

## APPENDIX 1: QURANIC TRANSLITERATIONS OF HEBREW NAMES

A comparison of how English versions, the LXX, the Qur'an, and the NAV transliterate common biblical names

Note: The highlighted names below indicate instances in which there is significant agreement between the Qur'anic transcription and that of the NAV (also known as the Kitab el Hayat).

English	Hebrew <sup>1</sup>	LXX <sup>2</sup>	Qu'ran <sup>3</sup>	NAV <sup>4</sup>
Aaron	אַהֲרֹן / 'a•hă•rōn	Ααρων aarōn	هَارُونَ /harūn	هَارُونَ /harūn
Abraham	אַבְרָהָם / 'ab•rā•hām	Αβρααμ abraam	إِبْرَاهِيمَ /ibrāhīm إِبْرَاهِيمَ /ibrāhīm	
Adam	אָדָם / 'ā•dām	Αδαμ adam	آدَمَ / ādam	آدَمَ / ādam
Amram	עַמְרָם / 'am•rām	Αμβραμ ambram	عِمْرَانَ /?imrān	عَمْرَامَ / ?amrām
David	דָּוִד / dā•wid	Δαυιδ dauid	دَاوُدَ /dāwud <sup>5</sup>	دَاوُدَ / dāwud
Elijah	אֵלִיָּהוּ / 'ē•liy•yā•hu <sup>w</sup>	Ηλιου ēliou	إِلْيَاسَ /ilyās <sup>6</sup>	إِيلِيَّآ / 'īlīyyā
Elisha	אֵלִישָׁע / 'ē•li'•šā'	Ἐλισαίε	أَلَيْسَعَ /alyasa? <sup>7</sup> أَلَيْشَعَ / 'elīšā?	

<sup>1</sup> The Lemma form of the Hebrew names and their phonetic transcriptions are taken from esv.org on-line study tools.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek names are derived from the LXX version of the OT as cited by E-Sword. To the extent possible, effort was made to list the names in the nominative case.

<sup>3</sup> Word-final case markers have not been included in the listing of Quranic names. In certain cases, dagger alifs have been replaced by regular alifs (as in the case of the alif following the 'ra' in Ibrahim) or by waSlas over word initial alifs (as in the case of Adam).

<sup>4</sup> As in the case of the Qur'an, the word-final case markers have not been included in this column.

<sup>5</sup> In the Usmani script: دَاوُدَ, and in the IndoPak script: دَاوُدَ (38.26) according to: quranexplorer.com

<sup>6</sup> Assumed to be Elijah in the Pickthall translation of 6.85

<sup>7</sup> Assumed to be Elisha in the Pickthall translation of 38.48

		<i>elisaie</i>		
Ezra	עֶזְרָא / 'ez•rā'	Εσδρας	عِزْرَا / ʔuzayr <sup>8</sup>	ʔizrā
		<i>esdras</i>		
Isaac	יִצְחָק / yiš•ḥāq	Ισαακ	إِسْحَاق / isHāq	'isHāq
		<i>isaak</i>		
Ishmael	יִשְׁמָעֵאל / yiš•mā•'ē <sup>(1)</sup>	Ισμαηλ	إِسْمَاعِيل / ismāʔil	'ismāʔil
		<i>ismaēl</i>		
Israel	יִשְׂרָאֵל / yiś•rā•'ēl	Ισραηλ	إِسْرَائِيل / isrāʔil	'isrāʔil
		<i>israēl</i>		
Jacob	יַעֲקֹב / ya•'ā•qōb	Ιακωβ	يَعْقُوب / yaʔqūb	yaʔqūb
		<i>iakōb</i>		
Jesus <sup>9</sup>	יְהוֹשֻׁעַ / y•hōw•šū <sup>wa</sup>	Ἰησοῦς	عِيسَى / ʔisā	يَسُوع / yesūʔu
		<i>iēsous</i>		
Job	אֵיּוֹב / 'iy•yōw <sup>w</sup> b	Ἰωβ	أَيُّوب / ayyūb	'ayyūb
		<i>iōb</i>		
John	----- <sup>10</sup>	ΝΤ: Ἰωάννης	يُوحَنَّا / yūHanna <sup>12</sup>	yaHyā <sup>11</sup>
		<i>iōannēs</i>		
Jonah	יוֹנָה / yōw•nā <sup>h</sup>	Ἰωνας	يُونُس / yūnus	يُونَانَ / yūnān
		<i>iōnas</i>		
Joseph	יֹסֵף / yōw•sēf	Ἰωσήφ	يُوسُف / yūsuf	يُوسُف / yūsuf
		<i>iōsēf</i>		

