

PARABLES

Bringing Hidden Things to Light



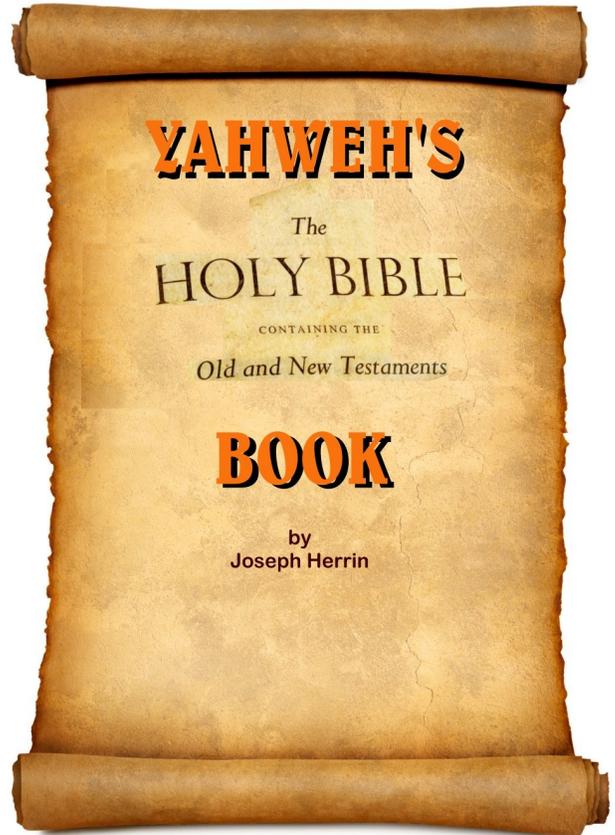
Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.18.1

This newsletter begins a new writing titled *Yahweh's Book*. It is an awesome thing to consider that Yahweh, the Creator and God of all, has given to mankind a book through which they might come to know Him. It is little wonder that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time and continues to be a perennial favorite. Yet few Christians actually know the history of this book and how it has come down to us in this generation in its present form. This series of writings will explore the history of the most important book ever written.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding as you read.



Food for Thought

"I am a creature of a day. I am a spirit come from God, and returning to God. I want to know one thing: the way to heaven. God himself has condescended to teach me the way. He has written it down in a book. Oh, give me that book! At any price give me the book of God. Let me be a man of one book."

John Wesley

Scripture Memory

Hebrews 4:12

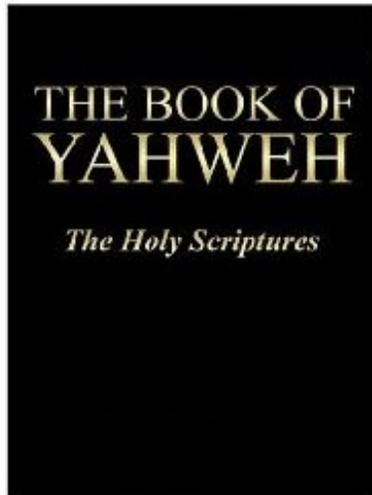
For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Parables Newsletter

- Series 1.18.1
- *Yahweh's Book*
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- Chapters 1-2

Yahweh's Book

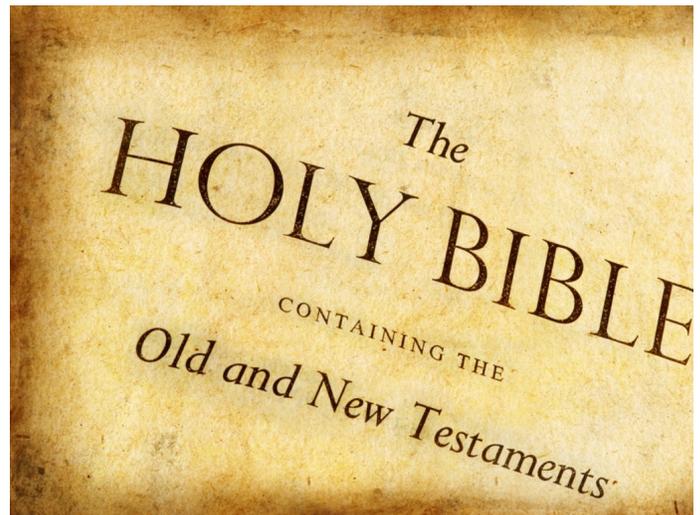
Introduction



John Wimber, one of the founders of the Vineyard Movement, was not raised with a Christian influence in his life. He had never entered the doors of a church in his youth, never read a Bible, or heard one read. He was a keyboard player for a rock group in the early 1960s, when he was invited to attend a Bible study. He was so ignorant of Christianity that he has shared in his testimony about his incredulity when someone told him about the Bible. "God has a book out?"

