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The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew

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Introduction: The Divine Name and Human Salvation

The opening chapters of the Gospel of Matthew carry a theological freight that has shaped Christian understanding for two millennia. At the heart of this opening stands a naming ceremony unlike any other in Scripture. In **Matthew 1:21**, an angel appears to Joseph in a dream and declares: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." To modern readers, the name *Jesus*may feel familiar, even ordinary. But in its original Hebrew context, this name is a thunderclap of meaning—a compressed sermon that links the coming Messiah directly to the saving work of the God of Israel.

When we examine **The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew**, we uncover layers of linguistic, theological, and covenantal significance. The name *Jesus* is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yeshua* (]•µ^•Á]U¼^%·), whic itself is a shortened form of *Yehoshua*(]•°]EÕ[•é[µÁ^%·) meaning "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation." This a explores how Matthew, writing to a Jewish audience deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, wove this name into a tapestry of prophecy, covenant fulfillment, and the very identity of God. We will examine the Hebrew roots of the name, the Old Testament echoes in Matthew's narrative, the significance of the naming event itself, and the implications for understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew Name Behind the Greek Text

To appreciate **The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew**, we must first understand the original language of the name. Matthew's Gospel, though preserved for us in Greek, is saturated with Semitic idioms, quotations from the Hebrew Bible (often from the Septuagint but with a distinctive Jewish flavor), and a narrative structure that presupposes knowledge of Jewish history and Scripture. The name "Jesus" (Greek: 8;ÃÑ¥ÞÂ, a direct transliteration of the Aramaic/Hebrew *Yeshua*.

Yeshua appears in post-exilic biblical books such as Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g., Joshua the high priest in Zechariah 3). It is a contraction of *Yehoshua*, the name of Moses' successor. The root verb *yasha* (]•¸^•·\ â) means "to save, deliver, or give victory." Hovering over the name is the divine name **Yahweh** (YHWH), making *Yehoshua* a theophoric name meaning "Yahweh is salvation." Thus, when the angel instructs Joseph to name the child *Yeshua*, he is declaring that this child embodies the saving presence of God himself.

Matthew's Gospel, more than any other, emphasizes the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. The naming episode in chapter 1 is immediately preceded by a genealogy that traces Jesus' lineage to Abraham and David, anchoring him in the covenantal history of Israel. The naming is not incidental; it is the climax of the angelic announcement. By giving the child this distinctly Hebrew name, Matthew signals that the salvation promised to Israel is arriving in person.

Matthew 1:21 in Its Jewish Context

The verse itself reads: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." For a Jewish audience steeped in the Scriptures, this declaration would immediately recall the divine warrior who delivers Israel from bondage. The phrase "save his people from their sins" goes beyond political deliverance from Rome—it points to the deeper problem of sin that separates humanity from God. This is a radical claim. The Covenant could only symbolize.

Yeshua will accomplish what God Christ is a radical claim. The Covenant could only symbolize.

The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew also connects to the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14, which Matthew cites in verse 23: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (meaning "God with us"). The interplay between the names *Yeshua* and *Immanuel* is profound. The child is called Jesus—"Yahweh saves"—because in him, God is with his people to save them. The two names are not contradictory; they are complementary. Matthew presents Jesus as the embodiment of God's saving presence, a theme that runs throughout his Gospel (e.g., 28:20: "I am with you always").

The Hebrew Gospel Hypothesis and Matthew's Original Language

A fascinating dimension of **The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew** is the long-standing debate about whether Matthew was originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic (a Syriac dialect closely related to Hebrew). Early church fathers such as Papias (c. 110 AD) and Irenaeus (c. 180 AD) testify that Matthew composed his Gospel "in the Hebrew dialect." Many modern scholars question this, pointing to the Greek text's sophistication. However, even if the canonical Greek Matthew is a translation or an original Greek composition, the Hebrew/Aramaic substratum is undeniable.

Consider the naming formula: "you shall call his name Jesus." In Hebrew, the phrase would be *v'qarata sh'mo Yeshua* (]U°^u¸^…¸] ê[, é[Á]åÕ[' Ù[Ué\ Õ[Åâ[r'à The direct citation of the Hebrew Scriptures in Matthew 1:23 uses the Greek *Emmanouel*, but the original hearers would have caught the linguistic link between *Yeshua* and *Immanuel*, but the original hearers would have caught the linguistic link between *Yeshua* and salvation. If Matthew existed in a Hebrew version, the pun would be even more striking: the name itself spells out the mission. This is not a mere coincidence; it is a deliberate theological statement encoded in the language of God's chosen people.