<sup>8</sup> Assumed to be Ezra in the Pickthal translation of 9.30

<sup>9</sup> The Greek name for Jesus is the transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua

<sup>10</sup> The presumed Hebrew name from which Ἰωάννης (John) is derived is : יוֹנָה / yōw•ḥā•nān (e.g. 1 Chr. 3:24).

<sup>11</sup> Usmani script, 19.12, explorequran.com

<sup>12</sup> As for the derivation of YoHanna in the NAV, the translation apparently understands the name to be derived from Ἰωάναν, a transliteration of Yohanan (which is an abbreviated form of Yehohanan, יהוהוּחַן, Yahweh has been gracious), in which the n /H/ naturally drops out in the Greek transliteration, since this phoneme does not exist in the Greek language. If this analysis is correct, NAV restores the original phoneme and renders the name: يُوْحَنَّا / yūHannā/.

<i>Lot</i>	לוֹט / <i>lō<sup>w</sup>t</i>	Λωτ <i>lōt</i>	لُوطُ / <i>lūTān</i> <sup>13</sup>	لُوطُ / <i>lūT</i>
<i>Mary</i> <sup>14</sup>	מִרְיָם / <i>mir•yām</i>	Μαριαμ <i>mariam</i>	مَرْيَمَ / <i>maryam</i>	مَرْيَمَ / <i>maryam</i>
<i>Moses</i>	מֹשֶׁה / <i>mō•šē<sup>h</sup></i>	Μωυσεΐς <i>mōusēs</i>	مُوسَى / <i>mūsā</i> <sup>15</sup>	مُوسَى / <i>mūsā</i>
<i>Noah</i>	נֹחַ / <i>nō<sup>a</sup>h</i>	Νωε <i>nōe</i>	نُوحُ / <i>nūH</i>	نُوحُ / <i>nūH</i>
<i>Saul</i>	שָׂאוּל / <i>šā•’u<sup>w</sup>l</i>	Σαουλ <i>saoul</i>	ظَالُوتُ / <i>Tālūt</i> <sup>16</sup>	شَاوُلُ / <i>šāwul</i>
<i>Solomon</i>	שְׁלֹמֹה / <i>š<sup>a</sup>•lō•mō<sup>h</sup></i>	Σαλωμων <i>salōmōn</i>	سُلَيْمَانَ / <i>suleymān</i>	سُلَيْمَانَ / <i>suleymān</i>
<i>Zechariah</i>	זְכַרְיָהּ / <i>z<sup>a</sup>•kār•yā<sup>h</sup></i>	Ζαχαρίας <i>zaxarias (x = kh)</i>	زَكَرِيَّا / <i>zekariyyā</i>	زَكَرِيَّا / <i>zekariyyā</i>

### Observations:

#### A. Linguistic Parameters

Of the three languages cited here, whether English, Greek or Arabic, each has its own capacity for accurately transliterating Hebrew names. The Arabic language, of course, has the greatest capacity of the three since Hebrew and Arabic are cognates and possess many of the same phonemes. The Greek and English languages, on the other hand, are more limited in their ability to transliterate Hebrew names given that they lack certain phonemes such as /ʔ/ (or ‘#’) and /ħ/ (or H) and the pharyngealized ‘q’ /q/, as well as /x/ (or ‘kh’) in the case of English, and /š/ and /đ/ (or /d/), as well as /ʔ/ (or ‘#’), /q/ and /ħ/ (or H), in the case of Greek. While the Greek language has the phoneme /h/, it is employed primarily, if not exclusively, at the beginning of words commencing with vowels and diphthongs. Greek, unlike English, does not

