

Nazarenes and the Name of YHWH **by James Trimm**

One major distinction between Nazarene Judaism and mainline Judaism of the first century was in regard to their usage of the name of YHWH. While mainline Judaism had limited and in some cases even banned the use of the name of YHWH, Nazarenes were at time persecuted for not participating in this ban.

Banning the Name

Although use of the Name of YHWH was clearly commonplace in Tenach times (Old Testament times), by the first century the Name was used only in the Temple. Even when reading the Scriptures, mainline Judaism used euphemisms or substitutions instead of pronouncing the name (j.Meg. 71d). According to the Talmud, after the time of Simon the Just (a contemporary of Alexander the Great) the priest stopped using the Name in the blessings (b.Yoma 49b). The ban on the name however, did not continue in this form. Later in the Second Temple era the name was used, but only in the Temple as the Mishnah states:

.In the sanctuary one says the Name as it is written but in the provinces, with a euphemism.. (m.Sotah 7:6; b.Sotah 38b; m.Tamid 7:2)

In fact the name was used in the Temple even in giving greetings, as the Mishnah states:

[speaking of behavior on the Temple grounds] And they ordained that an individual should greet his fellow with [God's] name, in accordance with what is said, "And behold Boaz came from Bethlehem; and he said to the reapers, `YHWH be with you!' And they answered, `YHWH bless you" (Ruth 2:4) (m.Ber. 9:5)

The first century Jewish historian Josephus mentions the ban on using the name of YHWH. Josephus, writing on the events of Exodus 3, writes:

.Whereupon God declared to him [Moses] his holy Name, which had never been discovered to men before; concerning which it is not lawful for me to say anymore.. (Josephus; Antiquities 2:12:4)

This ban on speaking the name of YHWH seems to have been almost universal by the first century. Even the nonconformists of the Qumran community (generally held to be Essenes) held to the ban. The Manual of Discipline states:

Anyone who speaks aloud the M[ost] Holy Name of God, [whether in.] or in cursing or as a blurt in time of trial or for any other reason, or while he is reading a book or praying, is to be expelled, never again to return to the society of the Yahad. (1QS Col. 6 line 27b - Col. 7 line 2a)

After the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. Pharisaic Judaism banned use of the Name of YHWH altogether. The new halacha was that the name was "to be hidden" (b.Pes. 50a) and "to be kept secret" (b.Kidd. 71a).

That the practice of using euphemisms in place of the Name of YHWH began at a very early date, long before the first century, is made clear from three important sources: the Septuagint, the Psalms and the Book of Daniel.

The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Tenach which was made around 250 B.C.E.. There is much debate as to whether the Septuagint originally contained the name of YHWH or simply the euphemisms for the Name. However the Septuagint translators paraphrased Lev. 24:16 (15 in Jewish copies) in such a way as to make it clear that the ban on the name existed by the time the Septuagint was translated. The Hebrew text of Lev. 24:16 reads (in English):

And whoever blasphemes the name of YHWH shall surely be put to death. (Lev. 24:16 from the Hebrew)

However the Septuagint translators paraphrased the text to mean:

And he that names the name of the Lord, Let him die the death. (Lev. 24:16 LXX)

This paraphrase makes it clear that the ban on the name existed at the time the Septuagint was translated.

Further evidence that the ban in the name was very early can be found by comparing Psalms 14 and 53. These two Psalms are almost identical except that YHWH in verses 2, 4, 6 and 7 of Psalm 14 has been changed to ELOHIM (God) in Ps. 53. This is an important piece of evidence which tells us many things:

The practice of using euphemisms in place of the name of YHWH predates the editing and redaction of the Book of Psalms.

At the time that the book of Psalms was edited the practice of substitution existed but was not universal, since the name is used in most of the Psalms including Psalm 53's twin Psalm 14.

Final evidence that the ban on the use of the name of YHWH is much older than the first century is found in the Aramaic sections of Daniel. Although the name appears in the Hebrew portions of Daniel it is conspicuously missing from the larger, Aramaic portion of the book. This tells us that by the time that Daniel was written it was the custom of at least some, not to use the name in another language besides Hebrew.

