For example, consider the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut, who is known as “the Queen who was King.” Hatshepsut lived in the fifteenth century B.C.E. during the 18th Dynasty in Egypt. Very little is known about her because of an attempt to blot

³⁴ Ibid. Origen’s exact words were, “Wherefore it is said that these things have been done ‘against the Lord (*Kyrios*) and against His Anointed (*Christos*).’ It is no secret that one pronounces the Name in Greek as ‘*Kyrios*,’ but in Hebrew as ‘*Adonai*.’ The Almighty (*Theos*) is called by ten names in Hebrew, one of them being ‘*Adonai*,’ which is pronounced in Greek as ‘*Kyrios*.’”

out her name from the record of history. In a nutshell, she became acting regent when Thutmose II died and the heir, her stepson, Thutmose III, was too young to assume the responsibilities of rulership. However, she went a step further and had herself declared “pharaoh,” continuing to rule even after her stepson came of age. Let’s read Hatshepsut’s story as we gain understanding of how the ancients regarded names. The following comes from *The Preclassical Civilizations: The Civilizations of Mesopotamia*, part of a History 101 text for Southside Virginia Community College:

Hatshepsut appears first as the stepmother and aunt (interfamilial marriages, including those of brother and sister, were normal among the royal family since the rulers were considered divine) of the crown prince Thutmose III. The youngster’s father, Thutmose II had died and thus his aunt/stepmother Hatshepsut assumed the responsibilities of the crown while the boy was growing up. What happened next was unprecedented.

Hatshepsut quickly threw off the pretensions of being simply a queen regent and assumed all the regalia and authority of a pharaoh. As one modest precaution, she did bow to the tradition of having male pharaohs and wore men’s outfits for official occasions. A number of the official portraits of her also show her in male attire, including even a false goatee (we assume she did not have a facial hair problem!).

Hatshepsut ruled quite ambitiously. She dispatched an exploratory expedition along the east coast of Africa to a land called *Punt*, which we believe to have been either Ethiopia or perhaps the coast of Kenya. She also commissioned the construction of a very beautiful temple on the other side of the Nile at a place called *Deir el Bahri*. It is a major tourist landmark today. She erected numerous other monuments in her honour as well.

In the meantime, Thutmose III had grown up and was eager to assume his rightful office. But Hatshepsut did not yield readily and continued to run the show while her rival stepson and nephew simmered. What happened then is not clearly stated in the Egyptian records and the archaeological evidence is a little confusing, too. It seems that after a number of years, the young prince finally launched some kind of palace *coup* and seized control of the throne. Hatshepsut was displaced, but no immediate revenge was inflicted upon her. Several years after her overthrow, however, Thutmose’s regime then proceeded to impose upon her what amounted to the ultimate punishment: her name and memory were effaced from all monuments, her images were destroyed, and everything possible was done to remove any trace of her existence.

Ancient Egyptians believed that the best way to preserve one’s soul in the afterlife was to preserve one’s body. That is why they practiced mummification and why they entombed themselves in all manner of safe and secure graves. If something happened to one’s body, then the next best insurance for one’s soul was to have images of the deceased preserved. As a result, pharaohs and other wealthy people had numerous statues and busts made of themselves. Failing the sculptural option (statues could be and were smashed by vindictive enemies and vandalism prone grave robbers), a third back-up system was to have one’s name inscribed in places where people, especially priests, could read them aloud from time to time. If just the memory of the deceased could be mentioned, there was at least some hope of survival in the afterworld.

The worst and most vicious way to deal with a foe, then, was to destroy his or her mummy, shatter his or her images, scratch the person's name from any buildings or monuments and finally ban the mere mention of his or her name by anyone, priests especially. If all this could be done, the destruction of the individual was complete and total. That is why Thutmoses or his enthusiasts launched their campaign to eradicate everything associated with Hatshepsut. They did not succeed because her supporters saved some of her memorabilia, including even some of the statues. Her mummy, on the other hand, has never been found.”³⁵

We thus see that names were not only important to Biblical personages, but also to heathens. The best way to utterly destroy someone, according to this approach, is to not only have them killed, but to also eradicate any and all memories of his or her existence. In fact, since we know it was a heathen culture that outlawed the mention of the name *Yahweh*, the practices and beliefs of heathen cultures are our primary focus. Moreover, the Egyptian culture is important because we know Antiochus Epiphanes would have been very familiar with Egyptian beliefs.³⁶

As Greek control of Judea shifted to Roman dominance, we find strong clues that nothing changed in the way names were regarded. It appears that “name eradication” was not only unique to Egyptian practice, but it was utilized by Romans as well. John Milton, best known for his epic poem *Paradise Lost*, authored another work entitled *Areopagitica*, which was written in 1644 as a protest against the English Parliament's ordinance restricting the freedom of print. In this latter work, Milton made reference to a first-century private orator named Dion Prusæus, who dared to speak out against an edict on the island of Rhodes.³⁷ This edict allowed the removal of original names from monuments and the substitution of new ones.³⁸ Dion Prusæus' speech, directed in opposition to this edict, is known as the “Rhodian Discourse.” To better understand the situation in Rhodes, we need to understand that this island was under Roman control at the time.³⁹ Dion Prusæus, also known as Dion Chrysostom, was

³⁵ From *The Preclassical Civilizations: The Civilizations of Mesopotamia*, part of an online History 101 course for Southside Virginia Community College, p. 15. Although the article is not dated, I printed it from <http://www3.sv.vccs.edu/his101a6/newpage2.htm> on 05/30/2002. As of this writing, the article is no longer available online. However, the information offered by the online textbook can be verified through other sources. In fact, in October 2006 we attended a special “Hatshepsut exhibit” at the Kimbell Art Museum in Ft. Worth, TX, where the information found in the textbook was validated.

³⁶ Cf., the Wikipedia article entitled “Antiochus IV,” where we read that he invaded and overran all Egypt except for Alexandria (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiochus_Epiphanes) See also *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, p. 270.

³⁷ Cf., The Online Library of Liberty web site (<http://oll.libertyfund.org/Home3/HTML.php?recordID=1224>) , where *Areopagitica* is reproduced. John Milton was born in 1608 and died in 1674. In speaking of Dion Prusæus, Milton wrote the following: “Such honour was done in those days to men who professed the study of wisdom and eloquence, not only in their own country, but in other lands, that cities and signiories heard them gladly, and with great respect, if they had aught in public to admonish the state. Thus did Dion Prusæus, a stranger and a private orator, counsel the Rhodians against a former edict; and I abound with other like examples, which to set here would be superfluous.”

³⁸ This information was gleaned from Dartmouth College's web site notes on Milton's *Areopagitica*. We read, “Dion Prusæus. Also known as Dion of Prusa in Bithynia and [Dion Chrysostom](#) (died about 112 CE). A rhetorician and philosopher, his ‘Rhodian Discourse’ advises the repeal of an edict allowing the removal of original names from public monuments and the substitution of new ones. He was expelled from Rome for political reasons by Domitian.” This information may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/areopagitica/notes.shtml.

³⁹ For example, according to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, article “Rhodes,” Doubleday, New York, David Noel Freedman, Ed.-in-Chief, 1992, p. 720, Rhodes had close ties to Egypt, Greece and Rome. “Its preeminence was directly dependent on its relationship with Egypt. As a cultural center during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, Rhodes was the home of the epic poet Apollonius (author of *Argonautica*), a sculptural school which produced the *Laocoön*, and the

later expelled from Rome by the emperor Domitian.⁴⁰ What does all this information tell us? Quite frankly, it is evident that Egypt, Greece and Rome shared the belief that the best way to blot out the memory of anything from a hated foe to a deity they didn't worship was to have its name removed from any and all monuments, and very likely from any written documents as well. This would also have to include *mentioning* the person or deity by name, which, of course, would also serve to bring it into one's memory. This, as we know, was the decree of the Grecian Government, and the information we have seen regarding Roman practices leads us to believe they perpetuated the custom.

We also know from the historical record that the Roman emperor Hadrian changed the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina (129—130 C.E.).⁴¹ If the emperor changed the name of the city, what would prevent him from issuing similar edicts against use of the name *Yahweh*? Would the worship of Yahweh have been tolerated? Not according to Clarence H. Wagner, Jr. We have already made reference to his article "What's in a Name?" On page 8 of that same article, he wrote the following:

The Romans also changed the name of Jerusalem to Aelia Capitolina (after the family name of the conquering Emperor Hadrian), and only allowed the Jews to enter one day per year to mourn the destruction of the Temple.

These names (Aelia Capitolina and Palaestina) were carefully chosen by the Romans to make a point. They wanted to erase God's chosen names for His land and city, and thus the connection between the Land and the Jewish people as given to them in covenant by God.⁴²

In view of all the information available to us today, we need to seriously and carefully weigh all the evidence thus far presented. We know that countless manuscripts were destroyed by the various nations that occupied Israel, to the extent that it is virtually a miracle that anything survived. How many manuscripts containing the Tetragrammaton were destroyed? We have no way of knowing, but various sources bear record that it must have been an enormous number.⁴³ The information we do have available demonstrates that it would not have been considered "safe" to write or speak the name

philosophical schools of Panaetius and Poseidonius. After the Battle of Pydna in 167 B.C.E., Rome undermined Rhodes' economic advantage by declaring Delos a free harbor. The island was further subjugated by Crassus in 43 B.C.E., although it remained a popular resort center throughout the Roman imperial period."

⁴⁰ For more information regarding Dion Pruseus, the following biographical sketch may prove helpful: "Dion Chrysostom (c.40-c.112) - Greek rhetorician and philosopher, born in Prusa, Bithynia. He went to Rome under Vespasian, but was banished by Domitian. He then visited, in the disguise of a beggar, Thrace, Mysia, and Scythia. On Nerva's accession (96) he returned to Rome, and lived in great honour under him and Trajan. About 80 orations or treatises on politics and philosophy are extant." This information was taken from the following URL: <http://appbio.net/biographies/Dion%20Chrysostom-2DCE.html>.

⁴¹ Cf., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, article "Jerusalem," Doubleday, New York, David Noel Freedman, Ed.-in-Chief, 1992, p. 761: "Jewish Jerusalem was effectively finished when Hadrian established the Roman city of Jerusalem, limited to the W hill in the area of modern Jewish Quarter. Hadrian visited Jerusalem in 129-30 C.E.; then he rebuilt the city, renaming it Aelia Capitolina. 'Aelia' was derived from the emperor's second name; 'Capitolina' recalled Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the deities of the Capitoline Triad in Rome, who became the patrons of Hadrian's new city."