<sup>13</sup> Q 6.86, here Lot’s name is apparently in the accusative case; quranexplorer.com

<sup>14</sup> NT: Μαριάμ /*Mariam*/

<sup>15</sup> Q 19.51, Usmani script; here Moses’ name is apparently in the accusative; quranexplorer.com

<sup>16</sup> Q 2.247, here, the accusative case marker has been removed

appear to tolerate /h/ in any medial or word-final position. Thus, Abraham in Greek is simply Αβρααμ /*abraam*/.

## B. Commonalities

The Qur'an transliterates the majority of the Hebrew names it cites in a straightforward and predictable manner. In fact, in 15 out of the 24 names listed above, the NAV and the Qur'an transliterate them identically, or virtually so. They are: Aaron, Abraham, Adam, David, Isaac, Ishmael, Israel, Jacob, Job, Joseph, Mary, Moses, Noah, Solomon, Zechariah.

## C. Acceptable Variation

In the case of **Aaron**, all of our transliterations are disyllabic. And while the Greek and English drop the /h/, it is retained in Arabic. As for **Abraham**, all of our transliterations replace /b/ with /b/, since none of them have this phoneme. Although both English and Arabic have the phoneme /d/, they replace it with /d/ in the case of **Adam**, perhaps following the lead of the LXX. As for **David**, only the English replaces the /w/ with /v/. The Arabic retains the original /ħ/ (or /H/) in the Hebrew name **Isaac**, while the Greek and English cannot do so. And here, all of our transliterations replace the original /š/ (or /ts/) with /s/. In the case of **Ishmael**, both Arabic transliterations (the Q and the NAV) retain the original /ʔ/ (or /ʔ/), while the Greek and English cannot do so. Interestingly, only the English retains the original /š/ of the Hebrew name Ishmael while both of the Arabic versions, due to the fact that the Arabic verb "to hear" (upon which the name is built) begins with 's' rather than 'š,' render it with /s/. In the case of **Israel**, the Arabic reflects the original /ʔ/ (glottal stop) of the Hebrew, while the Greek and English do not. Furthermore, none of our transliterations retain the word-initial /y/. In the case of **Jacob**, the Arabic reflects the original /q/ while the Greek and English approximate it with /k/. Also, all of our transliterations render the original trisyllabic name in a disyllabic fashion. As for **Job**, only the English renders the original disyllabic name as a monosyllable. In the case of **Joseph**, only the Greek and English retain the original long vowel /ō/ while in Arabic it is rendered /ū/. As for **Mary**, only the English drops the word-final /m/. In the case of **Moses**, none of our transliterations retain the original /š/. Rather, the Greek and Arabic have /s/, and the English, likely reflecting the French, has /z/, and doubles it. As for **Noah**, the Arabic once again reflects the Hebrew well by retaining the original /h/ (or H), something which the Greek and English cannot do. On the other hand, the two Arabic versions render the original disyllabic name Noah as a monosyllable. In the case of **Solomon**, all four of our transliterations deviate from the Hebrew in the same way. Perhaps following the lead of the LXX, the initial /š/ becomes /s/, and each of them adds a final /n/ as well. Furthermore, the original disyllabic name becomes trisyllabic. The underlying reason is likely because the original consonant cluster /šl-/ does not exist in the other three languages. As for **Zechariah**, only the LXX reflects the original /x/ (or /kh/) of the original name. Although Arabic also has the /kh/ phoneme, the Q and the NAV employ /k/ because the verb 'to remember' in Arabic (upon which the name is built) employs /k/ rather than /kh/. Notably only the English orthography represents the word-final /h/ of

Zechariah, thus more fully reflecting the original יה (‘‘Yah’’), even though it is not pronounced in speech.

