

# Jesus' Epitaph: King of the Jews

By Chuck Missler

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 are not apparent in our English translations.

*And Pilate wrote a title, and put [it] on the cross. And the writing was, "Jesus Of Nazareth The King Of The Jews." This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, [and] Greek, [and] Latin. Then said the chief priests of the 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 is apparent in our English translations. The Hebrew is shown below (remember, it goes from right to left):

HaYehudim	v Melech	HaNazarei	Yeshua
הַיְהוּדִים	וּמֶלֶךְ	הַנָּצְרִי	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? (Matthew 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." (Matthew 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 was resurrected after three days? One wonders.

## Other Acrostics

There is a similar occurrence in the Book of Leviticus. After the first **yod** ( **י** ), count seven letters, and you find a **heh** ( **ה** ), count seven more letters and you find a **vav** ( **ו** ), then seven more and you find another **heh** ( **ה** ), again spelling the **YHWH**, the Name of God. See below.

וִיקְרָא  
ויקרא אל משה וידבר דעה אליו מאהל בועד לאמר:  
Intervals of 7 letters  
ויקרא אל משה וידבר דעה אליו מאהל בועד לאמר:  
יְהוָה = YHWH (The Name of God)

Even more remarkable is that in the five books of Moses the Torah ( **hwrt** ) appears in letter intervals in both the Books of Genesis and Exodus (see Figure 1). In the Books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, in 49 ( **7<sup>2</sup>** ) letter intervals, we again find the "Torah," but spelled backwards! (See **Figure 2**).



Figure 1. Example from the Book of Genesis

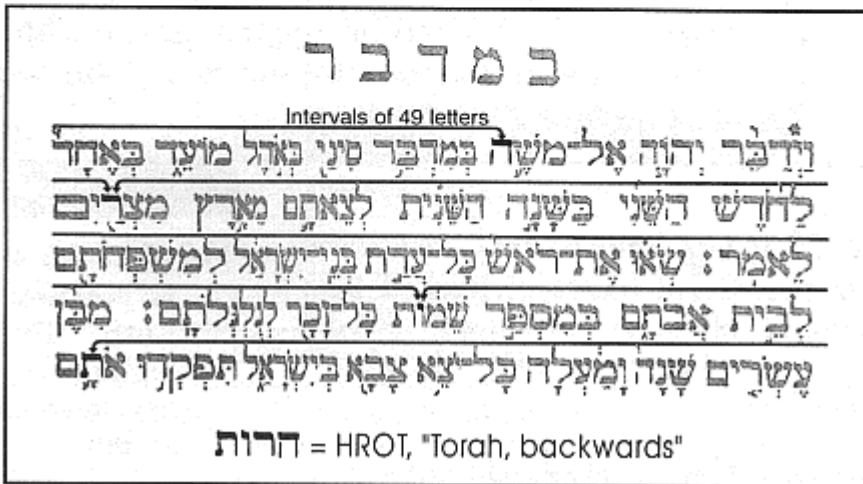


Figure 2. Example from the Book of Numbers

It would seem the "Torah" always points to the Name of God ("**YHWH**")! See **Figure 3**. Many of the secrets hidden behind the text have yet to be discovered.

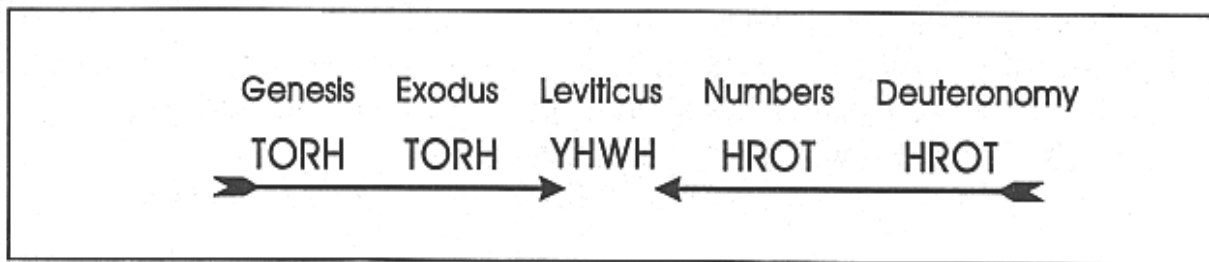


Figure 3. Example from the Book of Leviticus