

A SURVEY OF THE TANACH
FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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J.K. MCKEE



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ABBREVIATION CHART AND SPECIAL TERMS

The following is a chart of abbreviations for reference works and special terms that are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. 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>	ICC: <i>International Critical Commentary</i>
AMG: <i>Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament</i>	IDB: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)	IDBSup: <i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement</i>
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament	ISBE: <i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
Ara: Aramaic	IVPBB: <i>IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)</i>
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)	Jastrow: <i>Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature</i> (Marcus Jastrow)
b. Babylonian Talmud (<i>Talmud Bavli</i>)	JBK: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Koren</i> (2000)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.	JETS: <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
BDAG: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)	KJV: King James Version
BDB: <i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>	Lattimore: <i>The New Testament by Richmond Lattimore</i> (1996)
BECNT: <i>Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>	LITV: <i>Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> by Jay P. Green (1986)
BKCNT: <i>Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament</i>	LS: <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Liddell & Scott)
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.	LXE: <i>Septuagint with Apocrypha</i> by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
CEV: Contemporary English Version (1995)	LXX: Septuagint
CGEDNT: <i>Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words</i> (Barclay M. Newman)	m. Mishnah
CHALOT: <i>Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	MT: Masoretic Text
CJB: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	NASB: <i>New American Standard Bible</i> (1977)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition	NASU: <i>New American Standard Update</i> (1995)
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls	NBCR: <i>New Bible Commentary: Revised</i>
ECB: <i>Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible</i>	NEB: <i>New English Bible</i> (1970)
EDB: <i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>	Nelson: <i>Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words</i>
eisegesis: "reading meaning into," or interjecting a preconceived or foreign meaning into a Biblical text	NETS: <i>New English Translation of the Septuagint</i> (2007)
EJ: <i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i>	NIB: <i>New Interpreter's Bible</i>
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)	NIGTC: <i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
exegesis: "drawing meaning out of," or the process of trying to understand what a Biblical text means on its own	NICNT: <i>New International Commentary on the New Testament</i>
EXP: <i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>	NIDB: <i>New International Dictionary of the Bible</i>
Ger: German	NIV: <i>New International Version</i> (1984)
GNT: Greek New Testament	NJB: <i>New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic</i> (1985)
Grk: Greek	NJPS: <i>Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures</i> (1999)
<i>halachah</i> : lit. "the way to walk," how the Torah is lived out in an individual's life or faith community	NKJV: <i>New King James Version</i> (1982)
HALOT: <i>Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Koehler and Baumgartner)	NRSV: <i>New Revised Standard Version</i> (1989)
HCSB: <i>Holman Christian Standard Bible</i> (2004)	NLT: <i>New Living Translation</i> (1996)
Heb: Hebrew	NT: <i>New Testament</i>
HNV: <i>Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible</i>	orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world
	OT: <i>Old Testament</i>
	PreachC: <i>The Preacher's Commentary</i>

REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TEV: Today's English Version (1976)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)
TNTC: *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*
TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*

UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
WBC: *Word Biblical Commentary*
Yid: Yiddish
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)

INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade (1997-2012) many of us 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 when 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 a new decade of development 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,¹ 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 discipled 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

¹ This is directly affected by the homosexual agenda that is dividing entire churches and denominations.

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 31:31-34; cf. Ezekiel 36:25-27), 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 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 3:16), 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

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.

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

^{iv} Consult the author’s exegesis paper on 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).

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 *and have suffered* as a result.

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 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.’...[W]e 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 them (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 expounded 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 worked on 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

^{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.

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

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?
- 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, and the age of the universe estimated at around 13 billion years?

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. But 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*

^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.

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 quasi- or semi-Sadducees in our midst.^{xii} Ending our Biblical examination at Deuteronomy, and forgetting Joshua-2 Chronicles or 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 where 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 15:21). 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 (often 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 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?

In 2004 *The Jewish Study Bible* was released, published by Oxford University Press. 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.

^{xii} 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).

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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 while in Babylon, **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 of His salvation 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 which are often overlooked. Most of these aspects will be related to a text's composition that will place 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

^{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.

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 before mentioned *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,

^{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 four centuries 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.

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 to date**—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, and Tremper Longman III (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003). For further consideration, you might consider reading *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 before mentioned *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, 1976-1992) 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. At the same time, try to keep God's salvation history plan in mind, as concepts and ideas seen in the Tanach may lay the foundation for things elaborated on more fully in the Apostolic Scriptures.

After reviewing 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 which 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 study is going to be "meaty," but 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.

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, *Messianic Apologetics*

TORAH
PENTATEUCH

