The Name of Yeshua

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Miriam (Mary) in Luke 1:31, He declared that she would give birth to a son miraculously, and that she was to give Him the Hebrew name Yeshua (English: Jesus). Later, Joseph was given a similar instruction in Matthew 1:21, while also being told that the reason was: "for He will save His people from their sins." He received His name according to custom on the eighth day after His birth (Lk 2:21).

Forty days after His birth, Yeshua was presented to Adonai at the temple in Jerusalem. On that day, He was observed by a righteous man named Simeon, who declared under divine inspiration that He was seeing the salvation of God in the person of Yeshua (Lk 2:30). So, clearly the concept of God's way of salvation was confirmed from the very beginning of Yeshua's life by the name that He had been given.

The Etymology of His Name

The English name Jesus is the result of a progression of alterations and transliterations through multiple languages. This progression began with the Hebrew archetype *Hoshea* (הוֹשֵׁעַ), a proper name meaning "Deliverer," which is derived from the verb *yasha* (יָשַׁע), meaning "save."

In Numbers 13:16, Moses changed the name of *Hoshea,* the son of Nun, to *Yehoshua* (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ). That name is derived by affixing a *yod* (י), the first letter of God's divine name (יהוה) to the beginning of *Hoshea,* thus rendering his new name as *Yehoshua,* meaning "The LORD is Salvation" or "The LORD Saves." English translations render *Yehoshua* as Joshua.

In the days of King David and beyond, people began naming sons with the name *Yeshua* (יֵשׁוּעַ), which is an abbreviated version of *Yehoshua.* The *Tanakh* (Old Testament) records ten different individuals with that shortened version. Thus, *Yeshua* retains the same meaning of "The LORD is Salvation" or, more simplified, "Salvation." This name is written in the same way in Aramaic, the common language of the second temple period. This, then, is the name that was given to the son of Joseph and Miriam.

When the *Tanakh* was translated from Hebrew into Koine Greek during the second century B.C., the translators of the Septuagint rendered the Hebrew name Yeshua as the Greek name *Iesous* (Ἰησοῦς). The "-s" ending is necessitated in Greek for masculine singular names. *Iesous* is how the New Testament refers to the son of Joseph and Miriam.

When Latin replaced Greek as the dominant literary language of the church, *Iesous* was rendered as *IESVS.* Later modifications within the Latin language included the use of lower case letters and the addition of the letter "u" to distinguish the vowel sound from the consonant sound of the same original Hebrew letter *vav* (ו). Thus, in Latin, the name became *Iesus.*

The English name Jesus is based on the Latin *Iesus.* When English was initially formulated, both letters "i" and "j' shared the same soft sound. Thus, Jesus was pronounced exactly the same as *Iesus.* By the 17th century, the "j" had hardened, which shifted the pronunciation of Jesus to the form spoken today.

The Error of Alternate Forms

Some groups within the Hebrew Roots and Sacred Name Movement argue that the correct pronunciation of His name is *Yahshua*. In order to assign special power to His name, proponents insert a *shin* (שׁ) in the middle of God's divine name (יהוה), resulting in a new word *Yahshua* (יהשוה).

There are multiple problems with this approach. The name *Yahshua* (יהשוה) does not appear anywhere in the *Tanakh,* nor is it found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, inscriptions, or any other archaeological evidence, or any rabbinical texts. It first appears in the teachings of the Sacred Name movement, which grew out of the Church of God, 7th Day, in the late 1930s. Moreover, the pronunciation of *Yahshua* violates fundamental Hebrew phonology, and thus is an impossible rendering. This word is a fabrication of people who lack full understanding of the Hebrew language. No one with any true competence in Semitic languages, and Hebrew in particular, support the legitimacy of this alternate form.