

A SURVEY OF
THE TANACH
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

J.K. MCKEE



A SURVEY OF THE TANACH FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

by John Kimball McKee

© 2008 TNN Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission from the author.

Published by TNN Press, a division of Outreach Israel Ministries

1492 Regal Court

Kissimmee, Florida 34744

(407) 933-2002

www.tnnonline.net/tnnpress

Front cover image is of a desert caravan of camels, ©Istockphoto.com

Back cover image is an Assyrian relief of the Siege of Lachish, taken July 2008 by J.K. McKee at the British Museum

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, The Lockman Foundation.

Printed in the United States of America

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	V
TORAH (PENTATEUCH)	
Book of Genesis.....	1
Book of Exodus.....	11
Book of Leviticus.....	19
Book of Numbers.....	27
Book of Deuteronomy.....	35
NEVIIM (PROPHETS)	
Book of Joshua.....	43
Book of Judges.....	51
Books of Samuel.....	59
Books of Kings.....	69
Book of Isaiah.....	79
Book of Jeremiah.....	87
Book of Ezekiel.....	95
Book of Hosea.....	101
Book of Joel.....	107
Book of Amos.....	111
Book of Obadiah.....	117
Book of Jonah.....	121
Book of Micah.....	127
Book of Nahum.....	133
Book of Habakkuk.....	137
Book of Zephaniah.....	141
Book of Haggai.....	145
Book of Zechariah.....	149
Book of Malachi.....	155
KETUVIM (WRITINGS)	
Book of Psalms.....	159
Book of Proverbs.....	165
Book of Job.....	171
Song of Songs.....	177
Book of Ruth.....	181
Book of Lamentations.....	187
Book of Ecclesiastes.....	193
Book of Esther.....	199
Book of Daniel.....	205
Book of Ezra-Nehemiah.....	213
Books of Chronicles.....	219
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	229
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	231

ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by TNN Press. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

Special terms that may be used have been provided in this chart:

ABD: <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	KJV: King James Version
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament</i> by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Lidell & Scott)
Ara: Aramaic	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	LXX: Septuagint
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	m. Mishnah
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	MT: Masoretic Text
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	NASB: New American Standard Bible (1977)
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	NASU: New American Standard Update (1995)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	NEB: New English Bible (1970)
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	NIV: New International Version (1984)
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	NKJV: New King James Version (1982)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	NLT: New Living Translation (1996)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	NT: New Testament
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	OT: Old Testament
Ger: German	REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
GNT: Greek New Testament	RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
Grk: Greek	Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community	Thayer: <i>Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i>
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	TDNT: <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2001)	TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
Heb: Hebrew	TNTC: <i>Tyndale New Testament Commentaries</i>
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible	TWOT: <i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>	UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>	v(s). verse(s)
ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>	Vine: <i>Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words</i>
IVP: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>	Vul: Latin Vulgate
Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)	WBC: <i>Word Biblical Commentary</i>
JBK: New Jerusalem Bible-Koren (2000)	Yid: Yiddish
	YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade (1997-2008) we have witnessed the Messianic movement grow in leaps and bounds. Much of this is obviously due to the success of Messianic Judaism in evangelizing Jewish people in need of salvation in Yeshua Messiah. Much of it is also due to a renewed interest by Christians in the Old Testament, who by embracing their Hebraic Roots have desired to return to a sound foundation in the Torah and Tanach Scriptures. In more diligently studying these often neglected parts of the Bible, our collective understanding of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament has been greatly enriched, seeing the Messiah for who He is as anticipated by those of Ancient Israel. The Psalmist's declaration, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105) is something that has truly been realized by much of today's Messianic community. We have learned, "How sweet are Your words to my taste! *Yes, sweeter* than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

For those Messianic Believers from Jewish backgrounds, the Torah and Tanach have always been an important part of their spiritual identity. Every week, the Torah reading is considered, as the Synagogue traces the beginnings of Ancient Israel through the Exodus and to their eventual arrival at the Jordan River. The cycle begins again, and the Torah's godly principles become embodied in the Jewish soul. For those Messianic Believers from diverse Christian backgrounds, the Old Testament has often been viewed as an important part of the Biblical narrative, but perhaps not as important as the New Testament. The Tanach is often viewed as being the Scriptures of Ancient Israel—surely important to know as it foretells the coming of Jesus Christ—but is there really anything else that we need it for? Psalms and Proverbs have some good sayings in them, right? I think it is safe to say that we all need to place a higher value on the Tanach Scriptures, be our examination limited because we have only examined the weekly *parashah*, or be our examination limited because we have considered it important only for foretelling the arrival of Yeshua or to use for a few lines in praise songs.

With 2010 and a new decade of development soon facing our faith community, two important phenomena are occurring in today's evangelical Christianity that could significantly affect Messianic growth in the future: (1) the overall decline of Biblical ethics and morality,ⁱ and (2) a renewed interest in the Old Testament, beyond that of simply trying to piece together prophecies that point to Yeshua's Messiahship. What has happened in history when the Church has arrived at what appears to be an abyss of immorality? It's pretty obvious when you think about it: *people turn to the Old Testament!* In times past, the kinds of renewals witnessed included a return to the Ten Commandments, and other ethical and moral commandments in the Tanach. But today, especially given the positive Jewish-Christian relations and interfaith dialogue that we have, the kind of renewal we are bound to witness is likely *to include much more* than what we have witnessed in the past. People will want to consider not only the scholastic Christian tradition on the Old Testament, but also the Jewish tradition and views of the Rabbis. How did the Messiah really approach *and keep* the Law of Moses? What did the Prophets really call the people to do? How important is the Exodus in understanding salvation history? The opportunities not only for individuals to be disciplined and for the Messianic movement to grow, but also for us to see the prophesied restoration of all Israel occur, are definitely there!

Much of the predicament that we have seen in today's evangelical Christianity is well summarized by New Testament theologian Douglas J. Moo. He writes, "Far too many Christians are abysmally ignorant of even the basic content of the Old Testament. Too many pastors avoid the Old Testament or preach only a few of its more famous stories and texts. Evangelical scholars and publishers have perpetuated the problem by producing three or four solid exegetical commentaries on New Testament books for every one on an Old Testament book."ⁱⁱ This approach to the Tanach Scriptures is not helped by much of the negativity that New Testament theologians generally demonstrate toward it. It is commonly asserted that "the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2) is something entirely independent of the Torah of Moses; many fail to consider that the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:16-17) was something originally prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-33), where God will write the Torah onto the hearts of His people; and in the words of Ben Witherington III, perhaps worst of all, some might say "the Moses story [cannot be] the controlling

ⁱ This is directly affected by the homosexual agenda that is dividing entire churches and denominations.

ⁱⁱ Douglas J. Moo, "Response to Walter C. Kaiser," in Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 218.

narrative of God's people, precisely because it is the era of the new covenant. The Mosaic story thus becomes a story about a glorious anachronism."ⁱⁱⁱ Even when New Testament theologians realize that they may go too far, and that their conclusions which keep people away from the Tanach may be inappropriate, there is often no active effort made to correct such mistakes.

