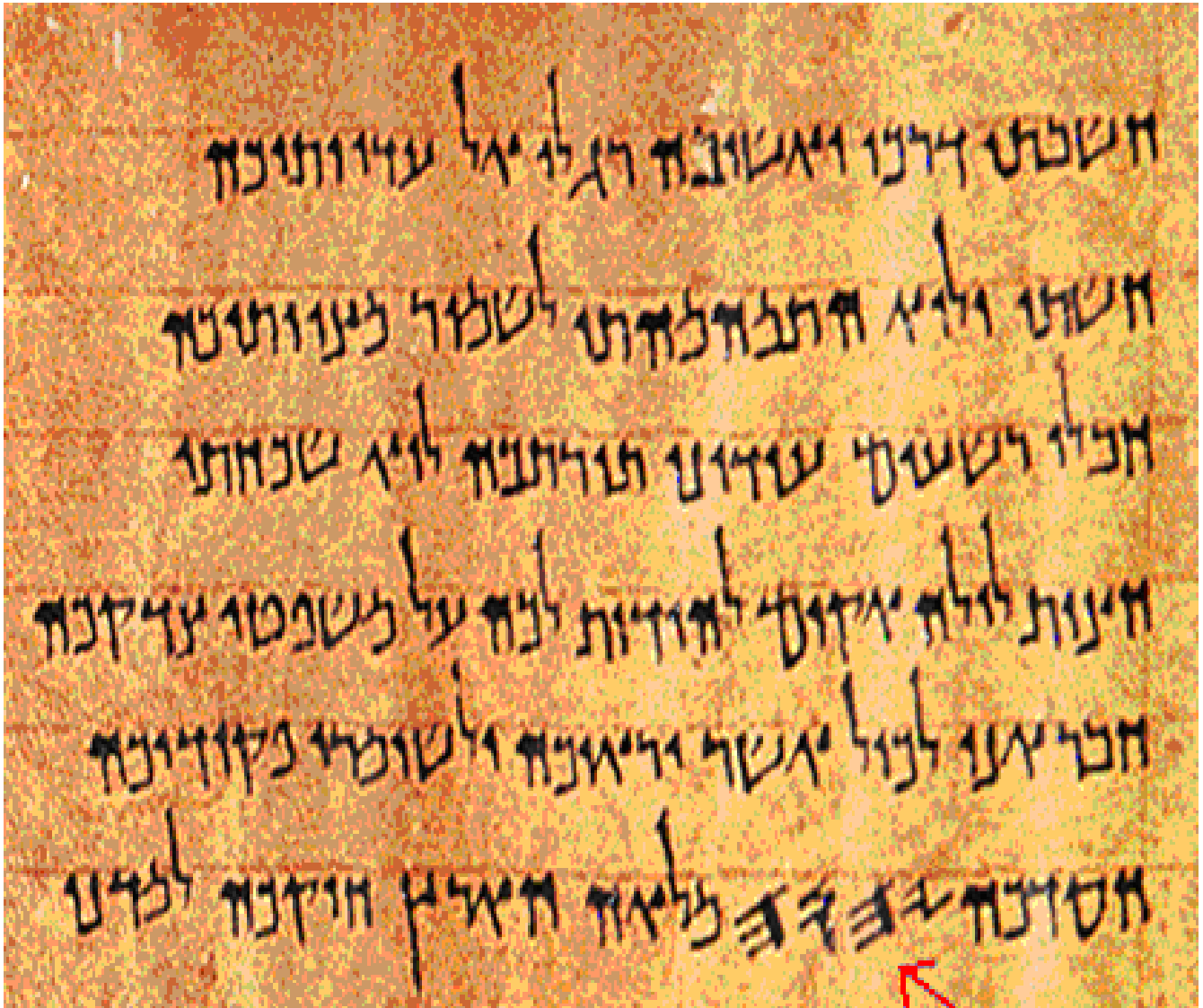


THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRED NAME



In View of Scripture

By Gary W. McDaniel

Researching the Creator's Name: A Waste of Our Time?

You may be wondering, “What is this thing about ‘doctrine of the Sacred Name’?” In a nutshell, the “Sacred Name” is the name our Creator gave to Himself, but very few of us have grown up in households where that name is so much as *mentioned*, let alone called upon in worship. I have found that many people are under the impression that this topic is inconsequential, and some have even suggested that those who spend their time searching out the truth regarding our Creator’s name are busybodies with nothing better to do. Others are simply investigating this matter for the first time, carefully examining each aspect from a Scriptural perspective before making a final decision. I hope you are in this latter group. If so, I also hope you don’t mind if I share my perspective after having spent untold hours studying this topic.

The book of Malachi speaks of a time yet future, and offers some exciting promises to those who worship and serve our Creator. In speaking of that awesome day of the resurrection, the Almighty inspired Malachi to write,

¹ See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says Yahweh (יהוה) of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

² But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. (Malachi 4:1-2, New Revised Standard Version, with the original Sacred Name, יהוה, restored)

Earlier, in this same book of Malachi, we read an account that closely parallels the present-day situation in which many of us find ourselves. In our struggle to make a living, as we look around at our wealthy neighbors, many of whom seem to be blessed many times over, we cannot help but wonder why those who do not worship the Almighty are so blessed, whereas we are barely able to make ends meet. However, the Almighty offers those who call upon His Name hope for a far better future than we could *dream* of in this lifetime:

¹⁶ Then they that feared Yahweh (יהוה) spake often one to another: and Yahweh hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon his name.

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, saith Yahweh (יהוה) of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

¹⁸ Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth Elohim and him that serveth him not. (Malachi 3:16-18)

Is the Creator’s name inconsequential—something we don’t need to “waste our time” investigating? Apparently Malachi didn’t think so! Maybe this topic *is* worth deeper study! I hope you enjoy reading my perspective as much as I enjoyed researching and compiling my findings.

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Note about the cover page: For the cover page of this study, I have selected a photo displaying an excerpt from Psalms 119:59-64, as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Creator's name (חַוְּהַי), indicated by the arrow, is written in an ancient Hebrew script known as *Paleo-Hebrew*, whereas the rest of the text is in more modern Hebrew characters known as the *square Aramaic script*, which was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian Captivity. In the square Aramaic script, the Creator's name appears as יהוה.

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THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRED NAME IN VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

By Gary W. McDaniel

For several years now, I have desired to put together a study which might help others to come to the knowledge of the truth concerning what has been called “The Sacred Name Doctrine.” From personal experience, I can honestly say that when someone approaches this subject with a heart that is searching for truth, and desires to do the will of our Heavenly Father, that individual will be richly rewarded after embracing this marvelous knowledge.

My suggestion to all who read this study is this: As you read the information I offer, combined with the Scripture texts that I cite, be in prayer and meditate on what you are reading. It is my belief that when you take this approach with an open mind and an honest heart, the Almighty will bear witness to His Word by His Holy Spirit.

What is His name?

When the Tanakh/Old Testament was originally penned in the Hebrew language as inspired by the Almighty, His personal Name appeared within its text 6,823 times. Although many people have endeavored to hide this fact by substituting titles for the Name, our Heavenly Father has been trustworthy to guard His Word. Moreover, since we are told numerous times to “call upon” the Name, He has stirred up the spirit of men to search out the truth regarding His Name. There is a verse of Scripture which asks some very straightforward questions that demand answers. In light of this, can we honestly believe that our loving Father would ask questions that demand answers without enabling us to actually find them? Personally, I think not. Consider the following:

⁴ Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind in His fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What *is* his name, and what *is* his son’s name, if thou canst tell? (Proverbs 30:4)¹

In order to answer the question pertaining to “His Name,” I will begin with a portion of Scripture which took place after Moses had seen a flame of fire within a bush, yet the bush was not consumed by the flame. He had just heard the voice of the angel giving him some instructions. After conversing with the angel and receiving His responses, we find the following:

¹ This and all other quotations from Scripture, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *The Word of Yahweh*, 2nd edition, published by Assembly of Yahweh, Eaton Rapids, MI. This translation, as stated by the translators in their preface, “is based upon standard English language versions of the scriptures, which in turn are built upon the oldest available Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek manuscripts. This version has retained much of the old English grammatical structure used by many English translations.” They add, “The prime objective in producing this new edition of the scriptures was a desire to accurately represent the most sacred names of our Father and His Son. It has been the tradition of most translators to substitute more common, familiar terms such as LORD and GOD, in place of the very names inspired from Yahweh Himself. We believe this is a grave injustice.”