⁴² From the article "What's in a Name?" by Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., international director for *Bridges for Peace*, p. 8. Although I printed Mr. Wagner's article from the *Bridges for Peace* web site in 2003 (www.bridgesforpeace.com), the last time I checked, his article is no longer there.

⁴³ Cf., I Maccabees 1:56-57, where we read, "And when they (Antiochus Epiphanes' army) had rent in pieces the books of the law which they found, they burnt them with fire. And whosoever was found with any the book of the testament, or if any consented to the law, the king's commandment was, that they should put him to death."

Yahweh. We also need to consider the fact the name *Yahweh* appears nearly 7,000 times in the Old Testament, yet zero times in the New. Why the abrupt change? Did the Name that was so reverently called upon and praised suddenly become “too sacred to pronounce”? Or did invading nations serve as the *real* catalyst for this teaching?

Did the Hasmoneans Really Repeal the Decree Against Speaking the Name?

We have encountered individuals who dismiss and reject the Talmudic reference to the Hasmoneans repealing Antiochus Epiphanes’ decree against speaking the name. After all, this decree is not specifically mentioned in the books of Maccabees. Moreover, these naysayers regard *everything* presented within the Talmud as fiction. We agree that we should take any Talmudic teachings that do not conform with Torah with a “grain of salt.” However, we are not so quick to dismiss the Talmud’s historical value. And consider this: Why would rabbinic Jews espousing the Ineffable Name doctrine fabricate a story about one of their heroes repealing a ban *against* speaking the Creator’s name—a ban that they themselves would have *supported*? This would be akin to President Joe Biden, who upholds abortion, i.e., “a woman’s right to choose,” conceding that his Democratic hero, President John F. Kennedy⁴⁴, found abortion to be “repugnant.”⁴⁵ *That will most likely never happen!*

In 1997, when we originally composed this study, we were not aware of any New Testament manuscripts in which the Tetragrammaton appears. Since then, we obtained a copy of Sebastian Münster’s Hebrew Matthew, in which יהוה frequently appears. It also appears in Münster’s Hebrew Hebrews. There really shouldn’t be any doubt that the ancient believers held the name *Yahweh* in high esteem and used it reverently. We need to also consider the fact that Yeshua Himself testified that He declared the Name, which must of necessity include *speaking* it.⁴⁶ If He spoke the Name ... and He is our Example, then He wants us to speak it as well.

⁴⁴ In his book *Promises to Keep*, Random House, 2007, p. 25, Joe Biden revealed that John F. Kennedy’s ideas aligned with the same lessons he had learned in his youth: “In fact, the thing that struck me about his inaugural address in January 1961 was not the newness of the ideas but how much those ideas rhymed with the lessons I’d learned at Saint Paul’s and Holy Rosary and Saint Helena and Archmere--and especially in my own home.” In fact, it was John F. Kennedy who sparked Biden’s [interest in politics](#).

⁴⁵ That JFK found abortion repugnant: The following is taken from Ira Stoll’s book *JFK, Conservative*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston · New York, 2013, pp. 77-78:

“Abortion in 1960 was not the hot political issue it would later become, but population control was a topic of discussion. In Kennedy’s interview with *Harper’s* editor John Fischer, the senator was asked, ‘Do you see any hope at all of slowing up the rate of population increase?’ Kennedy’s reply was somewhat dismissive. ‘Now, on the question of limiting population: As you know the Japanese have been doing it very vigorously, through abortion, which I think would be repugnant to all Americans.’” (Quote taken from *The Strategy of Peace*, by John F. Kennedy, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960, p. 224).

⁴⁶ *C.f.*, John 17:6, 26, where Yeshua, in His prayer to the Father, stated, “And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Some folks believe Yeshua’s remark here doesn’t “really mean” that He spoke or declared the Name. We find these claims to be without foundation.

6. Yahweh/Baal/Lord/God—It's all the same difference, right?

In the book of I Kings, chapter 18, we read of Ahab's "prophets of Baal." Interestingly, the word "Baal," if you look it up in a standard dictionary, is translated "lord" in English. It can also be translated "master" or even "husband." Both "adonai" and "baal" are acceptable *titles* of Yahweh⁴⁷, but when those titles are transformed into *names*, the trouble begins. This is what the "prophets of Baal" did in I Kings 18. When Elijah confronted those prophets, he exclaimed, "How long are you going to halt between opinions?! If Yahweh is the Almighty, follow Him! But if Baal, then follow him!" In other words, as an Irishman puts it, he gave the prophets of Baal the following ultimatum: "Are 'ya gonna serve Yahweh or Baal? 'Ya best be makin' up yer minds!" What question/ultimatum do you think Elijah would have for US today? Our society has deemed it acceptable to do the very same thing practiced by those "prophets of Baal" in I Kings 18! As difficult and far-fetched as it may seem, the majority of clergy teach that it is acceptable and even *preferable* to replace the Name of Yahweh with the title *the LORD*. The majority of clergy in Elijah's day taught that it was acceptable and even preferable to replace Yahweh's Name with the title *Baal*, which, as we pointed out above, means "lord." The irony of this turn of events would be amusing if the situation weren't so serious!

The article below is taken from the *Encyclopedia International*, and not only corroborates the original meaning of "baal" as being "lord," but provides a brief history of the deity as well:

BAAL, ancient Canaanite title for a male deity, meaning simply 'lord.' By about 1500 B.C., however, the people along the eastern Mediterranean coastlands used Baal as the chief name of the storm-god Hadad. As the personified storm, Baal was the power of nature, considered the king of the gods, 'the Exalted One, Lord of the Earth.' The head of the Canaanite pantheon was El, but Baal was the executive force in the divine government. In northern Syria his consort was the fertility-goddess Anath; in southern Syria it was Astarte; in Palestine during the time of the Hebrew kings it was the mother-goddess, Asherah. As 'Lord Storm,' people heard his voice in the thunder, saw his arrow in the lightening, and through the rain, considered him the giver of fertility. The chief myths about him and his cult centered in the annual cycle of nature. The spring burst of life was the result of the marriage of Baal and the fertility-goddess; the drought resulted when the forces of Mot (Death) killed Baal; the rains returned when he was brought back to life.

As a title, *baal* was also used of the God of Israel, after the Israelites entered Palestine; but because of the great danger in confusing him with the Canaanite Baal there was in Israel a great struggle against the use of the term after the 10th century B.C.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Concerning the word "baal," see Jeremiah 31:32, where Yahweh says, "... I was an husband unto them, saith Yahweh." This word "husband" is word #1167 in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, בַּעַל, which is the word "baal." Concerning the word "adonai," see Psalms 2:4, where we read, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord (Adonai) shall have them in derision."

⁴⁸ From the *Encyclopedia International*, vol. 2, 1972, by Grolier Incorporated, New York, page 291.

Thus we see that by referring to our Creator as “LORD,” we are, quite frankly, imitating the very same custom practiced by the “prophets of Baal.” If we believe our Creator is well pleased with this level of service to Him, we are only fooling ourselves.

To summarize the events of I Kings 18, Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest that day on Mt. Carmel. In the end, despite a wood-covered, water-soaked altar with a bullock on it for a sacrifice, Yahweh sent fire from heaven to devour the entire offering, the wood, and even the water. The dry counterpart prepared by the prophets of Baal was left untouched by Yahweh, proving to everyone that day that there is indeed a distinction between Baal (LORD) and Yahweh. Contrary to our modern-day preachers, Yahweh DOES make a distinction between “the LORD” and “Yahweh.” **It DOES matter!**

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in today’s society, it is not unusual to hear statements from the clergy that referring to the Almighty as “the LORD” or even “God” is, as they say, “just as good” as referring to Him as *Yahweh*. This line of reasoning is identical to the mentality of ancient heathens, who regarded Zeus and Jupiter to be the equivalent of *Yahweh*. Notice what John Dominic Crossan, in his work *The Birth of Christianity*, has to say with regard to the way ancient heathens regarded the Jews’ Mighty One, Yahweh. Mr. Crossan begins his commentary by quoting a fictional letter written by an Alexandrian Jew, authored under the name of Demetrius of Phalerum, curator at the great library at Alexandria. This letter was addressed to King Ptolemy II Philadelphus and reads as follows:

The (same) God [Greek *Theos*] who appointed them their Law prospers your kingdom, as I have been at pains to show. These people worship God the overseer and creator of all, whom all men worship including ourselves, O King, except that we have a different name. Their name for him is Zeus and Jove. (*Letter of Aristeeas 15-16*).⁴⁹

Of course, all of us hopefully understand that Demetrius was woefully mistaken in identifying the Mighty One of Judaism with the Mighty Ones of Greece, *Zeus* and *Jove*. Nevertheless, we can summarize his commentary by stating that he himself *did* identify Zeus and Jove with Yahweh, as if they are one and the same. Does this sound familiar? If Demetrius had lived in today’s society, might he have written, “Their name for him is ‘the LORD’ and ‘God’”? John Dominic Crossan recognized Demetrius’ error in judgment, and wrote the following:

Although speaking fictionally through the lips of a pagan, this Jewish writer is quite willing to consider that Jews and Greeks worship the same God under different names. Yahweh for Jews, Zeus for Greeks, Jove or Jupiter for Romans—these are but different names for the same God.⁵⁰

Again, this sounds all too familiar. Most clergy in our society would adamantly reject the notion that Zeus, Jupiter and Yahweh are “one and the same,” presumably because no one questions their heathen orientation. However, these same clergy, based upon what we have experienced, would have no problem identifying Yahweh, the LORD, and God as “one and the same.” The question is, “**Are they?**” Are Yahweh, the LORD and God simply ‘different names for the same Creator’?” This is a

⁴⁹ From *The Birth of Christianity*, by John Dominic Crossan, HarperSanFrancisco, 1998, pp. 584-85.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 585.

question that, if we haven't already sufficiently addressed and answered it by now, will be fully dealt with by the time our study is concluded.