In my seminary studies I discovered that for the most part, those of the New Testament department tended to sit in their own little world off to themselves. (I sincerely hope this was just my experience, and not the experience of others.) While there are many godly theologians who dedicate their God-given talents and skills to interpret (primarily) the words of Yeshua and Paul, and I have certainly learned many excellent things from them, they often do not have to carry the same kind of burden as do scholars who specialize in the Old Testament. They too frequently disregard Yeshua's admonition to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5:17-19).^{iv} Those in the Old Testament department, as I discovered, not only have to teach you what you need to know about the Tanach Scriptures and their history – but also how the Tanach indeed does foretell of the Messiah who was to come and save us from our sins. They have to show how the Tanach is relevant for Believers today. I have found that Old Testament theologians are generally more concerned with *the whole Bible* than those in the New Testament department. They are required to make you understand that when Paul told Timothy "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Timothy 2:16), he was primarily speaking of the Tanach Scriptures. Unfortunately, there are usually not enough of them.

John Goldingay writes how "One of the New Testament's own convictions is that the Old Testament is part of the Scriptures (indeed, *is* the Scriptures)...and that the Old Testament provides the theological framework within which Jesus needs to be understood. The New Testament is then a series of Christian and ecclesial footnotes to the Old Testament, and one cannot produce a theology out of footnotes."^v How much do we miss in our examination of the Apostolic Scriptures, because we do not know enough about the Tanach? It is insufficient for any interpreter who looks at the ministry of Yeshua to exclusively assume that the Old Testament is concerned about the Messiah to come. **While Messianic expectation is absolutely undeniable**, the need to examine these texts on their own merits – specifically for what they teach us about the human condition and God's interactions with the world – cannot be overstated! Goldingay has actually helped pioneer usage of the term "First Testament," as though this part of the Bible is Act I in a two-act play. For us as the Messianic movement, we simply use the term Tanach/Tanakh (תנ"ך), appropriated from the Jewish theological tradition, an acronym for: *Torah/Law, Nevi'im/Prophets, and Ketuvim/Writings*.^{vi} We use the term "Old Testament" infrequently, often for the familiarity of others.

What ultimately concerns anyone who examines these Scriptures is not what you call them or how you order them, **but how you interpret them and the role they play in your theology of God and the mission of Yeshua**. What does the Tanach teach us as the people of God *about God*? In evangelicalism today, particularly because of the various moral and ethical crises that it faces, interest in the Tanach is at an absolute all time high. People are not only turning to the Tanach to find out more about the Lord and Savior we love so dearly, but also to find out what God expects of His people in their conduct. As Old Testament theologian Walter C. Kaiser has had to sadly observe, "The current evangelical generation has been raised almost devoid of any teaching on the place and use of the law in the life of the believer. This has resulted in a full (or perhaps semi-) antinomian approach to life. Is it any wonder that the unbelieving society around us is so lawless, if those who should have been salt and light to that same society were themselves not always sure what it was that they should be doing?"^{vii} Kaiser does not beat around the bush in asserting that in dismissing the Tanach Scriptures and almost exclusively focusing on the New Testament, evangelical Christianity is partly responsible for the American holocaust of legalized abortion.^{viii} This does not mean that the Apostolic Scriptures are in error by any means, but simply that people have not looked at the larger whole of God's Word.

Realizing that it has gone too far in forgetting much of the Tanach Scriptures, a renaissance has begun among today's Christians. They are trying to rediscover the role that the Old Testament plays in their relationship with God, and what it teaches us about evangelism and His mission for the world. Christopher J.H. Wright describes, "We read the Old Testament messianically or christologically in the light of Jesus; that is, we find in it a whole messianic theology and

ⁱⁱⁱ Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 144.

^{iv} Consult the author's forthcoming paper, "Matthew 5:17-19: Has the Law Been Fulfilled?"

I do not wish to say that all New Testament theologians are anti-Old Testament. **They are not by any means!** One of the most beneficial resources any of you can have is C.E.B. Cranfield's Romans commentary (*International Critical Commentary: Romans 1-8, 9-16* (London: T&T Clark, 1975 and 1979), written from a traditional Reformed perspective that is generally favorable in its disposition toward the Torah of Moses.

^v John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 24.

^{vi} This order was in relative form by the First Century C.E. (Sirach 39:1; Luke 24:44).

^{vii} Walter C. Kaiser, "Response to Willem A. VanGemeren," in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 75.

^{viii} Walter C. Kaiser, "Response to Douglas Moo," in *Ibid.*, 400.

eschatology that we see fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth...But what we have so often failed to do is go beyond the mere satisfaction of ticking off so-called messianic predictions that have 'been fulfilled.'...we have failed to go further because we have not grasped the *missional* significance of the *Messiah*."^{ix} While the ministry of Yeshua will undoubtedly affect how one reads the Tanach Scriptures, the treasures that the Tanach holds for understanding them in their original context for the people of Ancient Israel cannot be forgotten. Indeed, they may give us important clues for what it means to be a light to the nations (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6), and for God's people to affect the world around it (Deuteronomy 4:6). The Tanach teaches us about God's mercy available for those who repent (2 Chronicles 7:14), and His impending judgment on those who fail to repent (Malachi 3:2). Trends that we see arising in today's evangelical Christian theology—as the Old Testament is reclaimed as an important part of God's revelation—only work in the Messianic movement's favor!

For most of my time as a Messianic teacher (at least as of now), I have explicated upon the Apostolic Scriptures. This is not at all because I lack an interest in the Tanach; it is because our faith community presently finds itself significantly behind the curve in coherent and scholastically-engaged resources on the New Testament, in particular the Pauline Epistles. Also to be considered is **whether we are really prepared** to delve into the Ancient Near Eastern world of the Tanach. In 2006, as I completed the companion volume to this work, *A Survey of the Apostolic Scriptures for the Practical Messianic*, I made the following statement,

it is much easier to survey the Apostolic Scriptures as we are largely dealing with a broad First Century of 100 to 120 years, whereas the Tanach spans from the Creation of the world to the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, with contemporary literature spanning anywhere from 2,200 to 4,000 years. There is actually *less controversy* surrounding the composition of the New Testament than the Old Testament, so not surveying the Tanach before the Apostolic Scriptures has been done to introduce you to smaller issues *before* greater issues.

It continues to be my observation that much of the Messianic movement today has a real problem with viewing the Apostolic Scriptures in their Ancient Mediterranean context. This is a Mediterranean context where both Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman classicism must be considered. Realizing that if Messianic people have difficulty understanding the role that both the Jewish Rabbis and the Hellenistic philosophers play in understanding the Apostolic Scriptures—even if the latter are primarily consulted to show where the Bible's message runs contrary—how much more difficulty would Messianic people have with considering the great cultural diversity of the Tanach?^x It is not enough for us to exclusively consult the Rabbinic tradition for understanding the Hebrew Bible, when the Ancient Israelites lived and interacted in a world with neighbors whose literature affected the development of Scripture. Much of what the Tanach says runs entirely contrary to the views of Israel's neighbors in Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, etc. At the same time, knowing about Ancient Israel's neighbors helps us understand that the Ancient Israelites really did exist, and that the Tanach books can be trusted. K.A. Kitchen asks in his massive work, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, "Are they purely fiction, containing nothing of historical value, or of major historical content and value, or a fictional matrix with a few historical nuggets embedded?"^{xi}

Whether you are aware of this or not, one of the most significant reasons why Christian pastors have stayed away from the Tanach Scriptures has not necessarily been because of a lack of seeing its great relevance for modern life. It is because they do not want to deal with anything "controversial." When you teach from the Old Testament, difficult questions such as the following inevitably get asked:

- Why is most of the Old Testament anonymous, having many books with no stated author?
- Is the doctrine of resurrection a late concept, or did it appear early?
- Were the Prophets mentally unstable, or were they really filled with the Holy Spirit?
- Did David really kill a "giant"?
- Were women really (that) oppressed in Old Testament times? Why is the Old Testament so "patriarchal"?
- Did God really condone genocide against the Canaanites?
- Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? How many people were really involved? Why is there no Egyptian record of the Exodus?
- Can I trust the Genesis account of the Flood in light of the Epic of Gilgamesh? (Was the Flood worldwide, or worldwide only to those living in Mesopotamia?)

