

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



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Daniel, Book of: What can you tell me about the composition of the Book of Daniel?

Approximate date: 539-530 B.C.E. (Right, some conservative-moderate); 500s B.C.E. (some conservative-moderate); 500s-300s B.C.E. (Left)

Author(s): Daniel and/or a close associate (Right, some conservative-moderate); anonymous writers and editors (some conservative-moderate, Left)

Location of prophet/author(s): Babylon (Right, some conservative-moderate); Land of Israel (some conservative-moderate, Left)

Target audience and their location: Southern Kingdom Israelites during the Babylonian exile (Right, some conservative-moderate); Southern Kingdom Israelites after the Babylonian exile (some conservative-moderate, Left)

The Book of Daniel (Heb. *Dani'el*, דַּנְיֵאֵל) is one of the most difficult to understand texts of the Tanach, and is highly debated among most interpreters. Daniel is placed after the Book of Ezekiel in the Christian book order of the Old Testament, among the Major Prophets, but is a part of the Writings in Jewish tradition. Daniel is prophetic/apocalyptic in nature, but its words were delivered by one who was a government official (*NIDB*, 253). Daniel was an exile taken to Babylon at a young age, who was renamed Belteshazzar and trained for the royal service (1:1-6; Harrison, 1105). While in Babylon he became an interpreter of dreams and signs, and was shown visions of both the future of the world and destiny of Israel.

Internally in the text, Daniel is afforded some level of involvement of delivering its prophecies (8:1; 9:2; 10:2). While many conservatives consider him to be the author of the book, others concede that a close associate may have been responsible for writing down or compiling his prophecies (*EXP*, 7.4). Yeshua the Messiah certainly refers to Daniel speaking prophecies (Matthew 24:15), validating Danielic involvement. The language style of Daniel, mixed Hebrew and Aramaic, is thought by conservatives to suggest an earlier, rather than a later dating of the text, likely sometime around 530 B.C.E. The Book of Daniel does demonstrate a unity of style (Harrison, 1107-1109; *NIDB*, 253; *ISBE*, 1:862), leading many to conclude “the internal evidence leads us to believe that Daniel was the source of the vision reports of Daniel 7-12” (Dillard and Longman, 330).

Up until the Twentieth Century, Danielic involvement with this book was not severely challenged, until the rise of the German critical movement (Harrison, 1111). Liberals today totally discount any kind of genuine Danielic involvement in Daniel. Most liberals suggest that Daniel is a fictional text because its prophecies are too predictive and specific (*ISBE*, 1:862), with the character Daniel perhaps being based on the “Daniel” mentioned in Ezekiel 14:14 and 28:3. In this schema, the figure of Daniel is a legendary character to be relegated to various “court tales” (*ABD*, 2:29-30; *New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 1231), of which there is no historically reliable information. A few liberal commentators have suggested a comparison between Daniel's existence and that of Britain's King Arthur (*IDB*, 1:761).

Liberals often suggest that because of the specificity of Daniel's prophecies, that the Book of Daniel must be a work of fiction probably written during the Maccabean revolt of 164 B.C.E. (*IDB*, 1:766-767; *EXP*, 7:6-8; *ABD*, 2:33-34). Thus, when Daniel prophesies concerning various abominations, what is to be considered are not events to come in the future, but events that have already taken place via the sacking of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Seleucids. In this schema, the Book of Daniel is nothing more than a “pious fraud” similar to the Book of Deuteronomy—as advocated by proponents of the JEDP documentary hypothesis. Liberals do not take Daniel very seriously, concluding “The author of Daniel tried to calculate the time of the end and failed” (*IDB*, 1:768).

There are a few conservatives who embrace the liberal propositions concerning the Book of Daniel. Some, perhaps seeing the abuses of various prophecy teachers who today give a great

deal of attention to Daniel, have ended up adopting the position that the “prophecies” were given after the fact (Dillard and Longman, 331). This is further complicated by some historical issues surrounding Daniel, as extant data from the Seventh and Sixth Centuries B.C.E. is probably not as complete as it could be (Dillard and Longman, 333-337; cf. Harrison, 1112-1127). However, conservatives supporting genuine Danielic involvement rightly suggest that the lack of information we have is not sufficient grounds to claim pseudonymity.

The Book of Daniel has some unique linguistic differences, likely accounting for a composition somewhere in Babylon. 1:1-2:4a and chs. 8-12 are written in Hebrew, with 2:4b-7:28 being written in Aramaic. Liberals commonly claim that this is evidence for a later composition of the text. Conservatives respond by saying that the differences in vocabulary are not significant when compared to the mixing of other Ancient Near Eastern languages in various documents (*ISBE*, 1:860-861). It is significant that Hebrew and Aramaic are both Semitic relatives, and interactions between the Jews and Babylonians necessitates the existence of loan words (*EXP*, 7:23-24).

The Greek Septuagint version of Daniel includes some notable additions: the Story of Susanna, the Story of Bel and the Dragon, and the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews. All of these books are included in the Apocrypha. A fair amount of agreement exists between the Hebrew Masoretic Text and LXX versions of Daniel (*IDB*, 1:763; Harrison, 1133-1134). Fragments of Daniel were discovered among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and bear some significant resemblance to the MT (*ABD*, 2:29).

The text of the Book of Daniel is divided into two large parts: historical narrative (chs. 1-6) and apocalyptic revelation (chs. 7-12). Believing the stated location of the events as Babylon, then Daniel’s prophecies would have been composed to encourage the Jewish exiles in Babylon who could have thought that the Lord abandoned them (*EXP*, 7:3). Daniel reminded them that God was not unfaithful to His people, and that the punishment meted upon Israel was to be lifted (9:2).

