

OIM UPDATE

July 2018

For the past three Fourth of July weeks, our family has made a lengthy trek from Dallas to Messiah College for the annual Messianic Jewish Alliance of America national conference in Grantham, Pennsylvania, very near to Gettysburg. There for eight days, we fellowship with like minded Believers and exhibit our ministry, while continuing to develop relationships with supporters of Israel and many of the other ministries in attendance.

Inevitably, as we drive up Virginia's Shenandoah Valley and traverse through West Virginia, crossing over the Potomac River into Maryland and then entering Pennsylvania, I am always reminded of the historic events that took place in this region on this very week in July 1863. As we amble up the interstate highway, bisecting field after field of five foot high ripening corn stalks, I imagine young men in blue or gray uniforms with bayonet laden muskets scurrying through the cover to unwanted death, at the skirmishes and ultimate battle marking the turning point in the War Between the States. *It is a sad recollection.* But understanding that God is sovereign over the affairs of the world, and that He alone chooses men and women to accomplish His will on Earth, allows me to thank Him, knowing He is in control of all situations, regardless of our human inability to comprehend **all** that He is doing:

"Now we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28, TLV).

I trust that many of the souls who were slaughtered or mortally wounded on those green hills and valleys, loved God and were called according to His purposes at that time in American history, and that they did not die in vain. For most assuredly, in today's extremely divided era in our country's political "pendulum-like" progress through time, we can all be grateful that armed conflict has not erupted among the disparate parties seeking to rule over the U.S. citizenry.

Nevertheless, in reminiscing about more recent history, in light of Israel's Biblical history and the MJAA conference theme about the 70th anniversary of the reconstitution of the State of Israel on May 14, 2018, my career marketing experience recalled two "axiom like" adages that apply to what we have been led to do in recent years. First, "**timing is everything**" is so elementary that it needs no explanation. However, it absolutely does apply, whether you are bivouacked sharpening your sword for battle, or reveling in praise and worship of the Lord, exactly 155 years later within a few miles of the same place on Earth. Obviously, Believers would prefer the latter circumstances. Yet, conference attendees should under godly conviction remember that the weeklong admonition to take spiritual action reverberated through many of the messages by Messianic Jewish and Christian speakers alike.

In fact, there were multiple references for the critical need to **not** sit back and rest on the recent positive political wins in America. In other words, do not get complacent about the mission to take the good news to the nations, because Israel, and the Jewish Believers, in particular, were called to be a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 60:3). It is the **kairos time** to **not** rest on peaceful laurels, but instead, take on a warlike mentality, and charge forward into the breach of opportunity to share Yeshua and His accomplished work to a dying world. One particular exhortation referenced the following verses,

with the emphasis on **fasting and prayer**, while beseeching the Lord for strength and victory:

"Now Yeshua was going around all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues and **proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and sickness. When He saw the crowds, He felt compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore **pray to the Lord** of the harvest that He may send out workers into His harvest field'" (Matthew 9:35-38, TLV).

Hence, the charge was given to the Messianic Jewish leaders and community at large—especially in regard to the recent recognition by the United States, of Jerusalem's rightful place as the capital of Israel, by the relocation of the U.S. Embassy (at that *kairos* moment May 14, 2018)—to take up their prophetic role, as those "**who God is with,**" as noted in this passage from the Prophet Zechariah, where "fasts" are mentioned:

"Thus says *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, 'The **fast** of the fourth, the **fast** of the fifth, the **fast** of the seventh and the fast of the tenth month will become joy, gladness and cheerful *moadim*. Therefore, love truth and *shalom!*' Thus says *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, 'Peoples and **the inhabitants of many cities will again come**. The inhabitants of one city will go to another saying "Let us go to entreat the favor of *ADONAI* and to seek *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*.' I also am going." **Indeed, many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek *ADONAI-Tzva'ot* in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of *ADONAI*.'** Thus says *ADONAI-Tzva'ot*, 'In those days it will come to pass that ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"'" (Zechariah 8:19-23, TLV).