Mr. Crossan goes on to cite another heathen by the name of Marcus Terentius Varro, who lived between 116 and 27 B.C.E., and was considered "the greatest scholar of republican Rome." According to Saint Augustine, Varro "... thought the God of the Jews to be the same as Jupiter, thinking that it makes no difference by what name he is called, so long as the same thing is understood [Larry's note: Again, does this sound familiar?]. Since the Romans habitually worship nothing superior to Jupiter ... and they consider him the king of all the gods, and as he perceived that the Jews worship the highest God, he could not but identify him with Jupiter."⁵¹ In speaking out against Varro's gross misperception, Crossan offers the following commentary:

That reciprocal agreement [between Jupiter and Yahweh] is perfectly irenic, beautifully ecumenical, and profoundly wrong. Why wrong? Because gods carry too much baggage. We know that individuals and groups, peoples and nations have historical baggage. We know that sects and cults, creeds and religions have historical baggage. We sometimes forget, though, that gods do too. It is at this point that my Epilogue connects directly to my Prologue. We are enfleshed spirit and enspirited flesh, and we meet divinity not just in abstract speculation but in historical deployment.

Zeus, Jupiter, and Yahweh are not simply different names for the same ultimate reality. Zeus is not just another name for Yahweh, because Zeus grounds a Hellenistic internationalism that directly threatens Jewish traditionalism. Jupiter is not just another name for Yahweh, because Jupiter grounds a Roman imperialism that directly threatens Jewish traditionalism. But is this not just the chauvinistic exclusivity of one people against another (or even all others)? Is it not just a Jewish *us* against a pagan *them*? There is, I think, much more at stake than that. What is at stake is the challenge of Psalm 82, quoted above. What is at stake is the character of your God. This is what *our* God is like, says that psalm.⁵²

John Dominic Crossan, in the above commentary, does a superb job of explaining why it is a mistake to confuse the worship of Zeus or Jupiter with the worship of Yahweh. However, our question is, "Should we stop there? Is this where the comparative analysis ends?" Would Mr. Crossan accept the following notion?

While it is true that we cannot reasonably accept the notion that Yahweh and Zeus are one and the same, there is no reason for why we cannot regard Yahweh and "the LORD" or Yahweh and "God" as one and the same.

When we weigh the above notion against the information we have thus far presented, and knowing that "the LORD" and "God" are used as substitutes for the Almighty's name, which effectively shifts the focus *away* from the identity ... the name ... He has given to Himself, we should begin to understand that Yahweh and "the LORD" are *not* one and the same, just as Yahweh and Baal (Lord) were never, and never will be the same.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

Mr. Crossan mentions “the challenge of Psalm 82” in his analysis above. Psalm 82 is a short psalm, only containing eight verses, but it has an excellent message, including how we are to defend those who cannot otherwise defend themselves. We even read of how the Almighty judges among the *elohim* ... and even how *we* are included among those *elohim*! No one can deny the importance of the message of Psalm 82, and here it is for your review:

- 1 Elohim standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the *elohim*.
- 2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.
- 3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.
- 4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.
- 5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.
- 6 I have said, Ye *are* *elohim*; and all of you are children of the most High.
- 7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.
- 8 Arise, O Elohim, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

As significant as the above Psalm is, there are other Psalms that we believe better address the problem at hand. We have already cited, for example, Psalms 91:14, where we read that Yahweh will set those who love Him on high and will deliver them because they know His name. We read in Psalms 69 that those who love His name will inherit, possess, and dwell in Zion. As for those who do not call upon His name, King David asked Yahweh to pour out His wrath upon them (Ps. 79:6). Moreover, later in this study we will read that David would not so much as take up the name of a heathen *elohim* upon his lips! As we can see, there are many “*elohims*” out there, but they are not all created equal! In fact, as we read in Psalms 82, there is only One Who is qualified to judge over the “other” *elohim* ... and His name is *Yahweh*. We recommend getting to know Him intimately ... *by name* ... accepting no substitutes. There *is* a difference!

7. “I’ve already proven that wrong!”

Several years ago, our family attended a Bible Sabbath Association unity conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. Prior to attending, though, we sought out a park where we could relax and grab a bite to eat. As we ate, we noticed a man and his son at a nearby table. The man frequently glanced our way, and at length arose and walked over to our table. He asked us if we were there to attend the conference. I was amazed that he had somehow made that deduction!

“Yes, we *are* here for the unity conference! How did you know?”

He pointed to our car, and said, “It’s your license plate.”

At that time, we were Illinois residents, and our car had a personalized license plate with “YAHWEH 4” on it. I then understood how that license plate could have given us away, as most worshippers of Yahweh meet on the Sabbath. Furthermore, our new acquaintance correctly reasoned that an Illinois resident would not have driven over 150 miles without there being some extra motivation to do so, such as a unity conference! We introduced ourselves and gave each other some background information about how we had arrived at the decision to observe the Sabbath Day.

We were having a very lively discussion, but at one point we both ran out of things to say. Suddenly the man, a seventh-day Pentecostal preacher, glanced over at our car, pointed at our license plate, and calmly stated, “I’ve already proven that wrong.”

I wasn’t prepared for his remark, so I asked, “What?”

He replied, “I’ve already studied into the sacred names. There’s nothing to it. It’s a false teaching.”

I asked, “What evidence do you have for this?”

“Well,” he answered, “For one thing, are you aware that pagans had used the Name ‘Yahweh’ for their gods?” Actually, I *was* aware of that fact. I had only recently read a book of mythology in which was included the details of some Samaritan sect that worshipped a goddess named “Yahweh-Asherah” among their list of other gods and goddesses.



“Yes,” I answered, “I know that pagans *did* use Yahweh’s Name as the name of at least one of their deities. But have you considered the possibility that maybe, just maybe, those pagans *borrowed* the Name of the Creator, the true Name, and applied that Name to their deities? Would that make void the Name of the Creator, just because some pagans applied His Name to their deities?” I asked.

“Well, that may be true, but God has *many* names.”

“Okay, then let me ask you a few questions. The Moabites had this detestable god that they worshipped. Do you remember its name?”

He couldn’t remember.

“It was Chemosh. Do you think our Heavenly Father would mind if we called Him ‘Chemosh’?”

“Well, I don’t think He would like that!” the man chuckled.

“I don’t either,” I agreed. “Now the Philistines’ chief deity was known as the ‘fish god.’ Do you remember its name?” He did not.

“It was Dagon. Do you think it would be okay for us to start calling our Heavenly Father ‘Dagon’?”

“No, I don’t think He would like that, either,” the man answered. I could tell he was trying to see what I was getting at, but I continued with another question.

“The Ammonites worshipped an abominable deity that they sacrificed their children to in the fire. Do you remember its name?”

He rubbed his forehead for a few seconds, and at length dejectedly admitted that he could not remember.

“His name was ‘Molech,’” I stated. “Do you think it would be all right for us to call our Heavenly Father ‘Molech’?”

“No, I don’t think that would be all right,” he mused. I could tell that he was still puzzled by my motive in asking these questions.

“Okay, the Babylonians worshipped many deities. Do you remember who their chief deity was?”

Once again, he did not know the answer.

“Well, their chief deity was named ‘Bel,’ which was the basic equivalent of the god named ‘Baal.’ Do you think it would be all right for us to call our Heavenly Father ‘Bel’ or ‘Baal’?”

Again, he answered in the negative.

“Okay, those Babylonians worshipped many deities, as I said, and among them was one known as the deity of fortune. The name of that deity was ‘Gad,’ which is actually pronounced ‘God’ in Hebrew.⁵³ So my question is this: Based upon the fact that there was a false deity named ‘God,’ do you really think it’s okay for us to refer to the Creator as ‘God’? Is that name to be preferred over ‘Yahweh’?”

⁵³ Many references document the fact that the Hebrew word גָּד, as found in the Hebrew text of Isaiah 65:11, and used in reference to a heathen idol, is pronounced “gawd.” For readers who have access to the internet, here is a link for where you may actually access not only the definition of “Gad,” but also the pronunciation:

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Lexicons/OldTestamentHebrew/heb.cgi?number=01408&version=kjv>

Once you access the above site, there is a “speaker” you can click on and you can hear the pronunciation for yourself. For more complete information regarding this Babylonian deity (sometimes referred to as a Canaanite deity), we recommend reading our study entitled [God’s Identity According to Ancient Hebrew Scholars](#).

He did not answer my question. Instead, he went on to a different subject—whether or not we believe in “speaking in tongues.”

8. Was there really a pagan deity named “God”?

At this point, if you haven’t yet read the footnote on the preceding page, you may be wondering, “Where in the world do you come up with the notion that there was ever a deity of fortune named ‘God’?”

Well, all it takes is an in-depth study of the text of Isaiah 65:11. This is a tricky verse, because the *King James Version*, regrettably, fails to properly translate a key word. Shown below is Isaiah 65:11 as it appears in the *King James Version*:

11 But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

Of course, hopefully by now we are all able to recognize that “the LORD” should have been rendered “YHWH,” but this is not the word that we are concerned with as we attempt to demonstrate our point. The “key word” we are looking for actually comes out to *two words* in that verse. The words are “that troop.” Even by making a cursory examination of the placement of the words “that troop” in Isaiah 65:11, it is apparent that they somehow do not “fit.” There is no context for the words to fit in the passage! A “troop” is, according to our dictionary, “A cavalry unit corresponding in organization to an infantry. An assemblage of persons or things; company; a herd, flock, or swarm; a unit of Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts under the supervision of an adult.”

With the parameters of this definition in mind, we can discern that, if the word “troop” actually belongs in Isaiah 65:11, then Yahweh is angry with someone for preparing a table for “an assemblage of persons,” or perhaps for “a cavalry unit.” The only problem is, there is no prior reference to any “assemblage of persons” or “cavalry units” that would indicate either a positive *or* a negative connotation! In other words, the words “that troop” do not make sense in Isaiah 65:11. Use of the words “that troop” begs the question, “What troop?” The passage itself leaves us no answer. Only by looking up this Hebrew word in a concordance or lexicon can one truly discern its original meaning, and hence its proper intent!

The Hebrew word translated “that troop” is word #1409 in the *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*, and is shown below as it appears in *Strong’s*:

1409. גָּד **gād**, gawd; from 1464 (in the sense of *distributing*); *fortune*:—troop.

Interestingly, word #1408 in Strong’s appears to be the actual word definition that was intended for word #1409! Both words are spelled exactly the same, the only difference being indicated by the vowel points. Shown below is word #1408 as it appears in *Strong’s*:

1408. גָּד **Gad**, gad; a var. of 1409; *Fortune*, a Bab. deity:—that troop.

