

Yaohushua? An Expose of the “Sacred Name” Movement

by Michael Gowens

The Yaohushua (or Yawhushua) Organization, based in Jerusalem, Israel, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Led by someone who is identified merely as “Cohanul”, the group seeks proselytes by means of internet “chat rooms” and its official website, www.yaohushua.org. Though “Cohanul” claims to lead the only group who knows the *true* identity of the Creator, the true identity of “Cohanul” himself is suspiciously obscure, a fact that undermines the scholastic credibility of his movement. Contrary to the New Testament’s insistence that spiritual leaders subject themselves to open and public scrutiny and avoid clandestine tactics, it is virtually impossible to document “Cohanul’s” academic or ethical qualifications to occupy a position of spiritual leadership.

The Yaohushua sect is the latest in a series of groups classified under “the Sacred Name” or “Hebrew Roots”¹ movement. Each of the groups in this movement, often called “Yahwehism”, claims that God must be addressed by a specific form of the Divine Name in the Old Testament (e. g. Yahweh, Yaohushua, Yah, Yahvah, etc., depending on the particular group). Whichever name is deemed to be the true name, all other terms or names for God are considered to be incorrect, at best, or references to false deities, at worst. Each group claims that salvation depends on referring to God by His correct name.

The Yaohushua group purportedly began when Cohanul prayed that God would reveal to him the *true* name of the Messiah. His request was allegedly answered in a dream/vision – move over Joseph Smith! Cohanul was unsure, however, of what it was exactly that he heard. Was the name pronounced *yaohushua* (yow hoo' shooah) or *yawhushua* (yaw hoo' shooah)? My research indicates that both spellings are associated with this movement, with the former predominating.² This most popular pronunciation seems inconsistent with the group’s claim to linguistic purity, seeing that there is no *ow* sound in Hebrew.

These suspicious facts regarding the inception of the sect, however, are merely the “tip of the iceberg”. The most disconcerting features of the Yaohushua Organization concern its patently unconventional, unorthodox, and unchristian doctrines. I will highlight four particular areas of emphasis that contradict Biblical Christianity.

Rejection of the Perpetuity of the Church

The Yaohushua sect has a faulty ecclesiology, or doctrine of the church. The very notion that truth lay in obscurity since the NT was initially penned, only to be rediscovered in recent times, and that Christians were deluded *en masse* for the past 2000 years, resembles the claims made by Russellism, Mormonism, Armstrongism, Christian Scientism, and virtually every other non-Christian religion. Such a claim also contradicts passages that promise church perpetuity. When Jude 3, for instance, speaks of “the faith once delivered to the saints”, it means “once for all time”. If Christ delivered his truth to the church, but that truth was subsequently lost, only to be recovered in the latter 20th Century, then Jude should have spoken of “the faith twice delivered to the saints.”

The Lord Jesus Christ promised that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against His church. Paul, also, expressed confidence in the perpetuity of the church when he wrote, “Unto Him be glory in

¹ See www.youthofamerica.com/Talmud.htm for a very scholarly essay on the origins of the Hebrew Roots movement. Similar groups include the “House of Yahweh” (1980’s) and “Yahweh’s Assembly in Messiah”.

² See www.letusreason.org/sacna3.htm for a compelling expose of the multitude of pronunciations within the “sacred name” movement.

the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21). The proponents of the “sacred name” movement with their willingness to assign to irrelevance 2000 years of Church History are hard pressed to explain what the Bible says about church perpetuity in lieu of their claim that truth was lost.

Rejection of Biblical Inspiration and Inerrancy

Secondly, the group has a faulty bibliology, or doctrine of scripture. The basis of the Yaohushua movement is an assault on Biblical inerrancy. They cast a cloud of suspicion on the integrity of the Greek NT, arguing that they alone have access to the archaic and original Hebrew documents; hence, the Yaohushua teachers assume final authority in interpretation. Their premise is that “the original Gospels were written in Hebrew and/or Aramaic, translated into Greek and are therefore not reliable, especially having passed through successive translations to the English New Testament used by English speaking Christians today.”³ But the evidence necessary to support such a revolutionary claim is conspicuous by its absence.

