

FAQ

FROM THE MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS ARCHIVES (2000-2018)

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MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS
messianicapologetics.net

Frequently Asked Questions

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Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: *English Standard Version* (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: *Greek New Testament*
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: *Holman Christian Standard Bible* (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: *King James Version*
Lattimore: *The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore* (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: *Septuagint*
m. Mishnah
MT: *Masoretic Text*
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJSB: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*
OT: *Old Testament*
REB: *Revised English Bible* (1989)
RSV: *Revised Standard Version* (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: *Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version* (2014)
TNIV: *Today's New International Version* (2005)
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: *United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition*
v(s). *verse(s)*
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: *Latin Vulgate*
YLT: *Young's Literal Translation* (1862/1898)
WMB: *World Messianic Bible* (2020)

YHWH, Above the Cross

I heard a Messianic teacher say that the Divine Name YHWH was spelled out on the writing above Yeshua's cross. Is this true?

The Scripture passages which are often made light of concerning this belief include Matthew 27:37 and John 19:19 (cf. Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38):

“And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, ‘THIS IS YESHUA THE KING OF THE JEWS’” (Matthew 27:37, NASU).

“Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, ‘YESHUA THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS’” (John 19:19, NASU).

What Bible readers know for certain from the Gospels, is that Hebrew was not the only language in which this was written. John 19:20 makes the important remark, “many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Yeshua was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin *and* in Greek” (NASU). At the very least, this indicates that there were more than just Hebrew-speaking Jews present in Jerusalem at the time of Yeshua's execution, but also probably indicates that various Greeks and Romans present at this event needed to know that Yeshua was indeed King of the Jews.

Some have made light of the record in John 19:21-22, where “the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, ‘Do not write, “The King of the Jews”; but that He said, “I am King of the Jews.”’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written I have written’” (NASU). This claim is made to support the belief that the Divine Name YHWH was somehow spelled out in the Hebrew above the Lord as He was dying. Some conclude that the Sadducees wanted the name YHWH pulled down and the words be re-written. But notice that this is not what the text states. The Sadducees wanted it torn down because they wanted Pilate to write the mocking statement, “I am King of the Jews.” History demonstrates how Pontius Pilate was no friend of the Jewish people in Israel, and that he was censored by the authorities in Rome for how he treated them. Varied traditions indicate that he was either executed, committed suicide, or was exiled because of his poor administration.¹ If indeed antagonistic toward the Jews, Pilate would have wanted Yeshua's execution-stake to say something to the effect that the king of the Jews was a “dead man,” and that Rome had prevailed.

While our ministry **fully affirms** the Divinity of Messiah Yeshua, we can find no evidence to support the conclusion that the name YHWH was spelled above the cross in the words “Yeshua the Nazarene, the King of the Jews.” Many who make this assumption claim that the Hebrew would have read *Yeshua haNatzri v'melech haYehudim*, beginning with the first four letters of God's Divine Name: YHVH or YHWH. The problem with this is that the statement actually translates as “Yeshua the Nazarene **and** king of the Jews,” notably including the Hebrew conjunction *vav*, generally meaning “and.” If this were an accurate rendering it would be reflected in John's Greek transcription with the conjunction *kai*, also generally meaning “and.” But John 19:19 reads *Iēsous ho Nazōraios ho basileus tōn Ioudaiōn*, with no *kai* present in the text.

The conjunction *vav* or “and” is also not present in modern Hebrew translations of the Greek Apostolic Scriptures in John 19:19. The Salkinson-Ginsburg translation reads with *Yeshua haNatzri melech haYehudim*,

¹ Lorman M. Petersen, “Pilate,” in Merrill C. Tenney, ed., *The New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp 789-790.

meaning “Yeshua the Nazarene, king of the Jews.” The 1991 UBSHNT reads with *Yeshua m’Natzerat melech haYehudim*, “Yeshua from Nazareth, king of the Jews.” While it may sound interesting, the Hebrew which would have appeared above Yeshua’s cross or execution-stake did not spell out the Divine Name YHWH.

If Bible readers really want to see Yeshua the Messiah portrayed as YHWH, then it would be much more beneficial for them to investigate the many intertextual references from the Tanach, quoted in the Apostolic Scriptures—where passages directly applying to the LORD **are applied to Yeshua**, with Him integrated into the Divine Identity.²

² For further consideration, consult Robert M. Bowman, Jr. and J. Ed Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place: The Case for the Deity of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).