^{ix} Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 30.

^x For a further discussion, consult the author's article "The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation."

^{xi} K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 3.

- Did Moses really “write” all of the Torah, or was it compiled after the Babylonian exile?
- **Isn't it true that the Old Testament portrays a God of vengeance and wrath, while the New Testament portrays a God of love and mercy?** Why do we really need the Old Testament?
- Am I allowed to reconcile the Genesis 1 Creation account to what astronomy has discovered about the Big Bang?

These are only a handful of the questions that inquiring minds ask about the Tanach Scriptures, and you can easily see why many pastors and Sunday school teachers would prefer to just not deal with them. *So they only stick to the New Testament in their preaching and teaching.* Yet even the Apostolic Scriptures call us to do better: “Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15, RSV). Anyone who looks to the Holy Scriptures for spiritual insight and guidance is called by the Lord to not avoid any controversies it may have. While immediate answers may not always be possible for those criticizing our convictions of its truth, answers to the questions above can be found. It is our responsibility as diligent students of the Word to find them when controversies arise, and not sweep them under the rug.

I have primarily been a Messianic teacher of the Apostolic Scriptures, because the New Testament often goes unaddressed by many teachers in our faith community. I find the Apostolic Scriptures to be a relatively free field that I can plow, plant, water, and sow—meaning that I can teach and comment on them without having to look like I am “competing” with someone else. Yet as I have studied the Tanach Scriptures, interestingly enough, I have found that on the whole it too is a relatively free field. In the past ten years, while there are many people in the Messianic movement who “study Torah,” there are **not a great many** who *study Tanach*. Our examination of the Tanach Scriptures as Messianics does not often go that far beyond the weekly *parashah*. While I can understand some of the avoidance of the Apostolic Scriptures on the part of a few (even though I wholeheartedly do not agree with it!), primarily because of common Christian antagonism toward the Tanach, I am very much concerned that if all we focus on is the Torah—we will run the serious danger of seeing a group of pseudo-Sadducees in our midst.^{xiii} Ending our Biblical examination at Deuteronomy, and forgetting Joshua-2 Chronicles/Malachi, is a problem we need to avoid at all costs! After all, as our Lord Yeshua said, “all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 22:44). *This includes much more than just the Pentateuch.*

There are various places within the Gospels where “the Law” is referred to when more than just Genesis-Deuteronomy is in view.^{xiii} For Yeshua and the Apostles, “Torah” or God’s Instruction actually included more than just those books of the Bible, but actually the whole of the Tanach Scriptures. It really does amaze me that for a movement that claims to want to recapture and reemphasize the Tanach Scriptures, how much of it we actually overlook, *if not avoid*. While prophecies such as Isaiah 4:3 and Micah 4:2, “instruction shall come forth from Zion” (NJPS), are absolutely imperative—such *torah* (תּוֹרָה) undoubtedly includes more than just Genesis-Deuteronomy. Will we be a movement that focuses only on *the Torah* in our Tanach studies, teaching, and preaching? Or will we learn to incorporate more of the Tanach in our understanding of the Biblical message? This volume purposefully uses *Pentateuch* in many places in reference to *the Torah*,^{xiv} because of the unfortunate reality that for many Messianics today, *the Torah* has become the only relevant Scripture. I wish to see us learn to appreciate the Tanach as a whole, and not only its first five books.

Please understand that I believe that examining the weekly *parashah* is a good exercise for today’s Messianics, one that can be documented going back to at least the First Century C.E. (Acts 5:21). Many of us benefit from hearing a teaching on the weekly Torah portion. But more could be done—even within our engagement of the weekly Torah portion! Too much of the Torah teaching I have directly witnessed is really the weekly *parashah* used as a springboard to rant on any number of issues (usually to unfairly chastise our Christian brethren). **This is not what we need to be doing.** Instead, we need to submit ourselves to a wider array of instruction from the Tanach. How many of us do not know how the themes of the Torah and Tanach inform us about the life and ministry of Yeshua? How many of us are not able to make typological connections between the accounts seen in the Tanach, and what we witness in the Apostolic Scriptures? When was the last time any of us examined a book like Nahum, Habakkuk, or Haggai? How many of us really do forget the missional imperatives of God’s people as originally given in the Tanach?

How much Messianic examination of the Torah and Tanach is really just one step above a *felt board Sunday school teaching*? Even in weekly Torah studies, important subjects are often glossed over that must be discussed. One of the

^{xiii} Consult the author’s McHuey Blog post from 21 October, 2008, “Sadducees Among Us?” accessible at <<http://mchuey.wordpress.com>>.

^{xiii} Matthew 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; 22:44 John 1:45 (cf. 4 Maccabees 18:10).

^{xiv} Please note that “Pentateuch” is simply a Greek-derived term meaning “book of five,” no different than the Hebrew term *chumash*. While it may not be a common term used in the Messianic movement, it is used in many of today’s scholastic Jewish works, i.e., *Pentateuch & Haftorahs* edited by J.H. Hertz (London: Soncino, 1960).

most significant aspects of analyzing the Tanach regards the historical and compositional issues that are largely not needed in similar examination of the Apostolic Scriptures. While Messianic examinations of the Apostolic Scriptures are being invigorated today with close attention paid to historical detail, will we be able to do something similar with our Tanach studies? I have observed, for example, that when we often come across a difficult-to-understand text, Messianics often immediately turn to the Rabbinic tradition for answers. *This often means consulting ultra-Orthodox Jewish materials.* These can certainly help us, but how many of these materials do not answer some of the critical questions (or even condemning questions) that have been asked in the past two centuries?

Five years ago *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) was released. The very fact that “Jewish” was in the title meant that Messianics had to go out and buy it! Much to their surprise, what they found in its study notes and introductory sections to each of the Tanach books was not very encouraging. While it was supposed to be a compendium of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jewish scholarship—most of the attention given was clearly Reform. Claims such as the Torah being compiled after the Babylonian exile and not written by Moses, that the Book of Esther was an ancient comedy but not real history, or that the Jews adopted Mesopotamian mythology for writing the Book of Genesis, **really disturbed many people.** But all *The Jewish Study Bible* had done was compile liberal Jewish views that also exist in liberal branches of Christianity. It had not put together anything new, but views that had been around for almost two centuries.

The over-reliance of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish tradition in our Tanach studies has kept the Messianic movement away from knowing about a much larger world out there, a world which often does not take a very high view of the reliability of the Old Testament. The liberal, or critical tradition, of reading the Tanach has existed since the 1800s, and has certainly not hidden itself in the world of Biblical Studies. It arose during a time when social Darwinism was en vogue. All people have to do to find it is watch documentaries on the Bible on either the History Channel or Discovery Channel, or go down to their local Barnes & Noble and pick up a book in the religion section. Messianic Believers need not be afraid of the critical tradition, but they need not be ignorant of it, either.