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¹³ And Moses said unto Elohim,² Behold, *when* I come to the children of Israel and shall say unto them, The Elohim of your fathers has sent me unto you, and they shall say to me, What *is* His Name? what shall I say unto them?

¹⁴ And Elohim said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you.

¹⁵ And Elohim said moreover to Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, Yahweh Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, has sent me unto you. This *is* My Name for ever, and this *is* My memorial unto all generations. (Exodus 3:13-15)

There is a footnote in *The Scriptures* version of the above passage which states the following: “The Hebrew text reads: *’eyeh ’asher ’eyeh*, the word *’eyeh* being derived from *hayah* which means *to be, to exist*, but the Aramaic text here in v. 14 reads: *ayah ashar ayah*. This is not His Name, but it is an explanation that leads up to the revelation of His Name in v. 15, namely: יהוה.” The Hebrew spelling יהוה,³ commonly referred to as the *Tetragrammaton*, is understood by leading scholars as representing the pronunciation *Yahweh*. We will look into this pronunciation later.

The reader will automatically notice that the term *God* does not appear in the above translation; rather, the title *Elohim* has been employed, since it better reflects the intent of the Almighty as can be seen in the Hebrew text. For we find in another place:

¹¹ But ye *are* they that forsake Yahweh, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Gad, and that furnish the drink offering unto Meni. (Isaiah 65:11)

In the above verse, we see that “Gad” (pronounced *Gawd* in Hebrew) is mentioned, alerting us that the Almighty is speaking of an idol named *Gad*, not to be confused with the name of one of the sons of Jacob.⁴ A careful study of this idol’s name reveals the pagan origin of the

² *Elohim* is the Hebrew designation or title for *Almighty, Mighty One, or Supreme deity*. Some translations, such as *The Word of Yahweh*, prefer to transliterate this title rather than translate it. Here is the definition of *Elohim* as found in *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Merrill F. Unger, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1988, p. 360: “**ELO’HIM** (e-lō’hîm; Heb. Plural *’ēlōhîm*; singular *’ēlōah*, ‘mighty’). A term sometimes used in the ordinary sense of *gods*, whether true or false (Ex. 12:12, 32:4; etc.), including Jehovah (Ps. 76:7; Ex. 18:11; etc.).”

³ יהוה is the Hebrew rendering of the Creator’s name as it appears in what is known as the *square Aramaic script*. This is the form most familiar to Bible students, and it is found in the oldest complete Hebrew texts known to exist. However, still older fragments have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in which the Creator’s name appears in a more ancient form of Hebrew known as *Paleo-Hebrew*. In these older fragments יהוה appears as חרשׁו, as indicated on the cover of this study. Paleo-Hebrew was used prior to the Babylonian captivity; by the time of the Jews’ return to Judea, they had adopted the square Aramaic script.

⁴ Regrettably, it can be demonstrated that Leah, who named Zilpah’s son *Gad*, named him after this same heathen idol. It must be remembered that both Leah and her sister Rachel were raised in a semipagan household (their father, Laban, as is evident from Gen. 31:19, 30-35, worshipped household idols). Moreover, the Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint in the 3rd century B.C.E. understood that this name was borrowed from the name of a heathen idol. Otherwise, they would not have used the name of *Gad’s* Greek counterpart, *Tyche* (Τύχη), as the pretext for her to choose the name *Gad* in Gen. 30:11: “And Lea said, *It is* happily (Τύχη): and she called his name, Gad (Γαδ).” In the Hebrew text, there is a play on words used with the selection of the name *Gad*. Leah literally says, “With fortune (*ba gad*, בגד): and she called his name Gad (גד).” Obviously, this same play on words does not work in the Greek, so it is significant that the translators chose the name of the idol *Gad’s* Greek counterpart, *Tyche*, when expressing Leah’s rationale in selecting the name *Gad*. In order to establish the fact that

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common term *God*. If Yahweh was not referred to as “God” in His originally-inspired Word, should we dishonor Him today by attributing such a title to Him or His awesome Name?

⁸ I *am* Yahweh (יהוה), that *is* my name, and my honour will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images (Isaiah 42:8).

¹⁸ That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is YAHWEH (יהוה), *art* the most high over all the earth (Psalms 83:18).

It should be noted here that “יהוה” constitutes the four Hebrew letters of the Almighty’s Name, which appear in the earliest available Hebrew texts of what is known as the Old Testament. These Hebrew characters are often represented by the English letters YHWH.⁵ There is some dispute as to how the Name is to be pronounced (Yahweh, Yahuweh, Yahvah, Yahveh, Yahuah, Yahwah, etc.), and I respect those who, in their own research, have concluded that any of these renderings is the most accurate. Nevertheless, after considerable study, I am persuaded that these letters are equivalent to the pronunciation *Yahweh* in the English language.⁶ For this reason, I have chosen to use the rendering *Yahweh* when quoting Scripture texts.

the Hebrew scholars who translated the Septuagint considered *Gad* to be a heathen idol, we need only to turn to Isaiah 65:11, where we find that they translated Gad (גד) as *daimonion* (demon, devil).

⁵ This form is also widely accepted as a valid representation of the Tetragrammaton by the scholarly community, as evidenced by the following excerpt from the Preface to the Revised Standard Version of the Bible: “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* ‘Lord’ (or *Elohim* meaning ‘God’).”

⁶ 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 only aware of two basic transliterations in the Greek language: *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 ἰαω (Diod. Sic. i. 94; Irenaeus, i.4, §1). ἰεου (Porphyry in Eusebius, Praep. Evan. i.9, §21), ἰαου (Clem. Alex. Strom. v. p. 666), and in a catena to the Pentateuch in a MS. at Turin ἰαουε; both Theodoret (Quaest. 15 in Exod.) and Epiphanius (Haer. 20) give *Iabe*, the former distinguishing it as the pronunciation of the Samaritans, while ἰαῖα represented that of the Jews. Of these forms, ἰαω=and ἰαου may both have arisen from יהוה (*yāhū*), the second element in so many Hebrew proper names; ἰεου is perhaps an attempt to render a pronunciation יהוה (Yehwōh) which might have succeeded יהוה (Yahwāh); cp. יהוה, Jehu, Assyrian *Ya-u-a*. ἰαῖα has the look of a Greek imitation of אהיה (*’āhyāh* or *’ehyèh*), “I am” (Ex. iii.14), but another MS. reads ἰαῖ that is, apparently, יה, Jah (*Yāh*), which occurs in the O. T. as an independent Name; while ἰαβελ seems to preserve the pronunciation יהוה (Yahwāh or Yahwèh), 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

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Bringing His name to “nothing”

Each Scriptural text that I have cited to this point testifies that the name of the Almighty is Yahweh. Many scholarly references support the transliteration *Yahweh* for the Hebrew characters יהוה.⁷ Also, you may occasionally notice a footnote for such verses as Exodus 3:15 in various Bible translations or study Bibles which refers to the Name as being “Yahweh.”⁸ This is one reason why I can no longer revert to calling our Heavenly Father by common titles or “names,” such as *Jehovah* or *LORD*.

In view of this reasoning, I ask you, the reader, what is the beginning of wisdom?

We find in numerous passages of Scripture that “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom.” Part of that “fear of Yahweh” is found within the Third Commandment, where we are told to not take His name in vain:

⁷ Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh thy Elohim in vain; for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. (Exodus 20:7)

The above commandment, when it is translated more literally from the Hebrew language into English, conveys so much more than taking “the name of the LORD thy God in vain,” as it is rendered in the *King James Version* (along with a host of other translations of Scripture). The Hebrew word translated “in vain” is *shawv* (שׁוּׁוּ, word #7723 in *Strong’s*), which conveys the meaning of *desolation* or *uselessness*, and can even be translated “lie” or “false.”⁹ We are not to take away or make useless the Name of Yahweh our Elohim, bringing it “to emptiness,” causing it to be brought to nothing, not known or used any longer. How many people are guilty of transgressing the Third Commandment?

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 יהוה, which is pronounced *Yahweh* in English. His proposal was based 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.

⁷ For example, the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Tyndale House Publishers, 1982, Wheaton, IL, p. 430, states, “Strictly speaking, Yahweh is the only ‘name’ of God.”

⁸ For example, Exodus 3:15 in the *NIV Study Bible* includes a footnote referring to the common substitution “LORD” for the Name of the Almighty. The footnote says: “*The LORD*. The Hebrew for this name is *Yahweh* (often incorrectly misspelled ‘Jehovah’).”

