



Shaqah

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."
Colossians 2:8

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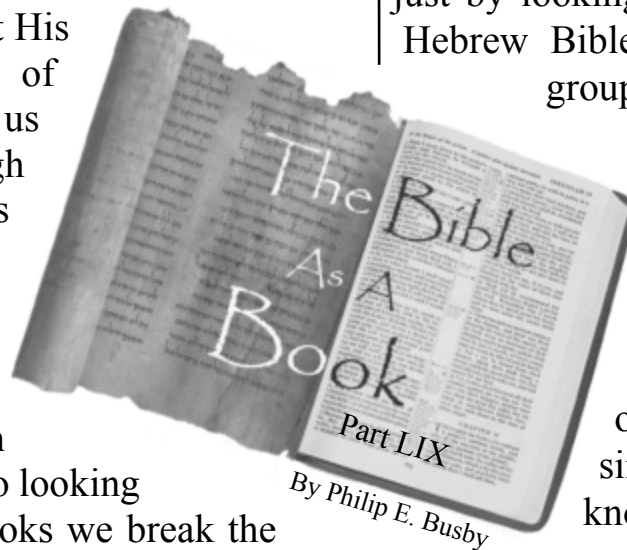
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In our last segment, we talked about how dependent the rest of the Bible is on the Law from the standpoint of having a good perspective and how that includes the New Testament. We also covered a lot of ground as to why and how this developed because God's purpose for the chosen

nation was to lay out His ultimate plan of salvation and give us The Messiah through them. All this was done as a way to take us further down the road of transitioning our discussion from covering the Torah to looking at the next set of books we break the Hebrew Bible into, which is the history books. As we ended last time talking about, there is also the issue that the Christians and Jews break this a little differently. While it's true in this study we will follow the more standard Christian thought pattern for looking at the books, it's also true both have value. The way we are breaking them up was done more from looking at the entire collection and dividing on the basis of how they go together. On the Jewish side it is

more about the fact they lived the events of these books coming into existence. So they have a much more historical view of the books being collections truly separated and only bond into a collection by the fact they are all Scripture. This is something we see just by looking at the name Jews call the Hebrew Bible as a single collection or group.



The entire Hebrew Bible as a collection is called the Tanakh. Now in this name is the actual truth one is looking at a collection of writings more so than a singular book. It is kind of like knowing an author who writes many stories and you can own the various ones, but at the same time some publisher might one day put together a book with many or all the author's stories in one book. These are not to run the stories together but simply a way of handling in that you can replace five or six physical books with one you can carry around. However, the collection has to indicate it is a collection. It does not bear the name of one of the works, nor does it often have a

name that makes it seem it might be an entirely different story in and of itself. No, most of the time there will be an indication in the title or a subtitle telling you it is more than one story. An industry standard is to simply call these something like, "The Collective Works of..." and insert the author's name or name the main subject the stories are known as. The subject idea can certainly be used as well. Books are put together that contain a collection of stories from different authors which all fit in the same genre. When it comes to the Bible, you have all this wrapped into one and a bit more. The Bible all comes from the same author if we look at the fact it is all the Words of God. However, it was physically written by different men. Then there is the added fact the books fit into different groups, and that makes the Bible a collection of collections.

Of course, when it comes to the Word of God we simply call it The Bible. This is a way of saying it is not just a book, it is - The Book! Most of us accept without thought that there are separate books that make up the Bible. If it had any more of a chronological flow than it does many would probably think of the books in the Bible as more of just chapters. This speaks to the cohesion these books have in spite of being written over centuries of time and by multiple authors, and that's a very good thing. However, when we look at the Jewish way of separating the books, we see more of that organic way they came together, and the fact it is a collection of collections is in the Tanakh. Tanakh is nothing more than a piece of what each collection is called, put together to form one

word. For the Jews the Bible is comprised of the Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim. Even without understanding Hebrew well one should be able to see how those three names come together to make the name, Tanakh. Because of the way these books came together and became recognized as the official Word of God, we also find that two of the three Jewish collections of the books have what might be called sub-collections of books inside them. This is not due to them having different books than what Christians recognize, it is again about how they came together. For Christians the separations of Law, history, etc. are totally intentional, but for the Jews, each of these separations were important collections of writings before anyone really thought about putting them into one collection specifically.

This is also driven by the day and age we are talking about. Since about the earliest days of most Christians outside the Vatican having access to what we consider the Bible, there has been the idea of putting together books with leaves. Leaves are what most people would simply call both sides of a page. In our minds this is what a "book" is, and that is for the most part correct. However, we should understand that before there were "books" the main way to preserve writing was to put them on long pieces of paper and roll the entire thing up for ease of handling. This we call a scroll. This can be something simple like having a long sheet rolled the way one might roll up a map or architectural drawing, all the way to having two fancy, and at times very large, wooden spools upon which very, very long sheets of paper

or animal skin (often several pieces sown together to be longer than any one sheet could be) were rolled. Such scrolls are read by winding the paper from one spool to the next so you can read the exposed part in-between. This left ancient people with a clear understanding that what they had was a collection of scrolls as each book would be written on an individual scroll. So if we look at the three main divisions of the way the Jews see the Bible, we are looking at scrolls that naturally went together or were collected together as a group.

This easily made way for two of the three main divisions or collections that make up the Hebrew Bible to have subcategories, but we should all be able to guess which one does not! That, of course, is the Torah, and that point is a huge part of why it is easy for the Jew to keep in their minds the fact the Torah is the core of the Word of God. People often pick up the Bible and see it as a collection of books separated into two main parts of old and new. To most, the first five books of the Bible are nothing more than simply, the first five books. Even when we are taught these Christian separations of Law, History, etc. we think of those first five as just the first of the categories. Unfortunately, I don't know if there is a good way to emphasize it without beginning to print Bibles commonly with the Torah in a separate work, but if those of us who grew up with the Bible, or those introduced to it later in life, had the Torah at least as separated as Old and New Testament, we might get a better sense of what I have been saying about the Torah

being the core, which is something Jews do not need explained to them. Unfortunately, Christianity believes it should put such an emphasis on the Life of Christ and the beginnings of the church as being the most important part of the Word. This is why we see little New Testaments produced as separate books to hand out without the Hebrew Bible in it at all, save maybe Psalms and Proverbs. Try to think when the last time was you saw a book containing only the Old Testament, and no one would think about handing out copies of only the Torah.

Sometimes what we do physically can have such an incredible impact! I know and fully understand why the church got into doing the little New Testament thing. We all know that the preaching of the Gospel is what we are to do. Just as Paul put it, we believe in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and we follow that example. (I Cor. 2:2) Thus, we give out the part of the Bible that focuses on that. However, that's not the real problem. The real problem comes in when we do not bring people into a greater knowledge. We read in the Book of Revelation God telling us, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,..." We focus on Him being the end but we do not seem to appreciate He is also the beginning, and it's important for us to know the beginning if we are going to fully understand the end. We may put a lot of focus on teaching the Gospel to people as a way to bring them into a walk with God, but building a walk with God is learning how and why Jesus ever came and did what He did. That understanding comes from

knowing the Torah, so neither the Jew nor the non-Jewish believer should see anything as well understood without it.