Of course, grasping hold of *tzitzit* or tassels referenced above, leads me to the second marketing adage that not only helps sales, but also can lead to career advancement and/or success in certain circles, or life in general. It is simply this well known phrase: "**It is not what you know, but who you know!**" While having all the knowledge in the world is helpful, it is actually **knowing** the right people, who can make impactful decisions about purchasing, which is critical for increased business. Or on the other hand, more crucially and spiritually speaking—in the case of hearing the good news and growing in your walk with the Messiah of Israel—it is far more important **to know and respect people**, who can model and teach you more understanding of His ways and how to order your life accordingly.

So **timing**, according to God's will, and **knowing**, not only Yeshua the Messiah for salvation but others who can help in your spiritual maturation—are vital for fulfilling the call that is upon your life. After all, we all share the same predicament of seeing through a

glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12), with the ardent desire to **know** Him (Philippians 3:10) in order to complete the call to **predestined conformation** to the image of the Messiah through ultimate justification and glorification:

"For those whom He **foreknew** He also **predestined** to be **conformed** to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters. And those whom He predestined, He also **called**; and those whom He **called**, He also **justified**; and those whom He justified, He also **glorified**. What then shall we say in view of these things? **If God is for us, who can be against us?**" (Romans 8:29-31, TLV).

Therefore, whether one lived in the First Century, enduring the persecutions of the nascent Body of Messiah, or participated in the bloody American Civil War that in many cases pitted brother against brother, or whether one is alive today with prophecies being fulfilled regarding the restoration of all things concerning Israel and the nations (Acts 3:19-21)—no one gets to decide when in time they will exist in corporeal form. But as followers of the Messiah, we **do** get to choose what we will allow to influence our thinking and walk with the Holy One of Israel. Of course, in current times the distractions to follow after other gods are made much easier due to the technological advances. But I am convinced that every generation since Adam and Eve has had similar tests, to determine just who, what, how, why, and where they would serve—because the world, the flesh, and the Devil have been around since the Garden fall from innocence. It is imperative to be frequently reminded of former holy ones, and how they deliberately chose to be faithful to the Almighty—as we fear Him, and serve Him alone, like Joshua, the leader of his generation:

"Now therefore, fear *ADONAI* and worship Him in sincerity and in truth. Get rid of the gods that your fathers had worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and worship *ADONAI*. If it seems bad to you to worship *ADONAI*, then choose for yourselves today whom you will serve—whether the gods that your fathers worshipped that were beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will worship *ADONAI*!"** (Joshua 24:14-15, TLV).

Consequently, conference attendance acts like an inspirational time of remembrance, in order to return to the Lord and His ways. After spending time at Messiah College with other committed families, listening to admonitions, teachings and exhortations that encouraged our walk of faith—we feel our faith has been supercharged, our hope for the future has been reinforced, and our love for the Messiah and His grace to our family has been confirmed beyond measure. What a blessing to be called into His work to advance the Kingdom of God at this point in time and world history, with the Messianic Jewish community, and the unique work that is present for **"a time such as this!"** Occasionally, we just look at each other and exclaim, "I need to pinch myself to make sure I am not in some fantastical dream!"

It is not a dream, but instead involves a great deal of work and heavy labor. Not only are people in today's world dying without knowledge of the Messiah—but many people in today's Messianic movement have a strategic need for a scholarly, balanced, and loving approach to theological and spiritual issues. We continue to require your faithful prayers and financial partnership! *For if God is for us, who can be against us?*

"*ADONAI* bless you and keep you! *ADONAI* make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you! *ADONAI* turn His face toward you and grant you shalom!" (Numbers 6:24-26, TLV).

Blessings and shalom,
Mark Huey

HOW DO YOU STUDY THE BIBLE?

by J.K. McKee

Each one of us as a man or woman of faith, continually treading on a spiritual journey, has a certain series of expectations when we read the Holy Scriptures. All of us affirm the great power of the Word of God to change lives, the need for each of us to be diligent students of the Word, and the requirement for us to be informed from the Word as it involves the interactions with God and humanity—and especially what the Bible teaches us about God’s character. We can identify with how Paul directed Timothy “Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to encouragement, and to teaching” (1 Timothy 4:13, TLV). But aside from spiritual people all agreeing that the Holy Scriptures are to be the place where we turn for some decisive answers to life’s questions—how do we study the Bible? As we are considering some of the issues present in Messianic theology, it needs to be fairly noted that some of the controversies that we are facing today, come as a result of inadequate, and perhaps even inappropriate, ways of reading and interpreting Scripture.