#### D. Moderate Discrepancies

In another three cases (Amram, Jonah, and Lot), the names are transliterated in basically the same way in the Qur’an and NAV except for the final phoneme. Thus, the Q has *ʔimrān* while the NAV has *ʔamrām*, the Q has *yūnus* while the NAV has *yūnān*, and the Q has *lūTān* while the NAV has *lūT*. In the case of **Amram**, the LXX, curiously adds /b/ (perhaps as a pronunciation aid) and inserts it between two of the original phonemes, while the Qur’an changes the final phoneme to /n/. As for **Jonah**, both the Qur’an and the LXX add /s/ to the original name, which is the nominative case marker in Greek. As for **Lot**, the NAV better reflects the Hebrew and maintains the original monosyllabic nature of the name.

#### E. Significant Discrepancies

In the case of **Elijah**, the original four syllable name (which means ‘my God is Yahweh’) becomes trisyllabic in Greek, English and the NAV, given that they all abbreviate the original /-yā•hu<sup>w</sup>/ to either /-yu/ (LXX), or /-ya/ (English and the NAV). The transliterated name is only disyllabic in the Qur’an (/il-yās/), however, because the first person singular possessive pronoun /i/ (which is the same pronoun in both Hebrew and Arabic) is dropped. Furthermore, /s/ is added to the final syllable /-yā/ which obscures the phonetic link to yā•hu<sup>w</sup> (or even to the abbreviated form -yāh), the personal name of God embedded within the original name ʿē•liy•yā•hu<sup>w</sup> (that is, Elijah<sup>17</sup>). All together, these modifications effectively eliminate all echoes of ‘‘my God is Yah!’’ the proclamation which is at the heart of the original name.

As for **Elisha** (God is salvation<sup>18</sup>), both the English and the NAV retain the original /š/, which the Greek cannot do. The Qur’an employs /s/ as well, perhaps echoing the Greek here. More significantly, the initial syllable of the Quranic rendition resembles the Arabic definite article (given that the lam, which follows the initial aleph, has a ‘sekoon’ over it [ل]), thus eliminating the connection to the generic name for God which is present in the Hebrew. The NAV, following the Hebrew, does not place a sekoon over the lam and renders the name: بَالِيَشَّع.

In the case of **Ezra**, both the Qur’an and NAV reflect the original /ʔ/ of the Hebrew name (which the Greek and English cannot do) but a major discrepancy occurs in the second syllable. In the Hebrew, this word-final syllable is open. While this is accurately reflected in the NAV, the second syllable is essentially inverted in the Qur’an (in that the consonant /r/ and the long vowel /ā/ are reversed), thus making it a closed syllable (/ayr/). This discrepancy is all the more peculiar in that it is found in a diatribe against the Jews (Q 9.30) in which they are accused of

<sup>17</sup> In English, the divine name embedded within the name Elijah is represented by ‘-jah’, which stands for Yāh, and is the standard abbreviated form of the name in English, as, for example, in Hallelujah.

<sup>18</sup> This name is based on יְשׁוּעָה /yē•šā’, and means *salvation* (e.g. Ps. 132.16; Is. 45.8). It is typically combined with a possessive pronominal suffix (e.g. ‘our salvation’ Ps. 79.9, or ‘my salvation’ Is. 51.5). יְשׁוּעָה /yē•šā’ (salvation) also figures in the name of Isaiah, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ /yō•šā’•yā•hu<sup>w</sup>, which means ‘salvation of Yah.’

calling عَزَّيْر /ʔuzayr/ the Son of God. This weakens the argument because Uzayr is not a name that Jews use. (But even if the name were correctly transliterated, the argument still falters in that the OT nowhere calls Ezra the Son of God. The only people God calls ‘his son’ in the OT are the children of Israel as a whole (Ex. 4.23), as well as each of King David’s anointed sons (2 Sam. 7.14; cf. Ps. 2.7). When read within the original biblical context, it becomes apparent that this kind of sonship is adoptive—the result of redemption, grace, and covenant faithfulness—rather than biological, though Ps. 2.7 infers an authentic rather than adoptive sonship in the case of David’s ultimate son, the Messiah.)