I have been intrigued by the innocent and sincere surprise expressed by John Wimber at the discovery that God has given to mankind a book - His book. Those who have been raised in Christian homes, attended church services, or otherwise had some Christian influence growing up, often fail to comprehend the wonder of what God has done in providing for mankind a book. Think about it for a moment. The world is

filled with books written by men, for men. Yet there is only one book written by God for men. The uniqueness and weightiness of this book is so extraordinary that men simply refer to it as "THE BOOK." (The word Bible means "book.") Some add to this description the word "Holy," which means "sacred, set-apart, having a spiritually pure quality."



There is truly no other book on earth like Yahweh's book. It is THE Holy Book.

Another name given to this book which Yahweh has authored is the Scriptures. This too is often given the appellation "Holy." The English word "Scriptures" comes from the Latin "scriptura" which means "writing." Once again, we find that this is not just an ordinary writing. This book is referred to as THE Writings, THE Scriptures. This writing stands out among all other writings in the world. It alone is God's tome, His authorship, the words of divinity recorded for mankind.

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As a child I remember feeling something akin to the wonder expressed by John Wimber when he first was introduced to the Bible. When I was around ten years old I was given a small, brown, leather bound King James Bible. It had gold edges to the pages and a cloth book mark that was attached to the spine of the book. Opening the cover, there was a page to write your name. It said something like “This Bible belongs to _____.”

I remember my delight in being given this Bible as a child. I carried it with me every time we set out for church. The size of the book was diminutive, containing small print. It also contained marginal notes, and links to other Bible passages that were related. I treasured this Bible. It did not sit on a shelf collecting dust. I read it. I used it to conduct my own topical Bible studies. In my early teen years I was given a *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*, as well as a *Nave’s Topical Bible*, and a Bible dictionary. These books were my reference tools, but they were nothing without the Bible itself.

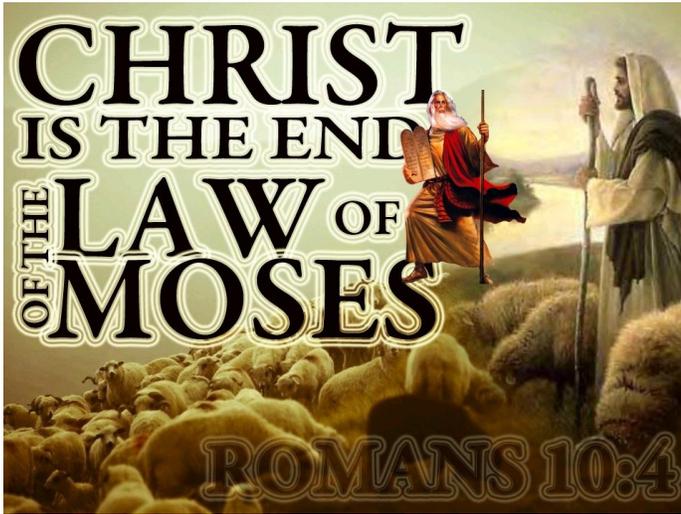
I remember the satisfaction I had as a youth carrying my Bible around. It was not a satisfaction that comes from showiness, for I was a very timid youth and it was only with great difficulty that I would tell a stranger that I was a Christian. Rather, my satisfaction came from the knowledge that I had God’s words in my possession. I could study these words to learn about God. I

could find wisdom and understanding within the pages of this book. Wisdom and understanding were two things I zealously desired. Therefore, my Bible was exceedingly precious to me.

It has been more than four decades since I received my first Bible and I have remained an avid student of the Word of God. I have never lost my zeal to acquire wisdom and understanding, and I have discovered no other source equal to the Scriptures to fulfill my desire. I have learned much from the pages of scriptures in the past decades. I have also learned many things ABOUT this book. Most of my teachings focus on things I have learned from the content of the Bible as I have been instructed by the Holy Spirit. This writing series is different in that my goal is to set forth some of the things I have learned about this book that we call The Bible. It is an exemplary book; a remarkable book; a unique book. I hope that it might be to you as much of a treasure as it has been in my life.

