

OIM UPDATE

December 2018

This month from December 2-10, the Jewish and Messianic Jewish communities of faith are celebrating *Chanukah* or the Festival of Lights, also known as the Feast of Dedication. This national holiday commemorates the Maccabees' victorious revolt over Seleucid Greeks, which sought to eradicate the Jewish people via assimilation, making obedience to the Torah and its commandments illegal on the threat of death. This eight-day festival is seen established from the histories mainly contained in the Apocryphal Books of 1&2 Maccabees, as well as in the works of Josephus. Today's Messianic people are keen to emphasize how *Chanukah* is mentioned in John 10:22, and that Yeshua as the Light of the World would have commemorated it. If the Maccabees had not been successful in fighting and dying for their Jewish heritage, then there would have been no Jewish people into which the Messiah could have been born. If the Temple had not been rededicated, Yeshua would not have been able to fulfill the requirements of Moses' Teaching as the sacrificial lamb of God.

It was curiously coincidental that during this year's *Chanukah* season, the American public was mourning the death of George H.W. Bush, the forty-first president of the United States, who founded the (thousand) "Points of Light Foundation," organized to encourage voluntary public service during one's life journey. In viewing some of the outpouring of sympathy and most of the two funeral services, there were a few things that caught my attention, as I was encouraged to appreciate a life well lived by this patriotic American, who was twice spared from an early death. From the eulogies and media coverage, it became apparent that this departed soul prioritized faith, family, country, and friends during his lifetime. Certainly, the military precision at the Washington Cathedral, on a day proclaimed by the current President to mourn the nation's loss, generated a tremendous number of eyeballs to take in the funeral ceremony and movements of the casket. But what was most wonderful to hear, from Scripture readings, creeds, and clergy alike—was the Word of God without equivocation, proudly read to those in the audience and the world glued to monitors and screens of all shapes and sizes.

Of course, with "light" being the underlying theme of the ceremonies, the service began with a reading from Isaiah 60 that boldly proclaimed:

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. **And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.** Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you. **Your sons will come from afar, and your daughters will be carried in the arms.** Then you will see and be radiant, and your heart will thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you, **the wealth of the nations will come to you.** . . . Violence will not be heard again in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders; but you will call your walls **salvation [yeshuah],** and your gates praise. No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have the LORD for an **everlasting light,** and your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more, neither will your moon wane; for you will have the LORD for an **everlasting light,** and the days of your mourning will be finished" (Isaiah 60:1-5, 18-20, NASU).

As tears began to well up in my eyes, I immediately reflected on another statement by Isaiah that always reminds me that God is in control, and He works through mysterious ways to get His Word into hungering hearts yearning for truth and light shrouded in darkness in these troubling times:

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly par-

don. For **My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,**' declares the LORD. For **as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.** For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; **so shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.** For you will go out with joy, and be led forth with peace" (Isaiah 55:7-12, NASU).

Next, when I heard the second Scripture reading from Revelation 21:1-4, 23-25, it became obvious that the people who prepared the program, were going to shout to the nations, God's comforting words that ultimately offer and if received, bring life everlasting:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, '**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.**' . . . And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp *is* the Lamb. **And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed"** (Revelation 21:1-4, 23-25, NASU).

By the time the Episcopal rector had his time to share a homily about his relationship with the late President Bush, seeking hearts were prepared to hear the gospel of the Lord. I knew that my almost 92 year old mother was watching the events unfold, so I prayed that her aging heart would see through all the pomp and circumstance and receive the gift offered freely to all. Of course, no one knows how many millions of hearts were being touched, but God knows. In these divisive times, people of all stripes are looking, if not crying out, for answers. Lamentably, "truth" is difficult to ascertain as the bombardment of information, misinformation, and disinformation clouds the airwaves with opinions from one extreme to another.

Nevertheless, the people of the world have been promised these very comforting words from God's Son, the Messiah Yeshua, who proclaimed to be and is the Light of the world:

"Again therefore Yeshua spoke to them, saying, '**I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life**'" (John 8:12, NASU).