The very idea that the New Testament was originally written in Hebrew is scholastically incredible. It is disconcerting to think that someone would be so naïve as to accept such a baseless claim. Where are the ancient Hebrew manuscripts that predate the Greek New Testament? Who is this ‘Cohanul’ and why doesn’t he produce his archaic and original source material for critical examination? Why should 2000 years of manuscript evidence documenting the integrity of the NT canon be discarded on the basis of the undocumented claims of a mystery person?

Instead of offering original source material from the New Testament, the Yaohushua web site counsels people to secure a copy of the Bible in modern Hebrew and to correct it as they go along: ***“If you don't have a copy of the 'Biblia Hebraica' or the Holy Scriptures, better get one immediately and begin reading the Word! And this is for your spiritual growth, which is vital...Simply make the necessary corrections as you read, now that you know the truth. Remember, you have to keep on learning the Word or the Holy Scriptures so you'll discover more truths that are important to clean, prosperous and healthy living. Begin reading the Holy Writ now.”***

Gary Mink has written a very scholarly defense of the Greek New Testament entitled *The Original Language of the New Testament was Greek: A refutation of the baseless claim made by Sacred Name Movement teachers of an original Hebrew New Testament*. Before two thousand years of Christian history is jettisoned for the unconventional claims of the Yaohushua sect, Mink’s arguments deserve a thorough answer. This entire work, complete with documentation, is available online at <http://www.sacrednamemovement.com/NTisGreekContents.htm>.

How does such an unconventional claim square with God’s promise to preserve both His word and the words in the word? Psalm 12:6 says, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou wilt keep them, O Lord; thou shalt preserve them from henceforth, even forever.” That verse affirms God’s sovereign superintendence in the preservation of the very words in His book. So confident was the apostle Paul that God preserved the very words of the Bible that he founded a theological argument on the basis of the preservation of a single letter: “...He saith not to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16).

³ See Peter Michas, “Is the New Testament Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek?”; <http://www.ezl.com/~peterm/>

It makes no sense to affirm that God inspired His word but deny that He would preserve it. Though the “Sacred Name” crowd is fond of Jeremiah’s apparent denunciation of careless scribes in Jer. 8:8⁴, yet we respond that our confidence in the integrity and inerrancy of God’s word does not depend on some scribe, but on the God who promised to providentially preserve it.

It is interesting to note that on the Yaohushua website, the ‘morphing’ tab promises proof for the claim that “the Name Yaohu and Yaohushua” were “changed from the archaic originals to modern Hebrew alef-bet through the years”. The page, however, cannot be found on the server. One would think that such a page would be maintained at all costs, seeing that this assault on the trustworthiness of the Bible is the basis of the entire religion.

Rejection of Salvation by Grace Alone

Thirdly, the Yaohushua sect has a faulty soteriology, or doctrine of salvation. Though superficial overtures are made to the idea that eternal salvation is all of God, the Yaohushua website includes numerous statements that suggest that eternal life is contingent on how a person uses, pronounces, and responds to “the sacred name”. Consider, for example, the following quotes⁵:

- ✂ ✂ Salvation is found in nobody else for there is no other name under heaven given to men for salvation except: 'YAOHUSHUA.' - Acts 4:12, Holy Scriptures
- ✂ ✂ YAOHUSHUA is the only way, the truth and the life, and no one can come to the Father, YAOHU UL, except through the Messiah YAOHUSHUA alone! All you have to do is to believe in His Name, make and receive the Messiah YAOHUSHUA in your heart as your one and only personal life Ruler and Savior! The only step you must take is to repent, believe and trust the Messiah YAOHUSHUA to save you! - John 14:6, 1:12-13, Holy Scriptures
- ✂ ✂ YAOHUSHUA the Messiah died in your behalf, as your personal Substitute, and He personally suffered the penalties of all your sins! All you have to do now is to believe and receive all the benefits of His redemptive work, it's that easy and simple.
- ✂ ✂ All your sins were already forgiven when the Messiah YAOHUSHUA took on Himself all the penalties of your sins, and the only thing you must do now is to REPENT then believe, receive and personally appropriate for yourself all the eternal benefits of His total, complete redemption!
- ✂ ✂ Be sure you are not relying on fake creators and false messiahs! Beware! It's your life and only soul at risk! Prepare for eternity now!
- ✂ ✂ Remember, THERE IS NO OTHER NAME under heaven given to men for salvation except this Name above every name: YAOHUSHUA! Salvation is found in no other name, repeat, no other name!