So as we look at the separations of collections, we need to see the words are not a separate thing or shift from one to the other. God is not moved as we are with the shifting sands of time, and neither is His Word. After the Torah, the next books are not a new thing, they are only the information to show us the things the Law was trying to show both Jews and non-Jews was coming did, in fact, happen. God is faithful to His promises. To be simple about it all, the remainder of the Word of God after the Torah is to help us understand the Torah. That is a big statement and the reason we must try to understand the Torah in order to get much out of the remainder of the Word. That statement is even true when it comes to the New Testament because it, even more so than the remainder of the Hebrew Bible, is simply the information to show us what God promised did, in fact, happen! What we must never lose sight of is that the Torah shows us what we need to know about how to be saved. I know it sounds like I am being demeaning to say this, but the truth is, what makes Jesus and the work He did on this earth so valuable is that it makes for a very easy way to see the basics of salvation's truth.

Why do you think God came down to offer Himself? I know the religion of Christianity makes the answer to that seem obvious by going into all this stuff about how Jesus was necessary in order for us to obtain salvation, but we made it necessary by not being willing to believe otherwise.

We first made it necessary by taking of the tree God told man not to take of, not because God had no power to forgive sin until Jesus came, but because without a first sin man would never have needed saved from death. We would have lived forever right here in this universe walking with God in the way heaven is meant to restore. If seen in this light we totally debunk in our mind any debate as if man needed to sin in order to obtain something greater. If that catches you off guard as something odd to even think about, understand there is plenty of that thought in many Christian philosophies, much less humanistic philosophies. So much so, that in some ways Eve is revered as a great figure for getting us on that path! You see, there is no end to where the human mind can go if we don't listen to the simple words of the Bible, and try to make stuff up according to our own understanding.

Now, understand that all we have been talking about is not just a way to make the point again and again that the Torah is so very important, it is also to understand how important the remaining books of the Hebrew Bible are. We can't take what we've discussed thus far and afford to believe the Torah is important and then the New Testament. Just as we need to know the Torah to understand the New Testament and why things unfolded the way they did, so too, we must know the books in-between. Like we talked about last time, what we see in the history books is the unfolding of a nation God had given His direct Laws to. This has direct ties to what Paul talks about in the New Testament when he speaks of things such as the Law

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment, we talked about how Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and then went into a deep discussion as to how much this kind of religious practice was later forbidden in the Law. This was not because Abraham had done anything wrong in what he did because God had not given the Law as yet. Men were worshiping God on the same basis as Cain and Abel brought their offerings to God. Man was going by how God had started us out and what we had lost in being driven from the Garden of Eden. Man was also following his feelings as to what he wanted to do in worship to God and what he felt was appropriate. The problem was that as man went on doing such things it became religious practices which began to take the place of true worship of God. Thus, we talked about how much religion gets in our way of serving God far more often than it helps. This was not to say doing things specific to honor God or worship Him is wrong. If that were true, God would not have given the chosen nation the Law. No, it is the mindset we do such things with, the way it keeps us from serving God in the way Abraham did when planting this grove. That is what made/makes it dangerous. In using Abraham's actions as an example to teach such truths we only made it through verse 33 of Genesis chapter 21 last time, and we will start in verse 34 this time.

Verse 34 is obviously the end of the chapter, so it is a bit of a technicality that we did not finish with it last time. However, it is there for a reason and we did not mention it

specifically. It tells us Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days. Considering the agreement that had just taken place between Abraham and the Philistine king, we see Abraham did exactly what the king seemed to know he would. After the earlier incident of Sarah being taken and given back, the king had told Abraham the land was before him to go where he wanted. That statement was meant to be one of acquiescence to the fact the king seemed to understand there was little he could do about it since Abraham had God on his side. That knowledge also played a part in the king coming to make the agreement he did with Abraham. However, the original thought of the king telling Abraham the land was before him also likely contained the idea the king was hoping Abraham would move on out of such direct territory. Abraham did not (or at least not for long), and that also had to do with why the king wanted this further agreement with Abraham.

One way or the other, Abraham staying in this area goes to show us again how much Abraham was not in the land at the time to lay claim to it. As we have touched on before, Isaac really did not "own" or claim any land either, and certainly Jacob did not as he was not in the land for many of his first adult years, and before his death he left again to go to Egypt where Joseph had ended up. With the exception of some wells and the field with the cave Abraham bought to bury Sarah, and which would be used to bury many of these forefathers of the nation,

they owned nothing. Verse 34 calling this “the land of the Philistines” was not just a way to give us a marker as to where Abraham was. We already know that by the fact he is in the area of Beer-sheba. No, calling this the land of the Philistines is a way of telling us, for all the time Abraham spent in this area, it did not become his. It was not God's intent for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to possess this land. It was not God's intent to see the early generations of this family/nation possess it. This is why they ended up in Egypt at the time the family really started to grow. Bringing Abraham to this land was about Isaac being born and living here. It was about Jacob being born and raised in it, and by the time Jacob goes to Mesopotamia where the family Abraham came from lived, Jacob already saw the land of Canaan as his home. (Gen. 30:25)

In fact, Jacob made it very clear, even after going to Egypt, he was not to be buried there but be brought back to Canaan to be buried with his fathers. (Gen. 49:29-31) This place, regardless of the fact it was the land of the Philistines, Canaanites, and the like, was home. The message had soaked in that this is where they wanted to be, and even Joseph instructs that his bones be carried out of Egypt and taken to the promised land when the nation one day left Egypt. (Gen. 50:25) This was a special thought in that one of the most revered forefathers of the nation had requested this. Joseph had served as Pharaoh's right-hand man. His body was no doubt laid in a lavish grave in Egypt upon his death, but the record survived that one day his bones were to be taken as the nation left. For any in the chosen nation who cared to stop and think about it, this was not just prophecy but literally one of their forefathers saying - Canaan is home not Egypt! All this

was important to the fact God wanted to prepare the nation to be on the land He chose. Thus, God made the land He wanted them on, “Home.” As the nation traveled and got discouraged they talked about turning back to Egypt because they believed it might be safer and more stable food supplies. However, never was it mentioned that they should just head for somewhere like Mesopotamia.

This is important to establish before we go into chapter 22 because we should take what happens next within the context of that fact. Abraham is sojourning in the land of the Philistines. Whether in their land directly or other parts of Canaan, it is all the same. Abraham has given up his home to be here. He has not established a new home here, he simply lives here. If not for having Lot along with them it would have been just Abraham and Sarah, and after Lot went his separate way, that was true again. In fact, this had been true in so many ways for so long now. Abraham had servants and hired men, but Sarah and he were alone until Ishmael was born. At that point, Abraham had a son, and Sarah had an adopted one that was looked at as more than adopted in the case and culture of the day. Hagar was also a bit of family as well since she had given Ishmael birth, but only in a servant kind of way still. This, of course, changed when Isaac was born. Isaac was a true son of both Abraham and Sarah just as God had said it would happen. As we discussed in length, this brought the need for Ishmael and Hagar to leave the household. Not to just go out of the main house, so to speak, but to leave completely and have a life all on their own. This, again, truly left just Abraham and Sarah with only their son now, a son truly of both of them. This is where we've been and

are as we start chapter 22.

