

*Challenges to the
Sacred Name
Answered*

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If a person told you his name, would you argue with him about it? Would you tell him, “No, I don’t think so. I’ll call you something else instead”? Of course not, that would be absurd! You have no right to do such a thing and you would certainly not make him too happy if you did.

Yet when it comes to the personal Name of the Father in Heaven, many believe that they have the prerogative to decide what they will call the One they worship. They will go to great lengths to avoid using the revealed Name of the Heavenly Father, Yahweh. The most creative mental gymnastics are performed in an effort to justify the continued use of common titles over the personal Name Yahweh, which the Bible says is a name above every name.

In an effort to quiet their consciences, some will argue, “He has many names.” Many will rationalize, “He knows who I mean no matter what I call Him,” while others will postulate, “His ‘name’ just means His authority.” Anyone looking into this important matter from the Scriptures, however, soon discovers that Yahweh Himself rejects all of these arguments, as well as other common assumptions about His Name.

A simple examination of the Scriptures shows that the issue of Yahweh’s Name is of paramount importance to Him — just as



your name is important to you. He thunders, “I am YAHWEH: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images,” Isaiah 42:8. The Hebrew original of this passage contains the Tetragrammaton YHWH, or Yahweh.

Yahweh is resolute about His Name. He is adamant that His people call on Him by the only Name that ensures salvation. The New Testament Book of Acts tells us, “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.

He even wrote the Third Commandment specifically to address the neglect of His Name: “Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh thy Elohim in vain; for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.” The Hebrew behind that commandment says “bring to desolation and ruin,” which is exactly what will happen if you substitute other names and titles for the one true Name.

Following are the most familiar arguments given to justify the use of substitute titles like “God” and “Lord” in place of the true Name Yahweh. We will examine each in light of the Bible to see whether any has validity.

- **“He has many names.”**

This is one of the most popular justifications advanced to avoid using the Name Yahweh. If He has many names then it is implied that no single name stands out as His one, special, personal Name. Or in other words, He has many names but no name. The problem with this argument is the failure to recognize that generic titles are not names.

Take “Mr. Sam Jones,” for instance. “Mister” is not the name of “Sam Jones.” Mister is only a title for him. Sam Jones cannot sign a document with only the word “Mister” and expect anyone to accept it as his authentic endorsement. One is a generic term that applies to any man, the other is his real name.

The same goes for the various descriptive titles for Yahweh that some erroneously think are names, like *eloah* (“mighty one”), *el shaddai* (“the all-powerful”) and *adon/adonai* (“sovereign”). Others are confused by attributions that are sometimes used in connection with His Name, like *Yahweh-Yireh* (“Yahweh provides”), *Yahweh-Zidkenu* (“Yahweh our righteousness”) and *Yahweh-Rapha* (“Yahweh our healer”).

Regardless of certain titles and attributions, He still has only one Name — Yahweh. He inspired the prophet Isaiah in 42:8 to write, “I am YAHWEH: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.” Psalm 83:18 confirms that He has but one Name: “That men may know that thou, whose

name alone is YAHWEH, art the most high over all the earth.” Nowhere in the pages of the Bible can we find a statement saying He has many names. But we can find many passages attesting to His one true Name.

- **“He knows who I mean no matter what I choose to call Him.”**

You cannot find such a statement expressed or implied anywhere in the Bible. Nowhere are we given the right to rename our Heavenly Father. To bestow a name is the sole prerogative of a superior, as when a parent names his child and as when Adam named the animals under his dominion. Since when does the one created have the right to address his Creator by any name he pleases?

To use this argument for the One who made us is the height of insolence and is utterly offensive to Yahweh. Notice His warning about such obstinacy: “If you will not hear, and if you will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, says Yahweh of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because you do not lay it to heart.” Yahweh’s Name is bound up in proper worship and in Psalm 68:4 He commands His people to praise Him by His Name. John 4:24 reminds us, “Yahweh is Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” To deliberately ignore the Truth of His Name in favor of what pleases us as His worshipers is nothing less than vain arrogance deserving of rebuke. We cannot reverse the flow of authority —Yahweh our Creator tells us how to worship Him, not the other way around. Even beyond this, His knowing “who you mean” makes no difference to Him if you refuse to honor and glorify Him as He demands, which includes using the right Name. His Name represents Him and His truths, something no other name does.