Not only did mainline Judaism read substitutions such as "Elohim" and "Adonai" when they came to YHWH in reading the Tenach, the ancient scribes of the Tenach actually substituted in many places "Adonai" for YHWH in the text itself. These in many translations are printed as "Lord". The official list given in the Massorah (107:15 Ginsburg edition) contain the 134 instances as follows:

Gen. 18:3,27,30,32; 19:18; 20:4 Ex. 4:10,13; 5:22,,; 15:17; 34:9,9 Num. 14:17 Josh. 7:8 Judg. 6:15; 13:8 1Kings 3:10,15; 22:6 2Kings 7:6; 19:23 Isa. 3:17,18; 4:4; 6:1,8,11; 7:14,20; 8:7; 9:8,17; 10:12; 11:11; 21:6,8,16; 28:2; 29:13; 30:20; 37:24; 38:14,16; 49:14 Ezek. 18:25,29; 21:13; 33:17,29 Amos 5:16; 7:7,8; 9:1 Zech. 9:4 Mic. 1:2 Mal. 1:12,14 Ps. 2:4; 16:2; 22:19,30; 30:8; 35:3,17,22; 37:12; 38:9,15,22; 39:7; 40:17; 44:23; 51:15; 54:4; 55:9; 57:9; 59:11; 62:12; 66:18; 68:11,17,19,22,26,32; 73:20; 77:2,7; 78:65; 79:12; 86:3,4,5,8,9,12,15; 89:49,50; 90:1,17; 110:5; 130:2,3,6 Dan.1:2; 9:3,4,7,9,15,16,17,19,19,19 Lam. 1:14,15,15; 2:1,2,5,7,18,19,20; 3:31,36,37,58 Ezra 10:3 Neh.1:11; 4:14 Job 28:28.

(NOTE: Where verses are written twice or more, such as "Ex. 34:99" means there it has been changed 2 times within the same verse.)

WHY THE BAN?

Those who enacted the ban on the use of the name in mainline Judaism did so out of extreme, though misguided, reverence for the name. The reasoning behind the ban was based on Ex. 20:7 which said in part "You shall not take the name of YHWH your God in vain" And Lev. 22:32 which says in part "and you shall not profane my holy name,". These two commandments, when brought together with the tradition recorded in the

Mishnah: ".make a hedge about the Torah." (m.Avot 1:1) resulted in a custom of not pronouncing the name at all. Thus eliminating any chance of profaning the name or taking it in vain.

WAS THE BAN SCRIPTURAL?

While it is true that those who enacted the ban on the name had the best of intentions, it has been said "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." This certainly seems to have been the case with the ban on the Name of YHWH. In the Torah YHWH states:

.My Name shall be declared in all the earth. (Ex. 9:16)

Thus the ban on use of the name conflicted directly with the Torah itself. There is a direct contradiction between the Rabbinical precept that the name should be "hidden" and "kept secret" (b.Pes. 50a; b.Kidd. 71a) and the Torah precept that the name should be "declared in all the earth." The Tenach speaks of apostates "which think to cause my people to forget my name" (Jer. 23:27). The precept of keeping the name secret also conflicts with other Tenach passages:

"My people shall know my name" (Is. 52:6)

"And those who know your name will put their trust in you" (Ps. 9:10)

"I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known my name" (Ps. 91:14)

".a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear YHWH and who meditate on His name." (Mal. 3:16)

"Let them praise Your great and awesome name- He is holy." (Ps. 99:3)

"My mouth shall speak the praise of YHWH, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever and ever." (Ps. 145:21)

"Let them praise the name of YHWH." (Ps. 148:13)

Moreover Rabbinic Judaism has produced a tradition of reading euphemisms in place of YHWH when reading the Tenach (j.Meg. 71d) and even altered the text itself in places, changing YHWH to "adonai" (Massorah (107:15 Gingsburg edition) contain the 134 instances listed previously). This tradition also conflicts directly with the Torah itself which says:

"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it." (Dt. 4:2)

".you shall not add to it [the Torah] nor take away from it." (Dt. 12:32)

DID THE NAZARENES PARTICIPATE IN THE BAN?