It is easy to discover that Jewish Biblical scholarship is often polarized between the far Right and the far Left. When one encounters such a predicament, lay interpreters will almost always choose the far Right, and this is exactly what has happened in much Messianic examination of the Tanach. While I can appreciate the desire of people who want to place their firm confidence in the Tanach Scriptures, we cannot act as though there is no criticism out there against it. Running to resources by ArtScroll for our answers when we need them might be a convenient thing to do, but it will not always help us in the long run. While there are some Jewish scholars who have helped defend the veracity of Mosaic authorship of the Torah^{xv} or overall veracity of the Tanach, such scholars are often few. For the most part, it has been evangelical Christian Old Testament scholars who have sought to engage with the critical tradition, in an effort to adequately defend the veracity of the Tanach Scriptures without ignoring the harsh questions that are commonly asked. Sadly, I have found that the voice of such Christian Old Testament scholars is too frequently ignored in today’s Messianic movement. I believe that our examination of the Tanach has been stifled from not hearing what they have to say. It is to them that we will most frequently turn to see how reliable and trustworthy the Tanach actually is.

Nothing like this workbook has ever been produced in the world of Messianic Biblical Studies. *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* plows a field that has largely never been touched by us. It could be the first stage for us seeing new commentaries, exegetical papers, and resources produced by Messianic Believers on the Tanach. It is my hope that it will also invigorate a new collective interest within us to take advantage of the great treasure trove that the Tanach actually is, which will not only help our understanding of the Apostolic Scriptures, but also of the gospel message itself and how the Lord has always had an interest in people coming to Him. If we assume that this is just a “New Testament” idea, then how on Earth could the Apostle Paul ever say “The Scripture...announced the gospel in advance to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8, NIV)?^{xvi} In your survey of the Tanach, **please keep this in mind!** Ask the Lord to show you how you can understand the good news in a larger and more profound way.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO SURVEY THE TANACH?

A survey may be defined as both “a detailed study, as by gathering information and analyzing it” and “a general view.”^{xvii} This examination of the Tanach will primarily be general, but also be detailed in that aspects of the text will be considered that are often overlooked. Most of these aspects will be related to a text’s composition that will place

^{xv} This notably includes Umberto Cassuto, in his brilliant work *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

^{xvi} Genesis 12:3.

^{xvii} *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*, second edition (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc, 2002), 638.

it in its proper historical and/or cultural setting, and the circumstances that likely precipitated its being written or composed. Imperative to our discussions will be considering how each text should be viewed or applied in a Twenty-First Century Messianic setting, and the challenges that are commonly presented to us spiritually and theologically from them.

This study of the Tanach follows the standard Jewish book order of: Law, Prophets, and Writings.^{xviii} Each study should begin with you having read the text beforehand. I would recommend that as much as possible that you dedicate several hours before each study, reading the assigned text in a single sitting. Because we are surveying Biblical texts, it is not necessary for you to pay close attention to every single detail. Instead, it is necessary for you to read the text as though you were reading a book, as we are trying to get a good feel on the overall message.

As you proceed to read large portions of the Bible in a very short timespan, I would strongly recommend that you pick a Bible version that is not translated as literally as some others. While I use the New American Standard, Updated Edition (1995) as my primary version, which is rather literal, the NASU can slow a person down significantly who is trying to read through a text to digest its basic facts. The NASU has not been published to use as a Bible that reads through more quickly like a book. For this job, I would recommend that you use a dynamic equivalency translation such as the New International Version (1984) or the New Jewish Press Society Tanakh (1999). While I know David H. Stern's *Complete Jewish Bible* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998) is quite popular in the Messianic movement, its constant use of Hebrew terms may be unfamiliar to many of you, who do not need to be confused. This may be a good secondary source to use, but Stern's edition of the Tanach comes from his paraphrase of the 1917 JPS English version now in the public domain, and is not a direct translation.^{xix}

When you read entire books of the Bible in a short space of time, questions will arise that you may not consider when reading shorter selections. There are some excellent study Bibles on the market that I believe can help you considerably to gain a good socio-historical feel of the text. From an evangelical and conservative point of view, these include the venerable *NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002) and the relatively new *Archaeological Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). The beforementioned *Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) is a good resource for you to become familiar with liberal Jewish views of the Tanach, and the *New Interpreter's Study Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003) will give you a good exposure to liberal Christian views of the Tanach. Another good tool to have is a Bible atlas, as we will be going through many places that may be unfamiliar to you. I would specifically recommend the *HarperCollins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997).

Some of you may also wish to have additional resources to make use of in your survey of the Tanach. I would recommend that you have a good Bible encyclopedia, such as the relatively conservative *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), and a one-volume commentary like the *New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970). If you would like to have a supplementary resource for the Torah, I would recommend the one-volume resource *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (ed. David L. Lieber [New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2001]), which includes an annotated version of the JPS Torah and Haftarah commentary series. Some of these can be found at discount booksellers new or used, and should be a welcome addition to any library. For those of you who would like to hone some of your skills of reading Scripture, then I would recommend the book *Bible Study That Works* by David L. Thompson (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 1994).

While this workbook has been compiled from a theologically conservative perspective, for some of you this will be your first encounter hearing about any kind of liberal views surrounding the composition of the Tanach. Thankfully, there is much material out there which has refuted such liberal claims. For a more general examination, I would recommend *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable and Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), by Walter C. Kaiser, and for a Jewish defense of Mosaic authorship of the Torah, *The Documentary Hypothesis and the Composition of the Pentateuch* by Umberto Cassuto (Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2006). One excellent work, primarily discussing the Ancient Near Eastern world of the Tanach Scriptures, is *The Bible In Its World: The Bible & Archaeology Today* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977) by K.A. Kitchen. Kitchen's powerhouse, though, is his massive treatise *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), which has compiled **all of the extant data we have**—both archaeological and historical, Israelite and non-Israelite—defending the veracity of the Tanach. Another good tool to have, which similarly defends the reliability of the Tanach, is *A Biblical History of Israel* by Iain Provan, V. Philips Long,

^{xviii} This is similarly followed by R.K. Harrison in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

^{xix} Stern, *CJB*, xiv.

Likewise, I would seriously recommend that you *not* use the King James Version to use for these studies. The KJV, while a major contribution to our faith history, is nevertheless almost 400 years old and reads somewhat archaically. Furthermore, it is based on younger Hebrew and Greek manuscripts unlike newer versions today like the RSV, NEB, NASU, NIV, etc.

and Tremper Longman III (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003). Also for further consideration might be *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) by Kaiser.

Most of the references that I will be making in the lectures have been gleaned from several Bible encyclopedias, including: the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), the beforementioned *ISBE*, and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992). I am also indebted to the thorough work of R.K. Harrison compiled in his *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), as well as the newer work *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). Some information has also been incorporated from select commentaries, most notably from the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981) and the JPS Torah series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society). Of course, all of these are tools that you can have in your personal or congregational library.

HOW DO YOU SURVEY THE TEXT?

The procedures of this survey study should be fairly easy to follow for the person who is eager to learn. Make sure that you have set aside some time to read in a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Make sure that you are alert, as there can be a tendency to “doze off” when reading large portions of text. Your mind will need to be focused – and you need to get those body chemicals moving!