As we look at verse 1 we see a word that many might find confusing. Some will simply take it in stride and go on but others question it, and we need to look at that here. In verse 1 we see the words, "...that God did tempt Abraham..." The word tempt catches some people, as well it should give one a moment to pause and consider we are reading an English translation. What makes this verse an issue is what James tells us in James 1:13, that no man is to say when he is tempted that he has been tempted of God. This verse in Genesis records that God specifically did tempt a man, and that man was Abraham. Now, we can just pass the word off as poorly translated, and there are versions that will "translate" the word here in Genesis differently, but that is not the best way to see it. The best way to see an issue such as this one is to go back to something we have talked about many times before, and that's the fact English is a weak language! It's not really that the word is poorly translated as much as it is, there is no word in English that really means what the word in the Hebrew here in Genesis specifically means. In truth, there is not a word in English to specifically mean what the Greek word in James means. However, we take what is said in James more properly due to how most of us view the meaning of the word tempt in English.

The first thing we must keep in mind is that the word the King James Version is translated from is a Hebrew word here in Genesis and a Greek word in James. This is in no way to point out that there is a problem with that, because ancient Greek and Hebrew

are both strong languages where words from one to the other which mean the same thing are possible. The problem only comes in when we try to get from languages like these two, which have so many variations of words with more detailed expression of thoughts, to a language like English where we have just the opposite. In English, instead of having several different words that mean something slightly different but within the same range of the basic idea, we can have only one word which can mean something totally different from one time we use it to another. Words like lead and fine both mean something different depending on what one is referring to. A person can lead an animal in a certain direction or action. There is also a metal called lead. Fine can mean something has been ground very small or it can mean you owe some money to something like the government due to something you did wrong. English also has times when there are many words that all can mean the same thing but are spelled totally different. English has so many of these kinds of things there are terms for them. Thus, English is a mess!

Now, when it comes to the word tempt in the Bible, it is simply true there is no words within the same thought pattern but with slightly different meanings to use in a translation to English, and this is where the trouble comes in. One fact I will point out is, when we look at the word tempt in the Old Testament it does often come from the same word. Interestingly the word probably does not mean what most think of it as meaning. I know that is a bit difficult to explain so let me spend some space here trying. When we generally think about the idea of temptation, most of us think about being drawn to

something. This can be done in many ways. We can be literally stimulated on a physical level by seeing or hearing something. Other times it might be more mental at first. Both can happen no matter if there is action taken specifically by someone else. However, there is also those times others are directly involved in taking actions in an attempt to stimulate us. This is most often what I believe many people would see as temptation. It is an odd thing how much people want to blame someone else for their actions, but we like to do that very much. We like to have someone we can point to and say it was their fault. We say if they had not done this or that I would not have done what I did.

We like to use this excuse no matter if the person took action they generally or specifically desired to do in order to draw us to something or not. In the case of the serpent in the Garden of Eden that is exactly the point, and it is from that we get our hard definition of what it is to tempt. The serpent said things to try and get Eve to think about taking the fruit. It worked, and she did. She also gave it to Adam, and he ate of it too. When God confronted them about what they had done wrong it was Adam's immediate response to say, "The woman made me do it." When God turned to Eve, she simply blamed the serpent. This excuse did not work for either of them, and even if it had, it didn't matter, the damage was done. Unless God was to reverse a basic design of our creation and turn back the clock or wipe their minds of the knowledge, man now had the knowledge of good from evil! In this, we see how much it does not really matter if we have someone to blame or not, and that is why James says what he does about how temptation works. We are tempted when we are drawn away of our own lusts and enticed,

he says. No matter the actions taken by others, it is our choice to resist, correct, or just do the wrong thing we feel like doing.

So while all this is true about our definition of temptation, we do not have a word in English that goes beyond that being the case, Hebrew and Greek do. We get limited thoughts about how when we are tempted it must be someone else's fault not just because we want to blame, but also because our language does not give us a range to speak of something more outside of that. However, if we stick with the someone to blame thought, it actually does help in understanding what is being said here in Genesis. When talking about our definition of being tempted, it is true there does not have to be specific and/or direct action on the part of others. However, when we look at the situation here in Genesis there is someone taking action, and that someone is God! God tempted Abraham, and as we consider all this, there are two verses in the New Testament that are so vital in our getting this in our minds correctly. That is why Paul speaks them. The first is what Paul says in Romans when he instructs, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28 The other verse is, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." I Corinthians 10:13

When we see the word tempt here in Genesis it is not to say God did not specifically take action that would cause Abraham to take actions or make a choice,

What About God's Chosen People?

Part XXXIII

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."

As we continue our look at the history of the chosen nation after Christ's ascension, we left off last time talking about how the Jews had mostly freed Jerusalem and most of the land of Israel from Roman rule. The Jews in Jerusalem had gone so far as to set up a provisional government, and Roman/Pagan symbols and signs were being removed throughout the land. However, the Emperor of Rome was not about to let this just stand. He ordered a very large army to Israel under the command of Vespasian. Vespasian along with his son Titus who was second in command would begin to move across the North taking town after town, stronghold after stronghold until the entire Northern resistance of the Jews was defeated and the region back under Roman control. Even after this Vespasian would not go head on to take Jerusalem, but instead began moving down the Mediterranean coast. Little by little the land was falling to the Romans, and Jerusalem would eventually have to face the Roman army.

A key figure in the provisional government set up in Jerusalem was a former High Priest named Ananus ben Ananus. He was most responsible for appointing many of the other officials of the new government and would be involved heavily in the events that came next. The fact there was this government in Jerusalem meant there was

leadership, but it did not mean they were in charge of the forces fighting the war. This was especially true of those known as Zealots and the Sicarii that we talked about last time. Many of them had taken lead roles in the war itself, and as the North fell back under Rome's control, Zealots eager to continue the war and defend the capital made their way to Jerusalem. The problem was these fighters were in all-out fight mode, and the government was struggling to get on its feet. The Zealots would flood into Jerusalem, but they would not answer to the government there. Instead they would act independently of the government, and of course, there were always those lustful for power individuals who had their sights set on being the next leader in Israel. One such individual was a man named John of Giscala.

John was a leader of the Zealots in the North who now made it to Jerusalem. Due to events in the North and the large army of Romans still working their way through the land, the Zealots and Sicarii were greatly concerned with any talk about surrender to the Romans. No doubt there were many who felt the effort had been made and Rome had shown it would ultimately succeed in spite of the early victories for the Jews. Thus, such individuals felt surrender only made sense in order to keep more death and destruction from taking place. One great concern many in Jerusalem no doubt had was that they did not want the city, and specifically the temple, to suffer damage or be destroyed as the Romans eventually came. From the start of things the

Sicarii had made it their work to assassinate people they felt were sympathetic to Rome. In their minds there could be no more sympathetic idea now than to think about surrender! On top of this, the Zealots themselves were at liberty to act far more violently than they normally would, and between the two groups many people in Jerusalem were killed for their opinion or believed opinion concerning surrender.

This kind of lawless behavior, of course, would and should be looked down upon by any legitimate government. There was also the issue that the Zealots had set up their base of operations in the temple itself. To the Zealots this made sense because holding the temple would be a main point of everything they wanted. This was not the righteous thing it might sound like but more of a power thought pattern. In any case, this made them a dangerous group not just to the people but specifically to the new government. By 68 A.D. there was considerable unrest in Jerusalem, and Ananus would raise up the people against the Zealots with the long-term goal of expelling them from the temple and city. This was not a tremendously hard task as the people felt they were at the mercy of the Zealots and Sicarii. Getting to do something about it was really all they could hope for. The problem was that John was a very crafty man who played both sides. He did not appear to Ananus or the common people to be totally on the side of the Zealots who were being violent. This gave him the opportunity to go around with Ananus and find out what all the plans were that those in the government were formulating and pass those plans off to the Zealots.

