



## Correspondence

Comments on articles appearing in the magazine are always welcome, and should be addressed to the editor in whose section the article appears.

### The names of God in the New Testament

Regarding the discussion on this theme ([Feb. 2001](#), p. 58 and earlier), the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ is all-sufficient for our present needs. We are clearly taught by him to use but three forms of address when coming into the Divine presence, namely:

- We must worship the *Lord* our *God*
- Our holy love is to the *Lord* our *God*
- We love and worship the *Father* in heaven.

These three honourable titles are the only ones we are permitted to use when approaching the Most High, the great Almighty, in humble prayer. These are clear and distinct teachings of the Master, in word, in spirit and in literal truth.

These teachings are in harmony with our fundamental doctrines, as defined in the *Statement of Faith*, indicating the essentials of status and relationship to all.

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The author of the above article (Oct. 2000, p. 376) is surely claiming too much when he says at the conclusion: "The New Testament writers . . . were not 'moved' . . . to use the Hebrew names for God in their writings", and for this reason implies that believers today should instead place more importance on the use of the New Testament titles of God, such as *Abba*, 'Father'.

On the contrary, I submit that there are good reasons to be convinced that the New Testament writers did indeed use some of the Hebrew names and titles of God. In particular, there is evidence to suggest that at least the Hebrew Memorial Name of God, YHWH (often referred to as the Tetragrammaton from the fact that there are four letters, and usually expressed by us as Yahweh), when it occurs in passages quoted from the Old Testament in the New, was simply transferred as Hebrew characters into the Greek text. This evidence suggests that these renditions were later lost from the very early Greek texts, probably through ignorance, when subsequent copyists substituted these unfamiliar Hebrew letters with

the more meaningful to them common Greek words *Kurios*, 'Lord', and *Theos*, 'God'. As a consequence, I submit that, contrary to Brother Pinfield's conclusions, the Hebrew names and titles of God are still every bit as important to today's believers as they were in the Old Testament times. I would ask readers to consider the following.

#### Was the Hebrew Name of God understood by first-century believers?

In Acts 15:14, James declared: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name [Greek, for the name of Him]". Then, to support his statement, James quotes Amos 9:11,12 from the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name [Greek, the name of Me] is called, saith the Lord, Who doeth all these things".

It is significant that the Memorial Name is found twice in this Old Testament quotation, especially as it is associated with the very significant reference to the ecclesia being taken out of the Gentiles for (the purpose of) God's Name. Surely James, a Jew fully knowledgeable of the Old Testament Scriptures, would have known God's Hebrew Name, especially the future memorial aspect of its meaning as detailed by him, no matter from what language version he was quoting.

Brother Pinfield mentions the importance of the title *Abba*, 'Father', to New Testament readers, and this is probably most clearly seen in the first line of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father Which art in heaven" (Mt. 6:9). However, the importance of the term 'Father' (Gk. *Patēr*) in the Lord's Prayer has to be balanced by the very next line: "Hallowed be Thy name [Gk. the name of You]". The question has to be asked, What name of God would the first-century believers have understood from the second line of this model prayer?

In Luke 4:17 our Lord is described as reading in the synagogue at Nazareth, from the (Hebrew)

scroll of Isaiah, the passage 61:1,2, where once in each verse the Memorial Name of God is found. Although the Jews substituted the title *Adonai*, 'Lord' (literally 'lords'), for YHWH in their readings from the Scriptures, what would Christ have read here? We know from other passages of his disdain for the petty restrictions of the Jews, so we can safely conclude that he would have read YHWH as written, probably to the chagrin of his pharisaic Jewish audience. His later words recorded in John 17, where in his prayer to God he says, "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world . . . And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it" (vv. 6,26), would appear to confirm this point.

The above suggests that God's Hebrew Name was at least understood by the Jews in the days of the Lord, even if it was not in common usage. So, if the believers down through the ages since the first century are to be a people for God's Name YHWH (Ex. 3:15), and as the first-century believers at least understood the importance of that Name, why should His distinctive Hebrew Name be missing from the Greek Scriptures?

#### **The Hebrew names and titles of God in the Greek New Testament**

Brother Pinfield referred in the article to the Hebrew title *Yahweh Sabaoth* (Hosts), which occurs twice in the Greek New Testament today as *Kurios Sabaoth*, in Romans 9:29 in a quotation from Isaiah 1:9 and in James 5:4 (cf. Deut. 24:15), the implication being that this supports his supposition that the Memorial Name was not in the original Greek of the New Testament. On the contrary, I submit that the absence of the Hebrew Name and the presence of the Hebrew title *Sabaoth* is most significant; it indicates to believers today that the Greek text may have been altered from what it was in the original manuscripts here (and also in other passages), with 'Yahweh' being changed to '*Kurios*' and '*Sabaoth*' remaining.

Other Hebrew titles of God are in the original Hebrew of Old Testament passages quoted in the New, for example, *Elohim*, 'Mighty ones', in Exodus 3:6, quoted in Acts 7:32, and *El*, 'Power', in Hosea 1:10, quoted in Romans 9:26, suggesting again that at the very least the first-century believers were not ignorant of these titles. Further, it is not beyond belief that these titles, like the Memorial Name, could have been in the early New Testament texts, but have since been lost.