The first thing that you should do before opening your Bible is pray. (Too many people forget to do this!) Ask the Lord to fill you with His Holy Spirit, and stimulate both your heart and your mind. Ask Him to give you the right attitude as you approach controversial texts. Ask Him to give you the skills to read the text and make intelligent observations. Ask Him to show you where your strengths and weaknesses are concerning a text.

Secondly, you should take your study Bible and jot down a few things from its introduction. Mark down how the Bible version you are working from interprets or views a text. Is its approach conservative or liberal? How many of the views are incorporated from the Rabbinical Jewish tradition and/or the Ancient Near Eastern world? To what degree is history a factor in the interpretation of a text? What are the similarities and/or differences between how Jews and Christians interpret the text?

Third, before you begin reading a text you need to remember that the Tanach Scriptures span a very broad period of time. It is too easy for us to forget that they were originally given to a diverse world that is much different than the world in which we live today. Do not interject your Western cultural or social biases into an ancient text that may make cultural or social assumptions that we do not make. Keep in mind how Ancient Israel's worldview was subversive to the worldview of its neighbors, before you consider what the Tanach books mean for us today.

After considering these things, you can then begin to read the assigned text. As you read the text, you may wish to have a sheet of paper divided up into four sections. With each new character you encounter (not withstanding genealogy charts), write down his or her name. Do the same with city names and regions. Write down critical events that you see taking place that really stand out to you. Please try not to “cheat” and use any of your Bible's headers; what events do you think are important? When you finish reading the book, write down 3-4 broad sweeping questions that you have on the fourth section. Please do this when you are finished, so you can reflect on the entire text, and not on precise issues. Be honest as you write these questions, as you need to be able to gauge where you are and where you need to improve. Obviously, if you need multiple sheets of paper – use them!

When you have finished your own survey of the text, then you may finally read the Messianic summary that I have provided here in the workbook. If you are conducting this study in a group setting with other Messianic Believers, then the suggested study questions I have offered can be used for you to ask questions about the text you have just examined. If you are doing this on your own, answer these questions yourself. Most importantly, each one of you needs to write a 1-2 paragraph summary about each of the texts of the Tanach. In your own words, encapsulate what you think makes each text important in the scope of God's revelation to humanity. When you meet with your fellowship or study group, go around the room and share what makes each text important.

GETTING STARTED

As we begin our survey study of the Tanach, remember that our goal is to get an overall feel of the text; we do not need to understand its entire depth or all of the mysteries of God's universe all at once. At a later time you can examine a text verse-by-verse along with some commentaries and other resources, and really get into the “meat” of it. Equally so, our goal is not to feed on just the “milk” of the Word, either. This survey course is going to be “meaty,” but (believe it or not!) will be more in the sense of having a stew with each text, as opposed to a steak. This survey study may be the first exposure that some of you will have to understanding the Tanach in a fuller historical-cultural setting.

A SURVEY OF THE TANACH FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

I sincerely hope that *A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* will be a great help not only to you, but to future Messianics who are looking to enrich their understanding of God's Word. I also hope that this workbook can be used to facilitate a greater need for us to continue conducting studies of all Biblical books, and dealing with the controversies some of them present us with head on—rather than avoiding them as though they do not exist. I trust that you will all learn something new that you can integrate into your life and relationship with our Messiah Yeshua. I also trust that you will have some answers to difficult questions asked about the Tanach, which you have commonly just shuffled aside or chosen not to hear.

J.K. McKee
Editor, TNN Online

BOOK OF GENESIS

Approximate date: 1440-1400 B.C.E. (Right); 1300-1200 B.C.E. (conservative-moderate); 500s B.C.E. (Left)

Time period: the Creation of the world to Israel in Egypt

Author: Moses exclusively (Right); Moses, Joshua, and later editors (conservative-moderate); compiled traditions and mythologies (Left)

Location of author: wilderness journey after the Exodus (Right, conservative-moderate); Babylon and/or Land of Israel (Left)

Target audience and their location: wilderness journey after the Exodus (Right, conservative-moderate); Babylon and/or Land of Israel (Left)

People:

Adam, Eve, the serpent, Cain, Abel, Cain's descendants, Seth, pre-diluvian people from Adam to Noah (5:1-32), the Nephilim, Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, post-diluvian descendants from Noah to Abraham (11:10-27), Terah, Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, Lot, Canaanites, Perizzites, Amraphel (king of Shinar), Arioch (king of Ellasar), Kedorlaomer (king of Elam), Tidal (king of Goiim), Bela (king of Sodom), Zuzites, Emites, Horites, Amalekites, Amorites, Melchizedek, Eliezer of Damascus, Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Rephaites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Hagar, Ishmael, Isaac, Moab, Ben-Ammi, Abimelech, Phicol, Philistines, Nahor's sons (22:20-24), Ephron (son of Zoar), Rebekah, Bethuel (son of Milcah), Laban, Keturah, sons born to Keturah (25:2-4), Ishmael's sons (25:13-15), Esau, Jacob, Ahuzzath, Judith (daughter of Beeri the Hittite), Basemath (daughter of Elon the Hittite), Mahalath (sister of Nebaioth), Rachel, Leah, Zilpah, Bilhah, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Dinah, Joseph, Israel (Jacob), Hamor, Shechem, Deborah (Rebekah's nurse), Benjamin (Ben-Oni), Esau's descendants (ch. 36), Ishmaelites, Midianite merchants, Potiphar, Pharaoh, Hirah, Shua, Er, Onan, Shelah, Kezib, Tamar, Perez, Zerah, Zaphenath-Paneah (Joseph's Egyptian name), Asenath (daughter of Potiphera, priest of On), Manasseh, Ephraim, sons of Israel who go to Egypt (46:8-27), Makir (son of Manasseh)

Places:

Garden of Eden, Pishon, Havilah, Gihon, Cush, Tigris, Asshur, Euphrates, Nod, Ararat, plains of Shinar, Babel, Ur (of the Chaldeans), Haran, Canaan, Moreh, Shechem, Bethel, Ai, Negev, Egypt, Jordan, Zoar, Sodom, Hebron, Mamre, Valley of Siddim, Ashteroth Karnaim, Ham, Shaveh Kiriathaim, Seir, El Paran, En Mishpat (Kadesh), Hazazon Tamar, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, Bela, Zoar, Elam, Goiim, Ellasar, Dan, Hobah, Damascus, Salem, Kadesh, Shur, Gerar, Beersheba, Desert of Paran, Machpelah, Aram Naharaim, Nahor, Beer Lahai Roi, Paddan Aram, Valley of Gerar, Esek (well), Sitnah (well), Rehoboth (well), Shibah (well), Bethel (Luz), Gilead, Jegar Sahadutha/Galeed (heap/pillar), Mahanaim (camp of God's angels), Jabbok, Peniel, Succoth, El Elohe Isral (altar), Allon Bacuth, Ephratah (Bethlehem), Migdal Eder, Kiriath Arba, Dothan, Adullam, Timnah, Enaim, Nile, Goshen, Ramses, Atad, Abel Mizraim