Yahweh's Book

The Two Covenants/Testaments



Moses and Yahshua - Two Covenants

The Christian Bible is divided into two sections. These sections are identified with two distinct covenants that Yahweh has made with mankind. These covenants are the old covenant of the Law delivered to Moses, and the new covenant of grace established through the blood of God's Son Yahshua. Most Bibles today use the word "Testament" instead of "Covenant" to describe the two divisions of the Scriptures. Both of these words are in various ways descriptive of the body of writings they pertain to, but they contain different shades of meaning. Discovering where the terms "New Covenant," and "New Testament" came from is helpful in order to understand how these terms differ.

The New Testament of the Bible was written in the Greek language. It has been translated into other languages, one of the earli-

est being Latin. In Luke's gospel, as well as the apostle Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, we find a quotation of Christ where He utters the words "new covenant." These words were spoken during the last supper which Yahshua shared with His disciples prior to His crucifixion.

Luke 22:20

"This cup that is poured out for you is the *new covenant* in my blood."

I Corinthians 11:25

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The actual Greek language in which both Luke and Paul wrote uses the phrase "kaine diatheke." The Greek word *kaine* is defined as "new" while *diatheke* means "covenant." The word diatheke occurs 33 times in the New Testament. Following are some more examples.

II Corinthians 3:5-6

Our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a *new covenant*, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

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II Corinthians 3:14-15

For to this day, when they read the *old covenant*, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away.

We see that the apostle Paul used the phrase “old covenant” to contrast the covenant of Law established under Moses with the “new covenant” established by Yahshua. In the Greek, the words “old covenant” appear as “palaia diatheke.” We see then that there is a solid justification for using the terms “Old Covenant” and “New Covenant” when referring to the two divisions of the holy Scriptures.

When the original Greek manuscripts which Paul and the gospel evangelists wrote were translated into Latin, these phrases became “Vetus Testamentum” and Novus Testamentum.” From there, somewhere around the year 1300 A.D. the Bible was again translated, this time from Latin to English. There were no ancient Greek manuscripts known, or available, to the English translators at the time. They had only Latin manuscripts, especially that which is called the Latin Vulgate, a translation attributed to Jerome who was commissioned by Pope Damasus I in 382 A.D. to create a revision of the Vetus Latina, which is an older Latin translation of the Bible. Thus, the first English translators were working from a translation of the Bible, rather than from the original manuscripts in their native languages. They were essentially translating a translation.

The Latin word Testamentum holds different meanings. One definition refers to a covenant, which is what the Greek word diatheke means. Another definition of Testamentum is “a will, or witness.” A will is also called a testament in English. A will provides a witness, or testimony, of a person’s final instructions to his heirs. When the Bible was first translated from Latin into English, the translators adopted the latter meaning, and adopted the English word Testament instead of the more accurate word Covenant.

There is some overlap between these English words, as one of the definitions of the word Testament is “covenant.” The word Testament, however, remains somewhat ambiguous, whereas the word Covenant conveys a greater clarity of meaning. To avoid confusion in the minds of the readers, I will be using the widely accepted word Testament when referring to the divisions of the Bible, rather than the word Covenant which I prefer. However, in this chapter I will use both terms in order to demonstrate the original use of the words.

Designating the two divisions of the Bible as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is solidly supported in the Scriptures themselves. The apostle Paul gives further testimony in this matter.

Yahweh's Book

Hebrews 8:8-9

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a **new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt.”

Paul is quoting the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah here (Jeremiah 31:31). We see that

*I will establish a **new covenant...***

even the Old Testament writings made reference to a day when a New Covenant would be established between God

and man. Paul additionally refers to the two covenants as the “first” and the “second” covenants.

Hebrews 8:7

For if that **first covenant** (word implied) had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a **second**.

From this citation we see that it was possible for the Bible divisions to have been designated the “First Covenant” and the “Second Covenant.” This, however, did not happen. The words “Old” and “New” are what have come down to us instead.

Hebrews 8:13

When He said, “A **new covenant**,” He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing **old** is ready to disappear.