#### F. Radical Reconfiguration (i.e. suspension of the normal principles of transliteration)

As for the name **Jesus**, the NT employs the standard LXX transliteration of the name Yehoshua, Yahweh is salvation (of which Joshua is the English rendition), which is Ἰησοῦς /*iēsous*/. Here, the first syllable /*iē*/ (= *yē*-) is a good reproduction of the Hebrew morpheme ‘yo-’ (or ‘ye-’) which echos the name Yahweh. But the /š/ of the original is replaced by the nearest equivalent, /s/, since the former does not exist in Greek. Likewise, the *ʔ*/ʔ/ (or /‘/) is not represented orthographically because it too has no equivalent in the Greek language. As for the English version, *Jesus* /*dʒizəz*/, the initial *iē*- of the Greek form becomes /*dʒ*-/, and the two sigmas /s/ of the Greek name become /z/, all of which is likely due to the influence of the French rendition, *Jésus* /*ʒēzu*/.

Before examining the two Arabic transliterations of Joshua/Jesus (i.e. those of the Q and the NAV), we note that BDB understands the Hebrew name *Y<sup>(a)</sup>hōšuaʾ*, which later became *Yēšuaʾ*, to mean “Yahweh is salvation,” or “Yahweh is opulence.” Strong understands it to mean ‘Jehovah saved,’ combining the name Yahweh [H3068] and the Hebrew word ‘salvation’ (*יְשׁוּעָה* /*yē•šāʾ*), the latter deriving from a primitive root that properly means “to be open, wide or free, that is (by implication) to be safe; causatively to free or succor: ...bring (having) salvation, save (-iour)...” [H 3467]. Notably, Hans Wehr gives as the meaning of the Arabic verb وَسَّعَ /*wassaʔ*/ (Form II), among other things, “to make wider, roomier, more spacious (هـ s.th.) . . . to be generous, liberal, openhanded (على toward s.o., هـ toward s.o. with s.th.).”<sup>19</sup> In standard transliteration between cognate languages the original morphemes (or their closest natural equivalents) are employed and placed in the same order in which they originally appear in order to preserve and relay the meaning of the original name in its transliterated form, which is precisely what the NAV does in rendering the name: يُسُوْع /*yēsūʔu*. And although the NAV, like the LXX, employs س /s/ instead of the original ʔ /š/, this is acceptable given that the س reflects the س in the cognate verb وَسَّعَ (see immediately above) and also because it presents the س and the ع in the original order.

Curiously, the Quranic version of Jesus, عيسى /*ʔīsāʾ*/, more closely resembles the name Esau than it does the name Joshua. Given the extent to which the order of the constituent elements (root

<sup>19</sup> Among the meanings that <https://en.bab.la/dictionary/arabic-english/> gives are: “to broaden...to enlarge...to open up...to widen...to make more spacious.”

letters, or consonants and long vowels) of the original name have been scrambled (if not completely inverted), it would be more appropriate to speak of the Quranic rendition of the Messiah’s name as a *reconstruction* than as a transliteration. The question even arises as to whether or not it may have been a polemical device of sorts.<sup>20</sup>

In any case, this is the one instance in which the Qur’an deviates most from its usual practice of transliterating Hebrew names.<sup>21</sup> But might not this assessment be overly harsh? Could not the Quranic version *ʔīsā* simply be an attempt at transliterating *lēsou(s)*, the Greek version of the name as found in the LXX and the NT? In response, it should be observed that while both the Quranic and the Greek versions do indeed share the /s/ phoneme, the presence of the ع/ʔ/ in *ʔīsā* (which is present in the original Hebrew name but not in the Greek transliteration) rules against it. And while the Quranic version of Jesus does indeed feature the /ʔ/ of the Hebrew, it hardly qualifies as a transliteration, given the radical reordering of the root letters, something the Qur’an does not do with any of the other biblical names cited here, though in the case of Ezra, as mentioned above, two of the three root letters are inverted. And while both the Quranic rendition and the NAV transliteration have the same two consonants ع and س, as well as a long vowel (in the one case و and in the other ی), they too appear in a different order. Adhering to the original Hebrew order, the NAV has: ی /y/ first, س /s/ second, then the long vowel و /ū/, and ع /ʔ/ last, while the Qur’an has: ع /ʔ/ first, ی /y/ second, س /s/ third, and the long vowel aleph ی /ā/) last. The reversed ordering can be graphically depicted as follows:

NAV: /*yesūʔ*/ = ع + و + س + ی يسوع  
4<sup>th</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 1<sup>st</sup>

Qur’an: /*ʔīsā*/ = ی عيسی + س + ی ع

Furthermore, in addition to scrambling the root letters and obscuring the linguistic connection back to the word ‘salvation’ in the original name,<sup>22</sup> the Quranic rendition of the Messiah’s name completely eliminates the initial syllable, /y<sup>ʔ</sup>/, which connotes the personal and covenantal name of God. Consequently, all the phonetic links to the crucial message of the

<sup>20</sup> Given that عيسی /*ʔīsā* closely resembles the pronunciation of Esau (אֶשָׂו / *‘ē•śāw*, or *ʔēsāw*)—a name that apparently means ‘hairy’ (Gen. 25:25) and is closely associated with the one person (the father of a nation) whom God says he hates (Mal. 1:2-5; cf. Ob. 1)—it is conceivable that there is some kind of a polemic here against the person to whom the Qur’an attributes this name (i.e. the Messiah). Perhaps it is an attempt to bring him down from his lofty throne by closely associating him (by way of phonetic assonance) with the name of a person whom Scripture describes as ungodly, unholy, or profane (Hebrews 12.16).

<sup>21</sup> See Appendix I for examples of how the Qur’an usually transcribes Hebrew names. Note: While some commentators conjecture that the Quranic name Idrisa represents Enoch, there are few if any contextual markers confirming such an identification (Q 19.56), and certainly there is no linguistic correspondence either. Therefore, this name was not included in our list of biblical names cited by the Qur’an.

<sup>22</sup> The Quranic reordering of س and ع is serious in the sense that it eliminates the natural connection between وسع and the Hebrew root נָצַח, which signifies salvation and is central to the original name.

original name, יהוה־שׁוּׁ /  $y^3 \bullet h\bar{o}^w \bullet \check{s}u^{wa}$ , 'Yahweh is salvation,' have been effectively severed in the Quranic rendering.

As for **John**, the LXX transliterates the OT name יְהוֹנָן /  $y\bar{o}^w \bullet h\bar{a} \bullet n\bar{a}n$ , Yahweh has been gracious (from which the name John appears to have been derived) with ἰωάννης /  $i\bar{o}ann\bar{e}s$ .<sup>23</sup> Here, because the Greek, once again, has no equivalent for  $n$ , it simply drops the phoneme in transliteration. It should also be noted that the /s/ at the end of the Greek name for John (iōannēs) is simply the marker of the nominative case. While the 'h' in the English version of the name, John /džan/, is not pronounced, its presence in the orthography points back to the original  $n$  /h/ of the Hebrew. The NAV's transliteration يُوحَنَّا /  $y\bar{u}Hanna$  renders the original well in that the word-initial  $y\bar{o}^w$ , as well as the  $n$  /h/ and the two  $\bar{n}$  /n/ 'noons' of the Hebrew are preserved and represented.<sup>24</sup> It appears, however, that the Quranic version of the name is neither a transliteration of the Hebrew nor of the Greek but a radical reduction of the name's constituent elements. While يَحْيَى /  $yaHy\bar{a}$  arguably reflects two or three<sup>25</sup> of the seven original phonemes of importance (i.e. four consonants and three long vowels), the word-initial  $y\bar{o}^w$ - (representing Yahweh) completely disappears *once again*, as do the two 'noons' ( $\bar{n}$  /n/) of the original name. Had the two 'noons' /n/ been preserved in transliteration along with the preceding  $ح$  /H/ and an intervening /a/, the name would have retained a meaningful echo of the original name, since حَنَّان /  $Han\bar{a}n$ / in Arabic means 'compassion.'<sup>26</sup> Thus, the two most important morphemic links back to 'Yahweh has been gracious' have been obfuscated in the Quranic rendering of John.