"**For God did not send the Son** into the world to judge the world, **but that the world should be saved through Him.** He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the **light** is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather

than the **light**; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the **light**, and does not come to the **light**, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who practices the **truth** comes to the **light**, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" (John 3:17-21, NASU).

Finally, there was one other take away from this life of service to country, family, and friends that made me want to reprioritize some of my activities, as the tick tock of time seems to be speeding up rather than slowing down. My own father, like George Bush ("he had two settings: full throttle and sleep), was a Naval aviator, who was born in 1924 and died in 2018, just two months short of 94, and three months from celebrating his seventieth wedding anniversary with my mother. Hence I concluded, if genetics have anything to do with long life, and my numbered days are not cut short by accident or illness, there is a good possibility that I might make it into my 90s, especially as medical science continues to prolong life. However, now that I just celebrated my fortieth year in the Lord, it is conceivable that I might get twenty or thirty more years to serve the Almighty One. Yet when I recall how fast the past twenty years have gone by, I realize that time is a fleeting, and every day needs to be lived to the max, with the absolute goal of fulfilling *all* of the good works that God has foreordained me to accomplish:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. **For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"** (Ephesians 2:8-10, NASU).

Yeshua emphasized the place of good works in a very succinct way:

"We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:4-5, NASU).

During this season of the year, let us each live out the life and call on our respective lives as it is articulated by the Apostle Peter, a second witness, who confirms the words of Yeshua, Moses, and Paul—with this summary explanation about who the children of God are from His Heavenly perspective:

"But you are a chosen race, A CHOSEN RACE [Isaiah 43:20; Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15], A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD [Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6], A HOLY NATION [Exodus 19:6], A PEOPLE FOR *God's* OWN POSSESSION [Isaiah 43:21; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2], **THAT YOU MAY PROCLAIM THE EXCELLENCIES OF HIM** [Isaiah 43:21] **who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY [Hosea 2:23]" (1 Peter 2:9-10, NASU).

To whom much is received, much is required! Thank you always for partnering with Outreach Israel and Messianic Apologetics especially as 2018 comes to a close! Your prayers and financial contributions allow us to serve the Holy One of Israel with all of our hearts, mind, souls, and strength. When you partner with us, you receive an equal measure of His mercy. After all, there is a reward for the "senders":

"How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? **And how shall they preach unless they are sent?** Just as it is written, 'HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS! [Isaiah 52:7; Nahum 1:15]' However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, 'LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT [Isaiah 53:1]?' So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah. But I say, surely they have never heard, have they? **Indeed they have; THEIR VOICE HAS GONE OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD [Psalm 19:4]"** (Romans 10:14-18, NASU).

Have a blessed holiday season! *Chag Samaech!*

Mark Huey

approaching EXTRA-BIBLICAL LITERATURE

by J.K. McKee

Many years ago when I was in elementary school, I was quoted Revelation 22:19 as proof that we did not need any more books in the Bible: “if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book” (KJV). In all probability, you have quoted this verse at some point in your spiritual experience, in order to uphold the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and perhaps in defense of some text of the Bible that someone is trying to downplay. Yet the context of Revelation 22:19 is clear enough that what is actually being emphasized is the importance of the prophesies of the Book of Revelation, not the role of extra-Biblical materials in the formulation of one’s theology.

Reading and consulting extra-Biblical literature and materials, is a definite part of the Messianic experience—and it is certainly witnessed in academic Biblical Studies. While we would all hold to the Holy Scriptures of Genesis-Revelation to be the inspired Word of God, there are many facets regarding the background and setting of such Scriptures, and how they were approached and interpreted by Second Temple Judaism, which can only be known by considering an array of other materials. Many of us are certainly familiar with how in various traditions, the books of the Apocrypha are considered canonical by Roman Catholicism, deuterocanonical in Anglicanism, and valuable history and philosophy in Jewish and Protestant scholarship. At the close of every calendar year, when Messianic people commemorate *Chanukah* or the Festival of Dedication, we make some effort to read from 1&2 Maccabees in the Apocrypha, reading about the Maccabees’ guerilla war against the Seleucid Greeks. Sometimes this is augmented with various readings from the Jewish historian Josephus. While not directly referenced in the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, we do consider the Maccabean revolt an important historical event worthy of consideration and remembrance—which certainly affected the worldview of the First Century Jewish community that first received the good news or gospel.