Key Themes and Events:

creation of the cosmos, followed by the Earth / God makes the first human beings (male and female) / God places Adam in the Garden of Eden / Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit and are cast outside of the Garden / Cain kills his brother Abel / the Nephilim have relations with (human) females / great sin on the Earth causes God to send a flood to destroy life / Noah is called by God to build an ark and collect pairs of animals / floodwaters sent by God destroy life on Earth / the human survivors of the Flood are given the command to repopulate / God confuses the languages of humanity at Babel / God calls Abram out of Ur / Abram goes to Egypt because of a famine / Abram and Lot separate, with Lot going to Sodom / Lot is taken captive when Sodom is ransacked by enemy kings / Lot is rescued by Abram / Abram gives a tribute (a tenth) to Melchizedek, king of Salem / Abram and God "cut" a covenant with animal sacrifices, with God being its guarantor / Abram has relations with Hagar, who gives birth to Ishmael / God renames Abram as Abraham / God gives Abraham the covenant of circumcision at age ninety-nine / God promises that Sarah will give birth to a son / God in the form of three men visits Abraham / Abraham pleads with God for Him not to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah / two angels arrive at Sodom and Gomorrah to take Lot and his family / Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by God / Lot and his daughters have sexual relations, believing that life on Earth has been destroyed / Abimelech kidnaps Sarah for his own / Sarah is returned to

A SURVEY OF THE TANACH FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

Abimelech, and Abimelech is blessed / Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah / Hagar and Ishmael are sent away / Abraham, Abimelech, and Phicol seal an agreement / God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac / Abraham is stopped from killing Isaac, demonstrating his steadfast belief in God's promises / Sarah dies and is buried at Machpelah / Eliezer is commissioned by Abraham to find Isaac a wife / Rebekah returns to become Isaac's wife / Abraham dies and is buried at Machpelah / Rebekah becomes pregnant with twins, later giving birth to Jacob and Esau / Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a meal / Isaac interacts with King Abimelech, telling him that Rebekah was his wife, just like his father Abraham had done with Sarah / Isaac moves to the Valley of Gerar, digging three wells / the Lord reaffirms His covenant with Abraham to Isaac / Esau marries two Hittite women, to the chagrin of his parents / Jacob tricks his father, not being able to see, into blessing him and giving him Esau's birthright / Jacob must flee to his uncle Laban, as Esau wants to kill him / Rebekah does not want Jacob to marry a Hittite woman / Esau marries again / Jacob has a dream of a ladder (or staircase) reaching up into Heaven, and so God affirms His covenant commitment upon him / Jacob arrives at Paddan Aram and meets Rachel and Laban / Jacob agrees to work for Laban for seven years, in order to marry Rachel / Jacob is tricked into marrying Leah, and must work another seven years for Rachel / Leah gives birth to: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah / Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, gives birth to: Dan, Naphtali / Zilpah, Rachel's maidservant, gives birth to: Gad, Asher / Leah gives birth to: Isaachar, Zebulun, Dinah / Rachel gives birth to: Joseph / Jacob shrewdly sees that his flocks are more prosperous than Laban's / Jacob and his family depart for Canaan, with Laban in pursuit / Laban catches up with Jacob after three days, seemingly looking for his household gods / Laban and Jacob agree not to cross a pillar they erect, harming the other / Jacob prepares to meet Esau, sending messengers ahead of him / Jacob hears Esau is coming, and prays that God would preserve him / Jacob wrestles with a being all through the night, having his hip dislocated and being renamed Israel / Jacob settles in the vicinity of Shechem / Shechem, son of Hamor, violates Dinah / the Shechemites agree to be circumcised to join in alliance with Jacob's family / Simeon and Levi kill all males in the city, after they have been circumcised / Jacob returns to Bethel, removing the foreign gods from his household / God reaffirms that great numbers of people will come forth from Jacob / Rachel dies giving birth to Benjamin / Reuben sleeps with the concubine Bilhah / Jacob returns to see his father Isaac, who dies / Joseph, given a many-colored robe, has dreams which make his brothers jealous / Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery, at the suggestion of Judah / Jacob is told that his son has been killed by wild animals / Joseph is sold to Potiphar in Egypt / Judah marries Shuah / Tamar marries Er, who dies / Onan fails to perform the rite of Levirate marriage, and so he dies / Judah sleeps with Tamar, impregnating her, and giving her his seal and staff / Judah hears of Tamar's pregnancy, discovering he is the father, and he must declare her righteousness as superior / Tamar gives birth to Perez and Zerah / Joseph becomes the attendant of Potiphar's house / Joseph is falsely accused of trying to rape Potiphar's wife / Joseph is cast into prison, quickly attaining responsibility for good conduct / Joseph interprets the dreams of Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker / Joseph is called before Pharaoh, to interpret his dream of seven fat cows and seven lean cows / a plan is derived to save Egypt from famine / Joseph is made viceroy of Egypt, second only to Pharaoh / Joseph's wife Asenath gives birth to two sons: Manasseh and Ephraim / Joseph prepares Egypt for the coming famine / Jacob's sons go to Egypt to buy grain, as famine hits Canaan / Joseph recognizes his brothers, even though they do not recognize him / Joseph "accuses" his brothers of being spies / Simeon is placed into jail, as the brothers must prove their honesty by leaving and returning with their youngest / Israel agrees to let his sons return with Benjamin to Egypt / Joseph's brothers, not knowing who he is, are invited to his house to dine / Joseph encounters Benjamin, the son of his own mother, and weeps privately / Joseph orders that his silver cup be placed in Benjamin's bag, and the brothers are accused of thievery and divination / Joseph says that Benjamin must become his slave / Judah tries to convince Joseph to allow him to be the slave, for the sake of his father / Joseph, not being able to control himself, finally reveals himself as Joseph to his brothers / Joseph asks for his fathers to come to him / the Pharaoh is pleased that Joseph is reunited with his family, and grants them of the best land to graze their animals / Jacob is overjoyed to hear that Joseph is still alive / Joseph is reunited with his father / Jacob is presented before Pharaoh / Joseph must monitor the results of the famine in Egypt / Jacob prepares to die, and Joseph agrees to bury him in Canaan / Jacob blesses Joseph, as well as his sons Manasseh and Ephraim / Jacob blesses all of his sons, blessing them and prophesying over their destinies / Jacob dies and is embalmed according to Egyptian custom / a huge company of Jacob's family, as well as Egyptian officials, make their way to Canaan to bury Joseph / Joseph assures his brothers that the past is behind them / Joseph dies, is embalmed, and is placed in a sarcophagus in Egypt

Key Scriptures: Genesis 1:27; 3:14-15; 6:5-8; 8:21-22; 9:12-16; 12:2-3; 13:14-17; 14:18-20; 15:4-6; 17:5-8; 22:7-12; 26:22-23; 27:27-29; 28:3-4; 32:9-12, 28; 35:11-12; 45:4-7; 46:2-4, 29; 48:15-20; 50:19-21 / **The Story of Creation** (1:1-2:3); **The Story of Adam** (2:4-5:32); **The Story of Noah** (6:1-11:32); **The Story of Abraham** (12:1-25:18); **The Story of Isaac** (25:19-28:9); **The Story of Jacob** (28:10-36:43); **The Story of Joseph** (37:1-50:26)

Theological Summary: The Hebrew title of the first book of the Bible is *Bereisheet* (בְּרֵאשִׁית), pronounced *Bereishis* in the Ashkenazic tradition), coming from the first sentence in the text, "When God began to create heaven and earth" (1:1, NJPS). Our English term "Genesis" is derived from the Greek Septuagint, which uses the term *geneseōs* (γένεσις) in

Genesis 2:4, describing “the book of the **generation** of heaven and earth” (LXE). This passed over into the Latin Vulgate as *Liber Genesis*. In the Jewish tradition, the full title of Genesis is *Sefer haBereisheet*, and referred to by some as *Sefer haYesharim* or “Book of the Upright” (Sarna, xi).