In the verse above we see that the word “new” is attached to the word “covenant.” The parallel association is observed in the word “old” being used to describe the earlier covenant delivered to Moses.

It is the practice of some Christians to **ONLY** read the New Testament portions of Scriptures. They reason that this is the division of the Bible that applies to them for they are bound to God through the New Covenant, not the Old Covenant. Rejecting the Old Testament writings is misguided, however. Yahweh has preserved both divisions of the Scriptures for the body of Christ. Great wisdom and understanding are to be derived from both Testaments. Though Christ fulfilled the Old Covenant that He might establish the New, it would be folly to discard the history of Yahweh’s prior dealings with man. The New Testament flows out of the Old Testament. They both share the same divine authorship. All of the Scriptures are “Spirit-breathed.”

(Note: Some may object to the statement that the Old Covenant no longer has authority over those who are “in Christ.” It is beyond the scope of this book to address this matter. You will find the subject set forth

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with much clarity and a firm Scriptural foundation in the book *Laying Down the Law*.)

I have been as much a student of the Old Testament as I have of the New Testament. I perceive the voice of Yahweh speaking to me through both bodies of writing. I would not understand the New Testament nearly as well if I did not have the Old Testament to provide a foundation. Indeed, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament more than two hundred times, and makes allusions to the Old Testament in hundreds of more instances. Those who have calculated such things have stated that more than ten percent of the New Testament consists of direct quotations, or allusions, to the Old Testament.

Perhaps I should already have defined the word *covenant*. The English word *covenant* shares a similar root with the word *convene*, which is defined as “to come together.” A covenant is Yahweh’s means of bringing man back into relationship with Himself after a separation occurred due to sin. In both the Old and New Covenants, blood played a central role in bridging the separation that existed between man and his Creator. The Bible tells us that “the soul who sins must die” (Old Testament), and “the wages of sin is death” (New Testament).

Under the Old Covenant, Yahweh permitted another creature to die in the place of man,

so that man might live. The blood of bulls, goats, sheep, and birds served as substitutions, paying the penalty for the sins of man. Yet, these offerings had to be made year after year.

Under the New Covenant, Yahweh sent His Son to die in the place of man that mankind might live. Yahshua’s sacrifice was perfect. It needed to be offered only once. All humanity’s sins were borne on the cross by the Son of God. Christ brought God and man into oneness, no longer separated by sin. This is the meaning of atonement (at-onement). We could say that Christ “convened” a meeting between God and man. He did so by means of establishing a “covenant” through His blood.

(Note: The word “atonement” was created by William Tyndale when he translated the Bible into English around the year 1526.

Tyndale recognized that there was no English word that fully described the act of Christ to reconcile God to man by paying the penalty of sin, while also providing a merciful covering for man that he might stand in the presence of God without shame. Tyndale coined the word “atonement” to describe the work of Christ in reuniting man to his Creator.)

*Yahshua’s sacrifice
was perfect.*

The subject of covenants is so central to the

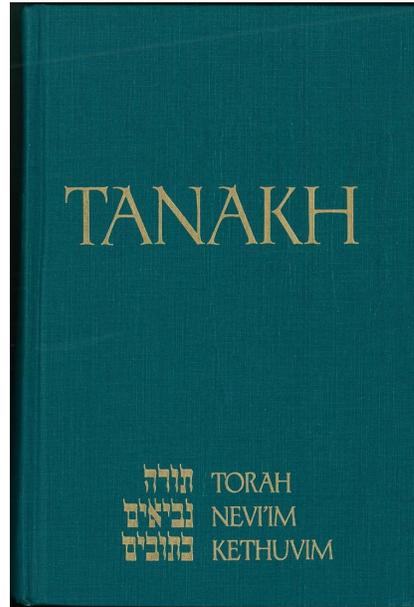
Yahweh's Book

Bible, that we find that its two divisions are properly referred to as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Bible presents two primary covenants that Yahweh has made with mankind. These covenants are designed to bring God and man together. In this we can see the shared origin of the words “covenant” and “convene.” Covenants bring disparate parties together, thereby convening them. In the case of the Biblical covenants, the two parties involved are God and man.