As the time came that Ananus had

gotten the people ready and willing enough to make a strike against the Zealots, little did they know that John had been going to the Zealots to let them know what was going on. When the Zealots heard they were going to be attacked, they did not wait for it to come. Instead, they went out from the temple into the city in a preemptive strike against the people. This was not an army against an army but simply the Zealots going out into the population of Jerusalem and attacking all those they felt stood in their way. Ananus organized the people as quickly as he could to come against them. The beginnings of this conflict were more like a riot than any kind of organized action of forces. It mainly consisted of throwing rocks and eventually moved to spears being thrown, until finally the fighting came down to actual hand to hand combat with swords. The Zealots would find themselves retreating back to the Temple Mount where the conflict would now center. Ananus' forces would drive the Zealots all the way into the inner court of the temple as some 6,000 under Ananus' command occupied the outer court. Thus, a standoff began.

In truth, the Zealots were under siege at this point in all the ways it mattered, but they still had John among the government leaders and the people so he was collecting and sharing information with them. This created a situation where, as the historian Josephus put it, the Zealots knew what the people were planning before even the people had settled on what to do themselves. In the end, it was suspected that John was a spy, and due to this Ananus made him swear an "oath of good will" to Ananus and the people. Ananus would then send John into the inner court of the temple to speak to the Zealots on his behalf. John would go to the Zealots, but he would not speak on Ananus' behalf.

Instead, he would attempt to inflame the situation by telling the Zealots that they were in imminent danger. He also wanted to convince them they could not survive a siege. This, John did because the last thing John wanted to see was the Zealots come to some compromise with Ananus or be defeated in the end. This would have left the provisional government in a comfortable place to simply hold power, but John hoped one day he would be the ruler in Jerusalem!

John convinced the Zealots they had two options. They could surrender, but he told them if they did they would likely face execution at the hands of the government or simply be killed by the people. In any case, they were sure to face some kind of retribution for what they had done. The Zealots' second option was to seek outside help! John would up the feeling that the second option was really their only one by lying and saying Ananus had contacted the Roman general Vespasian to come and settle the issue by taking the city. This would mean a great deal to the Zealots as this would be the realization of their ultimate fear. It was one thing to lose their fight to rule and lead, even lose their lives in this conflict, but to see the new government throw away all they had worked for up to that point by turning Jerusalem over to the Romans! That was an unacceptable outcome. Thus, the Zealots would turn to the Idumaeans for help.

By this point and time the Idumaeans considered themselves at least enough related to the Jews, if not in many ways Jewish themselves, they too saw Jerusalem as very important. The Zealots debated as to what to do because calling for outside help was not their first choice. They were also greatly

concerned outside help would take too long to get to them as they felt the attack of the people would come before anyone would respond, and they'd be forced to simply fight the battle alone as they could do at any time they chose to. Finally they would decide to turn to the Idumaeans, but they would tell them that Ananus had fooled the people into believing the Zealots were their enemy when, in fact, he was the true enemy who wanted to turn Jerusalem over to the Romans. This would make perfect sense in that if Ananus did, in fact, intend to do such a thing that he had organized the people against the one fighting force in Jerusalem that could stand in the way of his plans. When the Idumaeans received this "news," they believed if nothing else the city they considered their capital needed help against the provisional government which was going to betray it and its people to the Romans. They would put together a force of 20,000 to march to Jerusalem and defend its liberty.

Ananus would hear of this force marching toward Jerusalem, and in a move that seemed to confirm the Idumaeans' fears, he would shut the city gates to keep them out. An old former High Priest then gave a speech from the wall of Jerusalem to the Idumaeans denouncing the Zealots as robbers and thieves. He urged the Idumaeans to throw down their arms. The Idumaeans response would be that they had no doubt once at the city and finding the gates shut to them that those held inside the temple under siege were the true defenders of liberty not the provisional government. One night a thunderstorm would come to Jerusalem and the Zealots would sneak out of the temple to the city gates, and with the sound of the storm as cover they would cut the bars and open the

gates to the Idumaeans. The Idumaeans would quickly move to kill the guards and march to the Temple Mount where they would attack and kill Ananus' forces there. Ananus himself would also be killed. The Zealots would be freed from the inner court of the temple, and then a slaughter of the common people of the city would ensue. Eventually, the Idumaeans learned Ananus had not contacted the Romans to come and take the city. This would cause them to be sorry for the actions they had taken, but what could they do but simply leave the city, and that they did.

After this, John would establish himself as the new ruler of Jerusalem. However, there was another individual of importance named Simon bar Giora. This man had basically led the effort to defeat the Romans who came against Jerusalem after the initial revolt under the command of Cestius Gallus. As the Jews established the provisional government, they decided the last thing they wanted as part of the new government was a popular man of common blood. They felt it would disrupt their ability to guide the revolt and handle Rome in the end of it all. Thus, rejected from any command in the new government or its system, Simon gathered a large following and began robbing the wealthy as a way to feed his growing army. After the death of Ananus, Simon grew even more powerful and influential. This man stored up food and supplies consisting of those things he had taken from places he attacked. It seemed he was preparing to attack Jerusalem itself, and he would attack surrounding areas including Hebron to gather even more supplies. The Zealots in Jerusalem became worried as Simon's vast army had swept in and just overwhelmed the places they attacked. The

Zealots knew they could not face Simon in open battle, so instead they kidnapped his wife.

This turned out to be a bad move as Simon simply began capturing and torturing those leaving Jerusalem. He would cut off the hands of some and send them back into the city with the message this is what he would do to all of Jerusalem if they did not give back his wife. The Zealots would let her go, but by the spring of 69 A.D. they all had bigger problems than each other. The advancing Roman army was driving all the Jewish resistance inward around and to Jerusalem including Simon. The remaining Sadducee leaders in Jerusalem were not happy that John had taken control of the city. Thus, they invited Simon in. Simon entered Jerusalem with 15,000 men and took control of the upper and some of the lower city. John remained in control of the remaining part of the lower city and the outer court of the temple with 6,000 men. Another group of 24,000 men held the temple's inner court. These separate factions would fight constantly for control of the city, and this fighting is what led to the destruction of food stored in the city.

This would be a big problem as in the spring of 70 A.D. the Roman army under the command of Titus would finally come to Jerusalem itself. Titus would begin his siege on April 14, just days before the Passover that year. He would use three legions to blockade the west of the city and put another legion on the east side on the Mount of Olives. The Zealots having fought all this time among themselves were not prepared for the Roman attack. Titus would begin on the west side breaching the third wall of the city just north of the Jaffa Gate, which lays

near the middle of the west wall. The second wall would also be breached. Only as Titus came to directly attack the inner wall of the city did the Zealot factions begin to bind together in an attempt to hold the Temple Mount and what remained of the city from the Romans. Titus would build a military wall around the city to make sure no one could get in or out for food supplies and began building ramparts to take the Antonia Fortress, which was built by Herod the Great, as a way to protect the Temple Mount. The Zealots would repel these head-on attacks, so Titus would one night launch a surprise attack catching the Zealots asleep and would finally take the fortress by late July.