Consider also the following model of “decisional regeneration”, from the “Messiah’s Qualifications” page at the Yaohushua website:

Sinner's Prayer of Repentance

YÁOHU UL, Who dwells in shua-ólmayao (heavenly heights),

I now believe that You are the real Maker of all, my Creator;

I believe that You are the true Holy One of Yaoshorúl, no one else;

You are the 'UL' of Abruhám, YÁOHUtz-kaq (Isaac) and YÁOHU-caf;

I acknowledge that I have sinned against You, and I do now forgive all those who have offended me in the past;

I truly repent before You.

Please forgive me of all my sins and cleanse me now, by the 'DAM' (blood) of Molkhiúl YAOHÚSHUA hol-MEHUSHKHÁY, Who, I believe, died in my behalf, as my own individual replacement;

⁴ An interpretation of Jer. 8:8 that is probably faulty.

⁵ From the page entitled “Facts Shocking but True” on the Yaohushua website.

I now make YAOHÚSHUA hol-MEHUSHKHÁY as my only individual Ódmorul (Ruler) and 'Mée-hoo-shúa-yao' (Savior);

I believe that He died to pay for all my sins, was buried, became alive again, went to be with YÁOHU UL, and will soon return to rule as the King of kings;

I believe with perfect faith in the soon-coming return of Molkhiúl YAOHÚSHUA hol-MEHUSHKHÁY;

It is inscribed: 'Everyone who calls upon the Name of YÁOHU UL shall be saved,' and I believe in the resurrection of the upright to eternal rewards, and the damnation of the wicked to eternal punishment and perdition;

Please give me now the 'RÚKHA-YAOHÚSHUA' to indwell me as Your newly-born child in Your eternal Kingdom of uprightness, love and holiness;

And please also now immerse me in the 'RÚKHA-YAOHÚSHUA' so I may freely receive His gifts for empowerment in my new life as a Yaohúshua-hée (faithful believer);

I believe that I now receive the 'RÚKHA-YAOHÚSHUA' into my heart, as my life Ruler, Governor and Maoro-éh (Teacher), as I do also believe that I now receive Your mercy, forgiveness and cleansing and the empowerment gifts of and immersion in the 'RÚKHA-YAOHÚSHUA';

I praise, glorify, worship You and express my 'hodayáo' (thanks) for the free redemption and salvation You have given me.

I pray all this, 'beh hol-Shúam' (in the Name of) YAOHÚSHUA hol-MEHUSHKHÁY, am-nów!

The website proceeds to say:

Now you are free, you are healed, you are delivered, you are whole!

Now, glorify YÁOHU UL with me, let us exalt His NAME together!

Now begin your new life with YÁOHU ABÍ (Father) by telling others about His LOVE and His NAME and begin loving and helping your neighbors.

Obviously, this model makes man's decision, repentance, and acceptance the determining factor in salvation. But Scripture declares that God's will, not man's, is determinative in salvation. Salvation is by grace alone, without any contingency of human works. Man's faith, repentance, and good works are presented in the Bible as evidences of, not conditions to, a gracious state.

This semi-pelagian model of salvation espoused by the Yaohushua religion is diametrically contrary to the doctrines of grace as believed by Primitive Baptists. Even if there were no other discrepancy between this sect and the doctrines and practices of Primitive Baptists, this one emphasis would be sufficient ground for rejecting it.

