

YOTS AND TITTLES:

Jesus' Epitaph

Throughout the Tanach--our Old Testament--there are many fascinating acrostics and other textual peculiarities that will fascinate the diligent scholar. In the New Testament there also appears to be a Hebrew acrostic that generally goes unnoticed.

When Jesus was crucified, Pilate wrote the sign that was nailed to the cross. The particular wording he chose displeased the Jewish leadership and they asked him to change it. He refused. There are some interesting aspects to this incident that not apparent in our English translations.

And Pilate wrote a title, and put [it] on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus Of Nazareth King Of The Jews

This title then read many of Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to city: and it was written in Hebrew, [and] Greek, [and] Latin.

Then said the chief priests of Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.

Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.
John 19:19-22

Pilate refused to revise the epitaph he had composed. This may have more significance than than is apparent in our English translations. The Hebrew is shown below (remember, it goes from right to left):

HaYehudim	vMelech	HaNazarei	Yeshua
הַיְהוּדִים	וּמֶלֶךְ	הַנַּצְרִי	יֵשׁוּעַ
ה	ו	ה	י
H	W	H	Y

Yeshua HaNazarei v Melech HaYehudim: Jesus the Nazarei and King of the Jews.

What we don't notice in the English translation is that the acrostic made up of the first letter of each word spells out Yahweh (YHWH)!

If Pilate had rewritten it in the manner they had requested him to, it would not have spelled out the Name of God. Did Pilate realize this? Was it deliberate? Did he do it just to upset the Jewish leadership, which he realized delivered Him up for envy? (Mt 27:18). Or was he beginning to

suspect that there was more going on here than he previously realized?

When they requested a special guard for the tomb, he also responded with an enigmatic remark, "*Make it as sure as you can.*" (Mt 27:63-66) What did he mean by that? Did he begin to suspect that Jesus really was who said He was? Was Pilate really surprised when Jesus *as resurrected after three days? One wonders.

* Reprinted from July 1995 Personal Update.