Again, the Hebrew spelling of these two numbered items in *Strong’s* is exactly the same. Both words are proper nouns, and refer to the Babylonian deity of fortune, whose name is pronounced “gawd.” *The King James Version* offers the most blatantly incorrect rendering of the Hebrew word גָּד, as most other versions at least recognize that גָּד is the Babylonian deity of fortune; they translate the word as “Fortune.” In light of the fact that to correctly transliterate גָּד as “God” in Isaiah 65:11 would be quite damaging to the name we’ve all been taught to apply to the Creator of the universe, it is *almost*

understandable, though clearly unfaithful to the Word of Yahweh, that the translators would go to great pains to protect that name/title. By rendering the word as “that troop,” they effectively covered up the fact that Yahweh condemned the worship of “God”! Names, however, are not supposed to be translated—they are *transliterated*, or pronounced the same from one language to the next, and in Isaiah 65:11 a negative reference is clearly made to an idol whose name is pronounced “*God*.”

Adam Clarke, in his Commentary on the Holy Bible, made the following comment with regard to Isaiah 65:11:

11. *That prepare a table for that troop*—‘Who set in order a table for Gad.’ The disquisitions and conjectures of the learned concerning Gad and Meni are infinite and uncertain; perhaps the most probable may be that Gad means good fortune and Meni the moon.

Mr. Clarke recognized that “Gad” was a proper noun, and set forth what he felt was a more proper rendering of that Hebrew word. Indeed, “Gad” is a more proper rendering of the Hebrew word גַּד, but as we have shown, “God” (*gawd*) is the most accurate transliteration. By the way, Mr. Clarke’s use of the name “Meni” above stems from yet another King James Version mistranslation of Hebrew word #4507, incorrectly translated “that number” in Isaiah 65:11.

“Do you think our Heavenly Father minds if we call Him the same name that was given to the Babylonian deity of Fortune? Or do you think He might prefer the name that he *gave to Himself*?”

Gad, of course, is the name that was given to one of Jacob’s sons, born to him by Leah’s maid Zilpah. It is also the name of a Hebrew prophet. This does not, however, take away from the word’s *origin*. The *New Bible Dictionary* offers information on the two men named “Gad,” as well as information on the tribe of Gad. The dictionary then offers the following data:

4. A pagan deity worshipped by the Canaanites as the god of Fortune for whom they “prepare a table” (Is. 65:11, RV, Avmg.). (*GAD, Valley of.)⁵⁴

Thus we can see that the Canaanites and Babylonians worshipped an idol whose name is pronounced “God,” and was considered the deity of fortune! I would ask you, as I asked the preacher that day, “Do you think our Heavenly Father minds if we call Him the same name designated for the Babylonian deity of fortune? Or do you think He might prefer the name he gave to *Himself*?”

⁵⁴ From the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1982, by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, p. 398.

9. “But names can be translated, can’t they?”

When I was first told that there were actually people who believe we should call our Heavenly Father by His Hebrew Name, I could only shake my head and laugh. “Ha! That’s ridiculous!” I blurted. “If the Apostle Paul called Him ‘Theos,’ then I can call Him ‘God!’”

Indeed, as far back as anyone can find in the New Testament manuscripts that exist, none of which are originals, and most of which are written in Greek, title “Theos” (translated into English as “God”) is often employed where one would expect to find “YHWH.” Did the Apostle Paul and the other writers of the New Testament refer to the Creator as “Theos”?

“Only in a few localities, notably in Crete, does any form of the name of Zeus survive, but the god still lives under the title Qeo]j [Theos], a title so conveniently equivocal that the Christian can use it without heresy and at the same time square perfectly with the ancient pagan belief.” — *Greek and Roman Mythology*, Appendix I, p. 312.

According to one article on this subject, “Paul invariably used the Greek words for “God” (theos) and “Lord” (kurios). And he used the Greek name Iesous (Jesus). And so did the other writers of New Testament books, as inspired by God’s Holy Spirit.”⁵⁵ The author of the article then places the burden of proof on those who believe otherwise, because... “The evidence (for the belief that Paul referred to the Almighty as “Yahweh” and to His Son as “Yeshua”)? There is none—for it is a totally false notion, devised out of necessity to justify a false premise!”⁵⁶ A “false premise”?

Although it is true that the majority of ancient New Testament manuscripts only survive in Greek form, some Hebrew manuscripts have also surfaced, including the Hebrew Matthew, as well as a Hebrew text of the book of Hebrews. In these texts, there is evidence supporting the belief that the Tetragrammaton was in the original documents.⁵⁷ Moreover, the Messiah’s name is written either as Yeshua (ישוע) or Yahushua (יהושע).⁵⁸ Thus, there is strong evidence that the insertion of a substitute

⁵⁵ Keith W. Stump, “What is God’s Name?”, *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* magazine, January, 1986, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 18.

⁵⁷ C.f., *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, translated by George Howard, Professor of Religion, University of Georgia, Mercer University Press, 1995, Part Two (Analysis and Commentary), p. 229, where we read, “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew employs the Divine Name, symbolized by יה (apparently an abbreviation for יהשע, ‘the Name’).” On the following page, Professor Howard adds, “The appearance of the Divine Name in a Christian document quoted by a Jewish polemist is interesting, to say the least. If this text were a translation of the First Gospel by Shem-Tob himself, we would expect to find *adonai* in the text where the Greek or Latin reads ‘the Lord.’ We would never expect to see the ineffable Divine Name used as a translation equivalent of *ku]ri]oj* or *Dominus*. I have no hesitancy in saying that the occurrence of the Divine Name in places where the canonical text lacks any reference to the Lord at all, eliminates Shem-Tob as the author of this text. *No pious Jew of the Middle Ages would have dignified a Christian text by inserting the Divine Name.*” [Note: In the *DuTillet Hebrew Matthew*, the Divine Name is abbreviated with two “yods” (י), and it appears in its full form (יהודה) in the *Münster Hebrew Matthew*].

⁵⁸ For a brief notation regarding these two forms of the Messiah’s name, I will here cite page lix of James Scott Trimm’s introduction to his Bible translation known as *The Hebraic-Roots Version Bible*: “In rendering the name of the Messiah the HRV uses ‘Yeshua’ except in the Book of Hebrews where the Hebrew manuscript has יהושע ‘Yahushua.’”

for the Father's name occurred when the originals were copied. Notice the following commentary from the book *The Cairo Geniza*:

We now know that the Greek Bible text as far as it was written by Jews for Jews did not translate the Divine name by *kyrios*, but the Tetragrammaton written with Hebrew or Greek letters was retained in much MSS. It was the Christians who replaced the Tetragrammaton by *kyrios*, when the divine name written in Hebrew letters was not understood any more.⁵⁹

We see, then, that it is more than conjecture that the authors of the New Testament books ***retained*** the name of both the Father and His Son in their writings. If they did not, this begs the question, “*Why not?*” Why ***not*** retain the name of the Almighty?

⁵⁹ From *The Cairo Geniza* by Paul E. Kahle, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2nd edition, 1959, page 222. Those with internet access might consider accessing the following link for additional information:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetragrammaton_in_the_New_Testament#_ref-9

10. The Enemy Within

We have already addressed what we believe was the greatest obstacle faced by ancient Judaism with regard to mentioning, as well as writing, the name *Yahweh*. As we learned in chapter five, the first decree to not speak the Name was issued by a heathen nation, and we know what the penalty was for ignoring the decrees of that heathen nation: Death. This, then, is a summary of the problem that faced first and second century B.C.E. Jews who had previously enjoyed the freedom of calling on the Name *Yahweh*. As we also explained, the fact that this heathen decree was later repealed by Judah Maccabee would very likely *not* have had much of an effect on the typical Jewish family wishing to raise children who would grow to attain a ripe old age. Judah Maccabee and his victorious army repealed the decree prohibiting the mention of the name *Yahweh*, but that victory was by no means the end of the war, nor would it have marked the end of Jewish fears regarding freedom of speech (or the lack thereof).

We also covered the likelihood that the transition from Greek domination to Roman occupation did not bring about any noticeable changes in the “freedom” of worship. The fact that it was a Roman practice to remove names from monuments, replacing them with their own, demonstrates the likelihood that *Yahweh’s* name was included among the “effaced names.” If we can imagine the humiliation in watching heathens desecrate the Almighty’s name, mocking it as they chiseled it beyond recognition, we might catch a glimpse at why believers of that time period were reluctant to write His Name. Not only could writing His name in full form possibly have resulted in a death sentence for practicing their religion (which had been forbidden), but it would certainly have invited mockery from their heathen invaders.

In addition to the above-mentioned concern regarding the Name, we need to introduce yet another aspect to this conundrum, which adds yet another dimension to this already-complex issue. We are referring to the additional concerns experienced by first and second century C.E. believers who trusted in Yeshua as the Messiah. Many of these believers were Jewish, which resulted in splits among families and friends who did not share their faith in Yeshua as the promised Messiah. These splits were severe enough that families would disown members who recognized Yeshua as the Son of Yahweh, just as prophesied by Yeshua in Luke 12:51-53:

51 Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:
52 For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.
53 The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

The internal Jewish problems brought about by those who chose to adopt faith in Yahweh and His Son Yeshua was a natural consequence that not only led to strife, but sometimes even death when such strife was followed by betrayal. Author John Dominic Crossan addresses this aspect in his book *The Birth of Christianity*:

In sectarian debates, Christian Jews attacked Pharisaic Jews. There is only a single, secure criticism in the Common Sayings Tradition, *On Hindering Others* (Appendix 1A: #16). But it escalates to bitter invective and sevenfold woe in the *Q Gospel* at Luke 11:39-52. By Matthew 23, those woes have further escalated with a constant accusation

of hypocrisy in 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, and 29. That polemical crescendo charts the increasing alienation of Christian Jews over against Pharisaic Jews but tells us nothing, of course, about Pharisaic programs, motives, or intentions. Neither does it help us assess fairly the relative merits of each position within first-century options or twentieth-century traditions. All such name-calling, no matter how bitter, is intra-Jewish strife in the heated atmosphere of imperial divide-and-conquest policy.⁶⁰

Indeed, John Dominic Crossan gives us a general idea of the extreme animosity that was created amongst Jews when this newly formed sect professing faith in Yeshua the Messiah arrived on the scene. Fourth-century historian Eusebius, for example, recounted the story of the martyrdom of Yeshua's brother, James the Just:

