

THE FATHER'S NAME

Is It In the New Testament? By Voy Wilks

Casually read, New Testament Scriptures seem never to indicate a personal name for the heavenly Father. By contrast, translators tell us that the four capital letters L-O-R-D which appear in the Old Testament have been substituted for the name "Yahweh"—an admission that at one time the Father's personal name was present in the Scriptures approximately 7,000 times. Why, then, is it not in the New Testament today? If it is not, is this an indication we need not use the Father's Name?

It appears New Testament Scriptures once contained the Sacred Name, but scribes—evidently Gentile scribes—removed the name. Mr. George Howard, Associate Professor of Religion and Hebrew at the University of Georgia, writing in Biblical Archaeology Review, tells us:

"Many early copies of the New Testament abbreviate sacred words (nomina sacra). The earliest of these abbreviations stand for 'God,' 'Lord,' 'Christ,' and 'Jesus.' Abbreviations of these words were formed by writing their first and last letters and placing a line over them. Thus, using English to illustrate, 'God' would appear as GD and 'Lord' as LD." [1]

*Mr. Howard points out that Gentile believers, unlike Jewish believers, had no traditional attachment to the Sacred Name, so this is reflected in most ancient copies of the (Greek) Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. The name YHWH was **replaced** by the Greek term 'kyrios'. However, a significant number of Septuagint manuscripts have been found in which the name YHWH was retained in the Septuagint text. Mr. Howard makes other interesting observations:*

*"When the Septuagint which the New Testament church used and quoted contained the Hebrew form of the divine name, the New Testament writers no doubt included the Tetragrammaton in their quotations. But when the Hebrew form of the divine name was **eliminated** in favor of Greek substitutes in the Septuagint, **it was eliminated also from the New Testament quotations from the Septuagint.***

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

*"Thus toward the end of the first Christian century, the use of surrogates (kyrios and theos) and their contractions **must have crowded out** the Tetragrammaton in **both** Testaments. Before long the divine name was lost to the Gentile church except insofar as it was reflected in the contracted surrogates or remembered by scholars. Soon, even the contracted substitutes lost their original significance and were joined by a host of other abbreviated 'nomina sacra' which **had no connection** with the divine name at all." [2]*

Mr. Howard does not speculate on why surrogate titles crowded out the name YHWH from Scriptures near the end of the first century C.E. There were, however, pressing events which account for this and a number of other changes in religious views and practices among Gentiles, brought about by imperial hostility against the Jews.

Political Developments Shape Religion

◦ *Because of hostility against them, Jews were for a time expelled from Rome as early as C.E. 54 by Claudius Caesar (Acts 18:2).*

◦ *In 66-70 C.E. the Jews revolted against the Romans and were defeated. Hatred of the Jews continued to increase.*

◦ *Between 80-90 C.E. unbelieving Jews adopted the curse proposed by Samuel the Small. This curse against Yahshua's followers was a means of making them known so they could be expelled from the synagogue. Increasingly this dissuaded both Jewish and Gentile believers from worshiping in the synagogue. [3]*

◦ *In C.E. 115 the Jewish people again revolted, thus earning more Roman hostility. [4]*

◦ *During his reign in Judea (132–135) Bar kokeba, a radical in the extreme, ordered that Yahshua's followers be treated with dreadful torments unless they renounced Yahshua as the Messiah. [5]*

◦ *In C.E. 132 the Jewish people again revolted against the Romans. Hadrian, who crushed this revolt (in 135), ruled from 117 to 138, and placed harsh laws and cruel punishment upon the Jewish people, as had some of the Roman emperors before him. Jews were required to pay more taxes than anyone else, and it was unlawful to keep the festivals. [6] To these exacting laws were added the following:*

(1) The death penalty for Sabbath keeping.

(2) The death penalty for studying Scriptures.

(3) The death penalty for circumcising children.