Could Jn. 17:6, 26 mean that Yeshua actually pronounced the name? The Toldot Yeshu, a hostile Rabbinic parody on the Gospel story records the following legend:

After King Jannaeus, his wife Helene ruled over all Israel. In the Temple was to be found the Foundation Stone on which were engraven the letters of God's Ineffable Name. Whoever learned the secret of the Name and its use would be able to do whatever he wished. Therefore, the Sages took measures so that no one should gain this knowledge. Lions of brass were bound to two iron pillars at the gate of the place of burnt offerings. Should anyone enter and learn the Name, when he left the lions would roar at him and immediately the valuable secret would be forgotten. Yeshu came and learned the letters of the Name; he wrote them upon the parchment which he placed in an open cut on his thigh and then drew the flesh over the parchment. As he left, the lions roared and he forgot the secret. But when he came to his house he reopened the cut in his flesh with a knife and lifted out the writing. Then he remembered and obtained the use of the letters. He gathered about himself three hundred and ten young men of Israel and accused those who spoke ill of his birth of being people who desired greatness and power for themselves. Yeshu proclaimed, "I am the Messiah; and concerning me Isaiah prophesied and said, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.'" He quoted other messianic texts, insisting, "David my ancestor prophesied concerning me: 'The Lord said to me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee.'" The insurgents with him replied that if Yeshu was the Messiah he should give them a convincing sign. They therefore, brought to him a lame man, who had never walked. Yeshu spoke over the man the letters of the Ineffable Name, and the leper was healed. Thereupon, they worshipped him as the Messiah, Son of the Highest.

(A similar legend about Yeshua appears in b.Shab. 104b; b.San. 67a; t.Shab. 11:15; j.Shab. 13d)

Now Hugh Schonfield theorized in his book According to the Hebrews that Toldot Yeshu is a hostile parody on the Gospel according to the Hebrews. So while this legend sounds fantastic there may be some truth at its root.

Now another passage in Matthew might also lead us that direction. The passage is Mt. 27:59-65:

59 Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Yeshua to put Him to death,

60 but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at least two false witnesses came forward

61 and said, "This [one] said "I am able to destroy the Temple of God and to build it in three days."

62 And the High Priest arose and said to him, "Do you answer nothing? What do these men testify against you?"

63 But Yeshua kept silent. And the High Priest answered and said to him, "I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

64 Yeshua said to him, "It is as you said, Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the High Priest tore his clothes, saying "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard his blasphemy!

Note the phrase TEMPLE OF GOD in verse 61. This phrase never appears in the Tenach which always has TEMPLE OF YHWH. Also in verse 64 THE POWER is a common euphemism for YHWH which should appear based on the fact that this verse combines Ps. 110:1 with Dan. 7:13 where YHWH does appear in Ps. 110:1. Could Yeshua have been being accused of blasphemy for having used the phrase "Temple of YHWH" could he have aggravated and confirmed the charge by citing the Ps. 110:1/Dan. 7:13 phrase with the name YHWH pronounced? The Mishnah sheds a great deal of light on the events of this trial. The Mishnah states:

He who blasphemes is liable only when he will have fully pronounced the Divine Name. Said R. Joshua ben Qorha, "on every day of the trial they examine the witnesses with a substitute name. once the trial is over, they would not put him to death with the euphemism, but they put everyone out and ask the most important of the witnesses, saying to him, "Say, what exactly did you hear?" And he says what he heard. And the judges stand on their feet and tear their clothing. (m.San. 7:5)