Occult Emphases that Mirror the Mystery Religions

If none of the above concerns are sufficient to convince the believer that the claims of the Yaohushua Organization are spurious, all doubt is removed by the repeated emphases on occultic themes. Bizarre statements concerning exorcism and communication with the spirit world are commonplace in Yaohushuan literature.

Great emphasis is placed on the proper pronunciation of the "sacred name". In cases where the name is mispronounced in prayer, they claim, evil spirits are actuated. Consider the following quotes:

☞ Note that the words 'deus,' 'theos,' 'josh' and 'zeus' all refer to the same unseen spirit -being, in the supernatural realm, that is regardless of spelling, since the sounds produced call on the same idol spirit-being. Remember, when two different words are spoken with hardly any difference in the position of the tongue against the palate and the lips, the words are the same, as far as calling out to unseen spirit beings is concerned. For example, if you call out to the unseen enemy, satan, he will reply whether you use the spelling zeytan, or zheytan or z-taan. So when you call out to 'yahshua' or 'yeshua,' the goat indeed will be too glad to be referred to as your redeemer. It

is the fulfillment of his mission, to deceive and make the unwary take him as the redeemer. The impostor, and frankly fake.

- ✂ ✂ Not what you presumptuously think but what you say with your lips. By our mouths, our confessions are made unto salvation! You get in contact and really communicate with whom you call upon. You may believe that you are in contact with your friend but if you dial the wrong phone number, watch out!
- ✂ ✂ 'YAOHUSHUA' is the Name above every Name. There is so much power behind this Name. It should and must not have been translated to 'iesous,' sounding like 'zeus' because having done so greatly altered and replaced the unseen Spirit-Being behind this awesome Name! Remember, a name represents all the personality and attached authority of the person behind it. Changing the names of holy beings involves changing the spirit-persons represented by these names, and the personalities and characters, roles in life as well as the spiritual forces that are activated by these names. Always bear in mind too that people are dealing with unseen spiritual-beings behind every name which they use in prayers or any other forbidden communication with the supernatural. Remember, they are unseen so we must be very particular and careful to identify who we are dealing with and communicating to. What or who unseen, invisible spiritual beings will respond, in the supernatural world around us, right spirits or wicked spirits, depends solely on which names we call on. Correct names will activate correct spirit beings, wrong names will activate wrong, unwanted familiar evil spirits, who are notorious in pretending or imitating the real ones, to deceive many. Wicked spirits are liars and deceitful. Impostors, really.
- ✂ ✂ Did you know that 'zeus' is the god or idol of storms, tornadoes, thunderstorms, cyclones and all sorts of catastrophic weather disturbances? So if you want to avoid such calamities, better stop now from calling upon this idol-spirit of darkness, deceiving the whole world with his pretensions and deceptions.

The website proceeds to offer very elaborate and lengthy instructions on performing exorcisms. The instructions are prefaced with the following explanation:

“This supreme authority of Molkiúl YAOHUSHUA has been delegated to the faithful believers in His Shúam (Name). Being partakers of all authority in heaven and on earth which has been given to YAOHUSHUA hol-MEHUSHKHÁY, believers in Him have been commanded to: 'heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out evil spirits.' Being a faith warrior under the command of Molkiúl YAOHUSHUA, there are times when the believer must exercise his YÁOHU UL-given authority, and in obedience to the commands of Molkiúl YAOHUSHUA, there will be opportunities for the believer to manifest the healing and delivering power of Molkiúl YAOHUSHUA through himself. A loved one may be ill needing medical care, a neighbor may be evil-spirit possessed, or someone close might have untimely died. Therefore, it is one of the believer's responsibilities, in YÁOHU UL's Kingdom, to be ready and prepared at all times to exercise the authority, powers and dominion of Molkiúl YAOHUSHUA through himself.”