(4) The death penalty to any Jew for entering, or residing in, the city of Jerusalem. [7]

◦ *Roman authorities considered Jewish every person who kept the Sabbath, so they mistreated Gentile believers as if they were Jewish. When these cruel persecutions arose, many Gentiles chose not to be labeled as Jews. To convince authorities they were not Jewish, most*

Gentiles dropped the "Jewish" Sabbath, the "Jewish" law, and the "Jewish" festivals. [8]

◦ *Until C.E. 135 every bishop in the faithful assembly at Jerusalem had been Jewish. Never again. All Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, so from that time onward, every bishop of the Jerusalem assembly was a Gentile. [9]*

◦ *Bruce Metzger writes: "...after the Jewish rebellion under Hadrian, it became vitally important for those who were not Jews to avoid exposing themselves to suspicion; and the observance of the Sabbath was one of the most noticeable indications of Judaism." [10]*

◦ *"Taking into account the existing restrictions which prohibited every form of Jewish worship—especially in the city of Aelia Capitolina [Jerusalem]—it would seem logical to assume that the Gentile Christians adopted Sunday at this time [135] as their day of worship to avoid any possible suspicion of connection with Judaism in the eyes of the Romans." [11]*

◦ *From the time of Hadrian all connection between Jews and Christians ceased, and they no longer occupied the position of two hostile bodies belonging to the same house, but they became two entirely distinct bodies." [12]*

*Possibly it was easy to rationalize these actions for the purpose of saving their lives and those of family members. That Gentile believers also **dropped** from their worship and their Scriptures. **The Name** of the "Jewish" **Elohim** during these trying times seems more than coincidental. Abandoning The Name must have been for purposes of expediency—to be rid of the persecution which accompanied the Jewish religion.*

Vestiges of the Name Remain

They are easily overlooked, but vestiges of the name "Yahweh" are still present in the King James Version, although most other versions have allowed even these to slip away. In at least four New Testament Scriptures, the King's Men retained the four capital letters to indicate Yahweh's name. These letters L-O-R-D (all in capitals), are found in quotations from the Old Testament in which Yahweh's name originally appeared, and so are retained in the New Testament in the following passages:

"The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, til I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Mt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36; Lk. 20:42; Acts 2:34; from Ps. 110:1).

*We have every reason to believe that the Savior declared the Father's name to his disciples, if not to the general public. Also he worshiped the Father by the name **Yahweh**. Please review Psalms 22. Verses 1 through 24 are exact prophecies of the Messiah, it seems.*

*Within these verses are at least 15 separate prophecies concerning his life, his trial and death. Is it reasonable to suppose that 14 of these prophecies were fulfilled, but the 15th prophecy failed? If Yahshua is indeed the Messiah, it would seem that **none** of the 15 could fail; all must have been fulfilled. This would include the prophecy which says,*

*"I will **declare thy name** unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22:22 KJV).*

*This makes it a reasonable certainty that Yahshua did, indeed, praise the name **Yahweh** in the assembly, and taught his followers to do the same. On one occasion he confirmed this by saying to the heavenly Father,*

*"I have **declared** unto them **thy name**, and **will declare it**;..." (Jn. 17:26).*

*Yahshua boldly declared the Father's name, so is it logical to assume his disciples never once recorded The Name in their writings? No. Indications are, The Name was originally written in the New Testament Scriptures. Just as Yahshua praised The Name in the congregation, **let us**, too, praise the name "Yahweh."*

"O give thanks to Yahweh; call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing unto him, sing praises to him, tell of his wonderful works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek Yahweh rejoice!" (Ps. 105:1-3 RSV). So be it. (Emphasis added throughout).

References

- 1. Biblical Archaeology Review, Volume 4, Number 1, 3/78; Article: "The Name of G-d In the New Testament," page 12.*
- 2. Ibid, pages 14,13, & 14.*
- 3. Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday, by Samuele Bacchlocchi; The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome; 1975, page 35.*
- 4. Pictorial History of the Jewish People, by Nathan Ausubel; Craven Publishers, NY; 1953, page 89.*
- 5. Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday, page 37.*
- 6. Pictorial History of the Jewish People, by Nathan Ausubel; Crown Publishers, NY; 1953, pages 89,90.*
- From Sabbath to Sunday, by Samuele Bacchlocchi; The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome; 1977, page 173.*
- Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday, page 40.*
- 7. From Sabbath to Sunday, by Samuele Bacchlocchi; The Gregorian*

University Press, Rome; 1977, pages 159, 160, 172, 178, 181-183, 198, 212.

8. *Who's Who In Jewish History*, by Joan Comay, David MaKay Company, Inc, NY; 1974, page 222.

Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday, pages 56,60 (See foot-note also).

9. *Ecclesiastical History*, by Eusebius; Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI; 1976; pages 131, 132.

10. *Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday*, page 42 (As quoted by Bacchlocchi).

11. *Ibid*, page 43.

12. *Ibid*, page 52.

THE FAITH

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