As there were many therefore of the rulers that believed, there arose a tumult among the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees, saying that there was danger, that the people would now expect Yeshua as the Messiah. They came therefore together, and said to James: "We entreat you, restrain the people, who are led astray after Yeshua, as if he were the Messiah. We entreat you to persuade all that are coming to the feast of the Passover rightly concerning Yeshua; for we all have confidence in you. For we and all the people hear the testimony that you are just, and you respect not persons. Persuade therefore the people not to be led astray by Yeshua, for we and all the people have great confidence in you. Stand therefore upon a wing of the Temple, that you may be conspicuous on high, and your words may be easily heard by all the people; for all the tribes have come together on account of the Passover, with some of the Gentiles also. The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, placed James upon a wing of the Temple, and cried out to him: "Oh you just man, whom we ought all to believe, since the people are led astray after Yeshua that was crucified, declare to us what is the door to Yeshua that was crucified." And he answered with a loud voice, "Why do you ask me respecting Yeshua the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of Great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven." And as many were confirmed, and glorified in this testimony of James, and said, Hosanna to the son of David, these same priests and Pharisees said to one another: "We have done badly in affording such testimony to Yeshua, but let us go up and cast him down, that they may dread to believe in Him." And they cried out: "Oh, oh, the Just himself is deceived," and they fulfilled that which is written in Isaiah: Let us take away the just, because he is offensive to us; wherefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings" (Is. 3:10). Going up therefore, they cast down the just man, saying to one another: "Let us stone James the Just." And they began to stone him, as he did not die immediately when cast down; but turning round, he knelt down saying, "I entreat you, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus they were stoning him, when one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, a son of the Rechabites, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet, cried out saying: "Cease, what are you doing? Justus is praying for you." And one of them, a fuller, beat out the brains of Justus with the club that he used to beat out clothes. Thus he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot where his tombstone is still remaining, by the Temple. He

⁶⁰ From *The Birth of Christianity*, by John Dominic Crossan, HarperSanFrancisco, 1998, p. 583.

became a faithful witness, both to the Jews and the Greeks, that Yeshua is the Messiah. Immediately after this, Vespasian invaded and took Judea.⁶¹

I hope this example of “intra-Jewish strife” suffices to illustrate what life was like for a Messianic believer in Yeshua living amongst devout Pharisees and Sadducees. At the very best, there were heated debates, and at worst lives were lost. James the Just is said to have been martyred in the year 62 C.E., or some 30 years following the crucifixion and resurrection of his brother, Yeshua the Messiah.⁶² Thus, we can see that life was not easy for those professing faith in Yeshua.

What does all this internal strife within Judaism have to do with the suppression of the name *Yahweh*? Plenty. To the Jewish sects that rejected Yeshua as Messiah, any writings that testified about Him being the Son of *Yahweh* were simply regarded as *heretical documents*. And what was done with heretical documents? They were destroyed! The only problem with destroying these documents involved the fact that their destruction would *also* mean the destruction of the handwritten Tetragrammaton, something that Judaism could not decide was permissible to do or not. The matter of whether or not to destroy such “heretical documents” containing the Name *Yahweh*, then, became the focus of yet *another* Jewish debate! Professor George Howard addresses this particular debate in the “Analysis and Commentary” section of his translation of the *Hebrew Matthew*:

The ineffable Divine Name is the most sacred word in the Jewish language. In medieval times, a debate arose about what to do with a heretical book that contained the Divine Name. T.σ(αββ. 13.5 reads: “The margins and books of the *minim*⁶³ do not save.” R. José suggested that the Divine Name should be cut out and the rest of the document burned. R. Tarphon and R. Ishmael said that the books in their entirety, including the Divine Name, should be destroyed.

Shem-Tob [14th century Jew who owned the text of this particular Hebrew Matthew] makes it clear that the Gospel of Matthew is a heretical writing.⁶⁴

⁶¹ From Hegesippus as quoted by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, translated by C. F. Cruse, Book 2, Chapter 23:10-18, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 2000, pp. 60-61. Note: We inserted the form *Yeshua* into the text from which we quoted. An endnote from the translator of Eusebius’ work (p.434) states, “By some corruption of the name of Joshua, Eusebius calls him *Auses*. *Jesus* is the Greek form for the more Hebrew *Joshua*.”

⁶² This information was obtained from the Wikipedia online encyclopedia article on James the Just, where we read, “According to a passage in Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*, “the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James” met his death after the death of the procurator Porcius Festus, yet before Lucceius Albinus took office (*Antiquities* 20,9) — which has thus been dated to 62.” The article may be read by accessing the following URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_the_Just. Also, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 3, places his death “shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.”

⁶³ Regarding the term “*minim*”: According to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 2, David Noel Freedman, Editor-in-Chief, Doubleday, New York, p. 261, the Talmudic references to the “*minim*” may be references to Ebionites, who were regarded as heretics by both Judaism and Christians. They were rejected by Christians because they professed obedience to the Torah; they were rejected by Judaism because they professed faith in Yeshua as the Messiah. We read, “Among possible allusions to Ebionites in Rabbinic literature, one of the more likely appears in β. σ(αββ. 116a, wherein rabbis debate whether to save books of the *minim* (heretics) in the case of fire.”

⁶⁴ From *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, translated by George Howard, Mercer University Press, 1995, Part 2 “Analysis and Commentary,” p. 230.

An obvious question from the above quotation is, “Who or what are the *minim*?” This question is effectively answered by the resource cited within the footnote (#60). However, an online encyclopedia, JewishEncyclopedia.com, offers additional information regarding the writings of the *minim*:

In passages referring to the Christian period, "minim" usually indicates the Judæo-Christians, the Gnostics, and the Nazarenes, who often conversed with the Rabbis on the unity of God, creation, resurrection, and similar subjects (comp. Sanh. 39b). In some passages, indeed, it is used even for "Christian"; but it is possible that in such cases it is a substitution for the word "Nozeri," which was the usual term for "Christian."

During the first century of Christianity the Rabbis lived on friendly terms with the minim. Rabbi Eliezer, who denied to the heathen a share in the future life, is said to have discoursed with the Judæo-Christian Jacob of Kefar Sekanya and to have quietly listened to the interpretation of a Biblical verse he had received from Jesus ('Ab. Zarah 16b; Eccl. R. i. 8). Ben Dama, a nephew of R. Ishmael, having been bitten by a snake, allowed himself to be cured by means of an exorcism uttered by the min Jacob, a Judæo-Christian. These friendly feelings, however, gradually gave way to violent hatred, as the minim separated themselves from all connection with the Jews and propagated writings which the Rabbis considered more dangerous to the unity of Judaism than those of the pagans. "The writings of the minim," says R. Tarfon, "deserve to be burned, even though the holy name of God occurs therein, for paganism is less dangerous than 'minut'; the former fails to recognize the truth of Judaism from want of knowledge, but the latter denies what it fully knows" (Shab. 116a).⁶⁵

As we can see from the historical Talmudic writings, Judeo-Christians were found with “writings” (most likely what is known as the New Testament), and these “writings” contained the Name YHWH. While we cannot say with certainty that the medieval rabbis (or even the more ancient ones) raided homes of Messianic believers in search of “heretical documents” to burn, we can nevertheless at least come away with a better understanding of the circumstances faced by these believers. Not only were they faced with opposition from heathens, but they also had to deal with the enemy within their own people.

⁶⁵ Taken from the JewishEncyclopedia.com article “Mim,” by Joseph Jacobs and Isaac Broydé, copyright 2002. The article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL:
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=627&letter=M>

11. Zeus Still Lives Under the Title “Theos”

We have already shown that when the Creator gave us His Name, He chose to reveal the Name YHWH. In other words, He named *Himself* “Yahweh”! All the believers of the Old Testament, such as King David, when they spoke, blessed the Name of Yahweh:

12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless Yahweh (אָהֲרָן!)
(Psalms 26:12)

As we have already established, if employing the Name *Yahweh* suited King David, then it should be suitable for us as well! It’s the original and the best! However, what about the Greek term “*Theos*”? By now we should all understand that no word or title can be legitimately be used as a replacement for the Creator’s name. If we can agree that there is no reasonable excuse to replace the name of our Heavenly Father with any substitutes, our next step is to see if there is anything wrong with using the *title* “Theos” in reference to Yahweh. As it turns out, there is no evidence that, as a *title*, there is anything improper about this Greek term, even though, as we are about to see, it was used in reference to a heathen idol. Consider the following information as found in the book *The Mythology of All Races in Thirteen Volumes*, Vol. I, *Greek and Roman Mythology*, Appendix I, “Survivals of Ancient Greek Divinities and Myths in Modern Greece,” p. 312:

Only in a few localities, notably in Crete, does any form of the name of Zeus survive, but the god still lives under the title Qeoj [Theos], a title so conveniently equivocal that the Christian can use it without heresy and at the same time square perfectly with the ancient pagan belief.⁶⁶

Notice that, according to the information offered above, Zeus still lives under the *title* “Theos.” Many folks consider the fact that Zeus is worshipped with the title “Theos” as a legitimate reason to *not* refer to Yahweh as our “Theos.”⁶⁷ However, there is a huge difference between a *name* and a *title*. Henry Ford, for example, was an inventor. His name was *Henry Ford*, and his title was *inventor*. No one would have addressed him as “Inventor.” In the same way, if the word “Theos” is a culture’s way of expressing “the Most High Creator of all Living Things,” then this is the word we would have to use as a title while sharing our faith with someone from that culture. In describing the Mighty One we worship, we might say, “*Yahweh is our Theos*” to help a Greek listener understand Who we worship.

Let’s approach the matter of Yahweh’s titles from the perspective of the English title “Almighty.” We need to bear in mind the fact that not everyone agrees that Yahweh is the “Almighty.” For example, a Hindu would argue that *Varuna* is the Almighty.⁶⁸ If we thus apply the argument that a

⁶⁶ Louis Herbert Gray, A.M., Ph. D., Editor, *The Mythology of All Races in Thirteen Volumes*, Vol. I, *Greek and Roman Mythology*, Appendix I, “Survivals of Ancient Greek Divinities and Myths in Modern Greece,” by William Sherwood Fox, A.M., Ph.D., Asst. Professor of Classics, Princeton University, 1964, Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., New York, page 312.

⁶⁷ For example, Jacob O. Meyer in his booklet entitled *Exploding the Inspired Greek New Testament Myth* (a publication of Assemblies of Yahweh, 1978, p. 15), makes the following statement regarding the title *Theos*: “Yahweh would hardly call Himself Theos, which Dr. Ignaz Goldzhier in his book *The Mythology of the Hebrews*, states conclusively is the same as Zeus, the idol of the Greeks!”