Many people in today’s Messianic movement have been taught, either externally or internally, that the Bible is God’s “love letter” to them personally. None of us want to be caught dismissing how the Bible indeed conveys God’s good character and good intentions for humanity. Psalm 19:8(7) properly emphasizes, “The teaching of the LORD is perfect, renewing life; the decrees of the LORD are enduring, making the simple wise” (NJPS). There are many passages of Holy Scripture which the Lord has doubtlessly used to help you through a difficult time. Many of you can likely identify with how, when experiencing some crisis, you were guided to a passage like Jeremiah 29:11, “‘For I know the plans that I have in mind for you,’ declares *ADONAI*, ‘plans for *shalom* and not calamity—to give you a future and a hope’” (TLV). However, while it is important that God’s love has been conveyed to you via His written Word; those who study Scripture seriously, and especially those who are engaged in technical Biblical Studies, tend to *absolutely cringe* when someone says that the Bible is God’s “love letter” to humanity. The reason that such persons do not like to hear others saying these sorts of things, is because the Bible was not written directly to Twenty-First Century, modern individuals, who can then interject their subjective feelings into various cherry-picked verses or statements. **The books of the Holy Scriptures were composed for ancient audiences beginning with the**

Israelites who left Egypt—to the Jewish, Greek, and Roman Believers who made up the First Century *ekklēsia*.

It is to be commended that a significant majority of the people in today's Messianic movement, genuinely want to study the Bible at a deeper level. But, in order to study the Bible at a deeper level, a variety of guidelines do have to be followed. Simply picking up an English Bible version, and having a Strong's Concordance by one's side, is entirely insufficient in order for today's Messianic people to study the Bible at the level that they want to study it. Indeed, one needs to be able to read multiple English versions of the Bible and catalogue astute observations, have access to up-to-date Hebrew and Greek lexicons, if necessary be able to access Hebrew and Greek language tools, and also be able to access a selection of up-to-date Bible dictionaries and commentaries. The simple, yet complicated rule, of Biblical interpretation, involves (1) reading and interpreting the text for what it meant to its original audience, and (2) applying it in a responsible manner for modern people. Many of us will find, that when making the significant effort and attempt to read the Bible for what it meant to its original audience(s) first, that Scripture will actually be *more* relevant and critical for us living today, and not less.

Reading the Bible in an Observant Manner

For too many people who want to honestly and sincerely read and appreciate the Holy Scriptures, they tend to be handed a Bible, they are told to be sure to pray before reading the Bible, they are told that the Bible is the inspired Word of God—and that perhaps by reading the Bible, God will communicate something profound to them. Many contemporary Believers start reading the Bible, as though they have just been thrown into the deep end of a pool, without ever having had any swimming lessons. We should hardly be surprised, why not enough of today's Bible Believers do not have as comprehensive or as deep an understanding of Scripture as they ought to have. Because of not having enough guidelines to follow in reading Scripture, people tend to gravitate only toward a selection of Biblical books. For many in evangelical Protestantism, their understanding of God's Word tends to be limited not just to the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, but only a selection of texts in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament. Many Messianic people, in rightly wanting to (re)claim a foundation in the Tanach or Old Testament, can have a reverse problem of only focusing on the Torah or Pentateuch as relevant Scripture. And, many unnecessary and complicated issues have doubtlessly arisen, because not enough people know how to methodically approach books of the Bible or various (controversial) passages of Scripture.

How should you read the Bible in an observant manner? How can you get a great deal out of the text, as God's Holy Spirit focuses your mind and intellect on what a particular passage communicated to its ancient recipients, and how it applies to you living in the Twenty-First Century? There are some very important guidelines which you need to be aware of, as you read and plumb the depths of Holy Scripture.