The Romans also faced some Jewish allies who killed many Roman soldiers, and Titus would send Josephus to try and negotiate with the Zealots. This would result in the Zealots wounding Josephus with an arrow, and they would move to suddenly attack the Romans, almost capturing Titus himself by doing so. Being built to overlook and defend the temple the Antonia Fortress also made a perfect place to attack the temple. Battering rams used would have little to no effect on breaching into the temple, but the fighting itself would eventually set the walls on fire. The fire spread quickly and got totally out of control burning and destroying everything including the temple itself. When the Romans did finally break through, Josephus records the soldiers rushed in with fury, and fury was their only commander. There were even many who were trampled by fellow soldiers and died alongside the Jewish defenders and in the burning cinders. Josephus describes the carnage of the event in gruesome detail, describing heaps of dead bodies being piled up around the temple altar and a river of blood flowing down the

sanctuary steps. What a sad ending to both the temple as well as the main part of the Jewish resistance.

The Roman siege of Jerusalem would begin just before Passover, and not long before the last three feasts of the Biblical year the temple would be destroyed. The day of the temple's destruction at the hands of the Romans is believed to have taken place on the very same day of the year as Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians. That date is recognized to this day as the saddest day on the Jewish calendar, and it is called Tisha B'Av, which is simply to say, the ninth of Av. The year of the last temple's destruction on the Gregorian calendar was somewhere near the end of August of 70 A.D. Josephus is pretty clear about the fact it was not Titus' intent to see the temple destroyed. However, it is likely just as well, due to the great defeat and loss of control of the city and temple suffered by the Jews at this time. Just as it was good for the temple not to be left defenseless in the days of the Babylonian captivity, it was good for it not to be left to be abused by the Romans in their day. It seems one of the points that makes it most clear Titus did not intend to destroy the temple, is the fact he intended to use it as a temple for Roman gods. This would have been as bad if not far worse than the desecration the temple suffered at the hands of the Greeks before it was finally retaken in the events now celebrated as Hanukkah.

At the time of Hanukkah's events the temple had been ripped from Jewish hands and desecrated by the Greeks. The Jews fought to regain the temple and cleanse it once again for use. Right up to the day the Romans took Herod's temple, it had been held in Jewish hands. It had not been administered

properly according to the Law, but it was held by the Jews, nonetheless. In spite of the poor administration, there was still an unwavering knowledge that it was to be the temple of The One True God. Unlike at times before the Babylonian destruction of the temple when false gods were brought into the temple, for a very long time now the Jews had fought and guarded against false gods being brought in by those powers who were over the nation. If the temple had been left standing after the Romans took control of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., there can be no doubt false gods would have been placed in the temple and that would have become its main purpose in the eyes of the world. Thus, what we mourn is not the destruction of the temple as much as the loss of the temple.

Today it is bad enough to hear the argument of those serving a false god that the originator of their religion had some special encounter on the same spot as the Temple Mount. That point of argument and the fact the mount had been totally out of Jewish hands for so long is why the Jews can not simply rebuild the temple now that Jerusalem is back under their control. As bad as it is to see structures built by others and used for worship in a false religion on the Temple Mount, at least that is what they are - structures built there by others for wrong purposes. We can mourn the fact the ground and even stones of the Temple Mount are used in this way, but we do not have to stand and watch as ceremonies to false gods are carried out in the actual temple originally built to serve God. We do not have to fight the argument that taking that structure back would be removing it from the hands of those who by now might seem to have a firm historical grip on the building itself being

their temple and not that which belongs to the Jews. When God is ready, the Temple Mount can once again be recovered and the temple restored. Due to the constant threat of the same things happening all over again to any structure built at this time, the most likely scenario for when the temple will stand once again is to believe Jesus Himself will be The One to restore it upon His return!

After the day the temple fell, the rest of the Jewish resistance in the city fell quite easily. While some escaped through underground tunnels, others held out in the upper city. The last remaining stronghold of any significance was Herod's palace, which, of course, was a defensible position for the last of the Jewish resistance to hold. This forced the Romans to once again build ramparts to get into it, but it would finally be taken by the Romans on September 7th, and the city would be completely in Roman hands by the 8th. As brutal as the siege and taking of the temple was, the Romans would even go after those who had fled the city. In the end, only three main Jewish strongholds of any consequence were held by the Jewish resistance. These three were Herodium, Machaerus, and Masada.

Herodium is about 7.5 miles south of Jerusalem and just over 3 miles southeast of Bethlehem. It is a hill with a flat top, and this made it a very defensible location. In about 40 B.C. the Parthians invaded the region of Israel, and this caused Herod to flee for Masada. On its way is Herodium, and there Herod would fight a battle with the Parthians. Herod would be victorious in that battle, and in that place he would build a town and a great palace. In honor of his victory Herod would name the place after himself, and that

is why it is called Herodium. It is believed by some that this is the location of Herod's tomb. In any case, this was one of the last three places the Jewish resistance held after the fall of Jerusalem, but it too would be conquered by the Romans in 71 A.D.

Machaerus is a place on the east side of the Dead Sea in what is today Jordan. This too was a hill which was very defensible. Its rockiness made it hard to scale and its height gave it a great view, especially to the east, of any approaching trouble. It also was within sight of other strongholds during the time it was constructed. It was originally constructed by the Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus around 90 B.C. In spite of all its advantages it was destroyed by the Romans in 57 B.C., but as one might imagine it was rebuilt by Herod the Great in 30 B.C. to be used as a military base on the east side of the Jordan in order to protect Herod's assets on that side. It is believed that in the New Testament when we are told of John the Baptist being imprisoned, this was the fortress he was imprisoned in, and it was here that he was beheaded. It would remain in the hands of the Herodian family until the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44 A.D., at which time it would pass into Roman hands. This base would be taken by the Jewish resistance, as many Roman installations fell to them in the year 66 A.D. Not long after Herodium fell to the Romans, that same Roman army would make its way to Machaerus and begin a siege in the year 72 A.D. A ramp was built in order to make a direct assault on the stronghold, but before any actual attack could begin the Jewish fighters held up inside agreed to surrender. Amazingly the fighters were allowed to simply leave the fortress, and the Romans proceeded to demolish the place leaving only its foundation in the end.

Masada is, of course, the place most people would recognize if they recognized the name of any of the three we have been talking about. Masada is a very high plateau on the western side of the Dead Sea. All natural approaches to this plateau make it treacherous at best to reach it. There is only one path to the top, called "The Snake," and even it is not wide enough for two men to walk side by side. The cliffs of Masada fall off steeply and are 300 feet high on the west and 1,300 feet on the east! This place makes for such an amazing natural location for a stronghold, the name Masada actually means "Fortress." It is hard to say how many times throughout the centuries this location may have been used as a place to live or as a fortification due to the ability to defend it, but Josephus tells us Alexander Jannaeus fortified Masada during his reign. Josephus further records that Herod the Great obtained it during the power struggle that followed Herod's father's death. While there is no archaeological evidence the Hasmonean Dynasty built anything here, we know Herod was truly responsible for putting the place to use as a fortress and palace. During the years 37 to 31 B.C. Herod built two palaces on this plateau along with a great fortress. This he intended to use as a place of refuge if ever there was a revolt.