Also throughout the year, certainly in Messianic Torah and Tanach studies, and likely also *Shabbat* teachings—someone will refer to various perspectives present from the Jewish Sages, found in literature like the Mishnah and Talmud. While there will always be those who are very skeptical of Jewish literature produced by those who were broadly dismissive of Yeshua

of Nazareth, it is not as though the Jewish Sages should be haphazardly ignored as not having any valuable wisdom or insight. Many of us consult literature such as the Mishnah and Talmud, to simply trace a history of interpretation and application of various Torah commandments, so we can best consider their implementation in our own modern lives. Extra-Biblical Jewish literature can help us enter into conversations of difficult Bible passages and issues, and provide us not only with an array of interpretational options, but also help us better realize that we are not the only people who have had to wrestle with difficult subjects presented to us by the Holy Scriptures themselves.

Many of us as men and women of faith legitimately feel that the canonical Holy Scriptures present enough material, stories, accounts, commandments, and subjects to keep us spiritually and mentally occupied for quite some time! Yet, as a matter of being diligent students of God's Word, extra-Biblical literature such as the Apocrypha, Josephus, Philo, the Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmud, Midrashim, and various Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman histories—all play **a role** in us understanding something about the background of various issues. What are some of the legitimate ways that this information can be employed in our Bible studies? How do we recognize misuses of extra-Biblical literature?

Encountering Extra-Biblical Literature in the Holy Scriptures

While at first glance, some people come to the quick conclusion that extra-Biblical literature has no place in the theological reasonings of today's people of God—the fact that the Scriptures themselves make reference to sentiments witnessed in bodies of material outside of the canon, is unavoidable. The fact that the Bible makes some use of extra-Biblical literature, means that it can play some role in us understanding background or perspectives. The Apostolic Writings themselves clearly do make some direct use of extra-Biblical materials.

Acts 17:28

"for 'In Him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring'" (TLV).

During Paul's encounter with the Epicureans and Stoics at the Areopagus in Athens, it is contextually clear that in quoting "one of your own poets," that some pagan Greek has been referenced. There is no uniform agreement among examiners as to which classical Greek figure(s) Paul may have been quoting. In his commentary on the Book of Acts, David G. Peter-

son does offer a useful selection of options from classical antiquity:

"Paul offers support for the preceding claim by asserting that *"in him we live and move and have our being"*. This triad is used 'to bring out all sides of man's absolute dependence on God for life'. Some have argued that Paul is citing words originally addressed to Zeus in a poem attributed to Epimenides of Crete, who flourished in the sixth century BC. However, we do not have the original poem, and there are similar assertions by other Greek writers (e.g. Dio Chrysostom, *Or.* 12.43). Whatever the source, Paul will have been using these words to convey the biblical truth that God, not merely the creation, is the environment in which we exist. As a personal being he can be known, understood, and trusted. In the syntax of the sentence, the words *'as some of your own poets have said'* most naturally relate to what follows. Paul goes on to quote Aratus of Cilicia (*Phaenomena* 5), a philosopher-poet from the third century BC, who said of Zeus, *"we are his offspring"* (*του γαρ και γενος εσμεν* [τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν]). The poet will have understood these words in a pantheistic sense, but Paul appears to have viewed them in the light of the image of God theology in Genesis 1:26-27...He recognized that a search for God had been taking place in the Greco-Roman world, but condemned the result—the idolatry which was everywhere present and the ignorance of the true God which it betrayed (vv. 22-25)."¹

2 Timothy 3:8

"Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so do these people oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and worthless concerning the faith" (TLV).

