

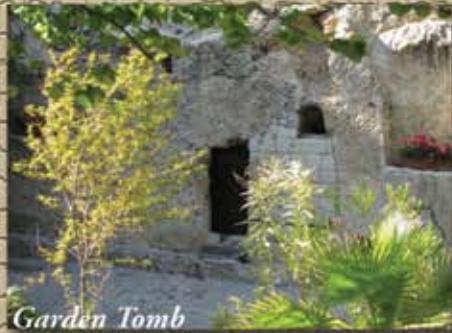
# Israel's TOMessenger

Spring 2015

*Publishing Salvation to Zion - Isaiah 52:7*  
A ministry of Jewish Awareness Ministries

Terach Midrash  
Pseudepigrapha  
**Jewish**  
**Writings**  
Responsa Apocrypha  
Zohar Talmud





*Garden Tomb*



*The Eastern Gate*



*Temple Wall Ruins*

Walk where He walked on a

A large, colorful mosaic map of Jerusalem, showing the city's layout and various landmarks. The mosaic is made of small, multi-colored tiles.

**Journey to  
Jerusalem**

**October 7-17, 2015**

**Call for pricing**

*Tour Host*  
Rev. Mark Robinson



**Jewish  
Awareness  
Ministries**

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**COVER:** The theme of this issue of *Israel's Messenger* is captured in the cover art – Jewish writings. The Jewish world has many sacred writings. A number of these sacred writings are explained in this issue. To the orthodox Jew, the Talmud, for example, is as much from God, as the Tenach (the Old Testament).



# From the Director's Desk

SPRING 2015

Dear Reader,

Now is the time to start planning to join us for our "Journey to Jerusalem" tour to Israel next October 7-17. Our 2014 trip was a blessing. Some of the comments were:

"This was marvelous trip...Thank you for all your hard work and great organizational skills to insure smooth days and unforgettable experiences!"

"I appreciate the extreme care that was taken every step of the way for our safety. I would highly recommend this trip through J.A.M. to others."

"Thoroughly enjoyed traveling with Jewish Awareness Ministries."

"Overall, this was my best trip to Israel [3 previous trips]...The devotions were very spiritually challenging, educational and thought provoking. Made this tour the best one I've been on."

"You all did an awesome job. It was hard to leave Israel for me. I am a changed person."

"I am so much more changed by this trip than previous trips...Top rated of my 6!!!"

"The entire experience was wonderful. I would, and will, recommend your tour to others interested in going. You achieved your goal of a great tour at a more than reasonable price."

These are some of the many excellent comments we received. Last year's tour was 10 days. We are able to offer this year's 11-day tour for the price of \$3,590 from most major metropolitan cities in the U.S. including the West Coast (call us about the price from your city). The price of the tour includes everything from your flight out of your domestic city and back except for lunches. Call us and reserve your space now as we limit our group to one bus.

This issue of *Israel's Messenger* examines Jewish writings and their importance in helping us understand our Bible. The Bible is a Jewish book, and, as you will see, the Jewish cultural background is necessary to glean all we can from God's word.

Keith Megilligan has written an article about the Talmud. What is it? When was it developed? What influence did it have on Jesus and His interaction with the Pharisees? These questions are answered in his article along with additional insights.

Dan Bergman has written an article about different Jewish literature such as *Midrash*, *Responsa*, *Pseudepigrapha*, *Zohar*, and the *Apocrypha*. His article will further your understanding of these ancient Jewish texts, the Jewish religious world, and why people were amazed in the first century at the authority with which Jesus spoke.

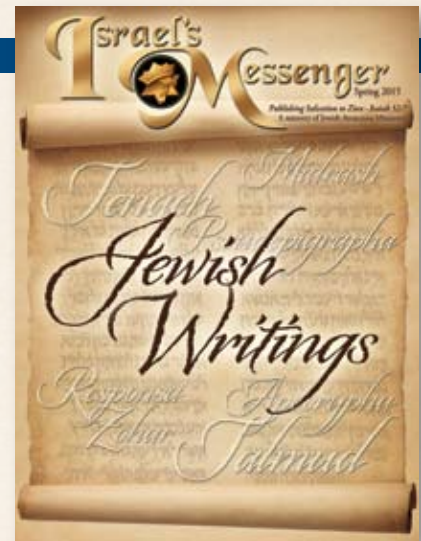
I have written about the Jewish Bible, the *Tenach*. Christians refer to the Jewish Bible as the Old Testament. To the Jewish people, though, it is not "Old" but their Scriptures. Actually it is a misnomer to refer to the entire Jewish Bible as the "Old Testament." I mention why in this article and introduce you to the Bible Jesus and the Apostles used. I believe it will be insightful.

On our recent trip to Israel, Dan Bergman had a number of opportunities to share Messiah Jesus with Israelis. He shares a couple of these experiences in the column "Sowing the Seed...Reaping the Harvest."

The column *Eretz Israel* looks at the importance of the *Shephelah*. Dr. Megilligan introduces us to this geographic region and its biblical importance.

Ken Symes contributed the article in the "Shadows of the Tribulation" column. He examines religious Babylon and political Babylon and their development in our world today.

It is a blessing to share that in December of 2014 we made our last payment on the



mortgage on the headquarters. God has been faithful in providing the funds to build our headquarters and retire the debt. To Him be the glory!

With our headquarters free and clear of debt, we have begun the **Elijah Project**. Elijah is the forerunner of Messiah, Malachi 4:5, heralding the coming of the King. In the months ahead we have targeted four metropolitan areas in the U.S. to have an outreach to the Jewish community. These areas are Raleigh, NC, Charlotte, NC, Cleveland, OH, and Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL, where we have personnel located.