⁹ *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon* builds on the understanding of “uselessness” and “desolation” by offering the definition of “emptiness, nothingness, vanity,” and in reference to Exodus 20:7 we read, “Ex 20⁷ take up name of God in vain (to no good purpose).”

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When I read such verses as the one cited above, it makes me realize just how explicit Yahweh is concerning His personal Name. It causes me to shudder just to think that I could deny the truth in order to please men or to escape what they may think or say about me when I refer to Him by His revealed name. As we read from Scripture:

²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

²⁷ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

³¹ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living Elohim.* (Hebrews 10:26-27, 31)

When I think about what man has done to the Creator's Name, I am reminded of how we are supposed to be careful with His Word, and I know that removing His name, effectively "bringing it to nothing," does not represent a careful handling of the text. Does removing His Name reflect a love for truth? If we do not demonstrate a love for truth, how can we act righteously? If we do not act righteously, what do we have to look forward to?

Is it appropriate to translate the Creator's name?

When we take away someone's name, we effectively cause it to become forgotten or unrecognizable. Many people do not even recognize the name *Yahweh*. Names are important because this is how we identify people, and it's how we identify our Heavenly Father. I have found that many people are very particular about how we pronounce their names. For example, I once worked with a woman named Kathryn. One day a coworker approached her and asked, "Hey, Kathy, could you please sign these papers?"

Kathryn replied, "I don't know who you're talking to. I *never* told you that was *my* name!" Obviously, Kathryn's name was very important to her, and she didn't appreciate it being tampered with. Of how much *greater* concern should we have for our Heavenly Father's Name? Should we be willing to settle for "just anything"?

Many people make the mistake of thinking that we can translate the Name *Yahweh* into other languages, which, if true, might appear to justify translating *Yahweh* as *God*. However, it is a basic truth that names are not *translated*, but rather *transliterated* (i.e., the same basic pronunciation carries over into all languages). An easy proof of this involves the name of the terrorist named Osama Bin Laden. This is how his name is pronounced in his native Arabic language. I have asked several people how this name should be translated in English. Of course, no one knows any other name for this man other than Osama Bin Laden. Other notable examples of this basic truth include Saddam Hussein, Ludwig van Beethoven, Jacques Cousteau, Mahatma Gandhi, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat, to name just a few.

I am reminded of a segment from a syndicated radio talk show hosted by Mike Gallagher back in 2005.¹⁰ During the show, Mr. Gallagher described the hoopla surrounding the upcoming release of the then-latest Batman movie, *Batman Begins*. Of course, toy companies capitalized

¹⁰ This segment was broadcast by Dallas radio station KRLD (AM 1080) on May 12, 2005.

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on the frenzy by manufacturing Batman toys to accommodate the pre-adolescent fantasy craze, and Mr. Gallagher mentioned his experience of purchasing a Batman toy as a gift. As is common with virtually every item on the market these days, the package containing the Batman toy had three languages represented: English, French and Spanish. The caption, in English, read as follows:

BRUCE WAYNE assumes a new identity as the mysterious guardian of Gotham City, and his journey to become Batman Begins.

The French translation of the above is not a problem, as the translator understood that “Bruce Wayne” should remain intact when referred to in the French language. Here is how the above summary was translated in French:

BRUCE WAYNE prend une nouvelle identité et devient le gardien mystérieux de la ville de Gotham. Et voilà que l'aventure de Batman commence.

Please notice that not only did the French translator keep “Bruce Wayne” intact, but he also left “Gotham” and “Batman” alone. He understood that names do not translate from one language to another. The translator of the Spanish version of the caption, however, wasn't so understanding. Notice how he translated this same summary:

BRUNO DIAZ asume una nueva identidad, convirtiéndose en el misterioso guardián de Ciudad Gótica... Y ahí empieza su viaje para llegar a ser ... Batman.

Whoever translated the Spanish version decided that “Bruce Wayne” should be rendered “*Bruno Díaz*” in Spanish. The average consumer will purchase the Batman toy as a gift and not even look at the caption in English, let alone the other two languages. However, radio personality Mike Gallagher took the time to read all three captions, and he noticed that something was out of place. Something was noticeably wrong: “Bruce Wayne” appeared in two of the captions, but the Spanish version came up with something *totally different!* They had unjustifiably replaced *Bruce Wayne* with a different name, *Bruno Díaz*. At least radio personality Mike Gallagher expressed his view that the decision to replace *Bruce Wayne* was unjustifiable.

In his commentary, Mike satirized the reasoning behind the Spanish decision to employ *Bruno Díaz* instead of Bruce Wayne. Here is an excerpt from his commentary:

I can't get over this kind of stuff ... I read it ... I see it in my mind ... can't comprehend it. I mean, explain this to me quickly before we start any serious conversations here on the Mike Gallagher show. *Do you translate first and last names differently in Spanish?* Would the rule be different than French? Wouldn't it still be “Bruce Wayne”? Isn't your first name “Bruce Wayne” in Spanish, too? Why would it be “Bruno Diaz”? How did that happen? 1-800-655-MIKE.

You think the Spanish folks are saying, “We don't want any 'Bruce Wayne.' Our Batman is ‘**BRUNO DIAZ.**’ That's the *Hispanic* Caped Crusader! *We don't need no stinkin' American!* Bruce Wayne is ”

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And face it ... “Bruce Wayne” is a REAL American-sounding name! “**BRUCE WAYNE** - crime fighter!”

“Well, we're not going to have 'Bruce Wayne' in the Hispanic corner of the world! It's '**BRUNO DIAZ**,' don't you know!”

1-800-655-MIKE. 800-655-6453. I mean, I understand “Mike” in Spanish would be “Miguel.” But wouldn't “Gallagher” be “Gallagher”? Or would you say, “Rodriguez”? Or no, more appropriate, “Gonzalez”? “Miguel Gonzalez, Talk Show Host!” No, no, it would at least be “Miguel Gallagher,” I believe.¹¹

We certainly appreciate and agree with Mike Gallagher's disapproval of name-altering, and of how names generally do not change from one language to another. Of course, we can only wonder if Mr. Gallagher would be able to carry his reasoning a few steps *higher*. Would Mike Gallagher wonder if the translators of the Bible were justified in replacing the name *Yahweh* with *the LORD*? Many of us were actually raised to believe the Creator's name is *God*. Is it justifiable to teach our children that the Creator's name is *God* when He plainly identified Himself as *Yahweh* at least 6,823 times in what is known as the Old Testament? Mike Gallagher understands the “identity theft” involved in replacing the original name, Bruce Wayne, with a false substitute. Regrettably, Mike doesn't seem to make the connection that this very same “identity theft” has occurred with the greatest name of all time: the name of the Creator of heaven and earth. As I have demonstrated, that name is *Yahweh*, but very few people know His name, and even fewer call upon it. Just as Bruce Wayne's name is brought to nothing in the Spanish language, and the identity of the “Caped Crusader” is presented under a completely different identity, so it is with the original name *Yahweh*.

It is taught that our Heavenly Father's name is whatever we deem it to be in whichever language is spoken. In French, it is Dieu.¹² In Polish, it is Bog.¹³ In Italian it is Dio.¹⁴ In Hungarian it is *Isten* (pronounced *Ishten*).¹⁵ In Finnish it is *Jumala*.¹⁶ The prevailing mentality offered by today's theologians is, “We call Him ‘God,’ but His name is different in different languages, depending upon which language you speak.” This understanding is exemplified by Alcoholics Anonymous, in the Santa Barbara, California chapter's publication of *The Santa Barbara Messenger*¹⁷:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² For more information, see the listing found in the online Wiktionary, located at the following URL: <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/God>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ This information can be gleaned from many sources, such as *Hungarian Mythology I*: “God and his helpers,” by Fred Hamori, where he writes, “The chief god and creator of the world therefore was called ISTEN and is still the Hungarian word for God.” This excerpt was taken from the following URL:

<http://users.cwnet.com/millenia/myths.htm>. See also <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/God>.

¹⁶ For more information on *Jumala*, see the online Wikipedia article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumala> or <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/God>.

¹⁷ Excerpt from *The Santa Barbara Messenger*, February 2005, Published by the 23rd District Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous, 1213 State Street, Suite H, Santa Barbara, California. This newsletter may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL:

http://www.santabarabaraaa.com/The_Messenger/02_2005.pdf.

