

Y the J in Jesus and not the Y?

By David A. Sargent

It has come to my attention that there is a misunderstanding in the linguistic etymological structure of the transliteration of certain words from the “Y” in Hebrew to the “J” in English; and can be cleared up with a brief explanation.

Languages can be funny and yet at many times very confusing. English is a very confusing language because it has now become the “melting pot” language with words made up from transliterations that now have their own place in the English language: phonograph: comes from two Greek words: Phonea, and grapha: meaning sound and written: or written sound: thus the phonograph record is written sound. The same word we use every day when we use the telephone and it’s usage in more modern terms is just phone the Greek word phonea for sound.

ηχος echos: of uncertainty, a loud or confused noise (“echo”) i.e. roar; a rumor: fame, sound.

σωφρονισμός sophronismos: discipline i.e. self-control: sound mind.

σαλπίζω salpizo: To Trumpet or make a Sound: a Blast

ύγιαίνω hugiaino: to have sound health, i.e. be well (in body) to be uncorrupt (true in doctrine) be in health, (be safe and) sound, (be) whole (-some).

ύγιής hugies: healthy, i.e. well (in body); fig. true (in doctrine); sound, whole.

φθόγγος phthoggos: utterance: i.e. a musical note (vocal or instrumental) sound.

φωνή phonea: a tone (articulate, bestial or artificial) an address (for any purpose) saying or language: noise, sound, voice.

Other Greek to English common words: Photo, charisma, chasm, phrase, phobia, pharmacy, philanthropy, echo, etc.

The words for sound are important because the characters we use allow us to visually write what we orally verbalize in sounds; thus when we transliterate we are taking the sounds of a word from one language and using the sounds of another language creating a new word and attaching a meaning to that new word usually from it’s original language word. Thus the word phobia in Greek becomes our word for a type of fear, in Greek it IS the word fear: so that while transliterating it becomes a term used to distinguish a fear, the translation of the Greek word renders the word fear.

Words in Greek do not match words in English: example: ψυχή psuche: from where we get the word psych: psychology, psychiatry, etc. We also get the word psycho which is short for psychopath; but the Greek word ψύχω phucho means: to breathe, (voluntarily but gently; thus differing on the one hand from πνέω pneo: to breathe hard i.e. breeze: blow: a forcible respiration; and on the other from the base of άέρ aer: to breath unconsciously, i.e. respire; by analogy: to blow) “air” (as naturally circumambient): air; referring properly to an inanimate breeze, (by implication of reduction of temperature by evaporation) to chill (figurative): wax cold. Thus the meaning can not match

etymologically in English. Thus there are to some degree impossible crossovers in linguistic transliteration. The same can be said and even more for more distant languages such as Hebrew.

Χαρακτήρ charakter was transliterated as character and means the same as the Greek word itself: a graver (the tool or the person) engraving ([“character”], the figure stamped, i.e. and exact copy or representation) express image. Notice that here is an example of a character “X” that takes two characters to transliterate: “ch”. The same as “φ” to ph. But why not use the commoner “f”? And here is the quandary: usage: once a thing is put into practice, it becomes used; and over time accepted. Why is there NOT a letter for “ch” in English when there IS one for “ph” yet then why is “ph” ever used and not the “f”?

Linguistics is not an exact science like math. Languages tend to decay with use, alter with usage and time, and become like modern English mixed with many other languages. It is the writes belief that English more than any other language actually allows this on a large scale. It is therefore an adaptive language.

The Hebrew language is much older and very different in structure: the proper name for God in Hebrew is: יהוה; Yehovah, meaning: (the) self-Existant or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God: Jehovah, the LORD. Now why the alteration from “Y” to “J”? Let’s look at another case similar to this one: In Hebrew the national name for the Jewish people is: ישראל; Yisrael, meaning: He will rule as God; Jisrael, a symbolical name of Jacob; also of his posterity: Israel. In this case the “Y” is just removed. The reason for this is because the “Y” in English is a vowel and holds a long “I” sound as in hype. In the case of Israel, the redundancy reason is enough. The “J” transliterates the Hebrew “Y” best because there is a sort of “J” sound in the Hebrew “Y”. The “Y” as a consonant in English as in the beginning of Yesterday, as opposed to the y at the end which is silent, gives more reason NOT to use the “Y” because of it’s complexity in the English language. Within transliterating a word sometimes there is not a letter or sound that reflects the original language: English has no guttural sounds or hacking sounds like many words in German, and other languages. These nuances are lost in transliteration.

The “Y” in Hebrew is a consonant as are all the letters. The vowels are added by dots and dashes and such to denote vowel sounds.

The “J” in English is always a consonant and replaces the “Y” as a dynamic equivalent in transliteration, and does not alter the value of the original “Y” factor, because we are not dealing with an alteration in usage, meaning, or etymology; but only in a character used. It is recognized by usage and time as the proper rendering with little debatable issues of substance.

Hope this helps.