Jannes and Jambres are not known anywhere by name inside of the Tannach, but within ancient Jewish tradition they are the names of the Pharaoh's magicians who used their black arts to counter the Divine signs issued by Moses (cf. Exodus 7:11, 22; 8:7, 18-19; 9:11). They are mentioned by name in both the Dead Sea Scrolls and Targum Jonathan:

"Moses and Aaron stood in the Power of the Prince of Lights and Belial raised up Yannes and his brother in his cunning when seeking to do evil to Israel the first time" (CD 5.18-19).²

"But the anger of the Lord was provoked, because he would go (that he might) curse them; and the angel of the Lord stood in the way to be an adversary to him. But he sat upon his ass, and his two young men, Jannes and Jambres, were with him" (Targum Jonathan on Numbers 22:22).³

¹ David G. Peterson, *Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), pp 499-500.

² Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 56.

³ [BibleWorks 8.0: Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on the Pentateuch.](#)

Titus 1:12

"One of them, one of their own prophets, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons'" (TLV).

The statement made by Paul about Cretans—regarding its originator as speaking prophetically of sorts—is often attributed to Epimenides, who was a Sixth Century B.C.E. poet. What is said would have been a well-known sentiment expressed about Crete in the ancient world. One of the oldest records of what Paul says is found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* 1.8, "Cretans are always liars,"⁴ dating to the Third Century B.C.E.

2 Peter 2:22

"What has happened to them confirms the truth of the proverb, 'A dog returns to its vomit,' and 'A scrubbed pig heads right back into the mud'" (TLV).

In his remarks on the condition of unreformed sinners, Peter first quotes from Proverbs 26:11, but then makes a quotation from an extra-Biblical source. This is likely taken from the Seventh-Sixth Century B.C.E. *Ahiqar*, a tale which spread throughout much of the Ancient Near East: "My son, thou has been to me like the swine that had been to the baths, and when it saw a muddy ditch, went down and washed in it..."⁵

Jude 14-15

"And about these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with myriads of His holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him'" (PME).

Jude 14-15 has some sort of quotation issued from the Pseudepigraphal *1 Enoch* 1:9: "Behold, he will arrive with ten million of the holy ones in order to execute judgment upon all. He will destroy the wicked ones and censure all flesh on account of everything that they have done, that which the sinners and the wicked ones committed against him."⁶

⁴ Stanley Lombardo and Diane Raynor, eds., *Callimachus: Hymns, Epigrams, Select Fragments* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 3.

⁵ J.M. Lindenberger, "Ahiqar," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 487.

⁶ E. Isaac, "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), pp 13-14.

Hebrews 11:38

“The world was not worthy of them! They wandered around in deserts and mountains, caves and holes in the ground” (TLV).

While the bulk of the Hebrews 11 “hall of faith” refers to individuals and persons which can be found within the Tanach Scriptures, Hebrews 11:38 is widely agreed by examiners to include a reference to the Maccabees, from 2 Maccabees 10:6 in the Apocrypha, as they first commemorated *Chanukah* or the Festival of Dedication: “And they celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals” (RSV).

It is seen that the Holy Scriptures actually do include quotations or significant references to extra-Biblical literature. In terms of background, be it historical or philosophical, this can be important. But does a quotation or significant allusion to an extra-Biblical source, automatically mean a wide-scale endorsement of such material as being inspired of the Creator God? Hardly. While it is recognized that Paul, for example, quoted from various Greek poets, no spiritual person today thinks that they should be considered canon. While Jude quotes from Enoch, there are considerable questions surrounding the preservation of the text of *1 Enoch*—and the Biblical Enoch is hardly the originator of the bulk of such information.

The Main Bodies of Extra-Biblical Literature

For your average Bible reader, simply encountering an obvious quotation or reference from extra-Biblical literature within the Biblical text, can come as quite a shock. More engaged Bible readers can often be familiar, at least in passing, with some bodies of extra-Biblical literature, via references they have seen in various study Bibles or commentaries. Many, while knowing that there are extra-Biblical materials “out there,” leave it to others to sort through such information.

How do you sort through some of the major bodies of extra-Biblical literature? Technically, extra-Biblical literature can involve anything from widely preserved and circulated religious and philosophical works, which in history were closely associated with the canonical Scriptures—to scraps of letters, ancient tomb inscriptions, and graffiti for that matter. Both Jewish and Christian scholars turn to a certain window of materials, which would at least represent some selection of religious and philosophical views present within the “broad Biblical period.”