1. Read the Biblical text as a whole: While many people have read the whole Bible through via various annual programs, very few, when approaching a known controversial passage, have first started their investigation by sitting down, and reading an entire book, preferably in a single sitting. While it might take a few hours for some books of the Bible, when you are able to sit down and remind yourself that in ancient times, many would first learn the Scriptures by reading them in such a manner, a great deal of information and context will be acquired. If you can believe it, many of the problems that we have with interpreting specific verses, can take place because we fail to read those verses in the context of what is stated before or after such verses. Likewise, as you read an entire Biblical text, it is useful to have a journal handy, where you note various observations on the characters, setting, events, as well as specific questions that the text raises. Do not be fearful if you do not have all of the answers, even when committing a few hours of your life to read through an entire book of the Bible. In order to probe a book of the Bible at a deeper level, reading through an entire book of the Bible is the first necessary step.

2. Compare and contrast various English Bible versions: It is a sad fact, but there are people seen in the religious world today, who will take a single English Bible version, read a passage of Scripture, and stridently insist on various conclusions from it. While English Bible versions have their place, when it is known that there are different theological conclusions drawn from a passage or a verse, such conclusions may originate from how a passage or a verse is translated. When a Bible reader uses a selection of several English Bible versions, in initially approaching a particular passage or verse, it can be easier to detect that there is a variance of opinion with how such a passage or verse should be approached. While many of the differences witnessed among English Bible versions are stylistic, careful Bible readers should be able to detect how various differences witnessed can indeed be theological. Seeing such differences in passages of known controversy is important, before investigating any original language issues. (While there are various parallel Bibles available, where one can have a print-

ed copy of different English versions to compare and contrast, Bible software will often give you the clear advantage of being able to customize which English Bible versions [and others] you can examine at the same time.)

(The recommended English versions that the publishers suggest you use, include, but are not limited to, the 1995 New American Standard Update or NASU, the Revised Standard Version/New Revised Standard Version/English Standard Version family, the New International Version; and for Messianic reading the Complete Jewish Bible and Tree of Life Version. All of these versions have been quoted or referenced in some way, throughout this workbook.)

3: Accessing original languages: Frequently, some of the differences which arise in interpreting Holy Scripture, originate from how Bible translators have chosen to render specific words or terms into English. *There is no "neutral" English Bible translation, as each translator or team of translators brings some presupposition to the text to be communicated from the source language into English.* Jewish translations of the Tanach, in English, will not be reflective of Yeshua of Nazareth being the anticipated Messiah, and as such various Messianic prophecies may be reflective of this. Christian translations of the New Testament, in English, are not too likely to be reflective of the position that the Torah or Law of Moses continues to remain relevant instruction for the people of God in the post-resurrection era. The Messianic Bible reader, in accessing any Jewish or Christian version, needs to keep these factors in mind. It does need to be recognized, that a number of English versions will indicate, in footnotes, where there are differences of opinion among a selection of translations.

There are a number of examples where employing both multiple English versions, as well as accessing the original languages which sit behind English translations, needs to be considered. The Sixth Commandment, as it appears in the venerable King James Version, reads as, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13), but in newer versions such as the New Jewish Press Society Tanakh or New American Standard, Exodus 20:13 reads with, "You shall not murder." An English Bible reader should immediately be able to detect that there is some perspective difference present. Going a little further, it is witnessed that the Hebrew verb translated as either "kill" or "murder" is *ratsach* (רָצַח), noted immediately by the venerable *Brown-Driver-Briggs* lexicon to mean "murder, slay" (p 953).

A well known difference of translation is witnessed in Romans 10:4, which in a version like the New American Standard reads as, "For

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," with a footnote also indicating, "Or *goal*." The 2005 Today's New International Version has the slightly different, "Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes," and the 2011 Common English Bible reads, "Christ is the goal of the Law, which leads to righteousness for all who have faith in God." Just among these English versions, it is detectable that some theologians apparently believe that the Torah or Law of Moses is terminated by the Messiah, or that the Messiah is the aim or purpose of the Torah, in that its instructions inevitably point to Him and to His salvation. Not surprisingly, a definition for the Greek *telos* (τέλος), as provided by *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, is indeed, "*the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose*" (p 620).