We will be partnering with 2 or 3 churches in these areas to work with us in a comprehensive outreach to the Jewish community. Some possible methods of outreach include secular radio advertisements, billboards, newspaper ads, mailing lists, and large local community events, as well as other methods sharing Messiah with Jew and Gentile. It is estimated we will need a minimum of \$25,000 to \$35,000, perhaps more, for each area. Please join us in prayer for the **Elijah Project** and prayerfully consider a gift to help make this possible. Your gift would be appreciated.

God continues to bless and provide for this ministry. I am looking forward to what He has in store for us in 2015. 🕊

In Messiah,  
Mark Robinson





by Keith Megilligan

**Y**ou have heard that it was said to those of old... You have heard that it was said... It was also said... Jesus uttered these phrases near the beginning of His teaching of what has become known as His “Sermon on the Mount” found in Matthew 5-7. With each of these phrases He references subject matter that had been “said” to His audience. These things that were “said” were apparently (even obviously) passed on from prior generations to those of His day.

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old.” This formulaic expression was used purposefully by Jesus. He was drawing attention to a teaching that had been passed down to His generation from an origin simply identified as being “of old.” But where, when and who were those “of old?” If it was Scripture to which Jesus was referring, why didn’t He just say, “It is written”? Instead He repeats again, “You have heard that it was said...” True, just a chapter later He

would start using the phrase, “I say to you...” but in Matthew five Jesus keeps referencing things His audience had heard, etc. Further, the origin of these things being “heard” was referred to simply as being “of old.” Again, what was Jesus doing?

First, Jesus was doing what master teachers do: He realized His audience consisted of Jews, they would hear what He had to say more readily if He started from their point of reference. His audience was not only Jewish by birth, they were Jewish by heritage. That is, their existing (spiritual) culture stood upon the shoulders of those who had gone before them. Second, those before them had passed along not only their written Scriptures but also the oral tradition of their fathers. The oral tradition was the repeated (from generation to generation, century to century) instructions and comments (teachings) of their respected spiritual leaders (priests, sages, rabbis) about what the Torah (written Scriptures)

said. These repeated teachings (which were memorized) became known as the “Mishnah.” The word Mishnah is taken from the Hebrew word that meant “to repeat,” or “repeated.”

The Jews’ spiritual forefathers believed they needed additional detailed instruction on how the fulfillment of the Torah impacted their lives. For example, the law gave clear instructions about a bill of divorcement (Deuteronomy 24),

but it did not say specifically what the content of that bill should be. But the Jews wanted to know, how do we go about this matter of divorce? What provisions should be entered into in such a bill? This is just one illustration of the desired clarification on matters contained in the Torah that the Jews desired to have resolved.

Thus, from the time that Moses was given the written law, tradition has it that there was also an oral law given. This oral law (*torah she’b’al pe*) became an additional vehicle of teaching/explaining what the written law contained. As the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness and for centuries thereafter, their priests and rabbis would faithfully pass on the oral explanation of the written law. This oral law was needed to help them as they “walked in the way” (Deuteronomy 4). In other words, it helped answer the question for the Jews, “What does the law mean by what it says?” This desire for an explanatory law to help govern their daily life came to be known as the *halakhah*, (going or path; *halakhot* (plural)). The *halakhot* eventually contained both explanations taught as well as customs developed which were derived from the Torah. By the time of the Second Temple in the 5th century BC, these *halakhot* became collected and transmitted. “Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, the earliest rabbis gathered and transmitted the laws learned from earlier sages.” (MyJewishLearning, Barbara Freedman). The ultimate work of collecting, transmitting and recording (putting in written form) the *halakhot* became known as the Talmud. The Talmud contains the Mishnah and Gemara. The Mishnah



Continued on page 6



was codified in the 2nd century AD by Judah ha-Nasi and the Gemara, the interpretation of the Mishnah (Oral Laws), was codified from the 3rd to the end of the 5th century AD.

As can be imagined, the compilation of the extant (existing) transmissions was quite a chore. The rabbis spent at least two full centuries putting the *halakhot* together, debating as they worked over which were the best traditions to be maintained. The goal of the debate was to ensure the best sense of the tradition, not to determine who was right or wrong among them. They worked diligently at this project as they believed “both these (Talmud) and those (Torah) were the words of the living God.” (MyJewishLearning, Barbara Freedman)

But that is not even half the story. By the time the desire and coordination for the project had commenced, the Jewish community of scholars and schools of tradition had long been split geographically. The dispersion of the Jews in 586 BC re-located a significant portion of the Jews to Babylon. The Jewish community that developed there became (eventually) prosperous and religiously self-reliant. That is, there was little need to look beyond themselves for spiritual enlightenment. Thus, when Ezra and Nehemiah led a (small) contingent of Jews back to Jerusalem/Judah, the “commonwealth” of Judaism was split into two portions. Those that remained in Babylon had assimilated much of the culture of that nation and peoples. The group that went back to Judah left with the good hand of the Lord upon them (Nehemiah 2:8). They believed both prophetically and spiritually they were doing the right thing, no matter their personal sacrifice.

