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Joshua and Jesus

"The Name Above Every Name"
(Philippians 2:9)

Many readers of the Bible do not know that these two names are the same. Identical, that is, when their root meanings and spellings are traced to their base Hebrew roots in the Old Testament and in the Greek New Testament.

Moses's right-hand lieutenant is called "Joshua (the son of Nun)" in most English Bibles (Joshua 1:1, 10, 12, etc.). But he actually had three Hebrew names.

His original name was **Hoshea** (Ho-shay-ah; meaning **"**salvation"). Without explanation, Moses later changed it to **Yehoshua** (Ye-ho-shu-ah; meaning "the Lord saves" or "salvation by the Lord"; Numbers 13:16). The Hebrew verb *yasha*, underlies both names: rescue, deliverance, salvation). Adding an abbreviated form of God's personal name (**Yeho**-) focuses on the Source of salvation. And that may have been the inspiration behind Moses giving Joshua such a spiritually rich name.

During the Babylonian Exile (beginning in 586 BC), numerous Hebrew mens' names were shortened, apparently to de-emphasize them if God's name were embedded in them. The Israelites wanted to prevent the pagans from blaspheming the Lord merely by speaking even a form of his name. So **Yehoshua** was edited by Hebrew scribes into **Yeshua** (Ye-shu-ah), which held no obvious religious content (to outsiders).

This is evident in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, where various men are named **Yeshua** in Hebrew, though most English Bibles render it as "**J**eshua" (Ezra 2:2, 3:2; Neh 7:7, 12:36). But at Nehemiah 8:17, editors chose to print the familiar OT phrase: "***Joshua*** the son of Nun" (NIV, NASB, CSB), even though the Hebrew text reads "***Yeshua*** son of Nun." One assumes they thought the name *Yeshua* would sound strange before the famous phrase "son of Nun."

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible [the Septuagint, dating to 250 BC], Joshua's all three Hebrew names are consistently translated and spelled "**Yesous**" (Yay-soos).

1) Hoshea 2) Yehoshua 3) Yeshua → Yesous (Greek)

In the Greek New Testament, the spelling "**Yesous"** (Joshua's "name") is important, as it stands behind the English name "**Jesus.**" This is important, as the *Hebrew* root behind Jesus's Greek name was originally God's ancient holy Hebrew name: **Yehoshua: "the Lord saves."** Two NT passages allude to this base meaning:

> [The angel said to Joseph:] "She will give birth to a Son; and you [Joseph] shall name him **Jesus** [Greek: *Yesous*; Hebrew: *Yehoshua*], for he will **save** [Hebrew root: *yasha*] his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

Peter also highlighted this meaning underlying Jesus's Hebrew name in his sermon in Jerusalem, before a Jewish (Hebrew-speaking) crowd:

> "There is **salvation** [*yeshuah*] in no one else; for there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be **saved** [*yasha*]." (Acts 4:12)

When Bible readers carefully compare the life and acts of Joshua with those of Jesus, it's possible to see how Moses's assistant set examples of an obedient loyal servant of God who *prepared* the people of Israel to encounter—a millennium later—the unique bearer of His Father's Name: "the Lord saves."

"I have come in my Father's name." (John 5:43b)

"I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known ."
(John 17:26)

Paul Sumner
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