Now from this passage of the Mishnah we learn many things about Yeshua's trial. It was normal for the witness to use a euphemism in his testimony of what Yeshua said. We also know that a charge of blasphemy required that the offender had "fully pronounced the Divine Name." It is therefore clear that Yeshua had been pronouncing the name of YWHH. Normally at the end of the trial the room would have been emptied and the witness asked to repeat the "blasphemy" without the euphemism. However in this case Yeshua surprised everyone. He wanted his statement heard by all so he repeated one of his "blasphemous" statements right there in the beit din. We know that he used the actual name and not "the Power" here because it was called "blasphemy" and would not have been unless Yeshua had "fully pronounced the Divine Name." That Yeshua also spoke the name of YHWH as part of his "blasphemy" was clear from the phrase "the High Priest tore his clothes" which agrees exactly with the halachah of the Mishnah "And the judges stand on their feet and tear their clothing."

Ya'akov HaTzadik (James the Just), the leader of the Nazarenes after Yeshua's death also recited the exact phrase Yeshua had recited "hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Dan. 7:13/Ps. 110:1) and was killed for having made the statement (Hegesippus as quoted by Eusebius Eccl. Hist. 2:23). Was he also killed for blaspheming the name of YHWH?

On yet another occasion certain Jews (probably pharisees) "made insurrection with one accord against Paul" (Acts. 18:12) a ringleader of the Nazarenes (Acts). They said that he "persuaded men to worship God contrary to the law." (Acts 18:13). Paul was later released with the Roman authorities saying "if it be a question of words and names and of your law, look you to it; for I will be no judge of such matters." (Acts 18:15) It seems then that Paul was accused of persuading men to worship God using the word/name of YHWH in contradiction to the ban on the name practiced by other sects of Judaism at the time.

HOW IS THE NAME PRONOUNCED?

The general belief at large is that the Divine Name is pronounced "JEHOVAH." Where did this pronunciation come from? Is it accurate?

A popular theory that has been circulating as of late has it that the name YHWH is actually four vowels IAUE. This theory is based largely on a statement made by Josephus in describing the headpiece of the High Priest. Josephus writes:

In which [headpiece] was engraved the sacred name. It consisted of four vowels. (Wars. 5:5:7)

At first this statement seems to support a four vowel theory. However on closer examination it is clear that this is not what Josephus is saying. Josephus is not supplying information about the pronunciation of the name. In fact in Antiquities 2:12:4 Josephus states that it would not be lawful for him to do so. Josephus is instead referring to the four letters YHWH which appeared on the High Priest's headpiece. But why would Josephus term these four consonants as "vowels"? As discussed earlier the Hebrew letters YUD, HEY and VAV (which make up YHWH) have no equivalents in Greek. They are generally transliterated in Greek with Greek letters that happen to be vowels. The reason for this is that when the Greeks borrowed the Phoenician/Paleo-Hebrew alphabet they used leftover consonants that did not occur in their language and used them as symbols for vowels, as Robert Whiting writes:

When the Greeks adapted the Phoenician writing system to their own language. they made a very significant change. They created signs for vowels and used them each time a vowel occurred. . The Greeks did not invent new signs for the vowels but simply converted some of the Phoenician signs that they did not need for their own language into vowel symbols. (The New Book of Knowledge Vol. 1 p. 193 "Alphabet" article by Robert M. Whiting, the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago)

As a result Hebrew YUD became the Greek vowel IOTA; Hebrew HEY became Greek vowel EPSILON and Hebrew VAV became Greek vowel UPSILON. For this reason Josephus writes that the four letters which appeared on the High Priest's headpiece were four "vowels." To the Greek speaking audience of the Greek edition of Wars of the Jews, the four letters on the High Priest's headpiece were in fact four vowels.