And, because you have two Jewish (scholarly) communities, you have two Talmuds: the Babylonian Talmud and the Palestinian/Jerusalem Talmud! Of the two, the Babylonian Talmud is the one preferred. The main reason

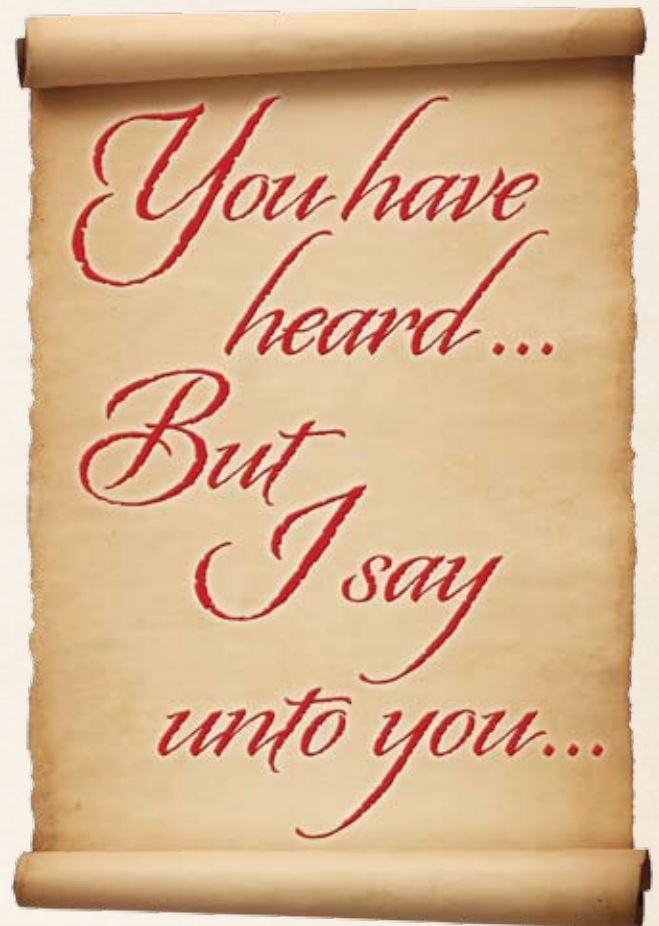
(there are several) why the Babylonian Talmud has been received better is that the level of scholarship (detail of expression and explanation) is more thorough in the Babylonian Talmud. As one writer has put it: “The finished Talmud weaves all of these fragmentary traditions and texts into coherent dialogues among sages living miles and centuries apart, regularly transposing and reforming sources while adding a sophisticated apparatus of explanation.” (MyJewishLearning, Yehudi Mirsky)

Now, back to Jesus’ teaching. Even with the above brief summary and background, you should have a better appreciation for the context and content of Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 5-7. Though the writing of the Talmud would not be completed for at least a couple of centuries after Jesus’ time, the habit of the Jewish people would have been to have “heard” the law - the traditions and the explanations of both as they had been memorized and passed down faithfully from one generation to the next. This is a practice that was not taken lightly. The Jews revered the Word of God and became, as a people, the recipient, the transmitter, and thus the preserver of that Word. The evident problem became, which “word” do you revere/hold to more: God’s or man’s? Do both the Torah and the (eventual) Talmud carry equal weight? Or, have you been caught up heeding (man’s) tradition as much or more than Torah? This really became a weighty matter! It also became a contentious matter. From this point in Jesus’ ministry onward, Jesus would be hated for

His character and for His (perceived) disrespect for the generational teachings passed down to His time.

Two points emerge in the text in light of this teaching. One, Jesus demonstrated the priority of His teaching over what they had heard: “*You have heard...but I say unto you...*”

Two, when Jesus was finished with His teaching, He left his audience almost speechless. And, I might add, at least at this point in Jesus’ ministry, He had captured their support. Why do I say this? Listen to Matthew’s conclusion to Jesus’ sermon: “*And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.*” You see, even when you quote the Talmud, though it has been written very respectfully in its reflection of God’s written Word, it is still man’s explanation/opinion. When Jesus spoke, He was (is) the Word! ☩



# *the* **Elijah Project**

*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”*

Malachi 4:5

Jewish tradition teaches that Elijah will appear prior to the arrival of the Messiah and be the herald of His coming. It is believed that Elijah will arrive prior to the battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38 and 39) according to Jewish tradition. Jewish Awareness Ministries believes we are living in the “Shadows of the Tribulation.” The *Elijah Project* is our desire to “shout from the mountaintops” to the Jewish people that Messiah is coming and you can know Him. Isaiah 40:9 says “O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” The *Elijah Project* is the application of this command from Isaiah. We have good news!!! We have “high mountains” today, through modern technology, that take the command of Isaiah to “heights” he never imagined!!! *The Elijah Project* intends to use modern communication methods to shout to the Jewish community of four metropolitan areas, “You can identify the Messiah! The prophets of Israel wrote clearly about Him! He is Jesus, the son of Abraham, the son of David!” Why four major metropolitan areas? We are targeting the areas where we have personnel - Tampa/St. Petersburg, FL; Raleigh, NC; Cleveland, OH; Charlotte, NC. Some of the possible methods to be used:



**Secular  
Radio Ads**



**Billboard Ads**



**Newspaper  
Ads**

**Internet  
Website  
Outreach**



**Outreach At Large Community Gatherings**



**Mailings To  
Jewish Homes**

God has given each Bible believing Christian a duty and a command:

*“I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,”* Isaiah 62:6-7.

A watchman warns! As people who “make mention of the Lord” we are to pray for Jewish people but also warn them, “shout from the mountaintops,” about their God and their need for personal redemption through Messiah! One of the ways you can help fulfill this command is to join us in the *Elijah Project*. We are anticipating needing about \$35,000 for EACH metropolitan area to accomplish this outreach. Please prayerfully pray about the *Elijah Project* and sending a gift to reach the Jewish people in these communities.