Conclusion: In three out of four instances,<sup>27</sup> the Qur'an eliminates phonemes connoting Yahweh, and this is especially striking in that it occurs in the case of one of the greatest OT prophets, *Yahweh is God* (Elijah), in the case of the Messiah, *Yahweh is salvation* (Jesus), and in the case of the Messiah's forerunner, *Yahweh has been gracious* (John). The fact that the same omission occurs three times, when the bulk of the Quranic transliterations range from acceptable to tolerable, raises the question as to whether it was deliberate. Furthermore, in the case of both Jesus' and John's names, morphemic elements present in both of these cognate

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<sup>23</sup> The Expositor's Greek Testament, Eerdmans 1976, Vol. 1, p. 462, states that the meaning of ἰωάννης is, "God is gracious." (Although in Luke 1:13, the verse on which this comment is made, the name is in the accusative: ἰωάννην). Similarly, Alford, in The Greek Testament, Vol. 1, 1874, p. 443, notes the connection between ἰωάννης and יְהוֹנָן, and observes three instances of the abbreviated name in the LXX (1 Chr. 3.24, 2 Kings 25.23, 2 Chr. 28.12), and gives as its meaning, 'God is favourable.' Maclaren expounds, "The name is significant. 'John' means 'The Lord is gracious.' It was an omen, a condensed prophecy, the fulfilment of which stretched beyond its bearer to Him as whose precursor alone was John a token of God's grace." (Expositions of Holy Scripture, Baker, 1982, St. Luke, p. 5).

<sup>24</sup> Technically speaking, because the 'shadda' placed over the 'noon' /n/ effectively doubles it, there are in fact two noons here.

<sup>25</sup> That is  $ح$ ,  $ي$ , and a long vowel (in this case a word-final aleph /ā/)

<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the name Hananiah in Hebrew, which means Yahweh has been gracious, contains the same Semitic morpheme.

<sup>27</sup> Zechariah is the only biblical name cited in the Qur'an in which the name Yah remains more or less intact, that is, in the final -yā of زَكَرِيَّا /  $zakarīyyā$ .

languages that could have been retained were obscured by the scrambling of the root letters in the first instance, and by the elimination of key phonemes in the second.

It should be reiterated that the names of Jesus and John were chosen by God and communicated to their respective ‘parents’<sup>28</sup> before the birth of the children, whether to Zechariah in the case of John (Luke 1.13), or to Joseph (Mt.1.21) and Mary (Lk. 1.31)—and that independently—in the case of Jesus.

Because God gave the Messiah the name Ἰησοῦς /*iēsous*/ (Jesus), a name burgeoning with prophetic meaning,<sup>29</sup> every attempt should be made to preserve and relay the meaning by way of standard transliteration principles including: 1) rendering phonemes with identical phonemes when possible, or with the closest phonetic equivalents when not, 2) maintaining the original order of the phonemes, and 3) preserving important morphemic elements, particularly when transliterating into cognate languages. When these principles are followed in Bible translation, people in every language group will be enabled to sooner or later connect the phonetic “dots” from the transliteration back to the meaning-laden original, all of which contributes to the renown of Yah and his great salvation, and the joy of his people. Hallelujah!

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<sup>28</sup> Joseph, in this case, was the legal and adoptive father of Jesus rather than his biological father.

<sup>29</sup> When announcing the forthcoming birth of Jesus to Joseph, the adoptive father-to-be, God through an angel explained his choice of the name by delineating its inherent meaning, “you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”