- **“The pronunciation of the Name has been lost and we don’t know how His Name was spoken.”**

Besides being false, this argument amounts to no more than an excuse — that because of supposed uncertainty we should not even

try to pronounce His Name. The fact is, the Name is given us in the Hebrew in the form of the Tetragrammaton or “four letters,” which is YHWH (Yod, Hay, Waw, Hay). Jewish scribes went to great lengths to ensure the accuracy of this Name in the Hebrew, while the Masoretes or text guardians vowel-pointed the Hebrew letters to preserve the pronunciation.

It is not true that the pronunciation of the Hebrew Name was lost. If it were then the pronunciation of the entire Hebrew Old Testament was lost as well. It would also mean that in the passing-down process of the Hebrew tongue from one generation to another, that at some point all Jews suddenly woke up and forgot how to speak their own language! If we can read the Old Testament out loud in the Hebrew, then we can also read the Name Yahweh accurately in the same Hebrew. Today the Jews read Hebrew every Sabbath in their synagogues. They have no problem pronouncing it.

Here is what the noted **Encyclopaedia Judaica** says about this issue: “The true pronunciation of the name YHWH was never lost. Several early Greek writers of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced ‘Yahweh.’ This is confirmed, at least for the vowels of the first syllable of the name, by the shorter form Yah, which is sometimes used in poetry (e.g., Ex. 15:2) and the –yahu or –yah that serves as the final syllable in very many Hebrew names,” Vol. 7, p. 680.

The **Encyclopaedia Britannica** comments: “Early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria in the 2nd century, had used the form Yahweh, thus this pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was never really lost. Greek transcriptions also indicated that YHWH should be pronounced Yahweh,” 15th Edition, Vol. X, p. 786.



Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215)

The **Catholic Encyclopedia** notes: “The saying of God, ‘I am who I am,’ is surely connected with His name that is written in the Hebrew consonantal text as Yhwh, the original pronunciation of

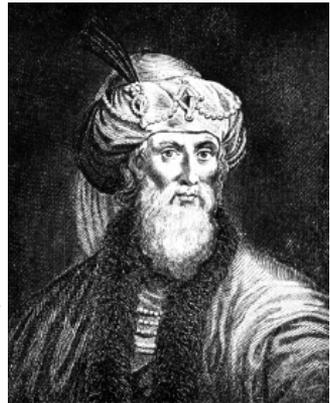
which is well attested as Yahweh,” 1967, Vol. 5, p. 743.

- **“But there are no vowels in the Hebrew so how can we know how to pronounce the four letters of YHWH correctly?”**

Vowels do exist in Hebrew, as in all languages, or else it would be impossible to speak Hebrew. Vowels are spoken via the open mouth, while consonants are spoken by closure of the lips or by tongue contact on teeth or palate. Old Testament Hebrew is composed of words written in consonants with the vowels understood.

As noted, the Masoretes in the seventh century inserted vowel points or marks in and around the Hebrew letters to preserve the correct pronunciation. Just as with our letter “Y,” there are some Hebrew letters that serve as both consonants and vowels. Amazingly, all four letters of Yahweh’s Name are such consonant-vowels. This fact can be verified in most Hebrew grammars, including **A Beginner’s Handbook to Biblical Hebrew** (Horowitz), p. 7 under “Vowel Letters”; *The Berlitz Self-Teacher*, p. 73 under “The Vanishing Dots”; **Hebrew Primer and Grammar** (Fagnani and Davidson) p. 10, under “The Quiescents and Mappiq,” and **How the Hebrew Language Grew** (Horowitz), p. 28.

First-century priest and historian Falvius Josephus writes about the sacred Name that was engraved on the headpiece of the high priest (Ex. 28:36-38): “A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraven the sacred name [of Yahweh]; it consists of four vowels,” *Wars of the Jews*, Book 5, chapter 5, p. 556.