**Call us at 919-275-4477  
to learn more about  
*the* **Elijah Project**  
or to get involved  
through a Financial gift.**





# Tenach

by Rev. Mark Robinson

**T**he word *Tenach* is probably unfamiliar to many of our readers. This is the term Jewish people use when referring to what Christians call the *Old Testament*. It is the entire *Jewish Bible*, made up of the exact same number of verses as the *Old Testament* in your Bible. The difference between the *Tenach* and the Christian's *Old Testament* is the order of the books. The Christian's *Old Testament* starts with Genesis and ends with Malachi. The *Tenach* starts with Genesis but ends with 2nd Chronicles.

What you may not be aware of, is that the Bible Jesus and the apostles used was the *Tenach*. The Christian community changed the order of the *Old Testament* books as they produced the complete canon of Scripture (including the *New Testament*).

Understanding the difference is important for a few reasons. It sheds light and understanding on the question of whether the Apocrypha should be included in the *Old Testament* canon; gives insight into a number of different events in the gospels; and, will help you in conversation with your Jewish friend if your friend brings out his *Tenach* in discussing biblical issues.

## LAW, PROPHETS, AND WRITINGS

The *Tenach* is composed of three parts. These parts are the Law (*Torah*), Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and the Writings (*K'tuvim*).

The Law is the five books of Moses, Genesis through Deuteronomy.

The *Prophets* is made up of the earlier prophets, Joshua, Judges, 1st and 2nd Samuel, and 1st and 2nd Kings and the later prophets which include major and minor prophets, 21 books in all.



The *Writings* is composed of 13 books, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1st and 2nd Chronicles.

*Tenach* is arrived at by taking the initial letters of the 3 sections, T-N-K (the K is a CH in Hebrew), and adding vowels.

## TORAH AND HAFTORAH READINGS

Every sabbath there are prescribed readings from the books of Moses (*Torah*) and selected portions from the rest of the *Tenach*, called haftorah readings. The last portion of the Torah reading (Deuteronomy 34:1-12) and the first portion (Genesis 1:1 - 2:3) is read at the *Simcha Torah* celebration, which takes place at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. This begins the yearly cycle in which the entire 5 books of

Moses are read. At each sabbath service selected portions of the *Prophets* and *Writings* are read.

This custom pre-dates Jesus and is commonly believed to have started in 168 B.C. with the events surrounding Antiochus Epiphanes and the Jewish people, today celebrated in the festival of Chanukah.

We know this custom was present in the synagogue of the first century as the practice is mentioned in the book of Acts.

*"And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."* Acts 13:15

*"For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."* Acts 15:21

Notice these texts say "after the reading of the law and the prophets" and "Moses...being read in the synagogue."

## JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

*"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat*

*Continued on page 9*



down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

Luke 4:16-21

When the Isaiah scroll was opened for Jesus to read it was most likely the prescribed Haftorah reading of that sabbath, as was the synagogue custom, that Jesus read. The text He read was from Isaiah 61:1-2, although He didn't complete verse two, "...and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn."

The reason He stopped with the "...acceptable year of the LORD..." was that this phrase refers to His first coming and was now fulfilled in Him. "The day of vengeance..." refers to His second coming in judgment.

What is fascinating about this entire event is that Jesus did not pick and choose what scripture to read that sabbath morning. No, it was the prescribed reading from the Prophets which became piercing truth when He said it was fulfilled in Him.

In today's synagogue *haftorah* readings, this portion of scripture (Isaiah 61:1-2) is omitted. The question can be asked, rightfully so is, what happened to this *haftorah* reading of Jesus? There is no definitive answer to this, but, perhaps, with this passage being a clear claim to the Messiahship of Jesus and used by Him, it is possible that the Rabbis replaced this *haftorah* scripture portion with a different one.

It seems highly likely, though, that Jesus read from the *haftorah* portion that particular sabbath morning.

## THE TENACH AND MESSIAH

It is certain that the Bible Jesus, and the apostles, used was the *Tenach*. For example, on the road to Emmaus Jesus shared with two discouraged disciples about Himself. "And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all

things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" Luke 24:44.

Jesus shared from the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* (the book of *Psalms* is the first book of the *Writings* section and, here, *Psalms* represents the *Writings*). What He was saying was that the entire *Jewish Bible*, the *Tenach*, from Genesis to 2nd Chronicles, speaks of Him. We don't know what messianic prophecies were shared from the *Law*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings*, but Jesus explained that they spoke of His birth, life, death, and resurrection. He was saying, the entire *Jewish Bible*, the *Tenach*, points to Him as the Messiah.

In Matthew 23 there is a scathing rebuke of some of the Pharisees. They had put tradition above truth, self-interest above the Savior, myths in place of Messiah. In pronouncing judgment upon these hypocritical leaders Jesus proclaimed, "That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar," Matthew 23:35.

Most of us are aware that the account of the "blood of righteous Abel" is found in Genesis (chapter 4). You may not be aware that the account of "the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias" is found in 2nd Chronicles (chapter 24:20-21). The point of this verse is that the message of the entire *Jewish Bible*, from Genesis, the first book in the *Tenach*, to 2nd Chronicles, the last book in the *Tenach*, which spoke of Messiah, was rejected for tradition.

## THE BIBLE AND THE APOCRYPHA

One brief thought about the canon of scripture. The Apocrypha is not accepted as part of the Jewish canon. When Jesus referenced the *Tenach*, He was excluding the Apocrypha as canonical. The scripture is made up

of 66 books, 39 *Old Testament* books and 27 *New Testament* books. The Apocrypha is not part of the inspired Word of God.