Some who have supported the idea that the name of YHWH is four vowels have also pointed to the use of the letters YUD, HEY and VAV in Hebrew as vowels. However the use of these letters as vowels in Hebrew is a later revision of the language. Moreover each of them serves as a vowel only when paired with a consonant, as a result none of these letters is ever a vowel when it initiates a word or syllable. Hebrew was originally a syllabary in which each letter symbolized a consonant vowel pair with the vowel being ambiguous. As Robert Whiting writes:

The Semitic peoples of Syria and Palestine developed purely syllabic writing systems. their signs expressed consonants plus any vowel. (ibid)

It was not until the ninth century B.C.E. that the Hebrew letters YUD, HEY and VAV began to double as vowels (and then only when paired with consonants). As Ellis Brotzman writes:

From about the ninth century on, certain consonants came to be used to indicate vowels. These "helping" consonants are called *matres lectionis*, literally "mothers of reading." (Old Testament Textual Criticism by Ellis R. Brotzman p. 40)

Thus prior to this time the letters YUD HEY VAV HEY (YHWH) stood for four Hebrew consonants. Even in later Hebrew an initial YUD can never represent a vowel.

The Hebrew Tenach was originally written like all ancient Hebrew, without vowels. When the Masorites (traditionalists) added vowels to the Hebrew text in the middle ages they came across a serious problem. The name had been "kept secret" and "hidden" for hundreds of years. Since the text contained only consonants in its written form, the vowels were generally unknown. In order to create vowels for the written name and continue to keep the name "secret" and "hidden" the vowels for Adonai were transplanted into the word YHWH. Later the vowels for Eloah (God) were used creating YEHOWAH. These vowels for YHWH actually violate the rules of Hebrew grammar since they use the W as a consonant and a vowel at the same time. Since in modern Hebrew the Hebrew letter WAW (later called VAV) is pronounced "V" in place of its ancient pronunciation "W", YEHOWAH became YEHOVAH. This became transliterated in the original KJV English as IEHOVAH and later when the J was added to English IEHOVAH became JEHOVAH. However the J and the V in "Jehovah" are incorrect, as are the vowels E-O-A which actually come from ELOAH. In fact only the two letters H-H are correct. The correct pronunciation of YHWH has however, been preserved.

The first evidence for the true pronunciation of YHWH is found in the Hebrew text itself in those Hebrew names of which the Divine Name forms a part. Now when a Hebrew name in the Tenach begins with part of the divine name, the vowels are given as E-O. Some examples are:

Yehoshaphat (Jehoshaphat) YEHO- Shaphat

Yehoshua (Joshua) YEHO- Shua

In these names the incorrect vowels from YEHOWAH have been transplanted into their names. However when we look instead at names which end with part of the Divine Name we find completely different vowels in the Masoretic text. Some examples are:

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) Yesha- YAHU

Yiramiyahu (Jeremiah) Yiremi- YAHU

Eliyahu (Elijah) Eli- YAHU

Moreover the "tri-gramaton" (the first three letters of YHWH) appear by themselves in the Tenach and always with the vowels being YAHU. Finally the Hebrew word Halleluyah (praise-Yah) has the first portion of the divine name with the vowels YAH.

Another source for the correct pronunciation of the name of YHWH is the Peshitta Aramaic text. The Peshitta is an Aramaic text of the Bible used by Aramaic speaking Assyrians, Syrians and Chaldeans. These Aramaic speaking peoples became Christianized in the first century C.E.. By the fourth century (long before the Masorites of the ninth century) these people created written vowels for the Aramaic text. When they added vowels to names that begin with part of the divine name they got names like YAHOSHAPHAT rather than YEHOSHAPHAT.

Further evidence as to the original pronunciation of YHWH can be found in ancient transliterations of the name into Egyptian hieroglyphics, which had written vowels. Although this author is not aware of any case in which the entire name of YHWH has been found transliterated into Egyptian hieroglyphics, there are cases where the abbreviated name (the first portion of the name) has been found transliterated in hieroglyphics. Budge's AN EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPHIC DICTIONARY give two transliterations that occur in Egyptian glyphs. The first is given on page 15 column A and is "IA" or "YA." The other is on page 142 column A and transliterates in english as "IAA" or "YAA." This supports the fact that the original pronunciation of the first syllable of the name was "YA."