A major thrust of Daniel’s prophecies is to remind God’s people that He is sovereign over human affairs: “This sentence is by the decree of the *angelic* watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men” (4:17; cf. 5:21, Dillard and Longman, 348-351). Daniel portrays God as being triumphant (7:11, 26-27; 8:25; 9:27), something that is climaxed later in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 11:15; cf. Daniel 2:44; 7:27). God’s people are stirred to anticipate a world to come where the battle of good and evil has come to resolution (*ECB*, 665), with evil being defeated.

For Believers in Messiah Yeshua, Daniel reminds us that the Messiah will be triumphant over the world. The words of Daniel significantly affect the symbolism we see in a text like Revelation. However, the ideas in Daniel also impact the history of the Apostolic Scriptures, its authors, and concepts displayed by them such as the antimessiah/antichrist, and most significantly the Second Coming (*EXP*, 7:10-12).

Jewish theological positions on the Book of Daniel have helped lead some interpreters to some of the liberal conclusions that are frequently made today. The ancient Jewish testimony regarded Daniel is that he was considered to be a real prophet with real prophecies for the future (Josephus *Antiquities* 10.266-268; 4Q; cf. Harrison, 1107; *ISBE*, 1:861-862). Later Rabbinic tradition, however, had difficulty embracing Daniel as a prophet. This largely came in response to how various words in Daniel were interpreted as favoring the Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth (*Jewish Study Bible*, 1642). The Jewish theology of the Talmud affords Daniel the role of a seer (b.*Megillah* 3a; b.*Sanhedrin* 94a), but not a prophet (*IDB*, 1:763; Harrison, 1106). The composition of Daniel was attributed to the men of the Great Synagogue (b.*Baba Batra* 15a), not Daniel himself or one of his associates. Consequently because of these factors, the Book of Daniel has not had a great impact on more contemporary Jewish theology, but words in Daniel are used in various liturgical prayers.

The Book of Daniel has impacted Christian theology significantly more than Jewish theology, particularly Christology as it concerns the Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth. Evangelicals today widely consider Daniel to be composed of authentic Danielic words and prophecies (*ISBE*, 1:861). However, even though Daniel is considered to have important words regarding Yeshua—particularly its distinct “Son of Man” references (7:13; cf. Matthew 24:30) and the fact that the doctrine of resurrection is based in Daniel (12:2; Harrison, 1131)—significant variance exists regarding how its future prophecies are to be interpreted.

Some evangelical Christian scholars interpret Daniel as predicting the prominence of the Church following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (*ISBE*, 1:865), with the remainder of Daniel’s prophecies given some kind of “allegorical” view. Many other evangelicals regard Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (7:23) to portray the major empires of ancient humanity (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome), culminating in a final global empire led by an antimessiah—only to be defeated by the Messiah (*ECB*, 665; cf. Harrison, 1129-1130; Dillard and Longman, 351-352). The prophecy of Daniel’s seventy “sevens” (9:20-27) is often viewed as culminating in a seven-year tribulation period (*NIDB*, 253; *ISBE*, 1:865).

Today’s Messianic movement generally leans toward some form of futuristic view of Daniel, consistent with what is seen in evangelicalism. A significant amount of engagement has occurred among Messianics and *parts* of Daniel, particularly with those who place a high degree of emphasis in Bible prophecy. However, it is notable that some Messianic views of Daniel often shift—and are primarily designed to make the text fit current events. Thus, to what degree Messianic engagement with Daniel may be considered responsible exegesis can be questioned.

Yeshua the Messiah is clear that no person knows the exact day or time of His return (Mark 13:32-36; Acts 1:7-8). No interpreter should be dogmatic with the numbers of Daniel, but instead entreat God for insight and wisdom for how to deal with its prophecies. In the future, it is likely that Messianic engagement of Daniel will take into consideration more of the critical views present, how Daniel would have encouraged those living in Babylon and/or the Maccabean period, and certainly how we can have a stable view of the text that does not diminish the importance of its future prophecies.

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Daniel 3:25: I have heard it said that Yeshua was present with the three men in the fiery furnace. To what degree might this be true?

The three Jews: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego were thrown into the fiery furnace for not worshipping the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. So serious was the fire, and so obstinate were they to his demand, that the crematory was heated seven times more than normal (Daniel 3:19). The three faithful Jews were bound so that they could not escape (Daniel 3:21), and as they were thrown in, some of the soldiers guarding them were actually killed by flames coming out of the oven (Daniel 3:23). As they are cast into the fire, King Nebuchadnezzar makes some startling observations.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, ‘Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?’ They replied to the king, ‘Certainly, O king.’ He said, ‘Look! I see four men loosed *and* walking *about* in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of *the* gods!’”

It is not difficult at all to see how a supernatural being saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from certain doom in the furnace. Jewish Bible translations render v. 25 with either “the fourth looks like a divine being” (NJPS) or “the appearance of the fourth [one] is like an angel’s” (ATS). But what is specifically meant by the Aramaic clause *l’var-Elahin* (לְבַר־אֱלֹהִין)? The Septuagint translators could not agree, with one LXX version rendering it *angelou Theou* (ἄγγελου θεοῦ) or “angel of God,” and then another with *huiō Theou* (ὁἰῶ θεοῦ) or “son of God.”