John Wenham summarizes it this way, "We conclude, then, that orthodox Jewry, Jerome, the Reformers and the founders of the great Bible societies were right in their view of the *Old Testament* Canon, and that the attempt by either Rome or liberalism to put the Jewish Canon and the *Apocrypha* on an equal level is misguided."<sup>1</sup>

## FINAL THOUGHTS

It is helpful to understand Jewish culture as we read and study our Bibles. The Bible is a Jewish book, both the "Old and *New Testament*." Actually, it is best to understand the Bible as just one book, Genesis to Revelation, and not "*Old Testament*" and "*New Testament*." The "*Old Testament*", or Mosaic Law, is the relationship God had with a nation, Israel, through the laws and practices God gave for Israel to live under in the Mosaic Law. The "*New Testament*" is the relationship God has with individuals, Jew and Gentile, which only takes place through the death, burial and resurrection of Messiah Jesus, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:27-28. When the first covenant was made old, see Hebrews 8, the "*Old Testament*" was done away with - the Mosaic Law, not the entire *Tenach*, as there are scores of prophecies, for example, that still must be fulfilled.

In the first century the Bible used by Jesus and the apostles was the *Tenach*. By the end of the first century God completed His revelation in His one book, the Bible, Genesis to Revelation. The complete revelation, Holy Scripture, is a Jewish book, not just the *Tenach*.



End Note

1. John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, Baker Books, 1994, page 152





# Jewish Writings

by Rev. Dan Bergman

One would be misinformed to think that religious Jewish writings consist of only the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) and the *Talmud*. There are many other Jewish documents dating from the 4th century B.C. through the late 13th century A.D. An understanding of these documents will further our understanding of the Jewish religious world. For the sake of clarity, our explanation will be limited to five groups of Jewish writings which will be examined in chronological order. It is also important to note that none of the writings discussed within this article are part of the canon of Scripture – meaning that all of these writings are extra-Biblical.

## PSEUDEPIGRAPHA AND APOCRYPHA

Between the pages of Malachi and Matthew, around 400 years of Jewish history transpired. It is during this period of time that most of what is known as the *Pseudepigrapha* and the *Apocrypha* were written (although some were penned in the first and second century).

It is easy to confuse these two similar terms. Of the two, the term *Apocrypha* is likely the one you are more familiar with, especially if you have had any exposure to Roman Catholicism, as it is even today included in the Roman Catholic Bible, and is the text from which numerous Catholic doctrines are based.

The word *Apocrypha* comes from a Greek word meaning “hidden”. The term in its specific sense denotes those writings from within the intertestamental period that were included in some printed editions of



the Bible. These books are not accepted as Scripture by mainstream Jews or Christians. Martin Luther included these books in his Bible, in a special section between the Old and New Testaments, labeled – *The Apocrypha*. Luther used this term to distinguish this group of writings from the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. It was in the same vein that this group books were included in the 1611 King James Bible. The Old Testament *Apocrypha* includes Judith, Tobit, 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, Susannah and the additions to Daniel. Some lists also include the book of Enoch.

The earliest known Jewish work not included in the Bible is the *Book of Enoch*. It was written after the return from the Babylonian Exile, and

before the Maccabean revolt in 172 BC. Copies of the Book of Enoch were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>1</sup> It is within these books that we find the basis for many false doctrines and practices such as the command to use magic,<sup>2</sup> forgiveness of sins by almsgiving,<sup>3</sup> Purgatory, and offering of money for the sins of the dead.<sup>4</sup>

On April 8th 1546, the Council of Trent, referring to the 66 books of our Bible and the *Apocrypha*, decreed that “...if any one receive not, as sacred and canonical, the said books entire with all their parts, as they have been used to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin vulgate edition; and knowingly and deliberately contemn the traditions aforesaid; let him be anathema.”<sup>5</sup>

The word *Pseudepigrapha* comes from two Latin words meaning “falsely inscribed.” It is a book written in a biblical style and ascribed to an author who did not write it. In common usage the term is often used to refer to apocryphal (non-canonical) writings that do not appear in printed editions of the Bible.

As can be seen from the titles of the books included within the *Apocrypha*, many of them can easily overlap into the category known as “*Pseudepigrapha*” due to the fact that their authorship is falsely ascribed to an earlier Biblical character (such as *Enoch* and *Baruch*<sup>6</sup>). This distinction is what makes a book like *1st Maccabees* fall into a different category than say, *The Apocalypse of Abraham*.

## MIDRASH

In Judaism, the *Midrash* (from the Hebrew verb “to search out”) is

*Continued on page 11*



the written work that exegetes and expounds upon the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). It seeks to interpret difficult passages, fill in gaps in the narrative of the text, and provide detailed application of general statements and commands given in Scripture. It also includes stories and illustrations from post-Temple era Rabbis to aid in analysis and application.<sup>7</sup>

There are two main categories of *Midrash*. One deals with *Halakha* (from the Hebrew verb “to walk” dealing with legal matters), and the other with *Haggadah* (from the Hebrew verb “to show forth” dealing with non-legal matters, and concentrating more on the study and interpretation of Scripture stressing devotion and ethics). This word may sound familiar to you if you have ever attended a Passover Seder; the book that is used as a guide for the order of service is called a “Passover Haggadah”. Until the 2nd century A.D. *Midrash* only existed orally. The earliest collection of *Halakhic Midrash* written down was in the 2nd century, and the earliest of *Haggadic* was written down in the 3rd century A.D.

## RESPONSA

In simple terms, the *Responsa* are a series of questions and answers within rabbinic literature existing for the express purpose of producing decisions and rulings regarding Jewish law. *Responsa* literature spans a period of roughly 1,700 years. The questions asked are often practical in nature, and usually come from adjustments to modern living, for which no application has been given in the codes of law, and the *Responsa* then become a supplement to the codes.