⁶⁸ I obtained this information from the online article “The Ultimate Reality in World Religions” by Ernest Valea, where he mentions that the oldest supreme deity in the *Vedas* (a collection of Hindu hymns) seems to be Varuna, whom the author identifies as “the sustainer of creation and guardian of universal order.” You may read the entire article by accessing the following URL: <http://www.comparativereligion.com/god.html>.

Greek-speaking believer would not have referred to Yahweh as the true “Theos” because that’s the same title the heathens used for Zeus, then similarly, we cannot refer to Yahweh as the true “Almighty” because that’s what the Hindus use to refer to Varuna. Having eliminated “Almighty” as a legitimate title for Yahweh, we would have to find another one to use. Eventually, we would run out of titles to apply to Yahweh ... all because the heathens would respond, “No, *Varuna* is Supreme!” or “No, *Varuna* is the Eternal!”

In the days of the early believers, the worship of Zeus definitely rivaled the worship of Yahweh. To a Greek-speaking believer (both then and now), the title “Theos” conveys the concept of the supreme creator, just as the title “Almighty” does in English. That was simply how they ascribed the ultimate title of supreme greatness and superiority. To some, that title belonged to Zeus. To others, it belonged to Yahweh. Thus, an argument might well have broken out amongst the Greeks in which one person declared, “Zeus is Theos!”, to which the other person answered, “No, Yahweh is Theos!” This same argument could have developed among early believers who spoke *Hebrew*. The one person might have declared, “Zeus is Elohim!”, to which the other declared, “No, *Yahweh* is Elohim!” Just as the Hebrew-speaking believer would not have eliminated “Elohim” from his list of “acceptable titles for Yahweh” because the heathen worshipper used that title for Zeus, in the same way, the Greek-speaking believer would not have eliminated “Theos” from his list of “acceptable titles for Yahweh” because it happened to be the title of choice for a Zeus-worshipper.

Historically-speaking, it can be demonstrated that from the *earliest times*, Greek-speaking believers who called upon the name of Yahweh referred to Him as their “*Theos*.” This can be verified by researching the oldest known manuscripts of the Septuagint, which is the Greek OT that was translated from Hebrew into Greek during the 3rd century B.C.E. The oldest known Greek text of the Septuagint is a fragment known as Papyrus Fouad 266 (also known as P. Faud 266).⁶⁹ This fragment, dated as late as 50 B.C.E., contains the second half of the book of Deuteronomy, and instead of substituting *Kyrios* for the Tetragrammaton, the form יהוה, in Aramaic script, appears in the otherwise Greek text. According to *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Papyrus Fouad 266 is listed as one of three pre-Christian copies of the Greek Scriptures known to incorporate the Divine Name:

The extant pre-Christian copies of the Greek OT that included passages which in Hebrew incorporate the Divine Name also preserve the Hebrew Divine Name in the Greek text. These copies are (1) P.Faud 266 (= Rahifs 848), 50 B.C.E., containing the Tetragrammaton in Aramaic letters; (2) a fragmentary scroll of the Twelve Prophets in Greek from Wâdi Khabra (= W. Khabra XII *Kaige*), 50 B.C.E.-50 C.E., containing the Tetragrammaton in Paleo-Hebrew letters; and (3) 4QLXX^{Levb} (= Rahifs 802), 1st

⁶⁹ C.f., *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. XLV, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1944, p. 159, article entitled “Notes and Studies: The Tetragrammaton in the LXX” by W.G. Waddell, where we read his response to the general claim that the Name did not appear in any copies of the Septuagint: “This statement is now flatly disproved by a new papyrus of the LXX, the remains of a roll containing the second half of the Book of Deuteronomy, which in the extant fragments shows no example of *ku)rioj*, but everywhere the Tetragrammaton written in Aramaic characters. This papyrus belongs to the Société Royale de Papyrologie du Caire; it is part of the collection of Fouad Papyri, of which Nos. 1—89 were published in one volume (*P. Fouad I*, 1939), and it bears the Inventory No. 266. Written in beautiful, rounded uncials by a Jew who was also master of the Greek language, it may be dated to the 2nd or the 1st century B.C.: the nearest analogue to the script appears to be the *Dialectical Treatise* (now in Paris), written before 160 B.C. (E. Maunde Thompson, *Intro. to Greek and Latin Palaeography*, 1912, pp. 112 f.), and there is on one fragment a marginal annotation in a cursive script which supports this early date.”

century B.C.E., containing the Tetragrammaton written in Greek letters in the form of *IAO*. The well-known Jewish-Greek versions of the OT that emerged in the 2nd century C.E., i.e., those of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus, continued the Jewish practice of writing the Hebrew Tetragrammaton into the Greek text. The evidence, therefore, suggests that the practice of writing the Hebrew Divine Name into the text of the Greek OT continued throughout the NT period.⁷⁰

It is truly significant that the most ancient evidence we have available demonstrates that the early believers chose to incorporate the name Yahweh into the Greek text instead of “translating” it. However, it is also significant that these same believers incorporated the title *Theos* in reference to Yahweh! Kristin De Troyer, professor of Hebrew Bible at the Claremont School of Theology and Professor of Religion at the Claremont Graduate University, who also specializes in researching the Septuagint, issued the following statement in her article “The Names of God: Their Pronunciation and Their Translation”:

Theos, in a non-contracted form, also appears in PFouad 266a, the Genesis fragment (dated to the first century BCE), in PFouad 266c, the Deuteronomy fragment, dated to the late first century BCE, and in POxy 4443, the LXX Esther text from the 1st-2nd century CE. Theos, albeit in a contracted form, also appears in P.Amh.1, n.3, an Aquila text of Genesis from the third century CE.⁷¹

Since it can be shown that *Theos* appears as a title for Yahweh in the most ancient Greek texts known to exist, we need to be careful with the argument that the early believers would not have applied the title *Theos* to Yahweh. The fact is, they *did*. The critical difference lies in the fact that *Theos*, unlike the title *God*, cannot be traced to the name of a heathen idol. It has only been a term reserved for a *title*, not a name. Some have attempted to prove that *Theos* was originally the name of a heathen idol, but every time we examine their reasons for believing this, we have found their reasoning to be flawed.⁷² After conducting our own earnest research into this question, we have found no idol in the Greek pantheon (or any other religion for that matter) named *Theos*. This is significant because we do not believe the early believers would have referred to Yahweh with a title that emanated from the name of a heathen idol. This understanding is reflected, in fact, from Yahweh Himself in the Torah. Shown below is Exodus 23:13:

13 And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

See also Joshua 23:7. These verses plainly demonstrate that our Creator, who never changes, does not desire that we apply the names of foreign deities to our worship of Him. King David, who left no doubt about his love for the Name of Yahweh, penned the following words in Psalms 16:4:

⁷⁰ From *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, Doubleday, New York, David Noel Freedman, Ed.-in-Chief, 1992, p. 392.

⁷¹ From “The Names of God: Their Pronunciation and Their Translation,” by Kristin DeTroyer, 2/2005. This article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL:

http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/05_2/troyer_names_of_god.htm#_edn67

⁷² For a more thorough investigation into the claim that *Theos* was originally the name of a heathen idol, please read our study entitled “Do We Honor Yahweh by Referring to Him as ‘Our God’?”

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, **nor take up their names into my lips.**

King David would not even *speak* the names of these despicable idols, yet modern man has the audacity, not only to apply these names to our Creator, but to teach that it is *His desire* that we do so! In fact, what has happened is, the names we've been told to not even speak—these are the names that man has chosen to apply to the Creator; and the actual **Name** of the Creator— we've been told (by man) that we shouldn't even *speak* it! How ironic!

So did the Apostle Paul and other New Testament writers **really** use the term “*Theos*” when referring to the Creator? Based upon our own research, the answer to this question is a definitive “Yes.” However, we need to quickly remind you that *theos* has never been anything more than a generic *title*, not a name, and therein lies the difference, especially when it can be demonstrated that *theos* was not originally used **in place of** the Tetragrammaton, but in conjunction with it. When we critically examine all the information we have thus far presented, we can see, then, that we must be careful. The Apostle Paul, in his famous speech on Mars Hill, referred to the Almighty as “*Theos*,” but only as a *title* to help his Greek-speaking audience to understand who the “true *Theos*” is. Here is what he stated in Acts 17:22-25:

²² Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

²³ For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN *THEOS*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you!

²⁴ The *Theos* that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is *kyrios* [Lord, Master] of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

²⁵ Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

Since there is no evidence that *theos* was originally ever anything more than a generic title, it goes without saying that we must be careful to not substitute the Creator's Name with such a title. As it turns out, the title that was predominantly used in replacing the Creator's name is the Greek *kyrios*. Professor George Howard of The University of Georgia, Athens, GA, who translated into English the *Shem Tob* Hebrew Matthew, a 14th century Hebrew version of Matthew that was owned by a Sephardic Jew named Shem-Tob ben-Shaprut, wrote an article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* in 1977 entitled “The Tetragram and the New Testament.” In his article, Professor Howard addresses the translators' decision to replace the name *Yahweh* with the substitute *Kyrios*:

... the divine name, יהוה, (and possibly abbreviations of it), was originally written in the NT quotations of and allusions to the OT and that in the course of time it was replaced mainly with the surrogate k@@@@@VVV@jV [*kyrios*]. **This removal of the Tetragram, in our view, created a confusion in the minds of early Gentile Christians about the relationship between the “Lord God” and the “Lord Christ” which is reflected in the MS tradition of the NT text itself.**⁷³

After a year of further research into this matter, Professor Howard submitted an even more detailed article to the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, published in March 1978. He provides further

⁷³ George Howard, “The Tetragram and the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96 (1977): p. 63. See also *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, “Tetragrammaton in the New Testament.”

documentation of numerous Greek texts (such as copies of the Septuagint) that have been discovered over the years since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls ... texts which “clearly show the Hebrew Tetragrammaton in Paleo-Hebrew script written into the otherwise Greek text.”⁷⁴ He sums up his findings by stating the following:

We can now say with near certainty that it was a Jewish practice before, during, and after the New Testament period to write the divine name in paleo-Hebrew or square Aramaic script or in transliteration right into the Greek text of Scripture. This presents a striking comparison with the Christian copies of the Septuagint and the quotations of it in the New Testament which translate the Tetragrammaton as *kyrios* or *theos*.⁷⁵

“Jewish scribes always preserved the Tetragrammaton in their copies of the Septuagint both before and after the New Testament period. In all probability Jewish Christians wrote the Tetragrammaton in Hebrew as well.”
— Prof. George Howard, quoted from the *Biblical Archaeology Review*

On the following page of his article, George Howard gives his perspective of “what went wrong” and how it came to pass:

...I offer the following scenario of the history of the Tetragrammaton in the Greek Bible as a whole, including both testaments. First, as to the Old Testament: Jewish scribes always preserved the Tetragrammaton in their copies of the Septuagint both before and after the New Testament period. In all probability Jewish Christians wrote the Tetragrammaton in Hebrew as well. Toward the end of the first Christian century, when the church had become predominantly Gentile, the motive for retaining the Hebrew name for God was lost and the words *kyrios* and *theos* were substituted for it in Christian copies of Old Testament Septuagints. Both *kyrios* and *theos* were written in abbreviated form in a conscious effort to preserve the sacred nature of the divine name. Soon the original significance of the contractions was lost and many other contracted words were added.