The theme of the Book of Genesis is undoubtedly beginnings. “Genesis covers an immensely long period of time, longer perhaps than the rest of the Bible put together. It begins in the distant past of creation, an event about whose absolute date we cannot even speculate, through millennia to reach Abraham at the end of chapter 11” (Dillard and Longman, 37). If the lifespans of the early genealogies in chs. 5 and 11 are added, then the text itself covers almost 2,400 years (*IDB*, 2:368). Specifically, it would cover 1,948 years from Adam to Abraham (Sarna, xii), and then 361 years to the death of Joseph (*Ibid.*), equaling 2,309 years (*Ibid.*). If one considers there to be missing generations or individuals via a telescoped genealogy, then the timespan between Creation and the Patriarchs becomes considerably longer (Harrison, 147-152), with human history certainly going back 18,000-20,000 years. The wide breadth of space and history that Genesis covers cannot be ignored by any able interpreter. Several, if not multiple millennia of human history are covered in Genesis’ first twelve chapters.^a

Geographically, Genesis can be divided into two principal segments. This first segment, chs. 1-38, comprises a great deal about what we know about humans living in Mesopotamia. Many conservative scholars are agreed that the Garden of Eden was likely located in Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia was the original home of Abram, Isaac’s wife Rachel was from Mesopotamia, and Jacob lived in Mesopotamia for twenty years. The homeland of the original Hebrews was, in no uncertain terms, found in Mesopotamia. Various other parallels exist between the customs and laws followed by the Patriarchs (*NIDB*, 380), and what was followed in Mesopotamia, in spite of them transplanting themselves to Caanan. Of extreme importance is the fact of distinct Mesopotamian influence on the first parts of Genesis. Harrison notes that “On the whole, English translations of the first dozen or so chapters of Genesis are so literal that they betray the translators’ ignorance of the Mesopotamian background that Genesis so faithfully reflects” (*ISBE*, 2:438).

“There can be no real question as to the immense antiquity of the source material that is to be found in Genesis” (Harrison, 552). We cannot ignore some distinct parallels between what we see in the Hebrew Bible and what is recorded in Mesopotamian works such as the *Enuma elish* creation story and *Epic of Gilgamesh* disastrous flood (Harrison, 555-558; *ABD*, 2:938-939). However, it must be noted that there are severe differences as well. “The Babylonian account depicts the Creation as taking place as a result of the sexual union of the gods...It is patently mythical and pagan in its orientation” (*NIDB*, 381). This is contrary to a Divine Creator making man in His own image, and being One who cares for His creatures. The Mesopotamian stories are nothing more than perverse preservations of the true Biblical account. “[I]t would not then be at all surprising if the story concerning them should come to be mythologized in pagan traditions, while being preserved in authentically historical form within the stream of tradition of which Gn. 1-11 is the inspired deposit” (*NBCR*, 79). It is probable though, that the author of Genesis knew of these myths when composing the text (Harrison, 552).

This first segment of Genesis can largely be broken up into two halves. The first half deals with what we might call primeval or pre-history, the period from Adam to the appearance of Abraham (1:1-11:26). This largely covers the Creation and Fall of humanity, the spread of sin in the early world, Noah’s Flood, and the Tower of Babel. The second half of this segment deals with the Patriarchal history (11:27-37:1), covering the lives of Abraham and Isaac (11:27-25:11), and then with Isaac and Jacob (25:19-35:29; 37:1). These parts record Abraham’s journey to Canaan, the judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and Abraham offering up Isaac for a sacrifice. They are interspersed by the genealogies of Ishmael (25:12-28) and Esau (ch. 36).

The second major segment of Genesis, chs. 39-50, that covers far less time, sees the scene shift from Canaan to Egypt. From 37:2-50:26 we see the lives of Jacob and Joseph, and the twelve sons of Israel having to move into Egypt. We also get a feel for the Ancient Hebrews’ lives in Egypt, and as a result, we see that the author of Genesis is quite familiar with the Egyptian civilization, with careful attention given in this part to specific agricultural advances made and perfected by Egypt.

The authorship of Genesis is a lively debate in modern theology, and has been since the mid-Eighteenth Century. Most, regardless of their position, are agreed that Genesis should not be read on its own without some connection to the rest of the Torah or Pentateuch (Exodus-Deuteronomy), as the story continues on. It is important that we remember Genesis “was not written as an independent and complete volume” (*New Interpreter’s Study Bible*, 1; cf. *ISBE*, 2:431-432; Dillard and Longman, 37). But as one can imagine, reading the Book of Genesis in light of the rest of the Torah has caused a great deal of controversy.

^a For a further discussion on this, and related issues, the author recommends Hugh Ross’ book *The Genesis Question: Scientific Advances and the Accuracy of Genesis*, second expanded edition (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001).

Historically, both Jews and Christians have held to the position of some kind of Mosaic authorship, even though Genesis is, in a strict sense, totally anonymous (Harrison, 542; Dillard and Longman, 39). Varied ancient traditions, both inside and outside of the Bible, Jewish and Christian, almost all attest to Moses being the author of Genesis (at least before 1750). The principal witness that we have attesting to genuine Mosaic authorship—as Believers—is actually the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament. Acts 15:1, for example, treats the rite of circumcision as being “according to the custom of Moses,” a direct allusion to Genesis 17. A consensus reading of the Apostolic Scriptures assigns some level of the Torah’s authorship to Moses (Mark 12:26; Luke 24:27; Romans 10:5; 2 Corinthians 3:15), especially John 1:45 and 5:46:

“Philip found Nathanael and said to him, ‘We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and *also* the Prophets wrote—Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph’” (John 1:45).

“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me” (John 5:46).

All of the specific quotations in the Apostolic Scriptures from Yeshua or the Apostles ascribe Moses as being the author of the Torah. “[T]he NT endorses the Jewish tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, not excluding Genesis” (NBCR, 79). Sailhamer further repeats, “It appears relatively certain that Jesus and the writers of the NT believed that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch” (EXP, 2:5). So, for anyone to deny Moses’ hand in composing the Torah, that person is going against the authority of the Messiah and the Apostles.

There are, however, conservative-moderates who believe in principal Mosaic authorship of Genesis, but do not disallow for post-Mosaic editing in some distinct references. “The concept of Mosaic authorship does not demand the belief that Moses was the first to write every word of each account in the Book of Genesis. It is generally understood today to mean that much of his work was compilation” (NIDB, 380). Verses that clearly indicate post-Mosaic editing of Genesis including the mentioning of “Dan” (14:14), a list of kings that reigned in the land of Edom (36:31), and a reference to the “land of Ramses” (47:11). Many “conservative Christians have been too quick to distance themselves from the possibility of sources and too closed to any evidence of significant post-Mosaic activity” (Dillard and Longman, 39; cf. Harrison, 542), and the idea of exclusive Mosaic authorship of Genesis permeates the vast majority of the Messianic community, with almost no room to move.