No *Responsa* have ever been found that predate the writing of the *Mishna* (the Oral Law), which transpired around the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. Many *Responsa* came in the form of correspondence between rabbis in Israel and Babylon. These letters were not at all friendly in nature; most of

them dealt with various rabbis in Israel threatening to send letters to those in Babylon (who held opposing views) which would refute and annul their teachings (since the rabbis in Israel were thought to be more authoritative).

## ZOHAR

The *Zohar* is the foundational work in Judaism regarding mysticism (known as Kabbalah). A large number of Kabbalists hold the *Zohar* to have equal authority with that of the *Torah* and *Talmud*. The word “*Zohar*” means “splendor” or “radiance”. According to Jewish tradition the author of the *Zohar* was Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who lived in the 2nd Century A.D. Although the teachings of the *Zohar* center around *Yochai* and his disciples, scholars believe *Moses de León* (1250–1305) of Spain is the most likely author.

Within the *Zohar* there are many references to the Messiah (including one from Isaiah 53), as well as passages that seem to promote the idea of a triune God. According to the *Zohar*, one day Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai was teaching his son Rabbi Eliezer about the mystery of the triune nature of God. He instructed his pupil by saying, “*Come and see the mystery of the word יהוה, Jehovah: there are three steps, each existing by itself; nevertheless they are One, and so united that one cannot be separated from the other.*”

There were at least two false Messiahs who used the *Zohar* as a springboard for their teachings and actions, *Shabbetai Zvei* (1626-1676) and *Jacob Frank* (1726-1791). *Zvei* eventually converted to Islam, a shocking blow to his followers. Frank claimed to be the reincarnation of both *Zvei* and *Jacob* the patriarch. In modern Judaism, both the Hasidic (Pious) branch of Orthodox Judaism as well as followers of *Kabbalah* look to this book for instruction and guidance. Mystical Judaism can be seen as far back as the first century; however, the *Zohar* has greatly impacted and strengthened it.

## CONCLUSION

Given the large amount of religious Jewish writings in existence, one can easily become overwhelmed and confused, and therefore understand the confusion many Jewish people have regarding what is authoritative and not, religiously speaking. When the officers of the Chief priests and Pharisees did not bring Jesus to them as ordered, the officers responded, “Never man spake like this man,” John 7:46. The Pharisees response was “Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?,” John 7:47-48. Jesus spoke with the authority of God. He was clear, direct, and unambiguous, not at all like what had become common in the extra biblical Jewish writings of Jewish religious leaders.

After examining these five groups of Jewish writings in somewhat of a survey fashion, may we now find them at least a little less confusing. One thing that we should certainly take away from this article is the extreme value of our Bible – the complete Word of God in its entirety. Let us hold it tighter, esteem it higher, and view it in stark contrast with the fallible writings of men. It is the Word of God that gives life. Praise the Lord for giving us His Word!



End Notes

- 1 [jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org)
- 2 Tobit 6:5-7
- 3 Tobit 4:11; 12:9
- 4 2 Maccabees 12:43-45
- 5 Council of Trent (4th Session) 1545-1563
- 6 From Jeremiah 32:12
- 7 “*Midrash*” Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary 2nd Revised edition, Random House Reference (July 12, 2005).



# THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

## I. THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD

- The Bible claims to be God's Word  
*Zechariah 7:12; 2 Timothy 3:16;*  
*2 Peter 1:20-21*
- The Bible claims to be inerrant  
*Matthew 5:18; Psalm 119:160*
- The Bible is proven to be God's Word through prophecy  
*Isaiah 34:16; Isaiah 41:8-23*

## II. THE BIBLE IS THE BELIEVERS ONLY AUTHORITY FOR TRUTH

- The Word of God is exalted above the name of God  
*Psalm 138:2*
- The Word of God is more authoritative than dreams, visions, or miracles  
*Jeremiah 23:25-32; 2 Peter 1:16-21*
- The Word of God is truth  
*John 17:17*

## III. THE BIBLE IS THE BELIEVERS GUIDE FOR LIFE

- The Word of God is indispensable for Christian growth  
*1 Peter 2:2*
- The Word of God leads us into every good work  
*2 Timothy 3:16-17*
- The Word of God will teach us how to be approved by God and not ashamed before Him  
*2 Timothy 2:15*
- The Word of God is what we are to share with others  
*2 Timothy 4:1-5*
- The Word of God is able to illuminate all thoughts and intents  
*Hebrews 4:12*

## IV. THE BIBLE'S BLESSINGS SEEN IN PSALM 19:7-11

- vs. 7 the Word of God leads to salvation
- vs. 8 the Word of God leads to right living
- vs. 9 the Word of God leads to truth
- vs. 10 the Word of God is more desirable than gold
- vs. 11 the Word of God promises great reward in keeping it

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# Sowing the Seed...

## *Reaping the Harvest*

### DESTINATION ISRAEL

by Dan Bergman

It's always exciting to see who the Lord may place next to you on a plane ride. My wife and I sat down in our assigned seats, mentally preparing ourselves for the 10 hour flight to Israel. There was an empty seat to my left. One man (Joshua) put his carry-on bag on this seat, and then walked away. Another man kept looking from his boarding pass to this same seat, and back to his boarding pass, a confused expression on his face. The first man returned...he was not happy. The two men began to argue about to whom the seat belonged. The first man then showed the second, from his own boarding pass, that this was in fact his seat. The second man apologized and backed down. Joshua sat down next to me. He seemed even less happy than he was a few minutes earlier. (Meanwhile, I began to silently pray, "Lord help me.")

Joshua began to put headphones on. I knew that if I didn't "break the ice" now, it may be a while before I got a chance to.

"Hello!" I said, with the biggest smile and friendliest tone I could muster.