A lesser known part of accessing Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek resources for Bible study—but an absolutely imperative one—concerns encountering quotations of the Tanach in the Apostolic Writings. Many people, when reading a passage from an English version of the Tanach or Old Testament, and then perhaps encountering a quotation from it later in the Apostolic Writings or New Testament, may not see it quoted word-for-word. Of course, it should be immediately remembered how some quotations of the Tanach in the Messianic Scriptures are only partial quotes, they may be slightly adapted by an author, or they may be amalgamated with other Tanach passages. Romans 11:27, "THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS" (NASU), is a likely amalgamation of Isaiah 59:20-21; Isaiah 27:9; and Jeremiah 31:33-34, with deliberate connections likely to be made to other Tanach passages and expectations as well.

While one can witness partial or amalgamated quotes from the Tanach in the Apostolic Writings, many of the apparent differences that one can encounter, when the Tanach is quoted in the Messianic Scriptures, occur because it is not the Hebrew Masoretic Text being quoted, but instead the Greek Septuagint. What is commonly called the Septuagint (LXX), is an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, produced approximately two centuries before the arrival of Yeshua the Messiah. The Septuagint was used within the Mediterranean Jewish Diaspora, and so it should hardly be a surprise why the Septuagint is quoted throughout the Greek Apostolic Scriptures. The single longest Tanach quotation in the New Testament, is how Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12. Apparent differences between these two passages in one's English Bible version, can be easily explained when it is recognized how Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted from the Septuagint. There are printed English translations of the Septuagint available, which you can use as a "crutch" if necessary.

4. Accessing Bible dictionaries and commentaries: While there are many issues regarding a controversial Bible passage or verse which can be resolved by considering translation from the source language into English, many issues cannot, in fact, be resolved by translation. Many of today's biggest theological controversies do not, in fact, concern translation—but they instead involve an evaluation of the location and setting of a text's audience, and potential background witnessed in ancient bodies of extra-Biblical literature, history, or philosophy. Various passages are interpreted differently, simply because different schools of thought have different perspectives in approaching the text. The answer you need for interpreting or applying a passage of Scripture, might actually be found in accessing a Bible dictionary, encyclopedia, or even a technical commentary. These resources should never be accessed *first*, without you having done some homework of reading and wrestling through a Biblical text yourself. Obviously, if the answer you are seeking is found in a quotation from ancient history, or even some archaeological find from Biblical lands, accessing a Bible dictionary or commentary will be necessary.

Tools for Studying the Bible

Each one of us, in our personal quests to study the Bible, does know that we need to have some key tools available at our disposal, for investigating things in more detail, and also for weighing whether or not some of the theological conclusions we might be coming to are at all accurate or appropriate. We are each called to be adequate students of God's Word, and as good students we need to have the right resources to interpret the Bible, understand its background, and be respected in the wider world of ideas. Whether you are someone who will be involved in facilitating various teachings in your local Messianic congregation, helping in a Bible study, or you simply want to be a person who can add useful and constructive thoughts to discussions on Holy Scripture—not enough of today's Messianic people are equipped with a selection of useful tools, to study the Bible, and enter into some conversation of Biblical Studies. While you may not need to have as an extensive library as I have in my office, there are a few resources which you need to consider adding to your personal library.

Study Bibles

Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible (ed. Spiros Zodhiates; Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993)

The *Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible*, available in KJV, NASB, and NIV, has important words underlined and keyed to *Strong's Concordance*. It includes an abbreviated Hebrew and Greek dictionary, and is a

good tool to use for Bible studies with those who are completely unfamiliar with the original languages. Each book includes a brief introductory section. Note that it leans toward dispensational theology. The NASB edition due to its literalness in modern English is the preferred edition. *This happens to be the main, personal reading Bible that I use and carry.*

ESV Study Bible (ed. Grudem, Wayne, ed.; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008)

The *ESV Study Bible*, employing the English Standard Version (2001), has become a significant, widely available, evangelical and conservative study Bible. The *ESV Study Bible* includes extensive introductions, annotations, and essays from many of the well known and appreciated evangelical scholars of the late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries. The *ESV Study Bible* includes a wide selection of perspectives as they involve Biblical historicity, as well as theology. The *ESV Study Bible* does notably lean toward a Reformed or Calvinist perspective in many places, and there are things that today's Messianic people would disagree with. Still, the *ESV Study Bible*, on the whole, is a useful tool for us to engage with a great deal of contemporary evangelical theology.