Josephus (37 – BCE. 100 CE.)

- **“When the Bible speaks of His name it just means His authority, not His literal name.”**

It is true that to do or say something in someone’s name can

mean by the authority of that person. But that is only a small part of the meaning of Yahweh's name in His Word. Through the Hebrew verb of existence, haYah, the Name Yahweh defines the very nature, character, and essence of Yahweh. His Name means to cause to be. To claim that references to His name refer only to His authority is incongruous in many important passages. To drive home the point, we have changed the word "name" to "authority" in the following verses. See whether each still makes proper sense:

"Who has ascended up into heaven, or descended? who has gathered the wind in his fists? who has bound the waters in a garment? who has established all the ends of the earth? what is his [authority] and what is his son's [authority], if you can tell?" Prov. 30:4

"That men may know that thou, whose [authority] alone is YAHWEH, art the most high over all the earth." Ps. 83:18

"Sing unto Elohim, sing praises to his [authority] extol him that rides upon the heavens by his [authority] YAH, and rejoice before him." Ps. 68:4

"Seek him that makes the seven stars and Orion... Yahweh is his [authority]." Amos 5:8

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his [authority] Yahshua: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21

Once we realize that Yahweh has a personal, life-giving, healing, covenant Name only through which we can find salvation, to continue calling on an inanimate, generic title to provide the same blessings that His Name gives is an affront to Him and His character.

• "I speak English, not Hebrew, so I use the English 'God and 'Lord.'"

One problem here is that these are not names but common titles that can apply to any number of mighty ones or even less than mighty ones. Another problem with this statement is that "God" is not English at all but Germanic from the word gott. A "lord" is someone subordinate to a king. "Lord" derives from Old English hlafweard meaning "loaf keeper," a person who headed a feudal estate under a king. Yahweh is King of the universe, and so to address Him with a

diminutive title like Lord is a dishonor.

Lord is also related etymologically to Bel, a pagan deity. As one source notes, “In late Babylonian times the title Bel, ‘Lord,’ became synonymous with Marduk, who like Ishtar assimilated to himself various aspects of other gods,” *Babylon*, by Joan Oates, p. 172. The Companion Bible note on Isaiah 46:1 says, “Bel. Abbreviation of Baal=Lord. Here=Zeus, or Jupiter of the Greek and Roman mythology.” Neither is the term “god” free of heathen trappings. Paul wrote that there are “gods many and lords many,” 1 Corinthians 8:5. One root of “god” means to pour as in a molten image (**Oxford English Dictionary**). No wonder idols are known as gods.

How can we justify using such terms when calling on the only true Father in Heaven, and His Son, Yahshua the Messiah? The language you speak has nothing to do with the Name of the one you worship, because His Name doesn’t change from language to language (Consider that there is no English form for the French name Napoleon and neither is there a German or Russian version for the English name Churchill. Specific names transcend language. They are transliterated, not translated).

• **“I have had prayers answered using ‘God’ and ‘Lord’ so it must be okay to use those titles.”**