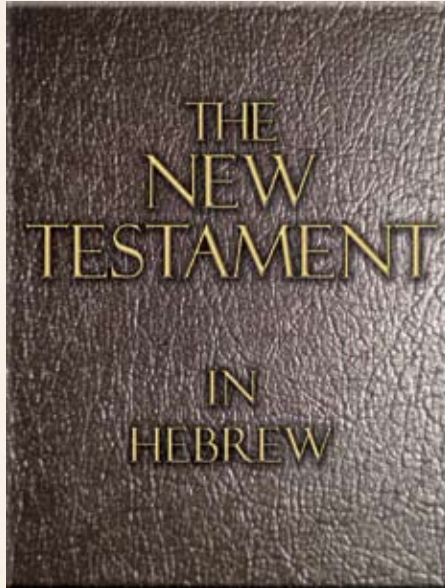
"Hi."

That was it. He put his head back and closed his eyes. It was only during the occasional PA announcement that he opened them, and a disgusted look would usually follow.

Joshua spoke with an accent. I wasn't sure if he was an Israeli or a Palestinian... or something else. I had no idea.

About two thirds into the flight, he asked me where I was from. He seemed to be in a better mood. I discovered that he was an Israeli from Tel Aviv. I told him that I was a preacher, and that we love, stand with, and pray for Israel. He seemed happy to hear how I felt about Israel, but I could tell he began to close up the moment I said I was a preacher. Joshua returned to his in-flight movie.

As we began our descent into Israel, Joshua removed his headphones again. I had with me in my carry-on, a Hebrew New Testament. I handed it to Joshua, telling him that this Book is the reason why true Christians love his people.



When he saw that it was in Hebrew, he actually smiled. It was the happiest I saw him the whole trip. He thanked me for the New Testament, and we landed. I hope and pray to see him again someday.

Please pray that Joshua reads the New Testament, and realizes that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah of Israel.



As I packed the eight Hebrew New Testaments into my luggage for our Israel trip, I couldn't have imagined that one of these would find its way into the West Bank - not only that, but into the hands of a very special person. The West Bank (of

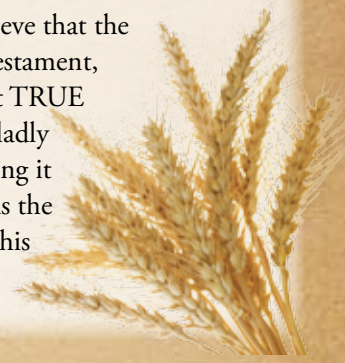
Jordan) is the one place we go as we travel through Israel, where there are Jordanian flags waving high in the wind. You see, this used to be known (in Jesus' time) as "the wilderness of Judaea."

During our travels, we headed to the banks of the Jordan River near Jericho. This is the area where John baptized Jesus. I was privileged to preach a short devotional message on the banks of the Jordan River. Among our group of 46 American Christians, sat one of the most unlikely listeners - an IDF soldier named Stephan!

Oy, I left my Hebrew New Testament on the bus! After I finished the devotional (which will be on JAM's YouTube channel sometime within the next year), I ran to the bus, grabbed the New Testament, and ran back praying that the IDF soldier was still there.

I praise the Lord for the multitudes in our group that swarmed this young man to get their pictures taken with an Israeli soldier!

When I had the opportunity, I told him that we love Israel, pray for their soldiers, and believe that the Land is theirs. I gave him the New Testament, telling him that it was the reason that TRUE CHRISTIANS love his people. He gladly took it, and even thanked me for giving it to him! Please pray that Stephan reads the New Testament, and accepts Jesus as his Messiah.





# ERETZ ISRAEL ארץ ישראל

## God's Testing Ground of Faith

### SHEPHELAH

by Keith Megilligan

A buffer between two worlds, that is the *shephelah* of Israel. Many English translations of the Hebrew text will render this word, “the low lands.” In reality the *shephelah* is a transitional range of diminutive hills running north and south which separates the Coastal Plain to the West from the hill country of Judea and Samaria to the east. But its existence has served, and continues to serve, several significant purposes.

First, as indicated above, it is the topographical and geographical buffer between the hill country and the Coastal Plain. Geologically, the *shephelah* is dramatically marked by a chalk moat that runs its length, north to south, separating the hill country from the *shephelah* itself. If you look carefully at the genealogy of 1st Chronicles 2-4, you will see that many of the tribes of Judah and Simeon settled the area of the *chalk moat* (cf. also Joshua 15). Likewise, the conquests of Joshua in chapters 10-12 cover much of the terrain of the “lowlands” and the vicinity of the *chalk moat* in Joshua’s conquests.

While you may be able to move freely in and around the Coastal Plain, once you head east to the hill country, you’d better know where you’re going. There are only so many east/west valleys that bisect the *shephelah*, and significantly, whoever controlled them controlled the entrance into the hill country. Each of these valleys is marked by prominent *tels* (ruins of previous civilizations marked by layers or tiers of occupation) that remind us of their strategic importance (Aijalon, Sorek, Elah, Beth Shemesh, Gezer, Lacish, etc.).

Second, the *shephelah* serves as an agricultural buffer. Since the hill country functions as a watershed from the prevailing wind and rain that comes from the Mediterranean Sea, most of the water drains back to the West via these east/west valleys. The erosion from the hill country brings very

fertile soil into the valleys so that various grain crops, vineyards, and other fruits and vegetables can be grown here. Again, whomever controls access to the valleys controls the agriculture as well, leading some Bible scholars to view the ongoing battles between Israel and the Philistines as agricultural wars. Whoever controlled the valleys of the *shephelah* controlled the produce, wine and olive trees of the region. Very few people need to be reminded of the exploits of Samson which took place, for the most part, in and around the *shephelah* (Judges 13-16). And finally, who can forget David and Goliath? Nobody figures more prominently in this region (Valley of Elah) than those two (1st & 2nd Samuel; esp. 1st Samuel 17)!