The Bible is an amazing book. It alone reveals the history of man and his Creator, the fall of man into sin, and separation from God. The Bible does not leave man in this forsaken condition, however. It reveals all that Yahweh has done to restore the breach that sin had created. We see the first Covenant that served as an interim measure until the fulness of time should arrive when Yahweh would send His Son into the earth. Thus, in the Bible, we have been provided with the supremely important testimony of God's two covenants with man.

The Bible is an amazing book.

The Tanakh



In the previous chapter it was observed that the Bible is a book of covenants. Though we read about multiple covenants established between God and man in the Bible, two of these covenants predominate; an older covenant established by Moses at Mount Sinai, and a new covenant established by Yahshua on Mount Calvary. F.F. Bruce, in his book *The Canon of Scripture*, affirms the covenantal aspect of the Bible.

In the earliest books of the Old Testament God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen. 9:8-17), and again with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15:18; 17:1-4). The external token of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow; the external token of the covenant with Abraham was the rite of circumcision. Later, when Abraham's descendants (or at least one important group of them) had migrated to Egypt and

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were drafted into forced labour gangs there, God remembered his covenant with Abraham and brought about their deliverance.

Having left Egypt under the leadership of Moses, they were constituted a nation in the wilderness of Sinai. Their national constitution took the form of a covenant into which the God of their fathers entered with them, making himself known to them by his name Yahweh. The terms of this covenant were very simple, 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people.' Yahweh undertook to make various kinds of provision for them; they undertook to worship him exclusively and to obey his commandments. These undertakings were recorded in a document called **'the book of the covenant.'** According to the narrative of Exodus 24:4-8,

"Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to Yahweh. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took **the book of the covenant**, and he read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, 'All that Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.' And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these

words.'"

This narrative is summarized in the New Testament, in Hebrews 9:18-20, where the covenant thus ratified is qualified as 'the first covenant.' This is because the writer to the Hebrews sets it in contrast with the 'new covenant' promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Over six hundred years after the ratification of the covenant of Moses' day at the foot of Mount Sinai, the prophet Jeremiah announced that, in the days to come, the God of Israel would establish a new covenant with his people to replace that which he had made with the Exodus generation when he 'took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt' (Jer. 31:31-34). That ancient covenant made the divine will plain to them, but did not impart the power to carry it out; for lack of that power they broke the covenant. Under the new covenant, however, not only the desire but the power to do the will of God would be imparted to his people: his law would be put within them and written on their hearts. 'In speaking of a new covenant,' says the writer to the Hebrews, 'he treats the first as obsolete' (Hebrews 8:13). And he leaves no doubt that the new covenant has already been established, ratified not by the blood of sacrificed animals but by the blood of Christ, a sacrifice which effects not merely external purification from ritual defilement but the inward cleansing of the conscience from guilt.

Yahweh's Book

This interpretation of the promise of the new covenant is fully in line with Jesus' own words. During the evening before his death, sitting with his disciples round the supper-table, he gave them bread and wine as memorials of himself. When he gave them the wine, according to Mark's record, he said, 'This is my blood of the covenant (my covenant blood), which is poured out for many' (Mark 14:24). The echo of Moses' words, 'Behold the blood of the covenant...', can scarcely be missed...

*Each of these covenants - the ancient covenant of Sinai and the new covenant inaugurated by Jesus - launched a great spiritual movement. Each of these movements gave rise to a special body of literature, and these bodies of literature came to be known in the Christian church as **'the books of the ancient covenant'** and **'the books of the new covenant'**. The former collection came into being over a period of a thousand years or more; the latter collection has a more inaugural character. Its various parts were written within a century from the establishment of the new covenant; they may be regarded as the foundation documents of Christianity. It was not until the end of the second century AD that the two collections began to be described, briefly, as the **Old Covenant** (or Testament) and the **New Covenant** (or Testament).*

[*The Canon of Scripture*, F.F. Bruce; Emphasis Added]

Many parallels can be observed between the

covenant established by Moses and the covenant established by Yahshua. Even as Moses took the blood of the sacrifice and threw it upon the people, sealing the covenant in blood, we find a parallel event in the establishment of Christ's covenant.

Matthew 27:24-25

And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people answered and said, "***His blood be on us and on our children!***"

Moses described the words that Yahweh has entrusted to him as "the book of the covenant." Today, we can aptly describe the Bible as "the book of the covenants." The Bible is divided into two sections of writings. It contains the books of the ancient covenant (The Old Testament), and the books of the new covenant (The New Testament).