Older English translations like the KJV employ “Son of God,” and hence various interpreters have concluded that not just any supernatural being was present with the three faithful Jews in the fiery furnace—but that it was a pre-Incarnate manifestation of Yeshua the Messiah. Most modern English translations today render *l’var-Elahin* in Daniel 3:25 as “like a son of the gods” (i.e., RSV, NASU, NIV, HCSB) or “the appearance of a god” (NRSV). It is often translated this way not necessarily to discount Yeshua as the Son of God, but rather to consider the vantage point of the person who made this declaration: the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar would have thought of any supernatural being as just another deity, because it is not until the narrative of Daniel 4 that he had his significant counter with the One True God.

When he saw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego saved from the fiery furnace, Nebuchadnezzar would have had no comprehension of a Messiah to come, or any Savior/Redeemer figure prophesied to rescue Israel as seen in the Tanach. King Nebuchadnezzar was simply a person in history who witnessed God’s deliverance in action. Based on his statements, it is not incorrect to conclude that this *bar-Elahin* was in fact a pre-Incarnate manifestation of *the Son of God*, Yeshua the Messiah. Yet when this took place, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, armed nothing with nothing more than his pagan theology, would not have understood this.

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Dead Sea Scrolls: What is your opinion of the Dead Sea Scrolls?

The Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) are a collection of ancient texts which were discovered in the caves at Qumran in Israel in 1947. They were the products of the Qumran community of Essenes, which were an eclectic sect of Judaism in the First Centuries B.C.E. and C.E. The Essenes believed that the Temple system of the Sadducees, and the sect of the Pharisees, were both corrupt and in league with the Romans. They separated themselves in the desert in anticipation of the final battle, where the Messiah would come and defeat Israel’s Earthly enemies and reestablish the Davidic monarchy.

The DSS are primarily used by Jews and Christians in textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible. Manuscripts from Qumran which are Biblical in nature are employed and compared against other Hebrew texts to determine what the original reading of a text was. From this standpoint, we have no problem with the DSS, as they provide a valuable ancient witness for us to consider of the preservation and copying of the Hebrew Scriptures.

It is notable, however, that the DSS do include texts that are specific to the Essenes, the Qumran community, and their theology. These include manuals on how the community was to live, requirements for entry, some reflections on the historical events of the time, and commentaries on their religious beliefs. Like all writings of the period, there are certainly things that can be gleaned from these works which can enable us to have a fuller perspective of First Century Israel. However, in the technical sense, the Qumran community was a fringe sect in First Century Judaism, and we need to be careful with giving theological credence to some of their views as they did not have an incredible amount of influence. Unlike the Pharisees or Sadducees,

the Essenes are not mentioned in the Apostolic Scriptures. We know of them primarily from the writings of the DSS and the archaeological findings at Qumran.

updated 24 August, 2006

Death, for Believers: What do you believe happens when born again Believers die?

We believe that the disembodied consciousnesses of Believers who die in the faith are transported to Heaven to be with the Lord. This is fully consistent with what the Apostles write to us in the Messianic Scriptures and the beliefs of First Century Pharisaical Judaism, which largely advocate an afterlife. As Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:8, “we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.” The Greek verb that Paul uses for “be at home with,” *endēmeō* (ἐνδημέω), actually means “To be at home, to be present in any place or with any person,” relating to “one who is at home with...or among his own people” (AMG, 585). Being separated from one’s physical body thus requires one to be present with the Lord.

Paul also writes in Philippians 1:23, “But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Messiah, for *that* is very much better,” expressing his need to remain on Earth a little longer to perform the Lord’s work. Further on in this same epistle, Paul writes that “our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Yeshua the Messiah” (Philippians 3:20). He wants to die and be in the presence of His Savior, yet recognizes that Yeshua will ultimately come to restore the Earth. The Believer’s ultimate place of residence is not a Heaven in the sky, but in the restored Kingdom of God on Earth. Heaven is the intermediate place to be with the Lord prior to the resurrection of a Believer’s body.

As a ministry, we fully denounce any form of “soul sleep” for the righteous, as it is only the Believer’s dead body that is “asleep,” awaiting for reunification with the consciousness at the resurrection—even though we fully affirm the reality of a bodily resurrection!

Those in the Messianic community who believe in “soul sleep” often base it on half-verses such as Ecclesiastes 9:5b, which says “the dead do not know anything.” Yet this is not definitive evidence of no afterlife, as the verse continues describing human life on Earth, and how the dead do not know of any Earth-bound things: “their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 9:5c-6). Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 does not say anything about the condition of dead persons or where they are, but instead lists specific things that they cannot do because they are dead. These are things that these people had time to participate in on Earth or “under the sun” (Heb. *tachat ha’shamesh*, תחת השמש), but cannot participate in beyond the veil of death not “knowing” about them.

It is insufficient for any interpreter, as can be quite commonplace among Messianic advocates of “soul sleep,” to only consider references in the Tanach without also weighing them with statements in the Apostolic Scriptures. The Tanach really does not even ask the question about life after death, because it is more widely concerned with the *corporate* nature of God’s people and their conduct on Earth, whereas questions of an afterlife are decidedly *individualistic*. Because the Tanach does not really ask the question, it is not addressed to the same degree as it is in the Apostolic Scriptures. But still, that does not mean that the Tanach is entirely silent about an afterlife. One cannot “die,” and then be “gathered to his people” (Genesis 25:8; 35:29; 49:33; Numbers 20:24, 26; Deuteronomy 32:50), unless one is gathered *somewhere*. It by no means speaks exclusively of internment.