Then, after outlining the qualifications of an exorcist, four steps for casting out evil spirits are given:

1. The exorcist must continually go on fasts with prayers before actual encounter with the sick or evil spirit-possessed.
2. The exorcist, when dealing with cases of evil spirit-possession, or the healer, in cases of sicknesses, or the raiser of the dead, in cases of untimely deaths, must first cleanse himself of all known sin.
3. The exorcist must continually immerse himself in the words of the Holy Scriptures, reading them, meditating upon them, muttering them, affirming them in faith and with full authority, visualizing them and fully comprehending the words of YÁOHU UL in his heart, soul and mind.
4. The exorcist must totally be 'RÚKHA'-filled (Spirit-filled) (i.e., Spirit-controlled), which means, that his mind, heart, soul and emotions must always be directed and fully responsive to the unctions and urgings of the 'RÚKHA hol-HODSHÚA' within him.

The occultic similarities between these emphases of the Yaohushua sect and the Yao religion (also akin to Chinese Taoism) are significant. Yao emphasizes the exorcism of ghosts in order to cast out the evil spirits that are assumed to cause illness, and practices prayer to the spirits of deceased ancestors.

Summary

Rather than being a recovery of Christianity in its primitive purity, the Yaohushua Organization has all of the earmarks of a “cult”, in the classical sense of the term. According to the late Walter Martin, a cult is “any religious group which differs significantly in some one or more respects as to belief or practice, from those religious groups which are regarded as the normative expressions of religion in our total culture.” The term implies that a group’s religious views differ radically from the principles of historical Christianity. Martin adds that a cult may be further defined as “a group of people gathered about a specific person or person’s interpretation of the Bible.”⁶ Cults, or non-Christian religions, are characterized by their rejection of the inspiration and/or sufficiency of the Bible and by doctrinal deviations on the Trinity and/or the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Judged by these criteria, the Yaohushua Organization looks very much like a cult. They reject historical Christianity, focus on a particular person’s interpretation of the Bible, deny the inerrancy of the Bible by rewriting it according to their preferences, and deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Their practices also parallel popular cults. They seek to deprogram members by convincing them that their past convictions were wrong and to reprogram their minds through intensive training requirements. An example of these tactics appears on several internet bulletin boards. This anonymous individual is an ex-member of the Yaohushua sect:

“This is information for anyone researching or considering association with the YAOHUSHUA organization based in Jerusalem, Israel.

I became associated with the organization after I did a search on a name I found in a book I picked up at a Passover Seder. The name of the book was called 'Come out from her, My people', I can't remember the author's name. Being a new believer, and on fire so to speak, I began correspondence with the organization. I found out that I was in an adulterous association and that I had to make corrective measures. Being in the situation I was in, and not having anyone locally I could trust and confide in, my decision to leave the area seemed like the only thing to do. I had decided to move out of state and begin to work on making my life the way it was suppose to be. The leader of the organization talked me into moving to Israel. When I had my plans confirmed they sent me advisories on what to do when I arrived. I did not do research on the laws or regulations of Israel. I printed the advisory and took it with me. The advisory told me how to go about getting through customs. I was told to get a cab and drive to a certain address. They gave me a phone number to call when I arrived. I was met by two people and waited at this city until it was time to go to another city. I imagine this was for some kind of security reasons and that is why they did not meet me at the airport. When I arrived at the next place we proceeded to go through my personal belonging's. Their purpose was to eradicate any occult symbols or designs sewn into my clothing. etc. If you read the occult section of the organization's website, you will see that this was not completed in one night, it took some time. Most of my clothes were not repairable and had to be taken away. The following day I was introduced to the city where I would do errands. I had been in contact with another member of the organization, who was not my initial contact. I soon found out we were living in the same apartment complex. During my entire two month stay in Israel, the leader never came to meet me. A week later, a friend caught up with me that had also decided to come to Israel. The second day I was there, I was assigned to an authority that gave me my commands and began to teach me. He was the one who told me when I could sleep, when I could get up, and what to do. After my friend arrived a couple of days later we were joined by another person who was just visiting and we went on a mini-tour of the country. We visited several cities in approximately several weeks time. During this time there were four of us that lived together.