In this chapter, I want to pay particular attention to the books of the ancient covenant, that which Christians today commonly call the Old Testament. These books were delivered to the descendants of Abraham, the Hebrew people. Many Christians are surprised to learn that the Scriptures used by the Hebrews in the time of Christ did not contain 39 books as are found in the Old Testament of our Bibles today. Flavius Josephus, a

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Jewish historian writing in the first century A.D. stated that the Jews had only 22 books of sacred writings.

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their times in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

[Flavius Josephus, *Against Apion*]

The Scriptures that Yahshua and His disciples used in their day included only 22 books. Christians should not be alarmed at this, however, for these 22 books contained all of the writings that comprise the Old Testament of their Bibles today. The books were merely arranged differently. This was no doubt in part due to the fact that writing at the time was done primarily on scrolls of animal skin, or papyrus. Many of the Old Testament books are small, and it would have been prohibitively expensive to create an individual scroll for each prophet's writing. Therefore, certain books were com-

bined into a single scroll. Following is a listing of how the Jews of Yahshua's day divided their holy writings.

- **The Law:** Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy: 5 books
- **The Prophets:** Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah-Lamentations, Ezekiel, The book of the twelve (Hosea to Malachi): 7 books
- **The Writings:** Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth-Judges, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles: 10 books

You can see by this list, that many books that are listed separately in Bibles today were formerly combined. I and II Samuel were one book. I and II Kings were one book. I and II Chronicles were one book. Jeremiah and Lamentations were combined as one book. Ruth and Judges were one book. Ezra and Nehemiah were one book. Then there were the twelve books of the minor prophets (Hosea to Malachi) which were all combined into one book which was referred to as "The Twelve."

There were other reasons that the Jews numbered their holy writings as 22, besides cost and the convenience of combining multiple books on a single scroll. In a writing titled *The Book of Jubilees*, found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, some Jewish teachers set forth the theological underpinning for

Yahweh's Book

this number. They wrote:

God made 22 things on the six days of creation. These 22 events paralleled the 22 generations from Adam to Jacob, the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the 22 books of the Holy Scripture.

Jewish scholar Sixtus Senensis, who lived in the 16th century, emphasized the importance of this matter.

As with the Hebrew there are twenty-two letters, in which all that can be said and written is comprehended, so there are twenty-two books in which are contained all that can be known and uttered of divine things.

It should be noted that modern copies of the Tanakh usually contain 24 books. This number has been arrived at by separating Jeremiah and Lamentations into two books, and dividing Ruth and Judges into separate books.

The Hebrews not only had a different number of books in their Scriptures, they also arranged their books differently than the order found in a modern Bible. The Jews organized their sacred writings as:

- The Law - Torah
- The Prophets - Neviim
- The Writings - Kethuvim

The first letter of the words Torah, Neviim, and Kethuvim (TNK) are combined to form the word Tanakh, which is the name employed by the Jews to refer to the Old Testament.



The Hebrew Tanakh begins the same way as the Christian Old Testament, placing the five books of Moses at the front, and in chronological order. As we see in the anagram Tanakh, these five books are referred to as the Torah. The word Torah is often translated as “Law,” but it may more accurately be defined as “teaching,” or “instruction.” The word Torah is used inconsistently as a reference to divine writings. At times just the Law of Moses is referred to as the Torah. Sometimes the entire Hebrew Old Testament is referred to as the Torah. Its more specific application however, is when it is used in reference to the five books of Moses.

Christian scholars often prefer the Greek word Pentateuch over the word Torah. Pentateuch means “five books.” This term may have first been used in Alexandria, Egypt,

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among Hellenistic Jews (Jews who had embraced the Greek culture and language).

Another difference between the Hebrew Scriptures, and their Christian counterparts is observed in the names assigned to the books. The Jews do not refer to the books of Moses as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Instead, they are called Bereshith (Bereshit), Shemoth (Shemot), Wayyiqra (Vayikra), Bemidbar, and Debarim (Devarim). Each of these book names in the Hebrew Scriptures are derived from the opening statement of their corresponding writings.

Genesis/Bereshith 1:1

In the beginning (bereshith) Elohim created the heavens and the earth.

The Hebrew word bereshith means “in the beginning.”

Exodus/Shemoth 1:1

And these are the *names* (shemoth) of the children of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each one with his household.