The two major bodies of extra-Biblical literature, which have been widely accessible to both Jews and Christians since the Second Century C.E., are the works of Philo and Josephus. It is not uncommon to find this material on the shelves of many individual people and families today:

Philo Judaeus or Philo of Alexandria lived between 20-25 B.C.E. and died between 40-45 C.E. He is widely regarded as the first Jewish philosopher and believed that it was possible to present the teachings of the Tanach in palatable forms to students of Greek philosophy. On one hand, Philo's writings represent many of the key theological tenets that we see present in First Century Diaspora Judaism, but on the other he was also somewhat eclectic. Many of Philo's works should be seen in the construct of him trying to defend Jewish belief and custom against Jews being persuaded in the so-called superiority of Hellenistic dogma, as Philo would defend Judaism as being the "true philosophy" or "true mystery" that Hellenism was trying to seek. Philo, while arguing to a different sector of the Jewish community, the Diaspora community, actually held to a very high view of Moses and the Torah. Some of Philo's ideas are paralleled in parts of the Apostolic Scriptures, although compared to many of his Judean counterparts he would most certainly be considered a bit "progressive." Philo's works are valuable as they give us a glimpse into some of the ideas and beliefs of Diaspora Judaism, and are an excellent historical witness to its customs and traditions. (Single-volume compilations of Philo's works are available in English, and all of his works are in the public domain.)

Flavius Josephus lived between approximately 37-100 C.E. He was born into a well-to-do priestly family in the Land of Israel. At 16 he began a thorough study of the major Jewish sects of his time, and by 19 had become a Pharisee. At the age of 29, he made his way to Rome to see to the release of various priestly friends, and made the acquaintance of the Roman court. Josephus did not join the Jewish Revolt of 67 C.E. and was taken a prisoner by the Roman army. He "prophesied" before Vespasian that he would become caesar, in order to save his own life, believing that the Jewish people could survive in cooperation with Rome. When Vespasian was installed in 69 C.E., Josephus was freed and witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem firsthand in 70 C.E. After this he returned to Rome and be-

came an author of Caesar's court, compiling several histories of the Jewish people. Josephus' works are extremely valuable as they give us insight into the Judaism of the First Century and the development of early Christianity. They are an excellent external witness to the historicity of the Apostolic Scriptures, and throughout much of Christian history have been read as second in importance only to the Bible. (Single-volume compilations of Josephus' works are available in English, and all of his works are in the public domain.)

The next major set of extra-Biblical literature, with more of it tending to be accessed by contemporary scholars than laypersons, largely originates the period immediately before, and then following, the Apostles, for several centuries. In this series of texts we find a great deal of information on Jewish theological opinions circulating before the time of Yeshua, some of the theological opinions circulating after the time of Yeshua, various wisdom sayings, important Jewish traditions and applications of Torah, as well as the challenges the Believers in the Second and Third Centuries C.E. faced:

The Apocrypha is a collection of books written sometime between the late Third and Second Centuries B.C.E., that by the First Century B.C.E. were added as an adjunct onto the Greek Septuagint. These texts primarily included history and wisdom literature. Most of these texts were originally written in Greek, although some were probably first written in Hebrew, the originals having been lost to history. The texts of 1-4 Maccabees and Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) are very significant as secondary resources to the Bible. The Apocrypha gives us a good idea about the possible origin of some of the "sayings" of Yeshua and the Apostles, and the history of Judaism during the Greek period. Notably, the books of the Apocrypha are considered canonical in the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic, deutero-canon in the Anglican traditions. While the Reformers largely rejected these texts as canonical, because Judaism did, they are nevertheless approached by Protestant academics as a valuable source of secondary material that should probably be used in some of our theology. It is very easy for one to acquire an English Bible version with the Apocrypha included (KJV, RSV, NEB, REB, NRSV, ESV), or even a study Bible with commentary included (i.e., *Oxford Study Bible*, *New Interpreter's Study Bible*).