The development of a theology of afterlife across the Biblical period is no more irregular or strange than the development of Messianism, which took multiple millennia (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2), or even the doctrine of resurrection itself which is scantily alluded to in the Tanach (Daniel 12:1-2). All three of these strata largely came to their peak in Pharisaic Judaism, which significantly affected the development of the early Messianic movement.

For a further discussion of this issue, consult the editor's articles "To Be Absent From the Body" and "Why Hell Must Be Eternal." Also recommended are the books *Death and the Afterlife* by Robert A. Morey, and *Bible, Soul & Life Everlasting* by John W. Cooper.

updated 06 May, 2008

Denying Messiah: Why do you think there are people in the Messianic movement today denying Yeshua as the Messiah?

There are a variety of reasons why some people in the Messianic movement are denying Yeshua as the Messiah. The first reason is that we are in the Last Days and that there will be apostasy from the faith (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). The second reason is that there are a variety of deceptive books and websites under the label of being "Messianic" that some have consulted, which (deliberately) plant seeds of doubt into the minds of people. The third reason is that it is likely that many people who are denying Yeshua's Divinity, and then His Messiahship, *never* truly knew Him as their Personal Savior.

One pattern that is very dangerous is the idea that one must "question everything." Many of those who teach that we must "question everything" have not considered the ramifications of what they are saying. Eventually a person will ask questions that cannot be answered, and the result can be denial of Yeshua and ultimately denial of the existence of God. The Hebraic mind accepts God for who He says He is because we cannot fully understand the infinite. The Biblical pattern is *not* to "question everything," but rather to seek confirmation of something (Deuteronomy 17:16; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Titus 5:19; Hebrews 10:28).

updated 22 May, 2006

Deuteronomy, Book of: What can you tell me about the composition of the Book of Deuteronomy?

Approximate date: 1440-1400 B.C.E. (Right); 1300-1200 B.C.E. (conservative-moderate); before 623 B.C.E. and/or 500s B.C.E. (Left)

Author: Moses exclusively (Right); Moses, Joshua, and later editors (conservative-moderate); a pious teacher or priest in Jerusalem, compiled traditions and mythologies (Left)

Location of author: wilderness journey after the Exodus (Right, conservative-moderate); Jerusalem, Babylon, and/or Land of Israel (Left)

Target audience and their location: people of Israel preparing to enter the Promised Land (Right, conservative-moderate); Jewish religious leaders during reign of King Josiah and/or Jewish exiles returning from Babylon (Left)

No book of the Torah or Pentateuch is more concise, or more frequently consulted as a single reference, than the Book of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew name of this text is *Devarim* (דְּבָרִים), meaning "words," derived from its opening sentence: "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel" (1:1). This calls the reader to heed the words that Moses spoke (*NIDB*, 269). Another Jewish title seen in some works is *sefer tokchanot* or "Book of Admonitions" (Harrison, 635).

Our English term Deuteronomy is derived from its Greek Septuagint designation of *Deuteronomium* (ΔΕΥΤΕΡΟΝΟΜΙΟΝ), literally meaning "second law." This meaning is derived from 17:18 where a king of Israel is told he "shall write for himself a copy of this law." The Hebrew of this is *mishneh ha'Torah* (מִשְׁנֵה הַתּוֹרָה), as *mishneh* means "double, copy, second" (*BDB*, 1041). The LXX rendered this as *deuteronomion* (δευτερονόμιον). Many Christian scholars regard this as a mistranslation (*IDB*, 1:831; Harrison, 655; *NIDB*, 269), even though there are many Jewish traditions that refer to the fifth book of the Pentateuch as *Mishneh Torah*, meaning "repetition of the Torah" (*ABD*, 2:168), and thus Deuteronomy would not be an invalid term, being a reflection of this view.

“[T]he error on which the English title Deuteronomy rests is not serious, as Deuteronomy is in a very true sense a *repetition* of the law” (*ISBE*, 1:934; cf. Dillard and Longman, 91). The Book of Deuteronomy does not just repeat the commands of the Torah, but it also sets forward the responsibilities of God’s people in light of a treaty-covenant (*NBCR*, 201). “Deuteronomy...is a deeply traditional text that, more than any other book of the Bible, provides the foundation of Judaism” (*Jewish Study Bible*, 356). The *Shema* and ritual objects like the *mezuzah*, *tefillin*, and *tzitzit* all find their basis in Deuteronomy (*Ibid.*). For Believers in Yeshua, it is notable that Deuteronomy is quoted more than any other book of the Torah in the Apostolic Scriptures.

The events of Deuteronomy occur as the Israelites are on the plains of Moab, preparing to enter into the Promised Land (1:5; cf. Numbers 36:33). Moses is handing the leadership to Joshua (34:9; cf. Joshua 1:1-2), who was yet unproven as the newly designated leader (*NBCR*, 201). Moses is recalling what has happened to Israel since the Exodus, and delivers a series of speeches likely given over just a few days. Interestingly enough, this “has possible antecedents in the Egyptian method of diffusing moral teaching. Most of the Egyptian wisdom instructions were dressed in the form of testaments of kings and viziers to their successors....This technique may have exerted its influence on Israel’s literature” (*ABD*, 2:169).