New Interpreter's Study Bible, NRSV (ed. Harrelson, Walter J.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003)

The *New Interpreter's Study Bible* should be considered as a token, liberal study Bible. (This resource is actually not as liberal as various volumes in the *Oxford Annotated Bible* series are.) Today's Messianic people do not tend to be well informed that much in critical theories surrounding the composition of the Tanach (OT), nor do they know how to approach various Left of Center schools of thought regarding interpretation of the Apostolic Writings (NT), either. The *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, while not too likely to be used as your primary study Bible, is nonetheless something that you will need, in order to be informed as to what many standard, liberal theological opinions have been, certainly going back to the mid-Twentieth Century. This publication also notably includes the books of the Apocrypha, along with introductions and annotations.

The Complete Jewish Study Bible (Rubin, Barry, gen. ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016)

The Complete Jewish Study Bible includes an updated edition of David H. Stern's *Complete Jewish Bible*. Most importantly, *The Com-*

plete Jewish Study Bible is a compiled work of both Messianic Jewish and Christian scholars, including introductions, annotations, and select articles. For a number of these Messianic Jewish scholars and pioneers, this will be one of their last major theological contributions to the Messianic movement. There is a diversity of approach to a number of the issues addressed in this resource, and some of you may be surprised what Bible passages include annotations, and which do not. Still, no Messianic library should be without a copy of *The Complete Jewish Study Bible*.

Jewish Study Bible (eds. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

The Jewish Study Bible is an ecumenical Jewish resource including perspectives from Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Judaism based on the NJPS translation. It does represent some liberal theology in various places, but overall is a good, easy-to-access reference source to have for Jewish perspectives on Scripture. Each book includes an introduction, most texts include commentary, essays on various Jewish theological issues are included, and there is a thorough glossary of theological terms unique to Judaism.

Hebrew and Greek Language Tools

Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament (eds. Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter; Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003)

Easy-to-use volume for referencing Hebrew words for those who are unfamiliar with the Hebrew language. Words are keyed to *Strong's Concordance* numbers and include a brief theological explanation.

Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament (ed. Spiros Zodhiates; Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1993)

Excellent lay resource to have for referencing Greek words, by a native Greek speaker. Words are keyed to *Strong's Concordance* numbers and include a detailed theological explanation. This dictionary is slightly influenced by dispensational theology.

Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, 4 vols (ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988)

ISBE is a good, well respected encyclopedia in both conservative and liberal circles. A revision of the original 1915 edition, the present version reflects new scholarship and many more theological points of

view. *ISBE* is generally more conservative than the newer *ABD*, but does not include as many Jewish references.

Anchor Bible Dictionary, 6 vols (ed. David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992)

ABD has become a standard, relatively up-to date Bible dictionary, in many conservative or liberal theological circles. Theologically it is liberal in many places, but is quite factual in terms of archaeology, manuscript information, and history. What is unique about *ABD* is that it is a major work produced with Jewish-Christian dialogue in mind, and Rabbinical opinions and extra-Biblical Jewish sources are referenced every bit as much as Christian opinions and outside sources are referenced.

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period (eds. Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002)

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period is an excellent, one-volume reference work listing critical topics unique to First Century Judaism, their relation to Rabbinical Judaism and the development of early Christianity, and background historical information of the time.

Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs (ed. David W. Bercot; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998)

Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs is a valuable tool to have if you are unfamiliar with the writings of the Church Fathers from Second-Fourth Century Christianity. The Church Fathers' theological positions on a diverse range of subjects are listed by heading with elongated quotations.

Interpreting the Bible as a Messianic Believer

Today's Messianic movement is to be highly commended as having a very high view for the role of Holy Scripture in theology and lifestyle practice. However, as each of us is probably well aware, there are scores of interpretations and viewpoints present—regarding many issues in the Scriptures—which do not tend to be witnessed in other religious venues. Furthermore, as an emerging faith community—in contrast to much of Judaism and Protestantism—there are an entire array of theological and spiritual issues which today's Messianic movement is internally discussing, (strongly) debating, and even (outright) avoiding. While it is very good that your Messianic congregation or assembly likely has Torah studies, Bible studies, and small groups which encourage open discussion—**learn to be targeted with your remarks**. While there are going to be people who want to add to discussions