By the time of the first Jewish-Roman war Masada was, of course, in use by the Romans; if for no other reason than to assure it was not used by others. The Sacarii being the crafty men they were, gained access to Masada in 66 A.D. They overcame the Roman garrison stationed there and took over. There is little reason to wonder why Masada was the last of the Jewish strongholds to fall during the war. There was no reason for the Romans to take it until they

were determined such a thing was needed in order to put the Jewish resistance down completely. Thus, the Sicarii leader who took Masada held it all through the war. When Jerusalem fell, those fighters who escaped, which it would seem were mostly Sicarii, fled to Masada. Many families also fled to Masada and lived there after the fall of Jerusalem. This was the only place the last of the resistance could hope to hold onto, and those willing to try went there. The Sicarii continued to be all for what they felt they needed and wanted, and using Masada as a base of operations they raided those living at Ein Gedi, on Passover no less! This was a move one would expect only from non-Jews, but the Sicarii did it, and Josephus records they killed some 700 of its inhabitants including women and children.

In 72 A.D., with almost everything in the region firmly back in their hands, the day came for the Romans to act against Masada. The Roman governor of Idumea took some 15,000 men and women to Masada consisting of a Roman legion and Jewish prisoners of war. It is estimated that eight to nine thousand of this group were fighting men, so a considerable force of both fighters and forced laborers were brought to lay siege. First, there would be a wall built around Masada, an amazing task in and of itself, but it would be done to ensure those inside could not be reinforced in any way nor escape. Then construction of a ramp would begin on the west face of the plateau. This was a massive undertaking to say the least. Perhaps it was because the Sicarii felt the Romans would never reach them or because they themselves could not see a way to get down and back up safely, or maybe because they felt what happened at that point was what it

would be. In any case, the Sicarii made no effort to counter attack any of this activity. Two to three months after it began the Romans were ready to use the ramp in the spring of 73 A.D. They would build a giant siege tower and battering ram to take up the ramp and attacked the walls of Masada with torches to set them on fire.

The Romans would finally break through into the fortress only to find those inside had set all the structures save the food storages on fire, and the people had killed each other in a form of mass suicide. Two women and five children survived by hiding in a cistern, and that was all that remained of some 960 Sicarii and Zealots who had held out in the hope the remainder of Israel might rise up against the Romans once more. That second wave of uprising never came, and so in the end the survivors recounted the speech the Sicarii leader Elazar ben Yair gave to the people. He said, "Since we long ago resolved never to be servants to the Romans, nor to any other than to God Himself, Who alone is the true and just Lord of mankind, the time is now come that obliges us to make that resolution true in practice ... We were the very first that revolted, and we are the last to fight against them; and I cannot but esteem it as a favor that God has granted us, that it is still in our power to die bravely, and in a state of freedom."

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

because He did. That much is so obvious in the verses it can not be denied, nor should it be. However, the reason I don't want you to look at it as simply a test or even a trial is that it was more than that. Abraham was about to be given a direct commandment from God that would to most of us seem so unreasonable we can hardly wrap our heads around being able to do it! In fact, it would almost without a doubt point to us having some kind of mental problems if it was easy for us to simply follow. It goes that far! Thus, for God to ask it of Abraham knowing that disobedience to any commandment of God would be sin? I just don't know how to express how much that fits the definition of temptation and beyond! At the same time, it seems we are told in James that God does not do such things, so if we want to deepen our understanding beyond what we get by simply weakening the translation to test or something of the kind, or doing the same thing in our mind, we have to quantify the fact James says God does not tempt us, yet Abraham clearly was tempted by God!

This is where it is so vital we understand the simple fact, in English we do not have the tools to express such closely related ideas but still separate them into two understandably different things. In English we are left with the flat truth that God does "tempt" us and yet He will not "tempt" us. No other way to put it really. If we say one is a test with no real consequences, we lie. If Abraham had refused to follow what God commanded, it would have been sin. If we say it was a trial, that gives the impression all Abraham had to do was endure it, but that's not the case here at all. This was serious on all sides. There is real damage to be done in not following God's command,

but if Abraham kills his son? This is where our other two verses come in. In I Corinthians Paul is talking to a church directly. This does not mean he is not talking to us all, but that's the context. He is speaking about the fact there likely were those in the church who had done the blame thing in thinking God had at least allowed them to be tempted and at times they had failed. Thus, what Paul is explaining to them is not the issue of saying God does not tempt us, but that God goes even further in protecting us by making sure when we are tempted it is never above what we can handle!

That is the key, and that's what makes the other verse in Romans something so important to also put in this discussion. As Paul is explaining things there, he makes the same point from a little different angle. In Romans he says all things work together for good not just in general the way many people like to think, but for those who serve God and His purposes. It is the same in that all things specifically include the things we feel are bad but had to "suffer" through anyway. Things we might want to ask, why did God put me through that or allow it to happen or ask that of me? Job's trial certainly shows us the extent which a man can be allowed to go through and still be expected to make it. Job says he wishes he'd never been born if this is what he had to suffer, and God tells him even that's incorrect thinking! (Job 3:1-13, 38-42) Why? Because of what Paul says in Romans and I Corinthians. If we don't fail to do as God wants us to, it will work for our good whether we can see it or not. Even if we fail we should never be angry at God for putting us through it or allowing us to go through it, because he will not allow us to go through more than we can

bear. If we fail, we need to look at ourselves and see where we failed, and allow God to show us where. It is nothing but counter productive to blame God for having to go through it. Living for God will always be worth living!

Very important to our understanding here is the last of what Paul says in I Corinthians about how God will make a way of escape. That part is important because as one can see in the commandment God gives Abraham, it seemed to be a total no win circumstance. It is not always a situation where we have the ability to see how, if I do it I'm in trouble, and if I resist it all comes out good. That is the point of understanding that causes us to need better words to define what it is to be tempted, and this is where we look directly at the words in Genesis and James which tempt comes from. In Genesis we are talking about a prime root which in many ways does mean to test. However, it goes beyond that because it comes with the implication of putting someone or something in an impossible situation. It is that you do not pass or fail, you lose either way. This is where it differs greatly from just a test, and that is most clearly seen in what happens to Abraham. God left him with a simple choice. Disobey me or kill your son. The only thing left after that was to see which option Abraham would pick!

In many ways, we simply do not have a word that means this in English. We can try and use the word trial, but even trials can be looked at with the attitude of what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. In the case of what God asked Abraham to do, disobeying God in this would have been crushing to

Abraham as he had lived his entire life to serve God but to lose a child, your only son and at your own hands. That's just, again, beyond what most of us can imagine ever doing! The fact this is such a no win, terrible loss both ways situation is why we need to use a strong word here, and even tempt does not really do it. However, for lack of a better word, this word is used in almost every place we see the word tempt used in the Old Testament. In almost every other place the word comes in the fact someone was saying I will not tempt The Lord, or God was telling people not to tempt Him. These places become clearer to see correctly and with the full depth they need if we can grasp what we have been talking about here.