The audience of Deuteronomy is an entirely new generation of Israelites who needed to be admonished about obeying the Lord (*IDB*, 1:831). The forty years of required wandering had been completed, with all having died out except Joshua and Caleb. “In some respects Deuteronomy is...‘the last will and testament of Moses’” (Dillard and Longman, 92). Deuteronomy does expound upon the instruction that God has given the people thusfar, but in some distinct instances changes and/or modifies it for their entry into the Promised Land (*Ibid.*, 100). “The word contains the essentials of Leviticus rewritten in such a manner as to make the more priestly and esoteric material amenable to the populace, and in this sense Deuteronomy can be said to comprise a popular version of the Levitical law, thereby approximating to something like an ‘Everyman’s Torah’” (Harrison, 636-637).

The text of Deuteronomy is divided into five major parts. The first part is (1) a prologue introducing Moses’ speech (1:1-4:43). This is followed by (2) comments preparing Israel to receive God’s covenant law (3:33-5:5), including a summarization of the Ten Commandments (5:5-21). Additional admonitions given include understanding the importance of learning God’s commandments (6:1-25), and how Israel has become God’s people because of His gracious choice (7:1-26). This is followed by a series of warnings about disobedience (8:1-20), and a reminder for Israel to consider past failures (9:1-29). The (3) largest section of Deuteronomy is a repetition of the law code that the people are to follow (12:26:15). The story closes with (4) a listing of blessings and curses that are agreed upon by Israel at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim (26:16-30:20), and (5) an epilogue describing Moses’ death (31:1-34:12).

The authorship of Deuteronomy was unanimously accepted to be Moses by both Jewish and Christian scholarship until the rise of German higher criticism in the Nineteenth Century. Deuteronomy itself attests Mosaic authorship (1:1, 5; 31:24-25), and the Tanach further testifies to Mosaic authorship of the legislation found in the text (Joshua 1:7-8; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; 8:53; Nehemiah 8:1; Malachi 4:4). The New Testament likewise unanimously affirms principal Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, including various testimonies of how certain commandments or admonitions were given by him to Israel. These are all found in the words of Yeshua (Matthew 19:7-8; Mark 10:3-5; cf. Deuteronomy 24:1), Peter (Acts 2:22-23; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19), Stephen (Acts 7:37-38), and Paul (Romans 10:19, cf. Deuteronomy 32:21).

Conservative scholars today all widely recognize that the narrative framework and conclusion of Deuteronomy likely come from another hand. Such material is generally referred to as being “a-Mosaica” (Dillard and Longman, 92-93; cf. Harrison, 637-640, 659). While Moses is accredited as being the author of his speeches in Deuteronomy, the introduction to the text, as well as its conclusion were probably written by scribes in his inner circle and/or Joshua. It is certain that Moses did not write about his own death (Harrison, 661; *NBCR*, 203; *NIDB*, 269).

Jewish tradition recognized that Joshua wrote eight verses of the Law (b.*Bava Batra* 14b), and these are likely the verses that speak of Moses' death (34:5-12):

“As regards the obituary itself, Jewish tradition is most probably correct in assigning the final eight verses of the Torah to Joshua. Following normal Near Eastern tradition, narratives dealing with events of any importance were written down at the time of, or shortly after, the particular incidents had occurred, and this doubtless took place in connection with the death of Moses” (*ISBE*, 1:938; cf. Harrison, 661).

Conservatives largely date Deuteronomy's composition in either the late Fifteenth Century or late Thirteenth Century B.C.E. (*NBCR*, 204; *ISBE*, 1:938), depending on how the Exodus is dated (see *Exodus* FAQ entry for a summarization of the conservative debates over the timing of the Exodus).

Liberal theologians who deny any Mosaic authorship of the Torah, largely basing their conclusions on the work of Julius Wellhausen and his documentary hypothesis (see *Genesis* FAQ entry for a summarization of the JEDP documentary hypothesis), generally identify Deuteronomy as the so-called D source or Deuteronomist (*IDB*, 1:831-832). Some date Deuteronomy's composition after the Babylonian exile, but others date it during the reign of King Josiah in the Seventh Century B.C.E. They assert that the Book of Deuteronomy was written as a “pious fraud” and then “discovered” in the Temple (Harrison, 647), providing the impetus for Josiah's reforms in 2 Kings 22:3-23:25 (*IDB*, 136; *ISBE*, 1:935-936; *ABD*, 2:175-176; *Jewish Study Bible*, 357). Thus, Deuteronomy was only written to call the people back to God when the Southern Kingdom faced extreme threats from both Assyria and Babylon.

Liberals generally assert that Deuteronomy's “authors were teachers and public officials” (*New Interpreter's Study Bible*, 242; cf. *IDB*, 1:836) or “rural Levites” (*IDBSup*, 229). “By employing ‘Moses’ as their spokesperson, they established a link with tradition at precisely the time when tradition, for the sake of survival, had to be transformed” (*Jewish Study Bible*, 358). Harrison validly points out that these views regarding Deuteronomy's composition were “an integral part of the evolutionary reconstruction of Hebrew religion which Wellhausen promulgated upon a basis of Hegelian philosophy” (Harrison, 640). This liberal scholarship “assigned [Deuteronomy] with entirely unwarranted confidence to the activities of an unknown prophet” (*NBCR*, 202). Harrison further states, “Arguments that suggest the possibility of a ‘pious fraud’ are therefore based on analogies from the Graeco-Roman period, and as such have no bearing upon the literary practices of the ancient Near East, where such fabrications simply did not occur” (Harrison, 647).