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If you haven't noticed already, the word God is used in AA. In fact, the name appears in four of the twelve steps, but in two instances it is followed immediately by the expression "as we understood Him" (meaning, according to your present conception of a Spiritual Power). When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. [Big Book page 47, line 1]

A.A. literature makes it clear that Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religion. It possesses no theology or dogma to be swallowed by anyone. In addition to using the term, God, the Big Book also refers to our Father, our Creator, the Spirit of the Universe, the Great Reality deep down within us, our Power, and many other names. When AA literature is translated into other languages, the name of God is translated also. He is called Dios, Gott, Yahweh, etc....

Perhaps you might ask Him directly which name is best for you to use. Whatever name seems right to you is the one you should adopt for your intimate relationship with your Higher Power; but, when it comes to discussing your Spiritual Power with others, you also may wish to use the term, "Higher Power", strictly as a matter of convenience in communicating with your fellow alcoholics.

The author of the above commentary suggests that we ask the Creator directly which name is best to use. I agree with that suggestion. Certainly, this is what Moses did in Exodus 3:13, as we read earlier, and we know that the answer was *Yahweh*. I can think of no better name to use in reference to the Creator than the name He gave to Himself.

Was His name intentionally distorted?

We would all like to think that those entrusted with the transmission of Yahweh's Word remained completely faithful, refusing to either "translate His name" or replace His name with any substitutes. However, as we all know, this is simply not the way things turned out. Even the scribes entrusted with faithfully copying Scripture distorted the Creator's name, which in turn led to His name being replaced with substitutes, such as *Kyrios*,¹⁸ *el Señor*,¹⁹ *Drottinn*,²⁰ *De Heere*,²¹ *Tuhan*,²² *Herra*,²³ *Gospod*,²⁴ *HaShem*,²⁵ *Jehovah*,²⁶ and *The LORD*.²⁷ Each of these terms has

¹⁸ From the online Greek Bible, where the Tetragrammaton is replaced by *Kyrios* (κυριος) in such verses as Exodus 3:15. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.myriobiblos.gr/bible/ot/chapter.asp?book=2&page=3>.

¹⁹ From the online Spanish version *La Biblia de las Américas*, where the Tetragrammaton is replaced by EL SEÑOR in such places as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=23&chapter=23&version=59

²⁰ From the online Icelandic Bible ([Icelandic Bibliuleit](#)), where *Drottinn* is used in place of the Tetragrammaton in such places as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.hi.is/cgi-bin/biblia?ritn=SI+23&ord=>

²¹ From the online Dutch Bible, where De HEERE is used in place of the Tetragrammaton in such places as Psalms 23:1. This Bible may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.coas.com/bijbel/>

²² From the online Indonesian Bible, where TUHAN is used in place of the Tetragrammaton in such places as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.bit.net.id/SABDA-Web/Maz/T_Maz23.htm

²³ From the online Finnish Bible, where *Herra* is used in place of the Tetragrammaton in such places as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.nic.funet.fi/pub/doc/religion/christian/Bible/html/finnish/1933_38/Ps.23.html

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been used to replace the Tetragrammaton when translating from the Hebrew. For those who may not believe the scribes could have intentionally distorted Yahweh’s name, there is a very interesting verse of Scripture that shows how some of the scribes were deceitful as they copied the Word of Yahweh. Shown below is Jeremiah 8:8:

⁸ How do ye say, We *are* wise, and the law of Yahweh *is* with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he *it*; the pen of the scribes *is* in vain.

Certainly, the way the above verse is translated seems rather tame. If the pen of the scribes is in vain, this doesn’t mean they did anything *wrong*, does it? It just means their writings were written in vain because the people weren’t paying any attention to the Word, right? Well, no, it’s not quite that simple. Let’s take a quick look at the Hebrew text of Jeremiah 8:8²⁸:

2009	403	3068	8451	2450	559	
איכה תאמרו חכמים אנחנו ותורת יהוה אתנו אכן הנה						
,Lo	,certainly	with	Yahweh	the and	(are) we	wise say you do How ←
		?us	(is)	of law		
		5608	8267	5842	6213	8267
לשקר עשה עט שקר ספרים:						
		.scribes the	the	the	has	deceit ←
			of lie	of pen	practiced	

As we can see from the original Hebrew text of Jeremiah 8:8, the scribes were found to be practicing deceit in their handling of Yahweh’s Word. Although the New International Version does not use Yahweh’s name, it nevertheless brings out the scribes’ deceitful ways much more effectively than the King James Version:

⁸ How can you say, “We are wise,
For we have the law of the LORD,”
When actually the lying pen of the scribes
Has handled it falsely?

²⁴ From the online Bosnian Bible, where Gospod is used in place of the Tetragrammaton in such places as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://www.wyru.com/izrada/19psa023.htm>

²⁵ From *The Chumash*, The Torah: Haftaros and Five Megillos with a Commentary Anthologized from the Rabbinic Writings, The Stone Edition, 1997 by Mesorah Publications, Ltd., Brooklyn, NY. In this version’s translation of Exodus 3:15, for example, the Tetragrammaton is replaced by “*HASHEM*”: “God said further to Moses, ‘So shall you say to the Children of Israel, ‘*HASHEM* the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has dispatched me to you. This is My Name forever, and this is My remembrance from generation to generation.’”

²⁶ From the online Spanish version known as the *Reina-Valera Version*, where the Tetragrammaton is replaced by *Jehová* in such verses as Psalms 23:1. This verse may be read by accessing the following URL: http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?book_id=23&chapter=23&version=61. The King James Version also uses the form *Jehovah* in such verses as Exodus 6:3.

²⁷ “The LORD” is the most common replacement of the Tetragrammaton in the popular English translations, such as the King James Version, the New International Version, the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version and The Living Bible.

²⁸ The following Hebrew text (Jeremiah 8:8) is taken from *The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1986.

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How did “the lying pen of the scribes” work falsehood? By doing some research, we can find in various historical references, such as the *Encyclopædia Judaica*, references to where the Name יהוה was altered by adding the vowel points from the Hebrew titles *Adonai* and *Elohim* to it in order to protect it from being misused or blasphemed.²⁹ This was done in part due to some misunderstanding of the charge which is found in several places in the Torah, one of them being:

³¹ Therefore shall ye keep my commandments, and do them: I *am* Yahweh.

³² Neither shall ye profane my holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I *am* Yahweh which hallow you,

³³ That brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your Elohim: I *am* Yahweh. (Leviticus 22:31-33)

As we will see shortly, the Name *Yahweh* was not originally a hidden or secret thing, known only by an exclusive few, but it was both known and freely used by the patriarchs of old, as well as by “common people” in everyday life in Israel. Indeed, even Jewish scholars, who themselves teach that we should not speak the Creator’s name, admit that it was ordained by the Almighty that we should speak His name when greeting our neighbor. Notice what A. Cohen, in his book *Everyman’s Talmud*, had to say:

On the other hand, there was a time when the free and open use of the Name even by the layman was advocated. The Mishnah³⁰ teaches: ‘It was ordained that a man should greet his friends by mentioning the Name’ (Ber. ix. 5)³¹. It has been suggested that the recommendation was based on the desire to distinguish the Israelite from the Samaritan, who referred to God as ‘the Name’ and not as JHVH, or the Rabbinite Jew from the Jewish-Christian.³²

Although the scribes and spiritual leaders in Israel may have meant well by their actions in order to protect Yahweh’s awesome Name from misuse, profanity and blasphemy, the following passage of Scripture reveals how He felt about His Name being forgotten:

²⁹ The following comes from the *Encyclopædia Judaica*, Vol. 7, Encyclopædia Judaica Jerusalem, The Macmillan Company, copyright 1971 by Keter Publishing House Ltd., Jerusalem, Israel, p. 680: “In the early Middle Ages, when the consonantal text of the Bible was supplied with vowel points to facilitate its correct traditional reading, the vowel points for ’Adonai with one variation—a *sheva* with the first *yod* of YHWH instead of the *hataf-patah* under the *aleph* of ’Adonai—were used for YHWH, thus producing the form YeHoWaH. When Christian scholars of Europe first began to study Hebrew, they did not understand what this really meant, and they introduced the hybrid name ‘Jehovah.’ In order to avoid pronouncing even the sacred name ’Adonai for YHWH, the custom was later introduced of saying simply in Hebrew *ha-Shem* (or, Aramaic *Shemā*, ‘the Name’) even in such an expression as ‘Blessed be he that cometh in the name of YHWH’ (Ps. 118:26). The avoidance of pronouncing the name YHWH is generally ascribed to a sense of reverence. More precisely, it was caused by a misunderstanding of the Third Commandment (Ex. 20:7; Deut. 5:11) as meaning ‘Thou shalt not take the name of YHWH thy God in vain,’ whereas it really means ‘You shall not swear falsely by the name of YHWH your God’ (JPS).”