The Pseudepigrapha is a wide array of religious texts that were largely written in the names of the Biblical Patriarchs and other important figures, compiled largely from the Third to First Centuries B.C.E., although some of it dates to the First Century C.E. Much of this literature recorded oral traditions extant in the Judaism in this period, notably Diaspora Judaism, and for that reason most of these texts survive in Greek. The interpreter will find various sentiments and beliefs that may make their way into the Apostolic Scriptures. Texts of the Pseudepigrapha should be consulted on a case-by-case basis, as most of them are anonymous, are very broad sweeping, and some have undergone some noticeable changes from their originals.

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) are the collected works of the Qumran community from the First Century B.C.E. that were discovered from 1946 to 1956 in caves on the shore of the Dead Sea in Israel. The Qumran community was an eclectic apocalyptic group expecting the arrival of the Messiah and the overthrow of the Romans. They were Essenes who strongly opposed the Sadducean Temple priesthood and who thought that the Pharisees were too liberal in their approach to the Torah. Other than the historical traditions we have of Pharisaic theology, the DSS make up the second historical witness of another branch of Judean Judaism during the First Century. We can actually see some parallels between the DSS and views that are recorded in the Apostolic Scriptures. This does not mean that there is total agreement, but does reveal that many of the teachings of the Apostles were not unique to their time, and there were parallels elsewhere. The DSS should be consulted when one is searching for the theological views of the major branches of Judaism in the First Century. Oftentimes, what the DSS say will often be considered when a reference is made either in a commentary or some other work. (Several English translations of the DSS are available.)

The Mishnah is the written down form of the Oral Torah, or what was considered to comprise the Oral Torah by the First-Second Centuries C.E. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the surviving Jewish Rabbis wrote down the Pharisaic oral traditions that guided their Torah observance. The Mishnah was composed by around 200 C.E. in a unique form of Hebrew. In Orthodox Judaism

today the Oral Torah is considered to be on par with the Written Torah or Chumash, and is authoritative to a lesser extent in Conservative and Reform Judaism. The Mishnah forms the basis of Jewish law, being divided into six distinct segments: agriculture, the appointed times, women, damages, holy things, and purities. The Mishnah certainly records the history and procedure of how things were done in the Temple and much of the *halachah* that Yeshua and the Apostles would have been exposed to in Judea. The Mishnah is an invaluable historical resource that gives us much insight into how the Torah was followed in the First Century, and there are many good, wisdom sayings in it. (Jacob Neusner has translated a single, one-volume edition of the Mishnah in modern American English that is extremely valuable for any congregational or personal library.)

The Talmud is actually a broad term describing two principal bodies of literature: the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. Both of these works are composed in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, and span across two centuries from the Second to Fourth Centuries C.E. The Babylonian Talmud largely represents the interpretation and traditions of Eastern Judaism from Babylon building upon the Mishnah, and the Jerusalem Talmud represents the views and traditions of Judaism from Judea, although there are many, many crossovers. Reading through the Talmud can often be a very daunting task to the interpreter who is unfamiliar with reading legal briefs. Much of the Talmud is compiled in the form of "Rabbi X said in the name of Rabbi Y that Rabbi Z said. . ." Most who examine the Talmud in any detail are religious scholars and teachers, whereas your average interpreter will have to have a tractate pointed out in a commentary or reference book so as not to get lost. The Babylonian Talmud, the larger of the two, has several translations into English. A congregation should at least have an electronic version of the Talmud on hand for reference. (The most popular edition available is the Soncino Talmud, even though Neusner has edited his own modern English versions of both Talmuds).

The Midrashim are largely commentaries composed of "conversations" or sustained passages of Scripture on various books of the Torah and Tanach. These works are all closely associated with the composition of the Talmud, and stopped being writ-

ten between 450-500 C.E. In the midrashic method of investigating Scripture, texts are often reinterpreted as applying to Israel or to Israel's messiah. The Midrashim give us important clues as to how various Tanach texts have been interpreted by the Jewish community. Some of the Midrashim add material beyond the Biblical text, and others expound upon texts in a moralistic way to turn people in repentance toward God. The Midrashim are frequently consulted by Messianics wanting to see various Jewish opinions on Tanach texts, but the fact that these often appear four to five centuries after Yeshua can guide examiners to treat these sources as tertiary, and not secondary. (Soncino and others have produced various English translations of the Midrashim.)