A similar pattern probably evolved with respect to the New Testament. When the Septuagint which the New Testament church used and quoted contained the Hebrew form of the divine name, the New Testament writers no doubt included the Tetragrammaton in their quotations. But when the Hebrew form for the divine name was eliminated in favor of Greek substitutes in the Septuagint, it was eliminated also from the New Testament quotations of the Septuagint.

Thus toward the end of the first Christian century, the use of surrogates (*kyrios* and *theos*) and their contractions must have crowded out the Hebrew Tetragrammaton in both Testaments. Before long the divine name was lost to the Gentile church except insofar as it was reflected in the contracted surrogates or remembered by scholars. Soon, even the contracted substitutes lost their original significance and were joined by a host of other abbreviated *nomina sacra* which had no connection with the divine name at all.

⁷⁴ George Howard, “The Name of God in the New Testament,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, March, 1978, p. 13.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 13.

Is there any way for us, at this late date, to calculate the effect which this change in the Bible had on the second century church? It is of course impossible to know with certainty, but the effect must have been significant.⁷⁶

Professor Howard recognizes the problems created by substituting other names and titles for “the real McCoy.” We cannot go back in time to correct the damage committed by these men who either lacked understanding or else had impure motives in their treatment of our Heavenly Father’s name. The damage has been done. We may be powerless to stop what’s already happened, but that doesn’t mean we’re powerless to take steps to correct things *in the here and now!* Once we recognize our engine’s not clicking on all cylinders, we aren’t supposed to just go on and ignore it without at least making plans to bring it in for repairs! If we can now get a handle on what has gone wrong with man’s handling of the Creator’s name, and if we can grasp how all of this was out of the bounds of Yahweh’s Will, then surely we can at least begin making plans for when we will once for all STOP playing along with the game, when we will once for all STOP following the piper. We need to pause for a few moments and reflect upon the fact that there is a powerful being out there who doesn’t want us to worship the Creator of the universe. But if he cannot succeed with *that* plan, then might he attempt to at least succeed in preventing us from calling upon the Almighty by name? Some folks will insist that we’re blowing this whole “name” issue out of proportion. If we’re going “overboard,” however, we would prefer to err on the side of safety ... and we know that when it comes to *safety*, there is no safer place to run to than the name of Yahweh:

10 The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. (Prov. 18:10)

We choose to run to the name of Yahweh ... how about you?

We believe the time has come to filter out the suggestions and interpretations of men who would be teachers and prophets; the time has come to wholly submit to what our *Heavenly Father* says, no holds barred and no questions asked! The Almighty plainly told us that if we are His people, we will *know His name* (Isaiah 52:6). As we have already seen, the patriarchs *knew His name* ... and they called upon that name. Thus, if we imitate the patriarchs instead of following the counsel of men who teach that His name is “too sacred to pronounce,” we’ll be in excellent company! As for June and me, we have chosen to take Yahweh at His Word instead of doing what *seems* right to us, i.e., “every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes” (Deut. 12:8).

“When the Septuagint which the New Testament church used and quoted contained the Hebrew form of the divine name, the New Testament writers no doubt included the Tetragrammaton in their quotations.” — Prof. George Howard, quoted from the Biblical Archaeology Review

There is most certainly reason to question the teaching that the Creator sanctions the use of pagan deities’ names and titles in the place of His own. In light of this “reason to question,” we are faced with a decision. Since He is the Creator of the universe, He is deserving of the most fruitful worship and servitude that we can offer Him. True worship is manifested, not in doing *our* will, but in

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 14.

humbling ourselves totally before our Maker. When we ***totally*** humble ourselves before Him, we simultaneously submit to what we know are the desires of the Creator. What *is* His desire, then? That we call upon Him or refer to Him by a name known to have been the name of a pagan idol? Or do we, out of a total and pure desire to respect the wishes of our Heavenly Father, choose to call upon Him by the Name that He ***gave Himself*** and revealed to His servants? Which of the two choices shown below is the ***best*** one?

QUIZ TIME! MARK THE MOST APPROPRIATE NAME TO CALL OUR CREATOR!

- ☐ The name/title “God,” which was not only devised by man, but can also be shown to have been the name of the Babylonian deity of fortune.
- ☐ The name “Yahweh,” which is the name our Creator gave to Himself.

12. The *Dios* and *Zeus* Connection

We have just addressed the Greek title *Theos*, and we have demonstrated that, contrary to some claims we have heard, it has never been anything other than a generic title used to designate a supreme being. Such being the case, we do not see any negative ramifications for referring to Yahweh as “our Theos,” especially for our Greek-speaking friends. However, another term that is commonly used in reference to the Creator is *Dios*. *Dios* is the common Spanish term used in reference to the Creator of the universe. Let’s examine this name/title to see if using *Dios* in reference to Yahweh gives Him honor. As it turns out, few people are aware *Dios* is derived from Zeus worship! Consider the following information taken from *Answers.com*,⁷⁷ which traces the origin of the word “Dioscuri” back to Zeus:

Di·os·cu·ri (dī-ōs'kyə-rī, dī'ə-skyŭr'ī)
pl.n. Greek Mythology.

Castor and Pollux, the twin sons of Leda and brothers of Helen and Clytemnestra, who were transformed by Zeus into the constellation Gemini.

[Greek Dioskouroi : *Dios*, genitive of *Zeus*, *Zeus* + *kouroi*, pl. of *kouros*, boy.]

As can be seen from the above listing for the item “Dioscuri,” it comes from two Greek words: *Dios*, meaning “of Zeus,” and *kouros*, meaning “boy” or “son.”

Moreover, if we examine the Greek text of the New Testament, it is plain to see that *Dios* actually comes closer to the pronunciation of the Greek idol’s name than does *Zeus*! Shown below is Acts 14:13:

13 And the priest of **Zeus**, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people. (RSV)

Shown below is how the above text appears within the Greek manuscript:⁷⁸

14:13	ο	τε	ιερεὺς	του	διο̅ς	του	οντος	προ	της	πολεως	ταυρους	και
	ho	te	hiereus	tou	dios	tou	ontos	pro	tEs	poleOs	taurous	kai
	THE	BESIDES	SACRED-one	OF-THE	ZEUS	OF-THE	BEING	BEFORE	THE	city	BULLS	AND
	the	besides	priest	of-the	Zeus	the	being	before	the	city	bulls	and
στεμματα	επι	τους	πυλωνας	ενεγκας	συν	τοις	οχλοις	ηθελεν				
stemmata	epi	tous	pulOnas	enegkas	sun	tois	ochlois	Ethelen				
garlands	ON	THE ^(p)	portals	CARRYing	TOGETHER	to-THE ^(p)	THRONGS	he-WILLED				
garlands	on	at the	portals	bringing	together	to-the	throngs	he-willed				
θυειν												
thuein												
TO-BE-SACRIFICING												
to-be-sacrificing												

⁷⁷ Those with internet access can view this definition and etymology online by visiting the following URL:

<http://www.answers.com/topic/dioscuri>

⁷⁸ Taken from Interlinear Scripture Analyzer 3, copyright © 2015 Scripture4All Publishing.

As you can see, the name of the pagan idol to whom the priests wanted to offer sacrifice is “*Dios*.” Thus, we see that the Spanish word “*Dios*,” considered by unsuspecting believers as “the Creator’s Spanish name,” is none other than the name recognized by the Apostle Paul, as well as the New Testament authors, as the name of a *heathen idol*. *Dios* was also worshipped by none other than Antiochus Epiphanes.⁷⁹ Once we absorb all the information disclosing the tampering of Yahweh’s name and the clever substitutions, combined with how He has made it clear He wants us to know and use His name (reverently), certainly this additional information regarding the appellative commonly used by Spanish worshippers should call to question once for all the validity of allowing the slightest hint of a substitution to creep into His magnificent Word. How could true believers have sanctioned this? Are we going to follow along? Which path do we choose?

⁷⁹ Cf., the Greek text of 2 Maccabees 6:2.

13. What Do Choosy Worshippers Choose?

Years ago, there was a popular television commercial about a particular brand of peanut butter. A man with a microphone approached a woman as she pushed her cart through a grocery store. He commented, “I noticed that you chose ‘Brand X’ peanut butter.”

“Yes,” the woman confirmed. “It’s the brand my family likes best.”

“Have you ever tried *Jif®* peanut butter?”

The man opened the lid, and the woman smelled the aroma. “*Smells* like fresh peanuts!” she exclaimed in a tone of surprise.

“*Taste Jif®!*” The man offered her a spoon.

“TASTES like fresh peanuts!” The woman was converted. “From now on, my family gets *Jif®!*” she announced as she put “Brand X” back on the grocery store shelf. The commercial ended with a persuasive voice suggesting that “CHOOSY MOTHERS CHOOSE JIF®!”

The message in that commercial is very basic. No one in his right mind would say, “I do not want the best.” We *all* want the best for ourselves and for our families, so if we can afford to be “choosy,” we instinctively go for what we know to be the best of **anything**. Can we transfer the message promoted by that commercial to how we regard the worship of our Heavenly Father? YES, WE CAN! How would that commercial go for worshippers of the Most High Heavenly Father? Would it be: “CHOOSY WORSHIPPERS CHOOSE THE NAME THAT THE CREATOR GAVE TO HIMSELF!”? Or would it be: “CHOOSY WORSHIPPERS CHOOSE THE NAME ORIGINALLY ATTRIBUTED TO A FALSE DEITY!”? The choice is ours!