In affirming Mosaic authorship of the Book of Genesis, none of us can conclude that Moses is the author of every single letter. First, we do not know if he used scribes to compile the earliest edition of Genesis, and secondly, it is quite probable that Moses did incorporate outside materials in its composition. Harrison speculates that the material for chs. 1-36, including the story of Creation and the Flood, originally existed on cuneiform tablets, and that information was adapted by Moses for our canonical Genesis account:

“If it is correct to assume that the first thirty-six chapters of Genesis had originally had an independent existence as cuneiform tablets, it would have been a comparatively easy matter for a talented person such as Moses to compile the canonical book by arranging the tablets in a rough chronological order” (ISBE, 2:437).

Conservatives generally believe that “the writer of the Book of Genesis appears to have composed his work from ‘archival’ records of God’s great deeds in the past...the narratives within the Book of Genesis appear to be largely made up of small, self-contained stories worked together into larger units by means of various geographical and genealogical tables. If such is, in fact, the case, one should not expect to find absolute uniformity of style, etc., among all the individual narratives any more than an absolute uniformity can be expected in later historical books” (EXP, 2:4). Some divide the material for Genesis 1:1-37:2 into eleven possible tablets (Harrison, 548-551), noting “to what extent [Moses] wrote any of its contents, with the possible exception of all or part of the Joseph narratives, is unknown” (Ibid., 542).

Moses may better be described as the “principal compiler” of Genesis, if indeed he took Patriarchal traditions that had been passed down in the community of Israel, and via God’s Spirit integrated them into His authorized religious instruction. It is notable that having been raised in Egypt, he would have seen that the original Genesis was written on leather, a more preferred and durable material than clay (ISBE, 2:437-438; cf. Harrison, 552). The author of Genesis has a knowledge of Egypt (13:10) and the Egyptian language (31:43-45), certainly pointing to Moses. We must, however, consider the fact that whatever was written in Moses’ time was composed in the paleo-Hebrew or Phoenician script, whereas what we have today is in Assyrian or Babylonian block script, acquired by the Jewish exiles who were taken to Babylon. The Talmud tells us that Ezra the Priest was responsible for the final composition of the Tanach in the current block script (b.*Sanhedrin* 21b), and so the Torah, and thus Genesis as we have it today, is a product of the post-Babylonian exile.

Our ministry falls well within the conservative-moderate position of Mosaic authorship of the Book of Genesis, and are certainly not advocates of the liberal view (Dillard and Longman, 38). We cannot ignore the broad array of events and history that Genesis covers (EXP, 2:3-4), including the incorporation of outside sources into Genesis,

so it is best to say that we believe in the “essential authorship” of Moses (Dillard and Longman, 40), allowing for possible later editing by individuals such as Joshua or Ezra the Priest.

The liberal view of the composition of Genesis, and indeed the entire Torah, is one that most Messianics are not even aware of. Liberals all deny any Mosaic authorship of Genesis, and instead adhere to some kind of “documentary hypothesis.” The most widely advocated of these theories is commonly called JEDP, which is believed to string together various religious traditions from a distinct element of Ancient Israel. Forms of this theory have existed since the mid-1700s, and were popularized in Germany in the mid-1800s, specifically by Julius Wellhausen. It is often based on factors such as differing literary styles, usage of the Divine name YHWH, alleged contradictions in the text, and perceived developments in Israel’s religion (*IDB*, 2:369-373; *IDBSup*, 358; *ABD*, 2:933-938; Dillard and Longman, 40-44) – and there have been significant scholars who have challenged it (*ISBE*, 2:433-437).

Liberals advocate that the Jews returning from Babylonian exile compiled various traditions into what we now call the Torah, ascribing authorship to Moses. Extreme liberals believe that the story of Creation and the Flood are largely myths, coupled with other “local legends” such as the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah (*IDB*, 2:376-378). Perhaps Abraham existed as an historical figure, but never as prominent as Genesis portrays him. Furthermore, many have tried to postulate that the religion of Ancient Israel developed from polytheistic to monotheistic, so any references in the Hebrew text to “YHWH” (J) or “Elohim” (E) are actually references to two different deities. This view came to prominence in a time highly dominated by social Darwinism, and is undeniably affected by the theory of evolution (*IDB*, 3:379).

Liberal views that deny the historicity of the Book of Genesis are mostly developed by people who deny anything supernatural. Conservative views are commonly criticized as being “shaken by modern natural science, especially by biology and Darwinism” (*IDBSup*, 356). While JEDP is a very common theory to hear in liberal Christian seminaries, many Jews likewise believe in it (*Jewish Study Bible*, 11). Many in Jewish and Christian institutes think that they “have to” believe it because “everyone else does,” but as Sarna validly points out, “it is beyond doubt that the Book of Genesis came down to us, not as a composite of disparate elements but as a unified document with a life, coherence, and integrity of its own. For this reason, a fragmentary approach to it cannot provide an adequate understanding of the whole” (Sarna, xvi). A good trend in Biblical scholarship among liberals appearing more and more is acknowledging some kind of unity in Genesis on literary grounds (Dillard and Longman, 46-47; cf. Harrison, 564), even though some Mosaic involvement in Genesis’ composition will still be denied by these people.

From a textual standpoint the major witnesses that we have of the Book of Genesis are the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT), Samaritan Pentateuch, the Greek Septuagint (LXX), and Genesis fragments found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (*ABD*, 2:933). On the whole, the Hebrew textual witnesses of Genesis are very good, but on occasion it can be necessary to find a better reading evident in a secondary version because of Genesis’ antiquity (Harrison, 565). This is especially true of translation into English where the Hebrew can be unclear or vague, and the Greek LXX will often give a translator clues as to what a clearer rendering in English can be.

The theological message of Genesis is clear to anyone who reads it. Genesis must be understood for a person to understand the rest of the Bible (Dillard and Longman, 37). Genesis lays the groundwork via the promises given by God to Abraham for the establishment of the nation of Israel, and most important lays the groundwork for understanding the Messiah to come. Genesis is highly monotheistic as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph are all relating themselves to a single deity. We see God relating to humanity in both love and judgment in Genesis, characteristics seen throughout the rest of Scripture.

As Genesis lays the foundation for the rest of the Bible, and specifically the Torah, we see that Israel is not just created by random chance, but by God directly intervening in the lives of people. We see that God has a plan of blessing all the peoples of Planet Earth through the line of Abraham (12:1-3), and the beginning of the people that will accomplish this blessing. Sarna summarizes that “the entire Hebrew Bible is both God-centered and Israel-centered” (Sarna, xii), so any examination of Genesis by us as Messianic Believers today must be done by us seeing what God’s agenda is for the world: **to see humanity’s restoration**. Not surprisingly, some of the themes seen at the beginning of Genesis are repeated at the end of Revelation (*ISBE*, 2:432).

When we consider the theology of today’s Messianic movement, some challenges exist in our present approach to Genesis. While many Messianic Believers engage in a consistent study of the Torah, including Genesis, some tend to make the reverse mistake of liberals who deny that its miraculous events took place. Some Messianics have an “overly mythical” view of Genesis that largely comes from consulting ultra Orthodox and Chassidic Jewish sources, at the expense of understanding Genesis in the context of the Ancient Near East. We would do well in the future to adapt a more conservative-moderate view of Genesis, where we fully affirm the accuracy of the text, that God did indeed create