Old Testament Allusions in the Naming Narrative

Matthew's narrative is steeped in the Old Testament, and the naming of Jesus is no exception. Several key passages resonate:

- Genesis 17:19: God tells Abraham to name his son Isaac (meaning "laughter") as a sign of covenant promise. Similarly, the naming of Jesus is a sign of the new covenant.
- Isaiah 43:11: "I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior." The name Yeshua declares that this child is that saving Lord.
- Psalm 118:25-26: "Save us, we pray, O LORD! ... Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" The Hebrew word for "save us" is hoshi'ah na, from the same root as Yeshua. This psalm was recited at the Feast of Tabernacles and later applied to Jesus at his triumphal entry (Matthew 21:9).
- Zechariah 6:11-12: The prophet is told to make a crown for Joshua (Yeshua) the high priest, foreshadowing a priestly king. Matthew presents Jesus as both King (from David's line) and Savior.

These allusions are not accidental. Matthew constructs his Gospel as a new Exodus story. Just as Moses led Israel out of physical bondage, Jesus (the new Moses) leads his people out of the bondage of sin. The naming in Hebrew underscores this continuity: the God who saved Israel from Egypt is now saving them from sin through his Son.

Theological Implications of the Name

Salvation as Divine Action

Jesus is not merely a label; it is a declaration of divine activity. In Hebrew thought, a name reveals the character and mission of the person. By calling him *Yeshua*, Matthew asserts that salvation is not a human achievement but a gift from God. The angel does not say "he will teach people how to save themselves" or "he will show the way to salvation," but "he will save." This passive verb construction in the Greek (*s ×6)v* echoes the Hebrew active sense: YHWH saves.

This has profound implications for Christian theology. The name *Jesus* becomes a creed: **Yahweh saves in and through this person**. The Hebrew context guards against any reduction of Jesus to a mere prophet or moral teacher. He is the embodiment of the saving God.

Forgiveness of Sins

The phrase "save his people from their sins" is uniquely Matthew's emphasis. While Luke focuses on salvation as deliverance from enemies (Luke 1:71), Matthew highlights the inner enemy of sin. This reflects the Hebrew understanding that the ultimate problem is not political oppression but separation from God. The Hebrew word for sin, *chata'* (]u¸]…¸] ’Â ÖV ç2 'Fò Ö—72 F†R Ö k." The name *Yeshua* signifies that God himself will enable his people to hit the mark of righteousness through the atoning work of the Messiah.

The Naming in Early Jewish-Christian Interpretation

For the first Jewish followers of Jesus, **The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew** was not a point of controversy but of confirmation. They saw the name as a direct fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish Christian texts, such as the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (now lost but quoted by early fathers), likely emphasized the Hebrew name. The *Didache* (an early Christian manual) refers to Jesus as "the Lord" and "the Son of God," but the name *Yeshua* remained central to prayer and baptism (Acts 4:12: "there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved").

Even after the church became predominantly Gentile, the Greek *I 76÷W0* retained the Hebrew meaning. Latin translations used *Iesus*, and vernacular languages adapted the form. Yet the original Hebrew resonance is often lost. Restoring the Hebrew context of Matthew's naming narrative helps modern readers grasp the radical nature of the claim: the God of Israel has come in person to save.

Practical Applications for Today's Reader

1. Deepen your understanding of Scripture: When you read the name "Jesus" in your Bible, remember it is the Hebrew Yeshua. Explore the Old Testament uses of the name Joshua (especially Zechariah 3 and 6) to see the typology of a high priest who brings salvation.
2. Embrace the meaning of the name: In moments of doubt or fear, meditate on the fact that the name itself proclaims God's saving presence. The name Jesus is a prayer and a promise.
3. Appreciate Matthew's Jewishness: Matthew wrote to show that Jesus is the culmination of Israel's story. Read his Gospel with an eye for Hebrew quotations, genealogies, and themes of fulfillment.
4. Share the gospel with sensitivity: For Jewish friends, knowing that Jesus' Hebrew name is Yeshua and that it means "salvation from God" can open doors for meaningful dialogue about the Messiah.

Conclusion: The Name Above Every Name

The Naming Of Jesus In Hebrew Matthew is far more than a historical detail. It is a theological cornerstone that reveals the heart of the Gospel: God saves. The Hebrew name *Yeshua* bridges the Old and New Testaments, showing that the promised deliverer is none other than Yahweh incarnate. Matthew's careful weaving of prophecy, genealogy, and angelic announcement presents Jesus as the fulfillment of every hope of Israel.

In a world that often reduces religion to moralism or ritual, the name of Jesus stands as a bold declaration that salvation comes from outside ourselves. It is the name that conquered death, forgives sin, and restores

relationship with the living God. By understanding its Hebrew roots, we gain a richer, more faithful appreciation of the one whom Matthew calls "God with us." And we are invited to call upon that name—with all its ancient, saving power—in every generation.

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