In the above paragraph, we stated that “if we can afford to be ‘choosy,’ we instinctively go for what we know to be the best of **anything**.” There is a lot of truth to that statement! The key word in that statement is the word “afford.” When it comes to getting the *best* of anything, there is usually a price to pay, so often we are compelled to settle for less than the best! However, when it comes to worshipping the Almighty, we don’t ask about the cost, we just do what pleases Him! The “cost” involved in worshipping the Almighty isn’t measured in dollars and cents, however. Sometimes the price we pay for the way we worship Him is the loss of friends. Sometimes it is the loss of family. The way in which we worship our Heavenly Father, then, can be *very* expensive. A decision to switch from calling upon the name/title of “God” to “Yahweh” may be done at the cost of the relationship to friends and families. Oh, they may not wholly reject you, but they’ll certainly think you’ve “lost a few marbles”! At the very worst, they *will* wholly reject you! Choosing the best can be *very* expensive! But let’s analyze this scenario in a different light, from a different perspective. Let’s suppose that, as time progressed beyond the Bible times that man retained the true Name of the Creator. By that, we mean, let’s suppose that, instead of translating “*Yahweh*” into different man-made, names — instead of this, man chose to retain the Name of Yahweh in each different language. In other words, let us suppose that each of us here in the United States of America grew up having been taught that the Creator’s Name is pronounced “Yahweh.” We knew of *no other possibilities*. If someone were to have asked you, as a young child, what the Creator’s name is, you would have proudly exclaimed, “**His Name is Yahweh!**”

But one day, someone approached you and involved you in a discussion about the Creator. During the conversation, you mentioned the Name “Yahweh,” which evoked a reaction from the person.

“Do you actually call the Creator ‘**Yahweh**’?” he asked.

“Yes,” you replied, “that’s His Name!”

“Well,” the man countered, “if you do some investigating, you will find that the name ‘*God*’ is just as good a name to call the Creator as ‘*Yahweh*’ is.”

At that point, you became confused. You had seen copies of the earliest known Hebrew manuscripts, showing the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, which you knew is most likely pronounced “Yahweh.” Until you had met this man, you had never even **heard** of the name “GOD.” Curious to know more, you asked the man for the evidence to prove his case. What evidence do you think he would have or **could have** provided that would have caused you to switch?

Yeshua said that He manifested Yahweh’s NAME (singular), not His “names.”

The Creator’s Son, Yeshua, in His prayer recorded in John 17, plainly stated that He had manifested (declared) Yahweh’s Name:

6 I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy word. (John 17:6)

Yeshua did not manifest *several names*, as many persuasive opponents have argued. Yeshua said that He manifested Yahweh’s **NAME** (singular), not His “names,” as purported by the author of the article quoted from below:

“God’s name has profound significance. The Hebrew text of the Old Testament contains many divine names (σ(εμ in Hebrew), each descriptive of some aspect of God’s character. Among them is *El Shaddai*, “almighty God,” as in Genesis 17:1, and *Eloheseba’ot*, “God of hosts,” as in Amos 5:27. The meaning of each of them is infinitely more important than its mere sound in Hebrew. God’s character remains the same—whatever the language may be.”⁸⁰

The above author put his own spin on the issue of our Creator’s name, claiming that there are “many divine names.” Confusion abounds, though, when we find ourselves promoting “many names,” as the Bible itself makes no such promotion! The Creator has one Name. So what about *El Shaddai*, *Eloheseba’ot*, *Elohim*, and other words that these men insist are **all names** of the Creator? Quite simply, these are all **titles** of the Creator, much as the title “Messiah” is *not* another “name” of Yeshua, but a **title** that we apply to Him to indicate that we identify Him as the “Anointed One,” which is what “messiah” means in the Hebrew! Yeshua does not have many “names,” but he **does** have several titles,

⁸⁰ Keith W. Stump, “What is God’s Name?”, *The Good News of the World Tomorrow* magazine, January, 1986, p. 18.

such as “Messiah,” “Prince of Peace,” and “the Lamb of Yahweh.” Note: a case *can* be made for Yeshua also having the name “Immanuel,” as the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 states. It is certainly unclear, however, as to why He was never recorded as being addressed by that name by any of the writers of the New Testament.

What “Name” did Yeshua manifest in accordance with His words spoken in John 17:6? Was it *God*? *Chemosh*? *Dagon*? *Bel*? *Molech*? *Nisroch*? The aforementioned names all belong to pagan deities. Doesn’t it seem more likely that Yeshua declared the Name of *Yahweh* to mankind?

Wouldn’t He have brought forth the Name that the Creator of the universe gave to Himself?

Furthermore, is it true that the *meaning* of our Heavenly Father’s name is “infinitely more important than its mere sound in Hebrew”? We believe Chuck Baldwin did a fantastic job of addressing this idea back in chapter one, but I am also reminded of an incident from my grade school days that also serves to illustrate that there’s a lot more to a name than just the “meaning.” I’ll tell this story in our next and final chapter.

14. “Me? But my name’s not Jim!”

In an earlier quote from an individual who is opposed to our position, we were told that the *meanings* of “God’s names” are infinitely more important than their “mere sounds in Hebrew.” No one can deny the vast significance represented by our Creator’s Name. There is a variety of opinions about the meaning of the Name in English, but most agree that it is something at least akin to “He exists” or “He causes to be.” Out of these meanings come such titles as “the Eternal.” It is true, then, that the meaning of our Heavenly Father’s Name is of great significance. But does the immense significance of that Name minimize the “mere sound” of it? In no way! Consider this analogy: I remember an experience from my high school days when I heard our Physical Education teacher yell, “Jim, where *were* you yesterday? Let me see your admit slip!”

There was no reaction from the crowd of students, most of whom continued chatting amongst themselves. The teacher’s face became red. “**JIM!**” he boomed. “Get over here **NOW!**” The teacher’s voice reverberated throughout the gym. He was clearly peeved at having been ignored. By this time, the teacher had everyone’s attention, particularly the student upon whose mug the gym teacher was focused, eyes glaring. The student pointed to himself and asked, “*Me?* But my name’s not Jim!”

The student’s name was *Vern*. “Vern” doesn’t even *sound* like “Jim,” which goes a long way towards explaining why he did not respond to our teacher, nor should he have been expected to! If we minimize the need to “sound out” the pronunciation of someone’s name, we end up calling that person the wrong name. As we have already demonstrated, people appreciate it when we choose to MAXIMIZE the importance of “sounding out” the correct pronunciation of their name (they will *respond* better, too!). We believe our Creator feels the same way. I frequently explain to my non-committed friends in down-to-earth terms why it is I choose to call our Creator by the Name of Yahweh instead of “God.” I explain to them, first of all, that I respect them as people. To *show* them that I respect them, I will address them by the names by which they wish to be called. I then add that, as much as I respect *them*, I cannot even describe how much *more* I respect the Creator of the universe. To show Him how much I respect Him, I choose to do all I can to call upon Him by the Name by which He wishes to be called. “God” is *not* the name that our Creator gave to Himself. He called Himself “Yahweh” (c.f. Exodus 3:15, Isaiah 42:8):

15 And the Almighty said moreover unto Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, ‘Yahweh Almighty of your fathers, the Almighty of Abraham, the Almighty of Isaac, and the Almighty of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My Name for ever, and this is My memorial unto all generations!’” (Exodus 3:15)

How much do *you* respect our Heavenly Father? How serious are *you* about honoring Him and respecting His wishes? He wants each of us to turn to Him with a pure heart, bent on serving Him at whatever cost, simply because He is who He is. Serving the Creator requires many sacrifices on our part, but we know it’s worth it because, again, He is who He is! He alone is our Creator; so respecting His wishes should be #1 on our list of priorities. By allowing His Word to be our guide, we discern that we do a better job of respecting His wishes when we strive to call upon Him by the Name that He gave to Himself.

1 Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with Him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had His Name and His Father's Name written on their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1, Revised Standard Version)

The above verse does not state that those who did not ever learn and use the true Names of our Creator and His Son will *not* be found among the 144,000. It does, however, mention that those Names will be “written on their foreheads.” Those Names must be pretty important! Important enough that blessings may come to those who seek out the Ones to Whom those Names belong and reverence Them with all sincerity of heart. May Yahweh’s blessings be upon you as you read and thoroughly investigate this subject. May His truth be revealed to all who diligently seek it!

Therefore, behold! I will this once
cause them to *know*; I will cause
them to know My hand and My
might; and they shall know that
My name is **Yahweh**!

--Jeremiah 16:21

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Yahweh for providing us with friends who have shared our common goal—doing the will of the Heavenly Father at whatever cost. The moral support provided by these altruistic individuals made this labor of love all the more complete. We also want to thank a special friend for so graciously taking the time to review our original article, adding his comments, suggestions, and corrections, which led to this second version.

He pointed out a possible error in our previous version involving the prophet Micaiah, as found in I Kings 22. This is the story of how King Jehoshaphat, before agreeing to join King Ahab in battle against the Syrians, requested that they inquire of a prophet of Yahweh. Ahab sent for his prophets (400 of them), who as one voice prophesied that “Adonoy” would give Ahab the victory. For some reason, Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with those prophets, and asked Ahab if there wasn’t a “prophet of Yahweh besides, that we might inquire of him?” This reading, of course, requires a Hebrew text, as our Bibles render YHWH as “LORD” (upper case letters) and “Adonoy” as “Lord” (lower case letters).

Ahab must have known what Jehoshaphat meant, because he ended up sending for Micaiah, a prophet that Ahab did not like because he always prophesied bad things about him! Micaiah did not, according to the Hebrew text, employ the term “Adonoy.” He referred to the Creator as “**Yahweh**,” and his prophecy came to pass in the end.

What was the difference between Micaiah and the other prophets? Was it a difference in names used in reference to the Heavenly Father? That would appear to be the answer, but as my friend so kindly pointed out in his letter, such may not necessarily be the case. Perhaps it was something else that tipped Jehoshaphat off that these were not “true prophets.” I will quote an excerpt from his letter:

“Bullinger reports that in 134 Scriptures, the Jewish scribes deleted the name YHWH and replaced it with Adonai, so the King’s [King James of England] translators spelled it Lord in these places. This is the case in I Kings 22:6. Originally, the word was YHWH, not Adonai.” If this is true, then certainly something else about those prophets, not their use of “Adonoy,” clued Jehoshaphat in that they were fakes. We may never find out in this lifetime!

We also want to thank an anonymous individual from Florida for his words of encouragement in response to our first version of this article. Words cannot describe how touched we are to know that there are people out there who, like us, hunger and thirst after righteousness and truth. Finally, in 2006 our study has found its way online. My thanks go to W. Glenn Moore for his tireless efforts in assisting us in making our study available to countless other individuals on the Internet.