While believing that Deuteronomy was originally written during the time of King Josiah, many liberals will argue for later editing by P or the so-called Priestly source, as Deuteronomy contained laws for Israel (*ABD*, 2:171-172). Frank M. Cross, in particular, argued for a double redaction of Deuteronomy: one prior to the time of Josiah, and then one after the Babylonian exile (Harrison, 640; Dillard and Longman, 105).

Most conservatives will concur with liberals that the text found in Josiah's time was the Book of Deuteronomy (*ISBE*, 1939; Dillard and Longman, 93-94), but will not agree with them that it was a fraud designed to get people focused on the worship of the God of Israel. Liberals will particularly argue for a late dating of Deuteronomy because the text speaks affluently of “the place which the LORD your God will choose” (*IDB*, 1:834), claiming that its author wants Israel to focus on the Temple and its service, and the exclusivity of Israel's worship (*IDBSup*, 231; *ABD*, 2:177-178) versus the paganism of Assyria or Babylon. But what is more likely, as conservatives validly point out, is simply a “Centralization of worship,” which “reflects Deuteronomy's ideal picture of ‘one God, one people, one sanctuary’” (Dillard and Longman, 104). Harrison further notes, “the assumption that Jerusalem was the place intended by Deuteronomy where the cultus was to be centralized is entirely subjective in nature, and has no textual warrant for it whatever” (Harrison, 643).

Interestingly enough, many liberals will argue for an earlier dating of Deuteronomy than all of the other books of the Torah (*NIDB*, 270; *ISBE*, 1:936), even though still consigning it to the Seventh Century B.C.E. Conservatives will respond to the liberal criticism, insisting that the

covenant language of Deuteronomy mirrors that of vassal treaties extended all the way back to the Third Millennium B.C.E., even though these sorts of agreements did exist in the Seventh Century B.C.E. (*NBCR*, 202; *ISBE*, 1:937-938; Dillard and Longman, 96-99). “The similarity of the structure of Deuteronomy especially to the treaties of the last half of the second millennium B.C. strongly buttresses the basic unity of the book and therefore the Mosaic authorship of it” (*EXP*, 3:5; cf. Harrison, 648-650). In light of this evidence, some liberals will now admit, “Deuteronomy...is a loyalty oath imposed by God on his vassal, Israel. Such loyalty oaths were prevalent from the days of the Hittite Empire in the 15th-14th centuries through the Assyrian Empire down to the Roman Empire” (*ABD*, 2:170).

Deuteronomy’s unity with the rest of the Torah must also be considered on compositional and literary grounds (*ISBE*, 1:938). A major critique that stands against the view that Deuteronomy was composed during the time of Josiah is that it sets the God of Israel against the gods of Canaan, but more than anything else demonstrates the honest character and humanity of Moses. “The picture of Moses thus presented in Deuteronomy is completely consistent with what is found in the historical sections of Exodus and Numbers, and furnishes for the reader a realistic image of a mortal man as contrasted with the highly idealized depictions of later Judaism” (*NBCR*, 203).

The integrity of the text of Deuteronomy is strong, even though there are some important things to take note of. The language of Deuteronomy does not necessarily date from the Seventh Century B.C.E., as some liberals would like to see it, in light of Semitic linguistic studies done of the Second Millennium B.C.E. (*ISBE*, 1:938). Deuteronomy was a favorite text of the Qumran community, and all but eight chapters of the book are represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls fragments (*EXP*, 3:7). Deuteronomy is also well preserved in its Greek Septuagint translation. Notably, some variations of quotes from Deuteronomy in the Greek Apostolic Scriptures often appear because they are from the LXX, and not the Hebrew Masoretic Text. This confirms that the Hebrew source text for the LXX was slightly different than the present Hebrew text. Some of these variations are minor, but a few may be major (*EXP*, 3:9). None of these are major enough to radically alter our ideas about any foundational doctrines when compared against other extant ancient versions.

The major theme repeated throughout Deuteronomy is the repetition of God’s covenant with Israel (*NIDB*, 269). This covenant is set in the context of the Ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties that would be made between parties. In this case, Israel would be God’s chosen nation if they remained faithful to Him. We see this theme when the various blessings and curses are pronounced for Israel’s faithfulness, or lack of faithfulness, to God’s commands (chs. 27-30). Deuteronomy calls God’s people to totally commit to Him, with an emphasis placed on both corporate and personal choice. The Israelites, while no longer slaves in Egypt, must not abuse the freedom that God has given them (*NBCR*, 204).

Deuteronomy also instructs Israel on how to live when they enter into their new life in Canaan (*EXP*, 3:5). “[T]he strong humanitarian emphasis of other pentateuchal writings is just as prominent in Deuteronomy. In order to ensure that the spiritual traditions of the covenant relationship will be sustained at the highest level through future generations, the Israelites are urged to bring up their children in the reverence and admonition of the Lord” (*ISBE*, 1:940). Deuteronomy has major prophetic overtones regarding the entry of Israel into the Promised Land. It is no surprise that the major themes of the text are picked up by what are frequently called the Former Prophets in the Jewish canon: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The three significant concepts seen in Deuteronomy that are exemplified throughout the whole Bible are (1) remembering the uniqueness of Israel’s God, (2) remembering the uniqueness of God’s people, and (3) remembering the uniqueness of God and His people together. God’s people are able to partake of His blessings via obedience to Him (*ISBE*, 1:935).

Deuteronomy is one of the most widely quoted books from the Tanach in the Apostolic Scriptures with eighty total quotes (*NBCR*, 202). Deuteronomy tells us of a prophet who is coming like Moses (18:14-22), which points us to the ministry of Yeshua the Messiah (Dillard and Longman, 105). It is specifically quoted by Yeshua in His rebukes of Satan (*ISBE*, 1:935, *EXP*, 3:7).