When men like Isaiah say they will not tempt God, they are not saying what we think of the word as meaning in English, and neither is that the case when God says we are not to tempt Him. In truth, it is a fascinating study to think about. What is being said is that we are not to put God in a no win situation. One might ask if God can do anything, how is that possible? The answer is seen in Abraham's situation. It was possible for Abraham to do what God asked him to do. Impossible was not the issue. The issue is the loss and pain suffered in the end no matter which direction is taken. That's why God uses this word to speak to Israel. It is not God's desire to put us through the pain of having to correct us from a stubborn course of action we insist on taking. That is why God created us in innocence and without the responsibility of even knowing good and evil. Training us up from lack of knowledge to great understanding and wisdom could have been a very pleasant

process for both man and God. Having us live in the sin brought by having the knowledge and in turn violating it, brings the need to correct us. That's what makes life hard, and living for God specifically harder and harder as the world waxes worse and worse.

One might ask if God does not want us to put Him in a situation where there is no winning, why would He do it to Abraham? That's a good question to ask, and for that one the fact all things are possible for God is very important. You see, when we demand something be one way or the other according to what we believe is right, especially in contradiction to what we know God has asked of us, we literally leave God with no options but to correct us, or allow us to do as we please. Correcting us can be an entire range of things from something simple to God having to destroy us. This is why we do not consider every mistake we make tempting God. However, many times we are doing things or proposing to do things we will need correction from, which has a very high price. This is why we see what we think of as such harsh actions taken against the chosen nation at times by God. Some individuals of the nation having to perish is a very high cost for correction. Of course, the other option of leaving us to do as we please is totally unacceptable. If we want to live for God, there is no point in Him allowing us to do as we please. If that was the case, we would be no different from the world. We must understand there is a reason sin is sin. Sin is destructive. As hard as it might seem to be to live for God in righteousness in the world, the world is the bad place it is due to sin. The world will need to be destroyed in the end, and people die every day because we live in sin. There is no winning in letting us

have our way, and we should not do things or demand things against God that leave Him no choice.

I wish we had more space for that discussion, but we must move onto the point of what is being said by James when he says God does not tempt us. The word there comes from Greek, and the difference in the word used there from the word used in Genesis is hard to articulate due to English being so very weak, but we must try to understand. Probably the best way to see it is to again keep in mind all things are possible for God. What that means is that when God does something He has more control than we ever can hope to have as to the end result. When we take actions that tempt God, we are doing things we know are wrong and have little control other than our stubbornness to do it. When God does something, it is planned and is not malicious. God knows just what Paul was speaking of in that He knows what we can bear. This is vital not just in the aspect He knows how to not crush us, but God knows how to take us to the edge without leaving long-term damage. Part of this is God's ability to understand where we are in our walk with Him. God knew Abraham was ready and able to face what God was asking of him. God knew Abraham would not be like so many of us who would simply crumble at the very thought of giving our child in sacrifice to Him. For all the sadness Abraham would face in this situation, it would not result in Abraham facing a lifetime of doubting God over why He would ever ask such a thing no matter the outcome.

All this is very important, and it goes directly to what the Greek word actually means in James. In James the word tempt is

a word that means all the things the word in Genesis means, but with the added meaning there is intent to do harm. The word comes with the implication of piercing or penetrating. The kind of action that when looked at in physical terms is very injuring if not deadly to the human body. James is not saying God will not put us in what we see as a no win no gain situation, even if by human standards the outcome of such a situation could only seem to mean that. Why? Because He is God. God does not do things that will pierce us and cause long-term damage. He does not do things just to hurt us to get or have what He wants. God does the things that are for our good, and even when we make mistakes He steps in if we will let Him and uses those mistakes to accomplish what He wants and we need in our lives. That's what Paul is talking about in Romans.

When it comes to the word in James meaning a piercing or penetrating act, we need to also keep in mind that while we understand such a thing by framing it in a physical thought of being injured by something entering the body, the truth is not that we will never suffer or be allowed to experience even physical damage. We have to put it all together and understand the entire package. Our life of sin can injure us even in a physical way that God will not necessarily fix. That's why we were taken from the Tree of Life. We may also make wrong choices during a specific trial or temptation God is sending us through that causes damage. This is all sin in action, and so we must be clear on the point God is not going to do these things to us, just as James is saying, but it does not mean our choices will not bring such things, even death itself,

upon us. So before space makes us bring this segment to a close, there is one more very important thing we need to look at, and that is something Jesus explained to us and which we do not take literal enough. In Mark 9:43-48 Jesus tells us it is better to lose a hand, foot, or even an eye if it can get us to heaven than it is to go to hell with all our body intact.

When I say we do not take this literal enough, I do not mean to literally cut off a hand or put out an eye because it is hard to control one's self, and that is not what Jesus was saying either. Yes, I know it seems that way, but again, a bit of translation problems. God does not wish for us to maim ourselves. We are to bring the flesh into submission. However, what is true is that as we go through our trials and tribulations in this life, we will face many situations where it might be necessary God allow us to take physical damage in order to open our eyes and do what is right. Jesus wants us to know that not only should we not be angry at God for allowing us to go through these things, we should be willing to give them in exchange for our soul. Abraham was so unwilling to disobey God he was willing to do anything God asked, and that is shown in the story we are discussing here in chapter 22. Simply put, it is the ultimate trust in God to be one who believes in doing exactly what Jesus was saying, willingly giving even a part of our bodies rather than lose out with God. It shows we understand this life is temporary, and in the end we trust God can truly remove all the scars, all the tears, all the pain, and all the heartaches, for He offers a new life that is truly worth it all!

Until next time, Shalom!

being weak and not doing the job and it being a school master. (Rom. 8:3, Gal. 3:24) The books that follow the Torah show us why all that's true. This is not to say the Law needed to be thrown out, because as much as the Law is an attempt to lead men into righteousness, it is equally about pointing us to the prophetic truth of what Paul was saying. The Law itself was in its representation telling us the same things Christians seem to think are new revelations on this side of Christ, and that's incorrect. The Law already showed us what we like to see in Jesus, which is that no matter how much we try we will ultimately fail and need God to forgive us! This is not to say in any way that we accept failure and just say God will have to take care of it all. No, it means we live and strive to do as best we can, and in the ways we fall short we have the comfort of knowing it's not useless because where our strength ends God's grace and work abounds. (II Cor. 12:9-10)

All these facts just emphasize how much each collection of books following the Torah show us how the Law tried to bring the ways of righteousness to man by man having exactly what many claim they want, which is for God to tell us exactly what to do. The books in the next collection show us just how much and where the chosen nation succeeded and failed to do well at following it. If we go back to those direct differences between what Christians call the history books and the next set of books for the Jews, we see that for the Christians the history books consist of the next twelve books of the Hebrew Bible following the Torah. These begin with

Joshua and end with Esther. If we look at the set of books that are placed after the Torah in the Tanakh, we are talking about the collection called the Nevi'im. The Nevi'im shows us a perfect example of what we talked about last time, which is the fact we must pick a path to follow when it comes to the breakdown of collections. We can take the Christian study path or we can take the more historical Jewish path. While there is great value in doing both, we can't do them at the same time. This is because the Nevi'im does not simply contain what we in our Christian arrangement of the books of the Bible consider the twelve books directly following the Torah. Instead, the Nevi'im consists of two sub-collections. They are called, The Former Prophets and The Latter Prophets.

