

Contrary to Popular Claims, Jesus Did Not Prophecy About Barack Obama

Is it true that a Hebrew prophecy about Barack Obama is hidden in the words of Jesus in Luke 10:18, where He said to His disciples, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven”?

Although this claim has been circulating for a number of years, I was asked about it again today, prompting this article.

The short answer is: Absolutely, categorically, certainly not. This is complete nonsense, without any possible linguistic support.

The claim goes like this: 1) Although Luke wrote in Greek, Jesus was speaking in Hebrew, so we must translate Luke’s Greek back into the original Hebrew; 2) the Hebrew word for lightning is “baraq”; 3) the Hebrew word for high place is “bama”; 4) in some cases there would be a “u” before the word bama (like the “u” in tube); 5) putting this together, Jesus would have spoken about baraq ubama, equating him with Satan.

To repeat: This is complete nonsense, without any possible linguistic support, but since this claim is still in circulation, I’ll take a few moments to demolish it.

I should mention first that Jesus most likely spoke to His disciples in Aramaic, not Hebrew, but since the words for lightning and high place are the same in both languages, we won’t make a major issue out of this.

What must be stressed, though, is this: Even if all five points listed above were accurate, this would not be what Jesus originally said, since “I saw Satan fall like lightning

from heaven" is not anywhere near, "I saw Satan fall like lightning and a high place." The latter makes no more sense in either Hebrew or Aramaic than it makes in English, yet if Jesus said the words baraq ubama, He would have said, "lightning and a high place" not "lightning from heaven."

As for each of the specific claims, while it is true that the word for lightning in Hebrew and Aramaic is baraq, that word is most likely unrelated to the name Barack, which is probably derived from the root b-r-k, which means "bless." Although the two roots seem very similar in English (b-r-q and b-r-k), they are quite different in Hebrew and Aramaic (and, in this case, Arabic too; think of the name Hosni Mubarrak, the former president of Egypt; it's from the same root, b-r-k, here meaning "blessed").

Some have claimed that the name Barack does not come from the root meaning "bless" and is instead derived from the Arabic Buraq, the name for Mohammed's mythical horse, which was derived from the root b-r-q (as in "lightning").

For argument's sake, we'll give the benefit of the doubt and say that the word "lightning" in Hebrew and Aramaic sounded very similar to the name Barack. But there is a much bigger problem that remains, namely, that no translator in his or right mind would render the words "from heaven" with the Hebrew or Aramaic ubama. Not one chance in a million.

There's nothing controversial or difficult here in Hebrew. We know that "from heaven" is simply mi-shamayim, as found in Isaiah 14:12, the original text Jesus would have had in mind when He spoke in Luke 10:18. There it says, "How you are fallen from heaven, 0 Lucifer, son of the morning!" (Is. 14:12, MEV).

As for the word bama (meaning high place, hill, or back), it does not refer to a high place like the sky (or heaven). Rather, it's the word found throughout the Old Testament

referring to “high places” like hills, where the people would offer up illicit sacrifices (Lev. 26:30). So, if Jesus used this word, he would have been saying, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from a hill,” which would be ridiculous.

It is true that the word bama is found in Isaiah 14:14, where it refers to “heights of the clouds,” but that only underscores the point I’m making: the word bama, in itself, does not refer to heavenly heights. It must be joined to another word, like “clouds,” to convey a heavenly meaning.

Third, to try and make the alleged original Hebrew sound something like Obama, the consonant u has to be introduced, making the sentence into complete gibberish, since u means “and,” in which case Jesus would have said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning and a high place.”

Did I say already that this was complete nonsense?

But there’s still more: This whole argument is not just complete linguistic nonsense (and I can say this with authority, since my Ph.D. from NYU is in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures), it is also complete theological nonsense, since Jesus was not introducing secret prophecies about American presidents into His interaction with His disciples.

Instead, He meant what He said and said what He meant, and the search for alleged secret messages is completely misguided. Perhaps Jesus also left secret Hebrew and Aramaic messages about Elvis Presley? Or maybe we can discover hidden messages that will help us win the lottery?

That being said, if you want to have some fun with the president’s name, then try this on for size: When you rearrange the letters for President Barack Obama you end up with An Arab Backed Imposter.

As ridiculous as this is (and of course, it’s just plain

silly), it's infinitely more plausible than is the completely absurd, not to mention impossible, reconstruction of Luke 10:18 to yield a secret reference to Barack Obama, one in which he is connected to Satan himself.

To be sure, internet myths die a prolonged and painful death, but I'm hoping that this one can be snuffed out once and for all right here.