



The Biblical Heritage Center's

DISCOVERING THE BIBLE

*Following the journey of our Bibles by viewing its words & messages
in their original cultural & historical contexts.*

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The Journey of **the Bible**^M Begins

By Jim Myers

The Bible^M is a MEME (See Facts and Beliefs Report #2), a name, given to a number of books, which are not identical. Some have more or fewer books than others. Even in the Bibles that contain the same books, those books may come from different ancient manuscripts. And, even if those manuscripts have the same Greek or Hebrew words, the English translations may be significantly different.

The point is that **The Bible**^M has become a catchall name that means very different things to different people. But, it takes on a completely different meaning when another MEME, **the Word of God**^M, is added to **The Bible**^M.

The Jewish Bible's 24 books were divided into multiple books in other Bibles; so for comparative purposes it contains 38 books. The next Bible that came into existence was the Roman Catholic Bible, which has 73 books. From a Jewish perspective the 35 books that were added to their Bible are not the "word of God".

If we jump to the last Bible to come

into existence, the Protestant Bible; it contains 66 books. From the Protestant perspective the Roman Catholic Bible contains 7 books that are not "the Word of God."

So, if someone taking a poll calls and asks you if you believe the Bible is "the word of God," the most accurate response should be - "Which Bible?" Or if someone tells you that you are supposed to do something because "the Bible says so;" once again the first response should be - "Which Bible?"

My biblical heritage began as a Protestant. Any time someone asked why the Roman Catholic Bible had 7 more books than ours; the minister would always say that the Catholics added new books to our Bible. No one ever questioned his answer.

But later, after learning that the Roman Catholic Bible had been around for over a thousand years before Protestantism was founded, I discovered that my minister was wrong. I even learned that the original King James Version had 73 books, but other later Protestants removed 7 books from the KJV.

The Jewish Bible

The Jewish Bible has three sections:

The Torah

- (1) Genesis
- (2) Exodus
- (3) Leviticus
- (4) Numbers
- (5) Deuteronomy

The Prophets (Nevi'im)

- (1) Joshua
- (2) Judges
- (3) Samuel (I & II Samuel)
- (4) Kings (I & II Kings)
- (5) Isaiah
- (6) Jeremiah
- (7) Ezekiel
- (8) The Twelve (Minor Prophets)

The Writings (Ketuvim)

- (1) Psalms
- (2) Proverbs
- (3) Job
- (4) Song of Songs
- (5) Ruth
- (6) Lamentations
- (7) Ecclesiastes
- (8) Esther
- (9) Daniel
- (10) Ezra & Nehemiah
- (11) Chronicles

The Jewish Bible is called the **Tanakh**, which is an acrostic made by placing an "a" between the first letter of each of the three sections – **TaNakh**.

The three sections became part of the Jewish Canon at different times. The Torah was first, followed by the Prophets, and last by the Writings. This process took place over a period of

about 400 years. It began in Babylon while the Jews were still living as captives under Persian rule. It is very important to understand that the Torah was brought to Israel from Babylon along with a decree issued by the Persian king **Artaxerxes**. Read its words carefully:

"Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, the scribe of the Torah of the God of heaven, and so forth. And now I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and their priests and the Levites, in my realm, that are minded of their own free will to go with thee to Jerusalem, go.

Forasmuch as you are sent by the king and his seven counselors, to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the Torah of your God which is in your hand .

. . .

And you, Ezra, after the wisdom of your God that is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges, who may judge all the people that are Beyond the River, all such as know the Torah of your God; and teach him that doesn't it.

And anyone that will not do the Torah of your God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon him with all diligence, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." (Ezra 7:12-14; 25-26)

Ezra was the scribe, authorized by and

under the authority King of Persia, to teach and implement the Torah of his God and the law of the King of Persia in the area known as "Beyond the River."

At the time that the Jews were defeated by the Babylonians and many deported, they had been under the authority of a Jewish king and a Jewish High Priest. When they returned they were under the authority of a Jewish scribe, who was also a priest, and a Gentile king.

This change in kingship is one of those things that rarely find its way into Jewish or Christian Bible studies. Cyrus the Great was the King of Persia who defeated the Babylonians and thus inherited the Jews captive there. Below are the opening words of the Book of Ezra as recorded 1:1-4:

"Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Yahweh by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Yahweh stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying:

'Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has Yahweh, the God of heaven, given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Whosoever there is among you of all His people--his God be with him--let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the House of Yahweh, the God of Israel, He is

the God who is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever is left, in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill-offering for the House of God which is in Jerusalem.'

Cyrus stated that Yahweh fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah the Prophet by "stirring the spirit of Cyrus and giving Cyrus all of the kingdoms of the earth," including the Jews. Yahweh appointed a Gentile to be the king of the Jews.

Cyrus was followed by these Persian kings: Cambyses, Bardiya, Darius I, Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I. The kingship was passed from Cyrus to Artaxerxes, who authorized Ezra to rule over Judah in his behalf.

Scholars conclude that Ezra was the leader of the Jewish scribes that collected, edited and canonized the five books of the Torah. When this group of scribes returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple, they became the **Temple Scribes**. They would be responsible for protecting the master copy of the Torah, making new copies of it, teaching it in the Temple courts, teaching it in other locations, and interpreting its words.

The priests were also responsible for teaching and administering another law too – **the law of the king of Persia.** The newly authorized Temple Scribes had the power to physically punish those who failed to keep both. **BHC**

January Memorials

In Loving Memory

**MURLIN
BENTLEY**

May 24, 1929
January 20, 1996

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**GLADYS
GERALDINE
MYERS**

October 1, 1916
January 29, 2009

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to
seek those qualities of mind and
heart which they shared when we
walked life's journey together.*

*May we help to bring closer to
fulfillment their highest ideals and
noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our
loyalty to those things which we
valued and shared --
faith, love, peace and devotion
and our biblical heritage.*

*As long as we live, they too will
live; for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The
Prayer Book Press)

In Loving Memory

**JULIE FALLIN
KELSOE**

January 12, 1960
January 19, 1990

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**HOMER
MELTON
(DOC) PITNER**

October 7, 1914
January 10, 1971

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*



Helping us remember those who came before us is a very important part of the Biblical Heritage Center's mission. They are the ones who make it possible for us to experience the joy and freedom of our world today. They are also a very important part of our biblical heritage. It is our privilege to honor them by the Memorials printed in The Biblical Heritage Report and in the Memorial Garden section of our website - <http://www.biblicalheritage.org>. Please visit the website Memorial the next time you are on the Internet. Please send us information about those who you would like to remember and we will remember them too.

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**"Our belief systems must be
large enough to include all of the facts;
open enough to be tested;
and flexible enough to change
when we become aware of
errors or new facts."**

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