Lastly, the *shephelah* served as a buffer for Israel from the invading armies of the Mediterranean world. Whenever Egypt, Assyria, Babylon or the like would travel through the land bridge of Israel, as long as Israel stayed in the hill country, these invaders were usually of little threat. As their armies marched via the coastal highway (Via Maris) Israel had the aided barrier of the *shephelah* to “protect” them. 🕊

NOTE: The author expresses his appreciation for the article *Israelite Expansion Process in the Iron Age II: A Chalk Moat Perspective* by Owen D. Chesnut, as a resource.





# Shadows of the Tribulation

By Ken Symes

As one looks at the prophecies of end time events, Babylon plays a major role. Political Babylon falls into two categories - the city and the empire. The city is first mentioned in Genesis 11:1-9 where men in rebellion against God built a tower intended to reach into heaven, displacing God as the rallying point for men. God pronounced judgment against the project, confused their language, and scattered them over the earth. Babel, or Babylon, however (with the exception of Joshua 7:20-21), is not mentioned again until it appears in the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied Babylon's fall (cf. Isaiah 13:17-19; Jeremiah 50:21-24), and in 539 B.C the city did indeed fall just as it was prophesied it would. Prior to this the Babylonian empire had already been destroyed by the Medes and the Persians.

Isaiah 48:12-15, 20, however, ties the city of Babylon's final destruction to the time of Messiah's return. Isaiah 13:1-16 pictures Babylon, the city, as sharing in the destruction that God will bring upon Gentile powers at the time of the 2nd coming of the Messiah. Isaiah 13:19-22 has yet to be fulfilled. Babylon has never been destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah, nor has the *Day of the Lord* occurred as prophesied in Isaiah 13:6. The heavenly lights were not darkened nor did God give rest to Jacob (the Jews) and to the whole earth as prophesied in Isaiah 14:1-7. Neither has there been a king in Babylon as described in Isaiah 14:12-14. Also, the ultimate downfall of the city is related to the downfall of Satan, Isaiah 14:12-15.

Obviously, at some future time Babylon will be rebuilt. Today much of the city has already been rebuilt, following a restoration under the direction of Saddam Hussein begun in 1978. The walls of the Procession Street are built. The southern palace of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Nimrath Temple, a Greek style theater that seats 4,000 and the Saddam Hussein guest house are all built.

The political world ruler will rise out of the resurrected Roman Empire. With the rapture of the church, America's power will die. The European Union, with its shell of Christianity, will have very little fall-out from the rapture and will rise above the ensuing turmoil to produce the economic stability necessary as a foundation for the coming world ruler.

Could it be that the anti-Christ ultimately moves his capital to Babylon? If Babylon becomes the world capital the description of the merchants in Revelation 18:11-13 makes sense, as does a prophesied destructive attack upon the city just before the return of the Messiah to establish the Millennial Kingdom. Revelation 18 describes in detail the destruction of the city of Babylon. It also is a lament by the world over political Babylon's fall (Revelation 18:1-3, 11, 16-19). Only then does Isaiah 14 make sense in tying the judgment of Satan to the destruction of the city of Babylon.

The destruction of Babylon by the Medes-Persians ended her political power, thus affecting her religious life. The Medo-Persians put an end to much of the religious corruption that had characterized Babylon. The religious system moved first to Pergamum in Asia Minor (Revelation 2:12-14) and later to Rome, where it became a major influence in the corrupting of the church. Many of the unbiblical rituals in the church today can trace their origins to the satanic Babylonian religion.

The Babylonian religious system is described in Revelation 17. In verses 1, 4-5, 15-16 the system is described as a harlot riding on the back of the beast indicating her great power over him for a time. This power lasts through the first half of the tribulation. In verse four we see her great wealth and glory. In verse 5 we note that she is a counterfeit. Since the true church is called a "Mystery" (Ephesians 5:32), the Babylonian religious system is a counterfeit. "The mother of harlots" indicates a great federation of all religions (including apostate Christianity) into a one world system. But religious Babylon who sought political alliances and power will, in the end, be destroyed by that political alliance (Revelation 17:16-18). Note, these alliances can only occur when the parties to it are willing to set aside the key issues of their biblical beliefs.

The events in our world today are moving us toward a Babylonian political system. This is the sovereignty of God at work (Revelation 17:17). But woe to them who stand with the apostasy against the sovereign Holy God and His precious Word. What we believe does matter! "*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begins at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of Christ?*" (I Peter 4: 17). ☞



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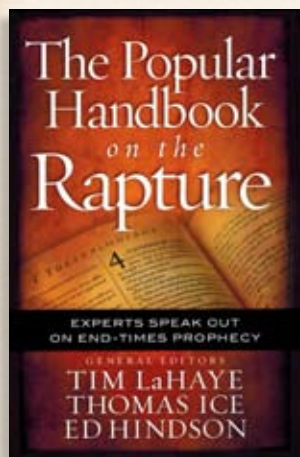
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*By Ed Hindson*

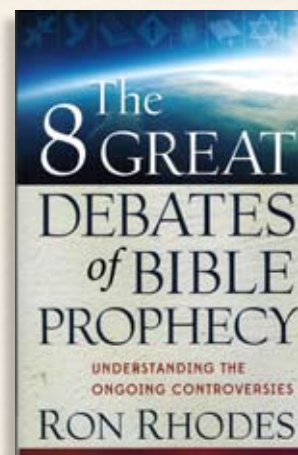
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