When we returned back to the second place I had lived at, we began a schedule of going on the Internet to proclaim in chat rooms from 10:00 p.m. till around 8:00 a.m. (because the phone charges were less at this time). Then we would either get to go to bed or perform some duty that needed to be accomplished. If we had sleep, it averaged between two to six hours, but most of the time it was the lesser amount.

⁶ Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*, p. 11.

Between 2:00 and 4:00 p.m we would get cleaned up, and then clean the apartment or perform a duty or practice something. About 5:00 p.m. we would eat. If we were on a fast, we would begin our prayers and what you would call an exorcism which would last for several hours. Then we would prepare to go online and proclaim in chat rooms for ten hours. Usually we would practice typing skills in English and Hebrew before going online. My friend and I were at this place, and mostly on this schedule, for the remainder of our stay. My direct authority, as well as the others, were all Asian. I only knew of one that was an American. I had given them approximately several thousand dollars as a gift, which was all the cash I had except for a credit card. I was misinformed about the status of the card, and was unable to get any information about the card while in Israel. I was informed that I needed cash to buy the computer I was to use online. Without any discernment we proceeded to remove the funds from the credit card. At this time I had no reason to return to America. I did not know that there was a tremendous charge for taking cash advances.

It was difficult to communicate with the people in direct contact with me, because they did not comprehend English very much. At some points I would be punished for doing the wrong thing or getting agitated with one of a higher ranking members. One time I had to wash an authority's car at three o'clock in the morning because there was a communication problem. Everything was very secretive and most of the time we had no idea what was going on. We were kept locked up in our apartment. I did not really have the time to check the scriptures, to verify that what was going on was scriptural. A year later I would be able to study and compare teaching's. One day I saw a supposed believer for 15 years raise a hand to hit a new believer for trying to assist them with a bag. When this person thought I might witness this event, they scrambled out of sight. I would have to say this made me uncomfortable. There was a teaching presented to me out of the old testament, if I remember correctly, concerning one of David's men who was killed for not returning on time. He had not returned and was found out in the field, killed on the spot. I had the notion this was presented as a warning not to disobey. During this time I had been praying for guidance about what to do. What I was experiencing was not right with my spirit. After about a week I told my friend that I had been praying and I was going to return to America. He said he had been praying about the same thing, and had made the same decision. As soon as we advised them of our decision, they removed us from the apartment the next day and dropped us off in another city close to the airport. We were able to borrow the money to return to the States, but we had to wait a few days. They did not offer to assist us in any way. But if we came back they would be happy to work with us again. When I made it back to America I was not able to stay very long because of the situation before I left. I asked the organization for assistance and they sent other believers to come and get me. I was taken to the east coast and supplied with work. I lived with my boss and three other believers. We would work all day and then proclaim online in the evenings [among other duties].

The organization demanded that we give 33 1/3 of our income. I had no choice since my boss was the one who paid me. After a while it seemed like money was the main objective and nothing else mattered. Other things happened that I am not at liberty to talk about, because it did not concern me directly. I can say, after carefully studying the scriptures, those persons were not taken care of scripturally. There was really no one in charge except the work boss. We had our orders from the organization, whether they were comprehended or not. This was the main problem, communication. Also, not knowing exactly what was going on or being able to get it across. Another thing I noticed was, if there was one Spirit, there should have been harmony and understanding. Eventually, over a seven month period, it came apart. Two of the believers left, and so I and another believer [I was caring for] left also. At first this was OK. But after I arrived at where I live now, I was ordered to go back to the east coast or suffer no communication at all. When I refused [because the situation was not solved] I was cursed, being called an organ donor. To me this meant they wanted me to die. Of course I don't accept any curses. I know what was going on and to me they don't have the slightest idea. Over the last ten months I have gone through the Scriptures and have been shown by the Spirit what has happened. I would advise anyone to always check everything out and let the Spirit be your guide. Examine doctrine's to be sure they are truth. Be sure that the person you choose to be your leader [in human form] is qualified and worthy."

Paul said in Titus 1:14, "Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and the commandments of men, that turn from the truth." I urge the reader to follow this Divinely inspired counsel in the matter of the Yaohushua Organization.

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