The writings of the Church Fathers are actually a very broad series of texts compiled anywhere from the early Second Century through the late Fourth Century. These texts include letters, apologetic treatises, and historical summaries of the challenges that the early Church faced. While many in Messianic community are quick to judge these writings, we cannot lump them all together as being "this" or "that," or all being "anti-Semitic," as they are simply too diverse. The writings of the Church Fathers were composed by many different individuals spread over a large geographical area, and it is best that we examine them on a case-by-case basis by who wrote what and the circumstances in which the person wrote. Just like the Talmud, searching through the writings of the emerging Church of this period is like jumping into an unfamiliar ocean. These texts give us important clues as to how Christian communities applied the Scriptures to their lives, as well as many of the persecutions they experienced at the hands of the Romans, and their tense relations with the Synagogue as well. We also get a glimpse at some of the heresies that circulated in the Second Century, and how the immediate successors of the Apostles handled them. An important section of these writings is the Fourth Century work *Church History* by Eusebius. When dealing with these texts, one will often have to be pointed to a specific reference via a commentary or reference source. (There are several English translations available of these writings, most of which are in the public domain.)

Beyond these collected volumes of extra-Biblical literature, the next range of materials considered would be some the extant historical and philo-

sophical works of civilizations contemporary to Ancient Israel and Second Temple Judaism, and with it archaeological inscriptions and any other form of writing or artwork. For the Tanach, some of the main civilizations to be considered include those of: Sumer, Egypt, Canaan, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. The classical civilizations of Greece and Rome, and their many works, are certainly considered to play some role as background material for the Apostolic Writings.

These main collections of extra-Biblical literature I have just mentioned comprise most of the material that the able researcher will consult in his or her examination of the Scriptures. Consulting this literature, more than anything else, should give us a better view of the world(s) of the Bible, and into the contemporaries of Israel. Many, if not most, of references to these works are going to be found via a technical or critical commentary, so please do not start digging without someone pointing you in the right direction.

An Irresponsible Use of Extra-Biblical Literature

Upon hearing about the existence of various collections of extra-Biblical literature, far from some people dismissing such materials as being off limits to consider for background studies and in better understanding the times of a particular Scriptural text—other people are seen to come to the conclusions that the existence of various bodies of extra-Biblical literature has been suppressed from them, that such texts were forcibly removed from the Holy Scriptures by religious authorities, and that the time has come for us to demand their re-introduction into the Bible.

It is to be fairly noted that various ecumenical study Bibles not only will include the books of the Apocrypha, but that there will be some running commentary on them as well. Study Bibles focusing on background and times will be seen to make generous references to extra-Biblical materials. And, the more technical and detailed a commentary on a Biblical text, the more likely there are going to be scores of references to materials outside of the Bible proper. However, for a wide scope of Jewish and Protestant scholars, the canon of the Tanach has been determined, and for the latter so has the canon of the Apostolic Writings. Extra-Biblical materials are not to be approached as being the *final* authority for men and women of faith. Extra-Biblical materials can be employed when evaluating different perspectives on issues seen in religious history, and sometimes may be employed not in a comparative way to establish some sort of commonality—but instead a contrasting way. When one examines Ancient Near Eastern mythology or classical Hellenistic philosophy in Biblical Studies, it may very well be to see how starkly different the Biblical message actually is!