#### **Indirect evidence from the Septuagint**

There is indirect evidence from texts of the Septuagint Greek Old Testament Scriptures of the early occurrence of YHWH in the original Greek New Testament. In the foreword to *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*, first published in 1950 (revised edition 1969) by the 'Jehovah's Witnesses', facsimile examples are shown of papyrus fragments of the Greek version of the book of Deuteronomy from the first or second centuries B.C. which clearly contain the Tetragrammaton, written in reverse order to the Greek characters, as is the Hebrew manner.

Did the first-century believers have copies of the Septuagint Greek text with the Memorial Name in Hebrew characters? The Foreword goes on to say that about A.D. 128 Aquila's Greek version contained the Tetragrammaton, and in A.D. 245 Origen produced an edition of the Scriptures with six versions side by side in six columns, called the Hexapla, in which one Greek version had the Tetragrammaton.

The Foreword then goes on to quote from Jerome, who in the third century said: "ignorant readers of the LXX imagined the Tetragrammaton to be a Greek word and actually pronounced it 'Pipi' ". This was because of the similar appearance of the four Hebrew characters of the Tetragrammaton (when written in reverse order as stated above) to the letters of the Greek alphabet which form the word 'Pipi'.

The Foreword further says that there is evidence that Matthew's Gospel was first written by him in Hebrew, and that copies of the same existed until at least the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. Again, the writings of Jerome suggest this was the case. So, when (as is believed) Matthew translated his Gospel from Hebrew into Greek, as the Septuagint with the Hebrew Tetragrammaton was already in existence Matthew would have had good grounds for using it in Old Testament quotations in his Gospel record. Similarly, it can be accepted that other writers of the New Testament could have done the same when they quoted Old Testament passages containing the Memorial Name.

The Foreword concludes by saying that the evidence is that the original text of the New Testament was tampered with, as was that of the Septuagint, to remove the Tetragrammaton. This must have occurred from about the third century onwards.

So is the modern translator justified in using the Hebrew Memorial Name in translating the

Greek New Testament text? As the Greek words *Kurios* and *Theos* are universally acknowledged by authorities to be very inferior substitutes for the original Hebrew Names and titles of God, then using the Hebrew can be justified at least where Old Testament passages containing these names and titles are quoted in the New. Given the appropriation of the Memorial Name (howeverbeit in the demonstrably incorrect form 'Jehovah') by the publishers of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, one can understand why the translators who produced this version used the Memorial Name 237 times.

This number is probably excessive and without justification. However, it is interesting to consider that Benjamin Wilson (the producer of the well-known *Emphatic Diaglott*) was, in 1864, one of the first to introduce the Memorial Name into the New Testament, using it eighteen times in quotations from the Old Testament from Matthew to Acts in his English translation of the New Testament.

### Conclusion

So, in conclusion, I submit there is good evidence to suggest that as a minimum the Hebrew Name of God was originally transferred into the Greek New Testament text in quotations from the Old and later lost.

But why, the reader might ask, did the Spirit of God, which oversaw the development of the New Testament, allow these renditions to be lost? The question might also be asked as to why the truth of the Scriptures was generally lost from about the second or third century. Other than the fact that the "falling away" was predicted in the Scriptures of truth, in both cases we do not really know, we can only say that it was the will of the Father. In any event we do know that "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour [glory] of kings [including those of the future age] is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2).

So then, even though the (Hebrew) title of God, *Abba*, 'Father', gains a new importance in the New Testament through its use by our Lord, we should never down-play or forget the distinctiveness, the majesty and the future fulfilment aspect of the Hebrew Name of God, *Yahweh*, for all times, including the "times of the Gentiles", for this Name is to be the basis of the "name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

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Another reader has submitted a copy of a book called *The Tetragrammaton and the Christian Greek Scriptures*, by Lynn Lundquist (published by the author at PO Box 301294, Portland, Oregon 97294-9294, USA, no cost stated), which goes to exhaustive lengths to demonstrate that *Yahweh* was never in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament.

This book was written specifically to oppose the Jehovah's Witnesses' claim that it was. Two main points are made:

- 1 Not one of the 5,000 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, some going back to the third century A.D., contain *Yahweh*, all use *Kurios*, even where the Old Testament is being quoted.
- 2 There exists an extensive body of writings by early Christians in which the New Testament is extensively quoted, all with *Kurios*, not *Yahweh*. Though these writings contain much about various controversies, there is nothing about any controversy over the exclusion of *Yahweh* from Greek manuscripts. Some of these writers flourished only a hundred years after Christ.—*T.B.*

### Lot's daughters

Regarding Brother Russell Ebbs' article, "Lot and Sodom", I would like to question the assumption in the subheading, 'Two immoral daughters' (Feb. 2001, p. 41), for the simple reason that Scripture does not condemn them. We are presented with the bare facts without comment, so we need to have sound reasons for adverse judgement on their behaviour.

Brother Ebbs comments that the elder daughter was wrong when she said, "there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us" (Gen. 19:31). True, but that was her *perception* at the time because they had just survived a holocaust which had completely destroyed their 'world', and they were living in an isolated cave with no sign of any other humans.

In assessing Bible characters we need to heed the inspired words of Balaam, "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (Num. 23:8). Those who do this are likely to be proved wrong. For example, Jewish commentators who condemn Joseph for his apparent lack of regard for his parents fail to appreciate that Joseph had an overriding imperative to fulfil his inspired dreams and convert his brethren, and he was prepared