

## Bosheth

2063

*“Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god. Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.” Ps. 16:4*

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Saul named one of his sons *Ish-baal*, meaning “a man of Baal”. Jonathan, who loved David so much, apparently named one of his sons *Merib-baal*, which, according to BDB, most likely means “Baal is my advocate”. The writer of the two books named after Samuel saw the devastating results of God’s people worshiping Baal, and he refused whenever possible to allow the name “Baal” to appear in his writings. He changed the names of Saul and Jonathan’s sons, *Ish-baal* and *Merib-baal* to “*Ish-bosheth*” and “*Mephi-bosheth*”, respectively. He even changed the name given to Gideon in Judges, *Jerub-baal* (or “contender against Baal”), to *Jerub-bosheth* (2Sam. 11:21).

“Bosheth” is a Hebrew word that means “shame”. So, the author of Samuel altered Saul’s son’s name from “a man of Baal” to “a man of that shameful thing”. Jonathan’s son’s name is changed from “Baal is my advocate” to “that disgraceful thing is my advocate”. And Gideon’s revised name is translated “contender against disgrace”.

The note on 2Samuel 2:8 on the following sheet from The New Oxford Annotated Bible (1991) shows that the spirit of honoring Baal has not completely departed from the hearts of religious men. In what they consider to be a show of superior wisdom, the editors of the New Oxford Annotated Bible reverse the Biblical author’s work and change his word “*Ish-bosheth*” back to “*Ish-baal*”. They obviously do not agree with the Biblical writer that Baal was a disgraceful thing, and so, they remove from his name the disgrace that the writer of Samuel felt toward that Canaanite god, returning Baal to the place of respect that King Saul originally gave him.

Christian scholars working on a new study Bible (The New Oxford Annotated Bible) were motivated by the spirit of Yahweh their god to replace the names given in the Bible to Israelite children named after Baal with names that reflect the more respectful tone toward the Canaanite deity. Here are two examples I found of the change:

2Samuel 2:8

2Samuel 11:21