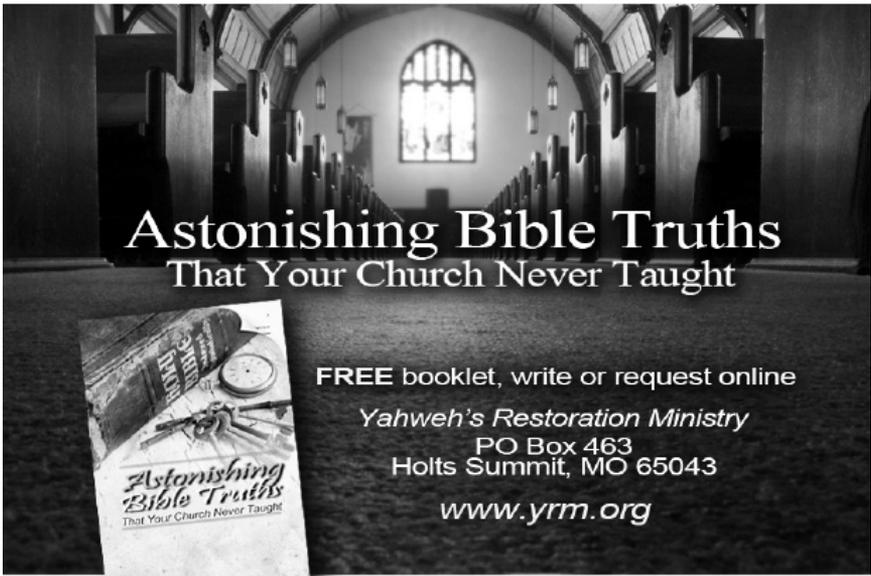
Yahshua said that even an evil person won’t give his son a stone when he cries out for bread (Matt. 7:9). Each one who seeks the Truth of Yahweh first does so with a certain lack of understanding. If Yahweh let our ignorance get in the way of our heart’s desire to seek Him, then we would soon become discouraged and give up our quest.

After more truth is revealed to us, however, then we become accountable to make the proper changes in our lives and toward True Worship. “And the times of this ignorance Yahweh winked at; but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” Acts 17:30. Our true walk must start somewhere, and if calling on Him through common titles is all we know, then Yahweh will show compassion and toleration.

But as He gives us more knowledge and Truth, He expects us to walk in all the light we are given. Paul wrote, “For you were sometimes darkness, but now are you light in the Master: walk as children of light,” Ephesians 5:8. Yahshua said, “Not every one that says unto me, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven,” Matthew 7:21.

The truth of His Name has been revealed to you and it is now your responsibility to use that knowledge to begin to honor Him by calling on His revealed, personal Name. See Psalm 34:3, 68:4 and 1Kings 8:35. He reminds us repeatedly that His people are called by His Name, 2Chronicles 7:14, Daniel 9:19 and Ephesians 3:14-15.

His Name is central to True Worship. We cannot say we truly know Him if we don’t know and call on His Name.



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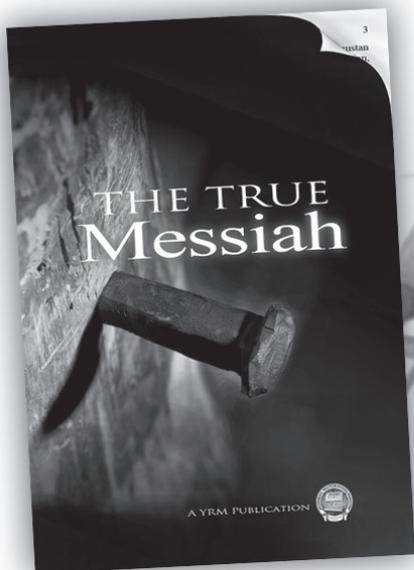
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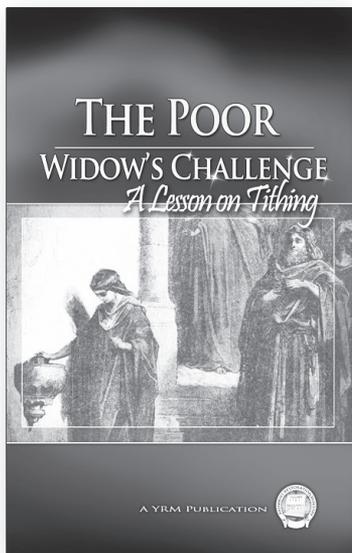
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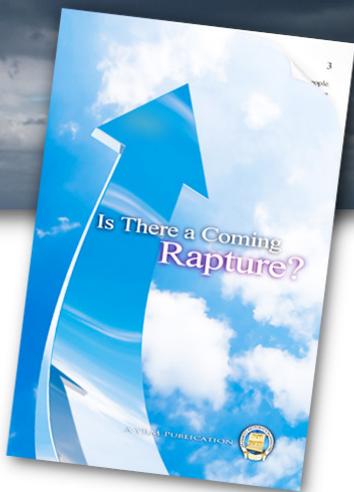
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