These titles in and of themselves need a bit of explanation due to the fact it is at the last of what Christians call the Old Testament that we put what is called the Prophets. Christians then break them into what they call the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. I have always had a little bit of issue with these two designations due to the fact when we say major and minor in English we think of importance, and there is nothing more important about the ones we call major over those called minor. The only argument that can even be made to that effect is that the "Major" ones are longer, and due to that they contain more information. In truth, that has a lot to do with why they are called major, but quantity does not dictate importance. In any case, Christians simply took the books of the Hebrew Bible and lined up what was viewed as prophetic books and put them at

the end. Because the Jews care more about the historical meaning of books and the collections as they came about through time, they look at them differently. What they call The Former Prophets might come as a surprise to some because they are the books of, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. This is only four books which do not seem to include Christian's first and second of both Samuel and Kings. When we get to them, Lord willing, we will talk about why Christians have them but don't worry the Jews have not left them out. I & II Samuel and I & II Kings are each considered one book in the Nevi'im. This, of course, turns four books into two. Christians might also note the fact Ruth seems to be missing. This also does not mean it is missing as much as it simply is not in this grouping of books, and that has some to do with why these books are called The Former Prophets.

To the Christian mind it might seem odd to call any of these books "prophets," but that is also due to our lack of understanding the more historical mindset. To Jews, Moses was a prophet, and I'm sure many Christians would not disagree. Moses was a man who disseminated the words of God to the nation, maybe in a way no other prophet did. However, we need to understand in the Jewish mind a prophet is more of a person who led the nation by God's direction, not just someone who spoke words, necessarily. This means to them Joshua is certainly a prophet. He did not just lead the nation as he made choices to do so, he led the nation as God instructed him. Joshua did not have so many words to speak as Moses did, due to the fact God had

taken care of most of the words that needed spoken for the time, through Moses. It was Joshua's job to pick up where Moses left off, and take the nation the last step of their journey to the promised land by taking them into and leading the claiming and dividing of the promised land among the tribes. However, none of this work could be done without the constant direction of God. Jews understand that, and another very important point is how the land was divided, settled, and used was as much prophecy in action as any words that had been spoken. So yes, Joshua was a prophet.

Christians think of the judges as leaders in a lot the same way Joshua was, but in more of a restorative way. However, from a Jewish perspective the judges were just as much people correcting and instructing the nation as any man Christians consider a prophet who spoke words. If we can see the entire nation of Israel in the correct light, we understand what a living prophecy the entire nation was and still is. When we look at it in that way, we find any God directed leaders of the nation were true prophets. This is a great example of how much there is value in seeing things the way the Jews see it. It corrects and deepens our understanding of God's Word and plan, and that is why God gave the nation to the world! This should also show us clearly why Samuel and Kings are prophets as well. The books Christians call I & II Samuel is the transition made from Israel having something more like a judge to a king like other nations have kings. Samuel also shows us the struggle it was to get from the first king of Israel to the Davidic

line of kings. Near the end of David's life is where we transfer into the stories kept in what Christians call I & II Kings, which directly follow historically the book of Samuel. The Book of Kings takes us from there all the way through to the fall of the nation at the hands of the Babylonians. All these leaders, judges, and kings were a story about prophecy and God's plan at work in spite of mistakes made by men.

This should also make it clear why these books leave the story given to us in Ruth out of this line. While Ruth is a story that tells us a bit more about where King David came from, it does not tell us about a person or persons who was a prophet to the nation. Christians put Ruth where they do because it fits more chronologically in the story, and we look at these books as history, which no doubt Ruth is a part of! Now, if we move to the second sub-collection of books that make up the Nevi'im, we are looking at The Latter Prophets, and these books are part of what Christians consider solid prophetic books. The Latter Prophets consist of four books. They are three of the books Christians consider part of the major prophets - those being Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and a book simply called The Twelve Minor Prophets. In this we see not one of the books left in what Christians call the history books following II Samuel, so this makes the Nevi'im particularly different, and again emphasizes how much the Jews are focused on collections more so than just telling a story. In many ways, following a study of what might be called a basic study of early Jewish history is best done by using the structure of the Torah and then The Former Prophets. By doing so you find the history of how man got from

creation to having a chosen nation. You then cover how that nation was established and eventually came to its first major defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. Something like the Babylonian captivity for most people would have been the end of them being a people, much less a nation, but that's why this is a great breaking point. God did not allow that to happen to the chosen nation, so there is more history to be told!

Christians do not view it from quite that angle, and this is why Christians like to shove the books of Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, along with the Chronicles into the first of the Christian collection, grouping them with the history books. The Jews simply make it through the narrative of creation to the Babylonian captivity and leave the more personal and detailed stories such as Ruth and Esther as well as record books such as Chronicles, and later books like Ezra and Nehemiah, to the Ketuvim. At the same time they fill in the blanks of what mostly took place during the Book of Kings by giving us The Latter Prophets, which are most all the acts of those Christians more so looked at as prophets, before ending the Nevi'im. For this, let's understand the fact Lamentations is not included along with the three "Major Prophet" books the Jews put in The Latter Prophet collection because it is not prophecy. Like more of a detailed story such as Ruth or Esther, Lamentations is a book Jeremiah wrote literally lamenting what Israel had come to and would suffer. This is best understood not by keeping it alongside the Book of Jeremiah as if it's history, but after knowing the full history through the beginnings of the Babylonian captivity, then we can appreciate what

Jeremiah was saying!

The Book of Daniel is a story like Esther in that it takes place chronologically during the captivity. For all of what Christians look at as prophecy in the Book of Daniel, it too is left for the Ketuvim. This also has a perspective to it, which is that Daniel reminds Christians of being just like many other prophets in Israel. At the same time, think about why Christians look at Daniel as so important! Yes, Daniel sought to find what would happen to the nation and how God would judge them or deal with them. Yes, his words were prophecy to the chosen nation, but they were not as immediate in time, instructions, or corrections to the nation as other prophets had been. He is not leading the nation like Joshua, one of the judges, or a king. He is not warning the nation to correct its ways or face God's wrath and lack of protection. What Daniel did is a story of being involved with real time events mostly as they took place in the government(s) who were over Israel at various times such as the transition from Babylonian to Medes and Persians, which serve as a great foundation as to why Daniel found out the other of what we really see as his prophecies. This prophecy was definitely information that helps us see how the chosen nation would interact to continue to affect the entire world. Looking at it that way, we should see how much this is far less, dare I say, personal to the Jews.

Now, the last book of The Latter Prophets is pretty much self explanatory. However, it's important we clarify that the book called The Twelve Minor Prophets is

a full collection of what Christians call the minor prophets. These are the twelve books of Hosea through Malachi. All but the last three of these prophets fit into the same category as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel when it comes to when they did their work. Another point I need to mention here is the fact even the Jews call these minor prophets. While I'm sure Christians see that and take pride in saying, see even they use the word "minor," there are a couple of points I want to make about that. First, remember that Christians don't just call these twelve minor prophets, Christians, in turn, call the five books just before them, "major" prophets. This makes for a direct comparison the Jews do not make, and it adds to the English flaw, we already look at the word minor as being something less in importance not just less in volume or amount. That leads directly into the second point which is, it's an assumption on the English speakers part to think when the title of this last book of the Nevi'im translates to use the word minor, it does not do so only due to our weak language. In English the word minor can, in fact, just refer to the truth these books are smaller, but to the modern English speaker, most don't tend to see it that way. All these things and more we will need to pick up again in our next segment because we are out of space for this time. However, I hope this beginning comparison has helped our Biblical perspective to at least take another small step down the path of growth this study is intended to help us take!

Let's stay in God's Word!

