

The Renaming of Joshua

Joshua and Jesus have the same name. But Joshua didn't start out with that name.

Numbers 13:16 - "These are the names of the men which Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Oshea the son of Nun Jehoshua." This was accomplished by prefixing the letter Yod to Oshea.

When the name Abram became Abraham (Gen 17:5) and Sarai became Sarah (Gen 17:15), the letter *Yod* was split up into two *He's* ($2 \times 5 = 10$), which the letter Yod complains of to God (according to Midr Gen R XLVII,1). But with the name Yehoshua Yod gets satisfaction: "Hitherto thou wast in a woman's name and the last of its letters; now I will set thee free in a man's name and at the beginning of its letters."

The Talmud (b. Sotah 34b; also quoted by Rashi on this verse) fills in details:

Regarding Joshua, Moses had already prayed for mercy on his behalf, as it says: "And Moses called Hoshea Yehoshua (Joshua) – [meaning:] May God (Y-ah) save you (yoshiacha) from the intrigue of the spies.

He is called Hoshea one other time in the Masoretic Text in **Deuteronomy 32:44**; the Septuagint and the Samaritan Pentateuch both have Joshua (not Hoshea) in this verse.

According to the Talmud, Moses suspected that the spies would rebel, and this is why he changed Joshua's name: Moses was trying to grant his beloved pupil divine protection. What if—in a repeat of the Joseph story—the other scouts turn on him and kill him? The idea that a change of name can protect a person from harm is still prevalent in Judaism, where ritual name changes are often done for people who are ill or in danger.

Other reasons are because of a new relationship to God or revelation - Abram to Abraham; Jacob to Israel. (In the New Testament they also mark a transition and a new mission - Simon to Peter, Saul to Paul etc.)

The name *Yehoshua* means "Yahweh saves," or "Yahweh is salvation."

But Joshua has already appeared a number of times before this. Joshua is the general of the army in the battle against Amalek (Exod. 17:9) and he serves as Moses' attendant in a number of stories (Exod. 24:13, 32:17, 33:11; Num. 11:28). Joshua is never once called Hoshea before this story.

Rabbi Moshe of Coucy (13th century), who suggests that although Moses called him Joshua only now, the Torah, written by Moses at a later period in his life, calls him Joshua throughout.

A different approach was taken by Hezekiah ben Manoah (13th cent.) in his comment on this verse (Hizkuni, ad loc.).

It isn't that [Moses] called him (renamed him) Joshua now, rather what it means is that Moses called him Joshua already, back when he became his attendant and found favor in his eyes...

Another Mystery

Exodus 33:11 - "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle."

There is some opinion that the verse should be translated "And he turned again into the camp with his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man. And He (God) departed not out of the tabernacle."

Moses removed his tent and pitched it outside the camp, as if to say to God: it is not my presence the people need in their midst, but Yours. That is why Moses sought to understand the very nature of God Himself. Is it possible for God to be close to where people are?

Moses pleaded with God to come closer to the people, so that they would encounter Him not only at unrepeatable moments in the form of miracles but regularly, on a daily basis, and not only as a force that threatens to obliterate all it touches but as a Presence that can be sensed in the heart of the camp.

That is why God commanded Moses to instruct the people to build the Tabernacle. It is what He meant when He said: "Let them make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell (*ve-shakhanti*) among them" (**Exodus 25:8**). It is from this verb that we get the word Mishkan /"Tabernacle" and the post-biblical word Shekhinah, meaning the Divine presence.

A *shakhen* is a neighbor, one who lives next door. Applied to God it means "the Presence that is close." If this is so – it is, for example, the way Judah Halevi understood the text – then the entire institution of the Mishkan was a Divine response to the sin of the Golden Calf, and an acceptance by God of Moses' plea that He come close to the people.

Moses was only able to see the backside of God - no one could see God's face a live.

Later:

"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle." (**Exodus 40:34-35**)

i.e. God knew the Golden Calf was being made even as He was talking to Moses on the Sinai (**Exodus 25**). He was already providing the solution to the problem Moses presented in chapter 33.

The mention of Joshua in this scene points to Christ as the fulfillment, the one who embodies God's glory (seen at the transfiguration, with Moses and Elijah) and at the same time He became human, and was crucified, resurrected and ascended to dwell in and among us through His Spirit.

Moses gave Hoshea his new name of Joshua (savior). In the same way, the Law prophesied about the Messiah and gave Jesus his name and mission, confirmed by the angel to Mary and Joseph.

- **Luke 1:31** - "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS."

- **Matthew 1:21** - "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

- **John 5:39** - "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

In Moses (the Law) we can only see the backside of God's glory. In Christ Jesus (Joshua) grace truth and mercy are personified and made real for us. He became Emmanuel, God with us.

There's Another Joshua

Joshua was also the name of an important high priest in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zechariah.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 - "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved (*yasha*'), and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Yĕhovah tsidqenu)

i.e. Jeremiah said the Messiah (the Branch) will save Judah.

It is quite suggestive that Yeshua/Jesus of Nazereth was given the same name as "Joshua," the postexilic high priest. This Joshua was one of the "symbolic" men in a well-attested Messianic passage, Zechariah 3:8-10. Moreover, Joshua is clearly symbolic of the Messiah in 6:9-12

Men Symbolic of Things to Come

Zechariah 3:8-9 NIV - "Listen, O high priest Joshua (Heb.- *Yĕhoshua*) and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it," says the LORD

Almighty, 'and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.'"

Zechariah 6:9-13 NIV - "Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Here is the man whose name is the Branch and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two." "

"Here is the man whose name is the branch" = "Here is the man who has the name of the Branch/ Messiah," or "Here is a man who has the same name as the Messiah."

This same high priest *Yĕhoshua* is called *Yeshua* in **Ezra 3:8**, showing that the shorter version was becoming common and interchangeable.

See <http://rabbisacks.org/the-closeness-of-god-ki-tissa-5776/>
and <https://thetorah.com/joshua-singled-out/>