

James, Name of

Why do you call the brother of Yeshua, “James,” when his name was clearly Ya’akov or “Jacob”?

The given name of the half-brother of Yeshua, most commonly referred to as James the Just, was actually *Ya’akov* (יַעֲקֹב) or “Jacob.” The name *Ya’akov*, which appears in the Tanach or Old Testament for the Patriarch who was renamed *Yisrael* (יִשְׂרָאֵל) or “Israel” by God, was transliterated in the Greek Septuagint as *lakōb* (Ἰακώβ). Things get somewhat complicated in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament where a derivative form, *lakōbos* (Ἰάκωβος), is also used. Modern Hebrew New Testaments such as the Salkinson-Ginsburg and UBS 1991 versions render *lakōbos* as *Ya’akov* or “Jacob.” It is likely that *lakōbos* was used by the New Testament writers to distinguish those who had this name from the Patriarch Ya’akov or Jacob. However, most English Bibles, rather than rendering *lakōbos* as Jacob, render it as James. Some believe that this was done to appease King James I of England who commissioned the translation of the King James Bible, but this is an opinion and not a fact. It is notable that James is an English derivation of Jacob, and it was used to render *lakōbos*, to differentiate it from *lakōb*.