Today's Messianic Judaism, while tending to recognize the useful place that extra-Biblical literature can play in one's examination of the Bible, its times, and a history of interpretation—considers the canonical Scriptures of Genesis-Revelation to be the final authority. Perhaps extra-Biblical tools should be consulted, and some may even possess a *secondary* level of authority on various issues, but they should never supersede the Bible. However, the broad and increasingly more unstable independent Hebrew/Hebraic Roots movement, does not tend to have the same sort of governor on it. While there are those in the Hebrew Roots movement who will rightly stick to the Biblical canon as being authoritative, there are others who are very much of the mindset that certain texts have been suppressed in history, with knowledge deliberately withheld from them, and that they need to be reinserted into the Bible. The increasing plethora of "restored name versions" that very much are seen to litter the Hebrew Roots movement—in addition to offering eclectic renderings of canonical Biblical passages—are most certainly seen to include additional texts beyond those of the Apocrypha (to generate sales?). The independent Hebrew Roots movement can be seen to be rather haphazard in its employment of extra-Biblical materials.

While collections of extra-Biblical literature such as the Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Mishnah and Talmud, and even various early Christian works, all play some role in a detailed examination of Scripture and issues of faith—those who become overly enthusiastic about a study of *1 Enoch* and the Watchers or Nephilim, among other examples, can quickly lose sight of the much larger and more imperative issues presented to us by the Bible itself. It might be slick and exciting for some to want to dig into some *presumed* "forgotten truth" in a text that sits outside of the canon—but which parts of the Biblical canon remain not only untouched, but entirely unread, by far too many of us? When was the last time any of us read through, much less studied, the Book of Obadiah or Paul's letter to Philemon? While it is important for us to be informed as students of Holy Scripture, as to what some of the beliefs and views were of various people who lived within the Biblical period—our theological questions and inquiries must originate out from the Biblical text itself, as we see the Bible interacting with the world. Our theological questions and inquiries should not, in contrast, be imposed onto the Bible from either the world, or extra-Biblical literature.

To What Extent is Our Theology Affected by Extra-Biblical Literature?

While each period of the Biblical record across the ages is different, and encounters the people of God interacting with different sectors and seg-

ments of the broader world—extra-Biblical literature does affect our theology to some important degree. *What were the values of the broader world in which the people of God found themselves?* More frequently than not, our consultation with extra-Biblical literature takes place during our examination of the Apostolic Writings—mainly because there is more material for us to consider from Second Temple Judaism and the Roman Empire, as the further you go back in history, the less extant resources you have. This does not mean, however, that there are not Ancient Near Eastern histories and mythologies, which might aid us in better understanding the Tanach, as there surely are.

As you read Holy Scripture from the beginning, to the arrival of Yeshua of Nazareth and the early Messianic movement—how might you employ various extra-Biblical materials in your studies? The account of Creation and the Flood in Genesis is paralleled by myths such as the Enuma Elish and the Epic of Gilgamesh, but where in Genesis God is witnessed to judge the Earth for its sin, in the Epic of Gilgamesh the gods destroy the Earth because they cannot sleep. When you read the commandments of the Torah as a modern person, you might think that some of their instructions are cruel, harsh, and unenlightened. Perhaps when comparing and contrasting Torah commandments to the Code of Hammurabi, dating from the Eighteenth Century B.C.E., one will see that Moses' Teaching is perhaps not so inflexible. And surely, today's Messianic people can frequently recognize that when reading the Apostolic Writings, that considering various parallels in bodies of literature like the Mishnah, Talmud, or Dead Sea Scrolls has added some insight into difficult sayings of Yeshua. No body of extra-Biblical literature is considered as an authority that overrides Holy Scripture, but such material can aid in making the Scriptures much more clear on various matters.

Because of the open-mindedness of many people within today's Messianic community, when initially encountering extra-Biblical literature, some people are going to give it more importance than is justified. In response, others in wanting to uphold Biblical authority, will see that bodies of extra-Biblical literature are dismissed. Yet, having a fair-minded regard for consulting extra-Biblical literature is necessary—because there are modern and post-modern issues which the Holy Scriptures do not directly or indirectly address, perhaps requiring one to at least consider if other materials from the broad Biblical period may address it.

As you proceed into deeper and more complicated Bible studies, remember that extra-Biblical literature does play **a role** in your interpretation and application. Make sure, however, that your attention and interest are not taken away from the Biblical text itself, and that your studies become more interested in things other than God's Holy Word.