³⁰ The Mishnah, which means “repetition” in Hebrew, contains six divisions, and is considered to be a “six-part code of descriptive rules.” It was composed at the end of the 2nd century CE. According to Jacob Neusner, who translated *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, “The Mishnah itself is generally supposed to have come to closure at the end of the second century, and its date, for conventional purposes only, is ca. A.D. 200.”

³¹ This is a reference to *Berakhot*, a tractate found within the first division of the Mishnah.

³² From *Everyman’s Talmud*, by A. Cohen, Schocken Books, New York City, NY, (originally published by E. P. Dutton, New York, in 1949), 1975, p. 25.

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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 neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal. (Jeremiah 23:26, 27)

It is just as Yahweh has said concerning those who have rejected His Word in one way or another:

⁹ The wise *men* are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken: lo, they have rejected the word of Yahweh; and what wisdom *is* in them? (Jeremiah 8:9)

Is it possible that by rejecting the name our Heavenly Father gave to Himself we are simultaneously rejecting His Word? This is something we all need to consider.

Did the patriarchs know the Almighty by name?

There is another account in Scripture informing us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all knew the Name of Yahweh. However, the translators of most Bible versions would leave us with a far different impression. This is why we must be careful students, for we are about to see the important difference that punctuation makes when translating from one language to another. The passage I'm referring to is found in Exodus chapter six:

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

³ And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by *the name of*³³ El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh was I not known to them? (Exodus 6:2, 3)

The reader will notice that the last part of the above quotation is a question, not a statement. Yahweh was asking Moses, "And by My Name Yahweh (יהוה), was I not known to them?" He is stating here by asking the question that He indeed **was** known to them by His Name—Yahweh! Many versions make Exodus 6:3 a statement, which would lead the reader to believe that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know the name *Yahweh*. However, several texts of Scripture prove that, indeed, not only did the patriarchs know Yahweh's name, but they also *called upon that name*. One example of this may be found in Genesis 12:7-8:

⁷ And Yahweh appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto Yahweh, who appeared unto him.

⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Yahweh, and called upon the name of Yahweh.

³³ Please observe that the words "*the name of*" in this text are in italics. Bible translators often employ the use of italics as a means of clarifying and conveying to the reader what they believe to be the intent behind the original words. In the case of Exodus 6:3, the translator chose to insert "*the name of*" as a means of quantifying his belief that "El Shaddai" is a name. However, the only name ever specifically ascribed to our Heavenly Father in Scripture is the name *Yahweh*.

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The ancient believers, then, knew Yahweh's name, they spoke Yahweh's name and they called upon that name.³⁴ It wasn't until *later* that a new teaching surfaced ... a teaching that we should *not* speak His name.

His Word Exalted Above His Name?

There is a verse of Scripture that some folks have pointed to in an attempt to minimize the importance of knowing and using Yahweh's name. According to this verse, they say, Yahweh exalts His Word above His own name. If this is so, this is fine by me, for this would *still* put Yahweh's name far above any name ever given to man! The verse I'm referring to is found in Psalms 138:2. Here is how this verse appears in the King James Version:

² I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

When examined very closely, the above verse doesn't really make a whole lot of sense. Here, King David says he will worship towards Yahweh's holy temple, and he will praise Yahweh's name for His lovingkindness and truth. So far, King David is being reasonable because Yahweh is certainly full of lovingkindness, and His ways are clearly the ways of truth. These are two excellent reasons to praise His name! Suddenly, however, King David seems to deviate from logical thought. He adds, "... for you have magnified your Word above all your name." Why would David say such a thing? How did Yahweh's *Word* suddenly become the center of David's thoughts, and how did it suddenly become elevated above Yahweh's name? Where's the context for such reasoning? Here he was, in the middle of praising Yahweh's name, when he suddenly switched gears and expressed that Yahweh's Word is above His name. Is this a normal thought process? Not in my estimation. This would be like saying, "I love this book because of the author's candid approach towards living a healthy lifestyle, for he has promoted his vitamins above his book." It really wouldn't make sense to suddenly switch gears from expressing love for a book because of its message only to proceed with an explanation that it's because the author promotes his vitamins above his book. Nor does it make sense to praise Yahweh's name for His lovingkindness and truth, only to explain that it's because Yahweh has exalted His Word above His name. This is nonsensical.

Some translators, recognizing the obvious ambiguity of this Hebrew text, have attempted to insert some punctuation in order to present this verse in a light more favorable to the importance of Yahweh's name. For example, here is how this verse appears in the translation known as *The Word of Yahweh*:

² I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word; above all, thy name.

³⁴ Scripture also offers us ample evidence that both Isaac and Jacob knew Yahweh *by name*. For example, we read that Isaac called upon the name of Yahweh in Genesis 26:24-25. It is clear that Jacob knew the name *Yahweh* or else he could not have said, "Surely Yahweh (יהוה) is in this place" in Genesis 28:16.

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The above translation, with the addition of a semicolon and a comma in a couple of choice locations, does change the general understanding of the text, but does it also change the way in which the Hebrew text is read? Let's take a look at the Hebrew text of Psalms 138:2³⁵:

2617	8034	3034	6944	1964	7812	
אַשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶל-הַיְכָל קֹדֶשׁךָ וְאוֹדָה אֶת-שִׁמְךָ עַל-חַסְדֶּךָ						
Your ,mercy	For ,name	Your ,name	give and to thanks	Your ;holy	temple toward	will I ← worship
565	8034	1430	571			
וְעַל-אֱמֻנָתְךָ כִּי-הִגְדַּלְתָּ עַל-כָּל-שִׁמְךָ אֱמַרְתָּ:						
.word	Your ,name	Your ,name	all above magnified	have You for	Your ;truth	and ← for

The wording of the above Hebrew text actually seems to negate the understanding promoted by *The Word of Yahweh* translation. The *Word of Yahweh* translation reads, "... for thou hast magnified thy word; above all, thy name." The literal Hebrew translation reads, "You have magnified above all Your name Your word." In his own literal translation of the above Hebrew text, Jay P. Green offers the following:

² I will worship toward Your holy temple; and give thanks to Your name for Your mercy, and for Your truth; for You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

I believe a careful analysis of Psalms 138:2 reveals that Green's literal translation best fits the Hebrew wording, even though he did transpose the words "word" and "name" from their original sequence in the Hebrew text. Transposing the Hebrew text and rearranging each word's position so as to accommodate the way our language is spoken is a common and necessary procedure employed by translators. This is how we end up with a semi-literal translation. The Hebrew words "word" and "name" are accurately translated, but they're not actually in the original sequence. For those of you who know a foreign language, such as Spanish, you understand how this works. As an example of this, if you hear "Es un hombre muy alto," you know to translate it, "He's a very tall man." However, the literal translation is, "Is a man very tall." For us to effectively communicate a thought from one language to another we have to employ the basic rule of transposing words in order to represent the way the people living in that culture speak.

With this in mind, I can now address the concern I have with regard to *The Word of Yahweh's* translation. You see, not only did they rearrange the words "word" and "name" from the original sequence, but they then proceeded to add strategic punctuation to those transposed words. The result is this: Not only do we have rearranged words, but now we have added punctuation designed to aid in the interpretation of the intent behind those rearranged words. Put

³⁵ The following Hebrew text (Psalms 138:2) is taken from *The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, General Editor and Translator, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1986. The only change I have made involves the number of word #565. It is clear that it is word #565 in *Strong's*, not #1697 (*dabar*), which is the number attributed to this Hebrew word by Jay P. Green.

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another way, if the translator of *The Word of Yahweh* had employed his punctuation marks with the original sequence of the phrase, it wouldn't have made any sense. To best illustrate the problem here, all I need to do is ask you to fit those same punctuation marks in that *original* sequence: "You have magnified above all Your name Your word."³⁶

I am not trying to say that I necessarily believe Yahweh magnifies His Word above His name, but then again, neither am I trying to make the Hebrew say something it doesn't say. And for those who disagree with Green's literal translation, I will repeat that even if it is true that Yahweh *does* magnify His Word over and above His name, this in no way minimizes His great name, which can never be regarded as being on the same level as any name given to man.

