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The Bible

A BOOK OF CONNECTIONS



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IT SEEMS THAT THOSE whom we have been trusting to bring us the news may not be as trustworthy as we thought. As if local news, world news, hard news, soft news and breaking news weren't enough, we now have real news and fake news, leaving us to try to figure out what is true and what isn't. Not so with the Good News! There is no better or more reliable report today than that of a living God whose power and strength are unmatched, whose authority is absolute and whose love for mankind is equaled only by His desire to be in an intimate relationship with those He created. For a behind-the-scenes account of the character and activities of this amazing God, all we have to do is read His Book.

Through our Ignite the Truth initiative, we at Bridges for Peace have had the privilege of reading through that Book this year with thousands of Bible lovers from around the world. In so doing, I have been encouraged, uplifted and strengthened, as I am sure many of you have as well. I have also been struck by the remarkable connections God put in place, linking Himself with His people, His people with Himself and especially His people with one another. For those who thought the original testament (*Tanakh* or Old Testament) was rendered unnecessary with the advent of the more recent one (Writings of the Apostles or New Testament), one only needs to see the thousands of connections He makes between the two to realize that neither was ever meant to stand alone.

The two faith systems



A SHARED HERITAGE

It has been said that Judaism does not need Christianity to explain itself, while Christianity cannot explain its existence without Judaism.

Bible scholar Dr. Marvin Wilson suggests that without Judaism, Christianity as we know it would never have endured, stating that the roots of Christianity go deep into Hebrew soil. The two faith systems, so alike in many ways yet so very different in others, are inextricably linked through our shared history and Scriptures. For many Christians and Jews, that connection has historically been of little interest and easy to ignore. However, today there are many in each community that are increasingly eager to learn about the other. They are discovering shared values, a shared love for the God of Israel and a shared heritage based on the heart of God as revealed in the Bible.

For Christians—many of whom have been taught that the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) is no longer valid—an exploration of the first two-thirds of the Bible is adding depth and richness to their faith and providing a deeper understanding of the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament) as well. Some in the Jewish community are coming to recognize that the Writings of the Apostles is indeed a very Jewish book, written by Jewish authors, filled with idiomatic Hebrew phrases and replete with quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures.

are inextricably linked.

BEDROCK FOR BOTH

The *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology* defines a canon as a set of texts or books regarded as authoritative Scripture. For both Judaism and Christianity, the process of canonization was based on a consensus that the works being considered were inspired by God Himself, or God-breathed, as the apostle Paul declared in 2 Timothy 3:16. Portions of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) were recognized as authoritative as early as 400 BC, and by the destruction of the Temple



in AD 70, the process was mostly complete, with the exception of four books. Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Esther were added later with the closing of the canon in the early second century. The canonization of the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament) was also a long and arduous process, with no recognized authoritative body of “New” Testament Scripture existing until the fourth and fifth centuries AD.

Clearly, the *Tanakh* was the foundation upon which both faith systems rested. In a sense, it became the parent of the Writings of the Apostles, helping to shape and inform what Christianity would become. Some in the Church today teach that the message of the Bible is short and simple, needing only the stories of creation, the fall of man, salvation and restoration. However, I suggest that a more careful examination of the Book proves differently. The concepts of monotheism, the sacredness of life, resurrection and the afterlife, man’s sinfulness juxtaposed with God’s holiness and righteousness, divine grace, God as Savior and Deliverer, a love relationship between God and humanity, atonement, election, covenant and the Kingdom of God are fundamental to Judaism and are firmly embedded in the Hebrew Scriptures. They are also the theological pillars on which Christianity stands and have found their way to the pages of the Gospels and the Epistles through the teachings of Paul, Peter, James, John and Jesus (Yeshua) Himself.



The *Tanakh* was the foundation upon which both
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SAY THAT AGAIN...

Most scholars agree that there are literally thousands of references to the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) in the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament), including direct quotes, allusions and suggestions. Depending on the translation being used, most scholars suggest there are between 350 and 500 direct quotes from 29 of the 39 books of the *Tanakh* found in 23 of the 27 books of the Writings of the Apostles. The Blue Letter Bible places the number of quotes at 855! When Matthew wrote his Gospel account, he quoted from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Hosea and Zechariah. Luke's account includes a similar list, with the addition of Malachi and Leviticus. The apostle John made 550 references to the *Tanakh* in his Revelation.