Another source of evidence for the correct pronunciation of the name of YHWH can be found in ancient transliterations of the name of YHWH into cuneiform script, which unlike Hebrew script, had written vowels. In 1898 A. H. Sayce published the discovery of three clay cuneiform tablets from the time of Hammurabi which contained the phrase "Jahweh (Jehovah) is God." (Halley's Bible Handbook p. 62). Now obviously the text read "Yahweh" and not "Jahweh" as was common to transliterate it in the 19th century. (This author believes this cuneiform should be examined to see if it reads YAHUWEH rather than YAHWEH).

A further source for evidence in cuneiform is the Murashu texts. The Murashu texts are Aramaic texts written in cuneiform script on clay tablets found at Nippur. These texts date back to 464 to 404 B.C.E. and contain many Jewish names transcribed in cuneiform with the vowels. Many of these names contain part of the divine name in the name. In all these names the first portion of the name appears as YAHU and never as YEHO.

("Patterns in Jewish Personal Names in the Babylonian Diaspora" by M.D. Coogan; Journal for the Study of Judaism, Vol. IV, No. 2, p. 183f).

Transliterations of YHWH also occur in ancient Greek texts. Although late by comparison to the hieroglyphic and cuneiform evidence, these Greek transliterations also contain the name with vowels. The following chart shows a list of Greek transliterations of YHWH (in English), their date and their source:

Transliteration source and date

IAO Qumran LXX first century
IAOUE Clement of Alexandria 150 - 212 C.E.
AwOUhEI Greek Papyri ?
IAw Theodoret ?
IAh Origin 250 C.E
IAw Epiphanius 380 C.E. (NOTE: "OU" are pronounced together in Greek as "oo" as in "zoo")

Now transliterating the name of YHWH into Greek is not easy. This is because certain Hebrew letters/sounds do not occur in Greek. Among these are the letters YUD (Y); HEY (H) and VAV (W) the very letters which make up the name in Hebrew. When transliterating these letters into Greek substitutions are made. Consistently the Hebrew letter YUD (Y) is transliterated into Greek as IOTA (I). Thus all of our Greek witnesses agree that YHWH begins with YA. The next letter HEY (H) is impossible to write in Greek. Some of the Greek sources have attempted to transliterate it with OMEGA (which I have transliterated with a "w" and which is pronounced "o" as in "no." Origin has tried to use ETA for this letter (I have transliterated it with an "h"). ETA as a character descends from the Paleo-Hebrew HEY but is pronounced "ey" as in "they." Clement and the Greek Papyri agree that the next vowel is "oo" as in "zoo." Clement gives the final syllable as "E" and the Greek Papyri has "hE" which agrees with a Hebrew termination of "-eh" Thus it is evident that the Greek transliterations are consistent with a Hebrew pronunciation of "YAHUWEH."

It is clear when examining the many sources that the pronunciation of YHWH can be recovered as YAHUWEH sometimes abbreviated as YAHWEH, YAHU or YAH. This is attested to by the Yahwitic names of the Masoretic text, the Peshitta Aramaic and the Marashu texts. The true pronunciation of YHWH is also preserved in ancient transliterations of the name written in Egyptian Hieroglyphics, cuneiform and Greek, all of which had written vowels.

The restoration of the use of the name of Yahuweh with its correct pronunciation is as prophetically significant as the restoration of the

ancient sect of the Nazarenes. Such a restoration of the name of Yahweh to his people is promised in scripture:

For then will I turn to the people a pure language, That they may call upon the name of YHWH. (Zeph. 3:9)

Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know mine hand and my might; and they shall know my name is YHWH. (Jer. 16:21)

Therefore my people shall know my name. (Is. 52:6)

There is also great prophetic significance to the fact that the name has been preserved, in part through archaeological digs, as the scriptures prophecy:

And you shall be brought down, and shall speak out of the ground, and your speech shall be low out of the dust. (Is. 29:4)

Truth shall spring out of the earth. (Ps. 85:11)

We are living in wonderful times, as Yeshua tells us:

.You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahuweh!" (Mt. 23:39)

Written by James Trimm

"I will declare Your Name unto my brothers: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You." - Tehillim (Psalms) 22:22

His Name is Yahweh!