I will also repeat that it doesn't really make a whole lot of sense for King David to, on the one hand, state that he will praise Yahweh's *name* for His lovingkindness and for His truth, and then in the next breath express that Yahweh has magnified His Word above His *name*. I have found that sometimes, when the Hebrew text reads in such an ambiguous fashion, it helps to turn to the Septuagint text to see if it offers any solutions to the puzzle. The Septuagint, as we read earlier, is the Greek translation produced from an original Hebrew text during the 3rd century BCE. How does the Septuagint translate Psalms 138:2?

² I will worship toward thy holy temple, and give thanks to thy name, on account of thy mercy and thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy holy name above every thing.

According to the understanding of the ancient Hebrew scholars who translated the Hebrew text into Greek, Yahweh has indeed magnified His name above everything. If this is true, then those who seek the Almighty should certainly strive to learn what that name is and call upon that name, just as the ancient believers did. But even if Yahweh magnifies His Word above His

³⁶ There are many ways of duplicating this problematic scenario of not only word sequence in a translation, but also the placement of punctuation. Here's a very simple example. Let's say the following sentence was originally written in Spanish, but later translated in English. Given this understanding, can you tell where the punctuation should be placed in the following statement? "Mrs. Martínez my piano teacher is a very gifted musician." Should it be, "Mrs. Martínez, my piano teacher is a very gifted musician" or should it be, "Mrs. Martínez, my piano teacher, is a very gifted musician"? In the first example, the student is telling Mrs. Martínez that his piano teacher is a very gifted musician. In the second example, the student is *referring* to Mrs. Martínez as a very gifted musician. As you can see, comma placement is very important in our language. With the preceding information in mind, let's take a look at the original *Spanish version* of the statement to see if we can determine which of the two examples must be correct: "La señora Martínez mi maestra de piano es una música muy talentosa." I purposely omitted the commas from this sentence because even without commas, it is clear from the Spanish construction that Mrs. Martínez is being *referred to*, not addressed. If Mrs. Martínez were being addressed in Spanish, the word "La" would have been omitted. This is simply a rule of the Spanish language that doesn't work in our English language. Thus, the statement in Spanish, with the correct punctuation, is as follows: "La señora Martínez, mi maestra de piano, es una música muy talentosa." Now someone who only has a rudimentary knowledge of the Spanish language might *think* they know where to place the punctuation in the translated sentence (presuming the original statement in Spanish contained no commas), and they might render it, "Mrs. Martínez, my piano teacher is a very gifted musician." If so, they will have inadvertently changed the meaning of the original intent when the thought was expressed in the Spanish language. This simple illustration is just one of the many examples demonstrating the tremendous task faced by translators in providing readers with the true intent of the original writer. In the case of Psalms 138:2, the Hebrew reading does not allow for any understanding other than that offered by the translators of standard Bibles—that Yahweh has placed His Word above His name.

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name, we should *still* strive to learn His name and call upon it, for there can be no greater name to call upon than the very name our Creator gave to Himself.

Yahweh proclaims His own name

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai bearing in his hands the Ten Commandments, which had been “written with the finger of Elohim” on two tables of stone, he found the children of Israel worshipping a golden calf. He became so angry when he witnessed what they were doing that he threw down the two tables of stone and broke them.

Yahweh, in His great compassion and mercy, told Moses to cut two tables of stone like the first ones and bring them back up the mountain to Him. Upon obeying Yahweh’s command, notice what happened:

⁵ And Yahweh descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of Yahweh.

⁶ And Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, Yahweh, Yahweh El, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,

⁷ Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation* (Exodus 34:5-7).

I quoted these verses in order to show that the Almighty came down and stood with Moses and “proclaimed the name יהוה.” Moses heard the name being proclaimed by the One to Whom it belongs. From all indications of transliteration into English from the Hebrew, Moses would have heard “Yahweh” being proclaimed to him. Just so there would be no doubt in the mind of Moses, Yahweh “proclaimed” His name two more times in the passage.

Elijah and the prophets of Ba’al: Who do we follow?

The Almighty never leaves Himself without a witness. We are told in Scripture that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter is to be established (Deuteronomy 19:15 and 2 Corinthians 13:1).

Let’s consider the prophet Elijah (pronounced *EliYahu* in Hebrew). When he came to the people of Israel (the ten northern tribes), even his very name declared to them, “*My El is Yah.*” However, there is a far greater lesson that we need to bear in mind.

Due to the weakness of Ahab, the king of Israel, he allowed his wife Jezebel to have many of the prophets of Yahweh put to death, while upholding the prophets of Ba’al. If we investigate the meaning of *Ba’al*, we find that it means “Lord.”³⁷ In essence, Jezebel was allowing the

³⁷ To prove that *Ba’al* means “lord,” all one needs to do is consult any reliable dictionary. For example, according to *The Reader’s Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, The Reader’s Digest Association, Inc., Pleasantville, NY, 1977, we find the following listing:

Ba·al (bā’al, bāl) *n. pl.* **Ba·al·im** (bā’al·im) **1.** Any of several ancient Semitic gods of fertility and flocks; especially, the sun god of the Phoenicians. **2.** An idol or false god. [*Hebrew* **ba’al lord**] — **Ba’al·ish** *adj.*

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prophets of Ba'al (the Lord) to live while putting to death the prophets of Yahweh. Israel was practicing grave sin by worshiping "the Lord" rather than Almighty Yahweh. For we read:

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel?

¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Yahweh, and thou hast followed Baalim.

¹⁹ Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.

²⁰ So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

²¹ And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If Yahweh *be* Elohim, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

²² Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of Yahweh; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

²³ Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*.

²⁴ And call ye on the name of your Elohim, and I will call on the name of Yahweh: and the Elohim that answereth by fire, let him be Elohim. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. (1 Kings 18:17-24)

The above verses of Scripture set the backdrop for what takes place in the thrilling story that every student of the Word knows quite well. In order to conserve time and space, I will not quote all of the verses about the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al. I will simply offer some commentary.

After everyone had been gathered on Mount Carmel as requested by Elijah, he then had the false prophets slaughter their bull and prepare it upon their altar. They called on the name of their deity from morning until noon with no results.

Elijah then mocked them and entreated them to cry louder in order that their mighty one might hear them. He suggested that perhaps their mighty one was on a journey or asleep. They continued carrying on, even cutting themselves until blood gushed out from their wounds. By the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, the prophets of Ba'al were still without answer from their elohim. We will pick up the story at this point:

³⁰ And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Yahweh that was broken down.

³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Yahweh came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

At this point, I simply cannot help but make a comment which might inspire the reader to study out another facet that is prevalent throughout Scripture.

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We notice that "...Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of יהוה had come, saying, 'Israel shall be your name.'" But at this point in time, the prophet is only dealing with the ten northern tribes which are many times referred to as "Israel" (*Yisrâ'êl*) as opposed to the other tribes which are called Judah (*Yahudah*) during this time period of the Scriptures. This is prophesying of the future time when ALL of Israel will again become one stick in the hand of Yahweh. (See Ezekiel chapter 37 to read this prophecy, which has not fully come to pass.)

Now let us continue with the remainder of this fascinating story, which proves once again to Israel that Yahweh is indeed the true Elohim.

³¹ And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of Yahweh came, saying, Israel shall be thy name:

³² And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Yahweh: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures³⁸ of seed.

³³ And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels³⁹ with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood.

³⁴ And he said, Do *it* a second time. And they did *it* a second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time.

³⁵ And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

³⁶ And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Yahweh Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* Elohim in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have* done all these things at thy word.

³⁷ Hear me, O Yahweh, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* Yahweh Elohim, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

³⁸ Then the fire of Yahweh fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

³⁹ And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, he *is* the Elohim; Yahweh, he *is* the Elohim.

³⁸ The Hebrew word here is *seahs*, which, according to the rabbis, was equal to one-third of an *ephah*. According to *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, article "Metrology," an *ephah* is equivalent to three pecks and three pints. One-third of three pecks and three pints is one peck and one pint. Since a peck consists of 8 quarts (two gallons), this means that a *seah* is roughly a little over two gallons. This understanding is corroborated by the information found in *The World English Bible Glossary* (<http://ebible.org/web/glossary.htm>). According to this reference, an *ephah* is equivalent to 5.8 U.S. gallons, or roughly six gallons. Thus, one-third of an *ephah* (one *seah*) consists of two gallons. From this, we can deduce that the trench around Elijah's altar was large enough to sow roughly four gallons (two *seahs*) of seed. We later find that the trench likely held at least 10 gallons of water, as 12 gallons were poured onto the wood, which then filled up the trench.

