

**One of the major reasons that today's Messianic movement has grown in the past decade is a significant interest by Believers in the Torah and the Tanach. In too many cases, the Tanach Scriptures were not probed in that great a detail in a Jewish Believer's traditional Synagogue upbringing—and perhaps more serious, a non-Jewish Believer's Christian experience often witnessed the Old Testament taking a back seat to the New Testament in the Church. With many of the ethical and moral controversies the greater Judeo-Christian religious community is experiencing in our age, a need for God's people to return to a foundational grounding in the Tanach Scriptures is absolutely imperative. The Old Testament cannot simply be disregarded any more.**

**Many have stayed away from consulting the Tanach not because of a lack of interest, but because few want to have to deal with the controversies it addresses. Unlike the Apostolic Scriptures, constrained to the First Century C.E., the period of the Tanach stretches back all the way to the beginning of the universe itself. Questions like: *Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? Did God actually condone the genocide of the Canaanites?* and *Am I the only one who thinks the Prophets are mentally disturbed?* are debates that many people do not want to enter into. Even more significant is the effect of critical scholarship which has attempted to divide the Torah into non-Mosaic sources, question the inspiration and historical reliability of the text, and even regard much of the Tanach as Ancient Israel's mythology. For a Messianic movement that claims to place a high value on the Tanach, it is time that we join in to these conversations.**

***A Survey of the Tanach for the Practical Messianic* takes you through the Old Testament from a distinct Messianic point of view. It presents a theologically conservative perspective of the books of the Tanach, but one that does not avoid some of the controversies that have existed in Biblical scholarship for over one hundred and fifty years. The student, in company with his or her study Bible, is asked to read through each text of the Tanach, jotting down characters, place names, key ideas, and reflective questions. Each book of the Old Testament is then summarized for its compositional data and asks you questions to get a good Messianic feel for the text. This workbook can be used for both personal and group study, and will be a valuable aid for any Messianic Believer wanting to study the whole Bible on a consistent basis.**



# A SURVEY OF THE TANACH FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC



A SURVEY OF  
THE TANACH  
FOR THE PRACTICAL  
MESSIANIC

J.K. MCKEE

**MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS**  
[messianicapologetics.net](http://messianicapologetics.net)

# A SURVEY OF THE TANACH

FOR THE PRACTICAL MESSIANIC

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

Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*  
NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (2007)  
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*  
NIGTC: *New International Greek Testament Commentary*  
NICNT: *New International Commentary on the New Testament*  
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*  
NIV: New International Version (1984)  
NJB: New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic (1985)  
NJPS: Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1999)  
NKJV: New King James Version (1982)  
NRSV: New Revised Standard Version (1989)  
NLT: New Living Translation (1996)  
NT: New Testament  
orthopraxy: lit. "the right action," how the Bible or one's theology is lived out in the world  
OT: Old Testament

PreachC: *The Preacher's Commentary*  
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,<sup>i</sup> 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

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

you think about it: *people turn to the Old Testament!* In times past, the kinds of renewals witnessed included a return to the Ten Commandments, and other ethical and moral commandments in the Tanach. But today, especially given the positive Jewish-Christian relations and interfaith dialogue that we have, the kind of renewal we are bound to witness is likely **to include much more** than what we have witnessed in the past. People will want to consider not only the scholastic Christian tradition on the Old Testament, but also the Jewish tradition and views of the Rabbis. How did the Messiah really approach *and keep* the Law of Moses? What did the Prophets really call the people to do? How important is the Exodus in understanding salvation history? The opportunities not only for individuals to be disciplined and for the Messianic movement to grow, but also for us to see the prophesied restoration of all Israel occur, are definitely there!

Much of the predicament that we have seen in today's evangelical Christianity is well summarized by New Testament theologian Douglas J. Moo. He writes, "Far too many Christians are abysmally ignorant of even the basic content of the Old Testament. Too many pastors avoid the Old Testament or preach only a few of its more famous stories and texts. Evangelical scholars and publishers have perpetuated the problem by producing three or four solid exegetical commentaries on New Testament books for every one on an Old Testament book."<sup>ii</sup> 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."<sup>iii</sup> 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

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

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

(Matthew 5:17-19).<sup>iv</sup> 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.”<sup>v</sup> 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, appropriated from the Jewish theological tradition, an acronym for: *Torah/Law*, *Nevi'im/Prophets*, and *Ketuvim/Writings*.<sup>vi</sup> We use the term “Old Testament” infrequently, often for the familiarity of others.

What ultimately concerns anyone who examines these Scriptures is not what you call them or how you order them, **but how you interpret them and the role they play in your theology of God and the mission of Yeshua**. What does the Tanach teach us as the people of God *about God*? In evangelicalism today, particularly because of the various moral and ethical crises that it faces, interest in the Tanach is at an absolute all time high. People are not only turning to the Tanach to find out more about the Lord and Savior we love so dearly, but also to find out what God expects of His people in their conduct. As Old Testament theologian Walter C. Kaiser has had to sadly observe, “The current evangelical generation has been raised almost devoid of any teaching on the place and use of the law in the life of

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<sup>iv</sup> 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.

<sup>v</sup> John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 24.

<sup>vi</sup> This order was in relative form by the First Century C.E. (Sirach 39:1; Luke 24:44).

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?”<sup>vii</sup> 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.<sup>viii</sup> 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*.”<sup>ix</sup> 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,

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<sup>vii</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, “Response to Willem A. VanGemeren,” in *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 75.

<sup>viii</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, “Response to Douglas Moo,” in *Ibid.*, 400.

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

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

It continues to be my observation that much of the Messianic movement today has a real problem with viewing the Apostolic Scriptures in their Ancient Mediterranean context. This is a Mediterranean context where both Second Temple Judaism and Greco-Roman classicism must be considered. Realizing that if Messianic people have difficulty understanding the role that both the Jewish Rabbis and the Hellenistic philosophers play in understanding the Apostolic Scriptures—even if the latter are primarily consulted to show where the Bible’s message runs contrary—how much more difficulty would Messianic people have with considering the great cultural diversity of the Tanach?\* 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?”<sup>xi</sup>

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”?

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\* For a further discussion, consult the author’s article “The Role of History in Messianic Biblical Interpretation” (appearing in *Introduction to Things Messianic*).

<sup>xi</sup> K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 3.