As Believers in Him, Deuteronomy reminds us that we are to revere God with all that we are (4:28; 5:10), as He has first loved us. Likewise, none of us must abuse the liberty that we do experience in Yeshua, just as Ancient Israel had its responsibilities when it was freed from Egyptian bondage (5:15; cf. 4:21).

Deuteronomy calls all who read it to rededicate themselves to God, and recognize Him as the only focus of worship in one's life. Just as the Ancient Israelites stood on the edge of entering into an unknown Promised Land—and needed to be reminded of who the Lord was to their emerging nation—so do many of us likewise need to be reminded of how God has been faithful to the ancients, and to us as well. Deuteronomy has a significant amount that we need to be mindful of as Messianic Believers regarding how we are to obey God, and how He will be faithful to us if we submit to Him. It provides us the impetus for reforming our own lives and orientation toward the Almighty.

When reading Deuteronomy, there are some things that we as Messianics need to be mindful of. Some of us run the risk of ignoring Deuteronomy's repetition of the commandments, and instead may focus solely on their listing(s) in either Leviticus or Numbers. The problem with this is that Deuteronomy adds details on how they were to be kept, and in some instances changes how they are to be kept (Harrison, 650-651; Dillard and Longman, 95). Most significantly with this, "The way in which Moses undertook to 'explain' the law (1:5) indicates that he thought it desirable to expound what had been delivered previously" (*ISBE*, 1:938). Moses delivers the commandments to Israel in the way which they are to be kept in the Promised Land.

The challenge with reading Deuteronomy for many of us is remembering that Israel eventually does not heed Moses' warnings when they reach the Promised Land, and the people quickly fall into sin. Messianic Believers who often study the Torah will often not go beyond Deuteronomy and read the history texts of the Tanach. This is a mistake because while Moses is insistent in Deuteronomy about how Israel is to obey God in the Promised Land, *they are never there*. In fact, Israel as a nation (excluding the period of Jacob and his sons) is never present in Promised Land in the narratives of the Torah. We need to couple our Torah studies of Deuteronomy with what takes place throughout the rest of the Tanach, lest we fail to understand its warnings for our own lives today. Each one of us is called to that special relationship that God wanted with Israel in Deuteronomy, and it is fully available now that the Prophet greater than Moses, Yeshua the Messiah, has come.

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Deuteronomy 6:25: I heard a Messianic teacher say that if I keep the Torah perfectly not only will I be able to be saved, I will also be able to never get sick or die of diseases like cancer? Can you help clarify this for me?

In Deuteronomy 6:24-25, one finds a statement of commitment made on the part of the Ancient Israelites. They declare before God,

"So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as *it is* today. It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us."

V. 24 makes the obvious observation that God's commandments are obeyed "for our lasting good and for our survival" (NJPS), or "so that we might always prosper and be kept alive" (NIV). This is because the Torah provides safeguards that are intended to keep God's people secure and industrious, thus allowing them to live lives where they can prosper. And truly, any society that has taken the Torah's code of ethics and morality to serious heart has benefited immensely from what it is intended to provide.

V. 25 is a bit more complicated, as the Ancient Israelites do say to the Lord *u'tzedakah tih'yeh lanu* (וַיִּצְדָּקָה תְהִי־יְהִי־לָנוּ), "and righteousness it is for us" (YLT) if they were to observe all of God's commandments. To some people, this might present the opportunity that if one were to observe all of God's commandments, then it is possible to be righteous on the basis of such Torah-keeping or Law-keeping. Yet, if this is a possibility, then it is also notable that *nowhere in Biblical history* was Ancient Israel ever able to do this. The testimony of the Tanach (and even much of the Torah itself) is clear evidence that a fallen human person is incapable of living up to the requirement of v. 25 (cf. Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Romans 3:10). This is why a Divine Redeemer, Yeshua the Messiah, is understood in Romans 10:4 to be the *telos...nomou...eis dikaiosunēn* (τέλος...νόμου...εἰς δικαιοσύνην) or "the goal of the Torah for righteousness" (editor's translation). Those desiring the righteousness the Torah requires of God's people must look to Yeshua as the source (Philippians 3:9).

There is another view of Deuteronomy 6:25 which need not be overlooked. The Hebrew *tzedakah* (צְדָקָה) or "righteousness" has *corporate* dimensions that concern all of God's people. Having *tzedakah* in this case would not regard being individually "righteous" or "justified," but simply being in covenant membership with the Lord and with other members of His community. TWOT explains some often overlooked aspects of this term,

"The covenant or theocratic aspect involves the nation of Israel, the covenant requires obedience to God by the nation and is the way of his people (Psa 1:1-6; Deut 6:25), a way of righteousness. God is righteous, under the covenant, when he delivers his people from trouble (Psa 31:1), their enemies (Psa 5:8), the wicked (Psa 37:6) and when he is vindicating Israel before her foes or executing vengeance on them (Jer 11:20). It is appropriate that Israel be assured of ultimate victory over her foes (Isa 54:14-17). In this last event the Lord is both righteous and the savior (Isa 45:21)" (Harold G. Stigers, "צְדָקָה," in TWOT, 2:754).