Perhaps the most compelling use of the *Tanakh*, however, is found in quotes from Jesus (Yeshua) Himself. In John 5:46–47, He challenges His listeners: *“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”*

When Jesus joined two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35), He caused their hearts to *“burn within”* (v. 32) them as He spoke to them on the road: *“Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”* And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (vv. 26–27).

In Matthew 4:1–11, we read of the encounter between Jesus and *“the tempter”* who was determined to lure the Messiah into an action that would have been displeasing to God. Jesus met each temptation with a declaration from the Bible, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13,16 and 8:3. The power of the Word of God was clear in His response, *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God’”* (Matt. 4:4). Those words by which He, His disciples and the early Church lived were found in the *Tanakh*.

ALLUSIONS

It would be impossible in this short article to list all the Scriptures in the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament) that are not

actually quotes but clearly allusions to verses in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament). May I suggest you do a Bible study of your own using the following list that may well spur you on to even further study?

Compare Isaiah 7:14 with Matthew 1:23; Micah 5:2 with Matthew 2:6; Hosea 11:1 with Matthew 2:15; Jeremiah 31:15 with Matthew 2:18; Genesis 1:27 with Mark 10:6; Exodus 20:12 and 21:17 with Mark 7:10.

In addition, there are countless similarities between important accounts in each testament that would have made the stories that the apostles had to tell seem relatable and fully believable. In the *Tanakh*, there are several stories of women who by all rights should not have become pregnant actually bearing children. Whether barren or simply too old, these women were only able to conceive by an act of divine intervention. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, had a similar story to tell, as did Mary, the young and unwed mother of Jesus (Yeshua) the Messiah. Like Sarah, the mother of Isaac, these women should not have been with child, and yet they were. And their pregnancies were announced in advance by a divine visitation. God spoke to Sarah, Mary, Abraham, Zechariah (Luke 1:5–25) and Joseph, confirming the miraculous nature of the pregnancies.

First-century listeners would also have felt an immediate connection when they heard of the decree from King Herod, demanding that all the infant boys in the area of Bethlehem be killed. It wasn't the first time in Israel's history that such a decree had been made. Moses would have immediately come to mind and the similar declaration made by pharaoh that should have meant his death as a newborn. But God intervened and Moses's life was spared as he was taken from the community

**God is enlivening in His people
a desire to read His Word.** ● ● ● ●



of Israel and given safe haven among the people of Egypt. Such was also true of Jesus.

God as healer was a concept well known to the Jewish people of Jesus' day. The prophets of old had been used by the Lord to bring healing more than once, and those who anticipated the Messiah in first-century Israel expected him to come with "*healing in his wings*" (Mal. 4:2) Their Scriptures told of those who had restored sight to the blind and raised people from the dead, prayed for the sun to stand still and performed other miracles in the natural realm. They were stories of faith, sacrifice, hope and the love and triumph of God. They were connectors, linking what God had done in the past with what He was doing in the present, the God who is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8).



THE BOOK OF CONNECTIONS

The writers of the Writings of the Apostles (New Testament) clearly had no desire to do away with the words of the prophets and the teachings of the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.). Rather, they sought to honor the words of God and stay true to the teachings with which they had been raised. They were living in a time of great upheaval and yet a day of prophetic fulfillment, a time when their world was about to be turned upside down. The *Tanakh* (Old Testament) was their anchor.

We too are living in a time of upheaval. Our world is changing rapidly, and sometimes we feel as if it is about to be turned upside down. But we are also living in a time of prophetic fulfillment. God is enlivening in His people a desire to read and embrace the entirety of His Word, and as we do, the profound importance of the events of our day are made clear, as was true for those first-century disciples. The stories of creation, the flood and the rebirth of mankind and Israel and the birth of a nation are all there as examples to us, the apostles tell us. In them we see the character of our God: His mercy, love, power and faithfulness. We read of His incredible relationship with the people of Israel and the promises He made to them millennia ago. Only then can we really comprehend with unbridled joy the fulfillment of those promises happening right before our eyes, as God rescues His beloved from their captivity, strengthens us—His Gentile children—and allows the nations to see that He is God. Now that, my friends, is news worth reporting!

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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God's chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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