³⁹ This is the Hebrew word *kad* (#3537 in *Strong's*), and is more accurately translated "pitchers" or "jars." For example, in the story of Isaac's servant and Rebecca, Rebecca came to the well carrying a *kad* on her shoulder (Gen. 24:15). Also, in the story of Gideon and the Midianites, Gideon's army of 300 men blew their trumpets and broke their *kads*, creating mass confusion within the Midianite army and serving as the catalyst for the Israelites' victory. It is an exaggeration to depict these *kads* as "barrels," which are typically designed to hold anywhere from 15 to 55 gallons. Thus, if we could presume that each *kad* held a gallon of water, and there were four *kads* used to pour the water, roughly four gallons were poured on the wood with each act. If this process was repeated three times, we can estimate that approximately 12 gallons of water were poured onto the wood.

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⁴⁰ And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. (I Kings 18:31-40)

In the above-described contest between Elijah and the prophets of Ba'al, a distinction was made between the true Creator, Yahweh, and the deity that was considered by the majority as the true supreme being. The prophets of Ba'al felt that their deity was at least equal to or possibly more powerful than the One worshipped by Elijah. Much the same situation exists today. Many believers who know of the name *Yahweh* will say something to the effect of, "Sure, His name is *Yahweh*, but He knows my heart, and besides, He has *many* names!" In other words, from their perspective, it doesn't really matter what name we call Him. Virtually no one seems to be aware that, just as it was during the days of Elijah, there is *still* a distinction between the true Creator and the deity worshipped by the majority of believers in our day. Who do *we* follow?

Other names declare the Father's name

Another well-known name in the Scriptures is the name of the prophet Joel (*Yow'el*). The meaning listed for the name Joel in *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary* (#3100) is: "יְהוֹאֵל *Yôw'êl*, *yo-ale*"; from 3068 and 410; *Jehovah* (is his) *God*." Since the "name" *Jehovah* is an incorrect English transliteration of יהוה, it stands to reason that a more accurate meaning of the name *Joel* is "Yahweh is El." Therefore, when Joel came to his people and delivered the Word of Yahweh to them, they knew by his name that "Yahweh is El."

Did the Messiah declare His Father's name?

In the New Testament, part of the Messiah's ministry was to manifest the name of His Father to His disciples. The Apostle John offers us this special insight through his quotation of the Messiah's prayer just before He was taken from the garden of Gethsemane by the company of soldiers. Notice what He had to say:

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.

²⁶ And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare *it*: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:6, 26).

In the above passage, we read that the Messiah revealed and made known the name of Yahweh to His disciples. If we claim to be His disciples, we too should desire to truly know the Father's name.

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The poetic short form reveals the Creator's name

Scripture does not leave us without other clues regarding the Creator's name. We find in several Bible texts what is known as the *poetic short form* of His name. Let's take a look at a few of these verses:

² Yahweh (יהוה, *Yah*) is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my El, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's Elohim, and I will exalt him. (Exodus 15:2)

² Behold, El is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for Yah (יהוה) Yahweh (יהוה) is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. (Isaiah 12:2)

¹⁴ Yah (יהוה) is my strength and song, and is become my salvation." (Psalms 118:14)

In each one of the above verses of Scripture, we find the abbreviated or poetic form of our Heavenly Father's name—*Yah*. Of course, the version from which I am quoting the above verses is a version that freely employs the name *Yahweh*, so we can naturally expect the translator of this version (*The Word of Yahweh*) to use either *Yah* or *Yahweh*, which he does. In the *King James Version*, however, "the LORD" is used, except in Isaiah 12:2. In this verse we see both the poetic short form and the long form together (יהוה יהוה), so to compensate, the translators rendered it "the LORD JEHOVAH." This sounds less awkward than saying "the LORD, the LORD," which is how יהוה יהוה is translated in the *New International Version*. Interestingly, not all the popular versions avoid using the poetic short form. In the *New King James Version* of the Bible, we find the following verse, which testifies to the short form of our Heavenly Father's name:

⁴ Sing to God, sing praises to His name;
Extol Him who rides on the clouds,
By His name YAH,
And rejoice before Him. (Psalms 68:4)

You may notice that in the *King James Version*, the poetic short form of the Creator's name is written as "JAH." However, as demonstrated above with the *New King James Version* translation, the more correct abbreviated form "Yah" is found. Notice the commentary on this verse offered by Willem A. VanGemeren in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

4 The community is convoked to celebrate the acts of divine vindication. To this end they remember what "God," the one "who rides on the clouds," whose name is "the LORD" (*Yah*), has done for his people. The focus is on the "name" of the God of Israel, Yahweh (abbreviated as *Yah*, as in *Elij[y]ah* and *halleluj[y]ah*). He revealed his name to Israel (Exod 3:15), signifying his fidelity to fulfilling his promises (cf. Exod 6:6-8).⁴⁰

⁴⁰ From *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Volume 5, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1991, p. 445.

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As understood by the author of the above commentary, the focus in Psalms 68:4 is on the Almighty's name, and the form used by King David when he penned this verse is the short form יה. Some people might argue that the pronunciation of this word as found in the *King James Version* (JAH) more accurately represents the pronunciation of the abbreviated name of our Creator. However, the translators of the *New King James Version* knew better. Moreover, another example testifying of the truth regarding the correct transliteration of the Hebrew form יה can be found in the familiar word that people know and use the world over. This word is "Hallelujah!" (הללוייה in Hebrew). The word *hallelujah* ends with the poetic short form יה, and is pronounced virtually the same way in every language known to mankind. Its pronunciation is hal'ə loo'yə.

What about His Son's name?

Earlier, in citing Proverbs 30:4, we read the crucial question, "What *is* his name, and what *is* his son's name, if thou canst tell?" I believe I have sufficiently addressed the question pertaining to the Creator's name, but I would like to also devote some space to answering the question regarding the Messiah's name.

When the angel came to Joseph in a dream in order to give him instructions regarding his betrothed, yet pregnant wife—even though she had as yet never "known a man," Joseph was told the following:

²¹ And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21, *King James Version*)

Looking at the same verse of Scripture in the *New International Version*, we find:

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^a because He will save his people from their sins.

Regarding the name *Jesus* in the *New International Version*, there is a footnote which references this "name" as shown below:

^a*21 Jesus* is the Greek form of the name *Joshua*, which means *the LORD saves*.

We know by reading the *Preface* of the *New International Version* that the term "the LORD" has been substituted for the four letters commonly called the Tetragrammaton.⁴¹ In view of the footnote quoted above, we can plainly see that the translators admit the Messiah's given name is "Joshua," but they nevertheless choose to employ the Greek form *Jesus*.

⁴¹ The exact wording, supplied by The committee on Bible Translation, June 1978 (revised August 1983), is as follows: "In regard to the divine name *YHWH*, commonly referred to as the *Tetragrammaton*, the translators adopted the device used in most English versions of rendering that name as 'LORD' in capital letters to distinguish it from *Adonai*, another Hebrew word rendered 'Lord,' for which small letters are used. Wherever the two names stand together in the Old Testament as a compound name of God, they are rendered 'Sovereign LORD.'"

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Reliable sources such as the *The New Book of Knowledge* encyclopedia and dictionaries of the English language reveal that the letter *J* is no older than the early 17th century.⁴² In fact, it is called “the youngest letter in the English alphabet.” It is also interesting to know that there is no equivalent sound in either the Aramaic, the Greek or the Hebrew alphabet for the letter *J*, even though it descends from the Hebrew letter *yod*. Knowing that the letter *J* was originally a *Y* sound, we can easily discern that a better rendering of *Joshua* is *Yoshua* or as some prefer to spell it, *Yahshua*.

At this point in my study, I would like to interject that in my original version, which was published in 1996, I was very dogmatic regarding the name of our Savior, insisting that it *must* be spelled and pronounced in the English language as “Yahshua.” Over the years, I have come to realize that there are a few possibilities for both the spelling and the pronunciation of this great name in the Hebrew and the English languages. I personally feel that the long form of this Hebrew name (יהושע) represents the original spelling of His name. However, there is also some evidence that His Hebrew name was written as ישוע (often referred to as the “short form”), which would most likely be pronounced as either *Yeshua* or *Y’shua* in the English language.