From this point of view, the affirmation on Israel's part to keep the Torah's commandments is a reflection on the fact that they will be identified as God's people by their obedience to Him. By obeying God's commandments, the Torah was to provide Israel with a society that was safe and prosperous and thus have "righteousness"—a corporate identification of being His people and being preserved by Him.

Any Messianic teacher today who says that individuals can be righteous just by keeping the Torah is ignoring the whole of Scripture. While the standard of obeying God perfectly is placed before us, it is not something that fallen man is capable of doing. This does not mean that such a standard should be ignored, **but it undoubtedly forces us to Yeshua because of our human incapacity to keep it perfectly.**

Perhaps what has been avoided more than anything else, is how the righteousness of Deuteronomy 6:25 is to be manifested on a corporate scale. Is today's Messianic movement desiring to be a faith community where the *shalom* of the Lord prevails, and we can live out all of those imperatives that the Torah calls us to? This is a question that often goes unasked in today's Messianic world. If we were to have this status, then we would be far more united as His people, and far more cognizant of the significant issues in the Torah that we often avoid but the world certainly needs to be made aware of.

posted 13 August, 2008

Dictionaries/Lexicons: Can you recommend any specific Hebrew and Greek dictionaries or lexicons I can use in my Bible studies?

There are many varied Hebrew and Greek lexicons available, some of them are excellent, others are good, and then some are substandard. As a lay person, there are some which we recommend that you have that can be fairly easy to use without extensive Hebrew or Greek training.

Two widely available Hebrew and Greek dictionaries, that you should have in your library, are *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB) and *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Thayer). These two lexicons, even though they are about 100 years old, offer standard definitions and usages of Hebrew and Greek words. Newer editions of them are keyed to Strong's Concordance numbers, which should make words easier to find than having to look them up in alphabetical order in either Hebrew or Greek.

A valuable Hebrew resource that we recommend is the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT), which is extremely thorough in its explanation of Hebrew words. Another commonly used resource is *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words*. With *Vine*, words can be easily looked up as English references, with various Hebrew or Greek equivalents listed under them.

Two other valuable resources that we recommend are the *Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, and *Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, both produced by AMG Publishers. They are quite easily to use if you are untrained in the Biblical languages.

For those, however, who want to use the premier Hebrew and Greek lexicons available today, please note that they require a working knowledge of the Biblical languages. *A Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT) by Koehler and Baumgartner has been recently republished in a 2-volume student size edition, and works well with *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (CHALOT) edited by Holladay. The best Greek lexicon on the market today by far is *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Ardt, Gingrich) or *BDAG*. Lidell & Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* is also a valuable resource, although its primary focus is on non-Biblical Greek literature. All of these lexicons require you to look up the words alphabetically in Hebrew or Greek.

Consult the editor's article "Getting Beyond Strong's Concordance" for further details.

updated 16 November, 2006

Dietary Laws, Kosher: Do you believe that the dietary commandments of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 are still applicable to Believers?

Messianic Believers think that in obedience to God we should follow the Biblical dietary commandments that He has laid out in His Word—and that they were not annulled by Yeshua the Messiah or the Apostles, nor in the vision of the Apostle Peter in Acts 10. Although eating kosher is not an issue of salvation, it is an area of belief where the Messianic movement does run contrary to the position of mainstream Christianity.

For a further study into this issue, and a response to the claims against eating kosher, we recommend that you consult the editor's articles "To Eat or Not to Eat?" and "How Do We Properly Keep Kosher?"

updated 16 November, 2006

Doctors, and Modern Medicine: I have encountered some teachings from Messianics which condemn the usage of modern medicine. What is your opinion on this? Do you have a problem with Believers consulting modern medical doctors?

Those who do not consult medical doctors, be they Messianic or Christian, often do so from the theological presupposition that going to the doctor is a so-called "lack of faith," and that all physical problems are likely caused by one's spiritual condition. These beliefs or opinions are usually those of a small few, and do not by any means represent a majority in the Messianic movement. As a ministry, we do not condemn consulting medical doctors or modern medicine. Luke himself, author of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, was a medical doctor. It is for

that reason why in his Gospel he painstakingly describes the physical act of the crucifixion of Yeshua.

With this said, while we would never condemn anyone for consulting a medical doctor, it is safe to say that not all physical ailments need be remedied with modern medicine. Eating properly and exercising regularly are absolutely needed for proper health, and are often the solution for many problems that some believe will only be solved by a “pill.”

updated 16 November, 2006

Dreams and Visions: What is your position on dreams and visions?

Joel 2:28 clearly tells us that in the Last Days the Lord will pour out His Spirit upon “all flesh/mankind,” but yet we also know that there will be intense deception and apostasy. Many have claimed to see visions, dreams, give prophecies, etc. of the Last Days outside that of the Biblical canon. Unfortunately for such individuals, most extra-Biblical prophecies of the end-times statistically do not come to pass, and many espoused “dreams or visions from God” are not Scripturally sound.

While we do believe that God will pour out His Spirit on His people, we question many of those who claim to have prophetic dreams or visions. When someone’s dream or vision does not come to pass as a person predicts, that person may claim to have had another vision in which the Lord “showed them” that predicted events would occur on another date on which nothing happens.

Many get into the pattern of believing that every dream that they have at night is prophetic, which we should highly question. We have serious reservations when dealing with those who claim to have dreams or visions, as many regard their prophecies to be at the level of, or even above the Bible, **which is highly dangerous.**

We as Believers have enough Bible prophecy to concern ourselves with in Scripture itself; we do not need additional “revelation.” Most dreams are simply mental digestion of what people are thinking and have nothing to do with prophecy.

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