There are a few schools of thought on the English pronunciation of the Hebrew form יהושע. A few examples include *Yahshua*, *Yahushua*, *Yahoshua* and *Yehoshua*. I will hereafter use the form *Yahushua* (pronounced Yä·oo’shoo·ə) for the remainder of this study when attributing an English spelling to the “long form” of His name.

When I first learned that the name of our Heavenly Father is *Yahweh* instead of the incorrect rendering *Jehovah*, I had no problem accepting it since I seldom used the latter in conversation or in written form anyway. But the name of *Jesus* was another matter altogether. I had been taught from my youth that I should *never* do anything to belittle or ridicule “that name” in any way. The name of *Jesus*, it was said, is the highest of all names in heaven and on earth. Naturally, when I began to understand that the name *Jesus* was never the Savior’s name to begin with, and that He had never even *heard* that name—since its origins are from the Greek language—I was truly upset and had a battle with truth for quite some time.

Then one evening as I was meditating and praying, a thought came to me seemingly from out of nowhere. If the name of *Yahweh* had been falsified and hidden, why wouldn’t the name of His Son have been disguised as well? Upon recognizing the similarity between *Yahweh* and *Yahushua* instead of *Yahweh* and *Jesus*, I no longer had any problems adjusting my thinking in that area of my life. It made perfect sense. I simply had to practice what I believed in my heart with my lips.

⁴² C.f., *The New Book of Knowledge*, Grolier Incorporated, New York, NY, volume 10, p. 1. We read, “J, the 10th letter in the English alphabet, is the youngest of the 26 letters. It is a descendant of the letter I and was not generally considered a separate letter until the 17th century. The early history of the letter J is the same as the history of the letter I. I is a descendant of the ancient Phoenician and Hebrew letter *yod* and the Greek letter *iota*. The Phoenicians gave the *yod* a semi-consonant sound pronounced like the Y in ‘yellow.’”

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Looking ahead to the future

We are told in many places to call upon the name of Yahweh and, more specifically, we are told that when we do, we will be saved or delivered. Just to cite a few verses:

³² And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Yahweh hath said, and in the remnant whom Yahweh shall call. (Joel 2:32)

²¹ And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of Yahweh shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)

The first of the three verses which are cited above comes from the Tanakh (Old Testament), and it is this verse that was recited by Peter on the day of Pentecost. It was on this day that Yahweh poured out His Spirit upon those steadfast disciples of Yahushua the Messiah as they were assembled in an upper chamber of the temple. Later, Peter delivered a masterful, eloquent message to the multitude, expounding on the prophet Joel's prophecy concerning the last days, and exhorting them to repent and be baptized.

The second time that we have record of the above text being quoted in the New Testament was by the Apostle Paul, and it, too, was quoted directly from the second chapter of Joel. As we can see, this prophecy was considered very important to both the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul.

We know that the names of our Heavenly Father and His Son are important to the 144,000 redeemed of the Almighty. Notice what it says in Revelation 14:1:

¹ And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty *and* four thousand, having his name and his Father's name written in their foreheads.⁴³

I am not so much concerned with who the "hundred forty and four thousand" are, but notice, they have the name of the Lamb *and* His Father's name written in their foreheads—written in their minds. They both know and use the name of the Lamb and the name of His Father.

⁴³ I should point out that some versions, such as the *King James Version*, have a slightly different reading, as it says, "having his Father's name written in their foreheads" without any mention of the Lamb's name. The translation I'm offering here comes from Nestle's Greek New Testament, which according to the Introduction of *The Zondervan Parallel New Testament in Greek and English* (Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982, p. ix), is considered "... one of the most reliable available today. This widely used edition was prepared by Eberhard Nestle seventy-seven years ago. It was Nestle's intention to offer the results of the scientific investigations of the nineteenth century. The text is based on a comparison of the texts edited by Tischendorf (1869-72), by Westcott and Hort (1881), and by Bernhard Weiss (1894-1900). Where two of these editions agree, this reading is printed by Nestle." I should also note that other versions, including the *New International Version* and the *Revised Standard Version*, agree with Nestle's Greek New Testament regarding the translation of Revelation 14:1.

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Let's also bear in mind that the multitude mentioned in Revelation 19:6 is in the kingdom of Yahweh ... in eternity with Him! I believe we can safely consider the 144,000 to be among that multitude. Notice what Revelation 19 has to say about this glorious, yet future, time:

¹ And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Halleluyah; Salvation, and praise, and honour, and power, unto our Elohim:

² For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

³ And again they said, Halleluyah. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

⁴ And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped Elohim that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Halleluyah.

⁵ And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our Elohim, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

⁶ And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Halleluyah: for Yahweh⁴⁴ our El Shaddai reigneth.

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

As you can see from the above passage of Scripture, the great multitude knows how to respond when they are told to praise the Almighty. This is just one more reason why I cannot revert to the days of my infancy when I did not know any better than to call upon a name attributed to the Almighty by *men*, not by Yahweh Himself.

Something else which I believe should be pointed out here is this: We read a very enlightening verse of Scripture which says:

³ Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name *is as* ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee. (Song of Solomon 1:3)

This verse of Scripture comes from a book which, in its spiritual application, depicts the relationship between the Bridegroom, Yahushua the Messiah, and His bride, the redeemed of the earth, His assembly. With this in mind, it is correct to say that the saving name of Yahushua the Messiah "is as ointment poured forth." This is why I can join the Apostle Peter in saying, with complete conviction and without fear:

¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

⁴⁴ While it is true that the name *Yahweh* does not appear in any known Greek New Testament texts, the translator of *The Word of Yahweh* here uses what I consider a justifiable reason for replacing the Greek term *kurios* with the Heavenly Father's name. Among the criteria cited by the translator for any decision to use the Creator's name is the following: "When 'kurios' stands alone in the Greek, with no definite article in front of it, it will be rendered as the Name, Yahweh." Evidence that *kurios* appears in place of the Creator's name is offered by the translator of the Nestle Greek New Testament, where he translates *kurios* as "[the] Lord." In his attempt to denote that a name doesn't belong in Revelation 19:6, he had to add the definite article "the" in front of "Lord."

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There is only one name by which we can be saved. The person being referred to here is the Son of the Almighty, who is our Savior. He is the One Who does the saving—no one else. I don't know about you, but I want to know the name of the One Who can give me salvation.

The Bible gives us a wonderful promise regarding our Heavenly Father. In reference to a time yet future, we read:

¹⁴ For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the honour of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14)

What a glorious and exciting time that will be! The knowledge of Yahweh will one day be “common knowledge,” not something understood by a select few! The prophet Zechariah offers us yet another glimpse into the future:

⁹ And Yahweh shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Yahweh, and his name one.

Although I have cited numerous texts of Scripture throughout this study, I have only scratched the surface of what the Bible has to say on the subject of “The Sacred Name Doctrine.” Should you desire to learn more on this subject, simply get a reputable Bible concordance, such as *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, and look up the terms “LORD,” “God,” “Jehovah,” “Jesus” and the title “Elohim.” As you verify and double-check the information that you encounter, expect to be surprised!

I would like to also point out that both the *Jerusalem Bible* and *Rotherham's Emphasized Bible* transliterate the name of the Almighty from the Hebrew language into English as *Yahweh* throughout the Old Testament books.

As I bring this study to a close, I am compelled to leave you with a question. In view of what you have gleaned from the information provided, what will you do with it?

May Yahweh enable you to seek His face through His Word until you can say with the great leader Moses, and with the general of Israel, Joshua (*Yahushua son of Nun*), who had come to the knowledge of the truth:

⁴ Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our Elohim Yahweh is one:

⁵ And thou shalt love Yahweh thy Elohim with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

I submit that one of many ways we can demonstrate our love for Yahweh is to learn and *use* His name! If He is the master of our lives, then we will serve Him. A servant should know and recognize the name of his Master. Joshua (*Yahushua*) son of Nun certainly did:

¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve Yahweh, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the Elohim which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the Elohim of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh. (Joshua 24:15)

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Today is our day of decision. Just as Elijah told the people to choose whom they would follow, whether it be Yahweh or Baal, we, too, have a decision to make. We have just read in the above verse the decision Joshua made. Will we be like Joshua?

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