The Hebrew word shemoth means “names.”

Leviticus/Wayyiqra 1:1

And Yahweh spoke unto Moses, *and he called* (wayyiqra) to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying,

The Hebrew word wayyiqra means “and he called.”

Numbers/Bemidbar 1:1

And Yahweh spoke to Moses *in the Wilderness* (bemidbar) of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

The Hebrew word bemidbar means “in the wilderness.”

Deuteronomy/Debarim 1:1

These are the *words* (debarim) which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the desert plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab.

The Hebrew word debarim means “words.”

If we were to literally carry the Hebrew names for these books into English, we would refer to the first five books of the Old Testament as:

- In the Beginning
- Names
- And He Called
- In the Wilderness
- Words

Yahweh's Book

The English word Genesis associated with the first book of the Bible means "Beginning." We can therefore see some correspondence between the Hebrew and Christian naming conventions for the first book of the Bible. We see no correspondence between Names/Exodus, And He Called/Leviticus, In the Wilderness/Numbers, or Words/Deuteronomy. How then did our Bibles come to bear these book names?

The Christian names for these books are derived from the Greek Septuagint. The Septuagint was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. A group of 72 Jewish scholars translated their Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the 2nd century B.C.. These Jewish scholars, working in Alexandria, Egypt where there was a large community of Jewish believers, chose names for the five books of Moses that reflected the theme of each book. In the Greek Septuagint, the first five books were titled as follows:

Genesis: "origin"

Exodos: "going out"

Leuitikos: "relating to the Levites"

Arithmoi: contains a record of the numbering of the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai and later on the plain of Moab.

Deuteronomion: "second law," refers to the fifth book's repetition of the commandments reviewed by Moses before his death.

It is easy to see in these Greek names how the English titles of the five books of Moses were arrived at in our Christian Bibles today.

The Tanakh follows the five books of Moses (the Torah) with the Neviim, or the Prophets. Included in these books are Ruth-Judges, Samuel (which includes I Samuel and II Samuel as a single book), and Kings (I and II Kings as one book). We may not think of these books as belonging to the prophets, though Samuel was certainly a prophet. Yet, the ancient Hebrews categorized them this way.

In modern versions of the Tanakh, the Neviim contains 8 books, often informally divided into two subdivisions; the Earlier Prophets, and the Later Prophets. The first four prophetic books lean more toward historical accounts, and the latter prophetic books are characterized by the declaration of numerous prophecies. Joshua, Judges-Ruth, Samuel, and Kings comprise the four early Prophetic books, while Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (the twelve minor prophets) comprise the latter group of four.

One may wonder why Kings is in the group known as Neviim, but Chronicles is not, for both of these books are very similar in content and cover the same time period. One of the widely accepted theories on this peculiarity is that Chronicles was adopted into the

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canon of Hebrew Scripture much later than the other books of the Prophets. Therefore, it was placed as the very last book of the Tanakh. This was evidently the arrangement of the books in Christ's day. F.F. Bruce provides the following argument in support of this view.

*There is evidence that Chronicles was the last book in the Hebrew Bible as Jesus knew it. When he said that the generation he addressed would be answerable for 'the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world,' he added, 'from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary' (Luke 11:50f.). Abel is the first martyr in the Bible (Gen. 4:8); Zechariah is most probably the son of Jehoiada, who was stoned to death 'in the court of Yahweh's house' because, speaking by the Spirit of God, he rebuked the king and people of Judah for transgressing the divine commandments (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Zechariah (c 800 BC) was not **chronologically** the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr; some two centuries later a prophet named Uriah was put to death in Jerusalem because his witness was unacceptable to king Jehoiakim (Jer. 26:20-23). But Zechariah is **canonically** the last faithful prophet to die as a martyr, because his death is recorded in Chronicles, the last book of the Hebrew Bible.*

[*The Canon of Scripture*, F.F. Bruce]

That Chronicles was adopted into the canon of Hebrew Scripture last of all the books,

explains why it appears at the end of the Tanakh where it is chronologically out of order, as well as providing some explanation of why it does not appear in the same group as Samuel and Kings.

Another oddity is that Daniel, who was surely one of the great prophets of the Old Testament, is not listed among the Neviim - the Prophets. Instead, the book of Daniel is found among the Kethubim - The writings. It would seem that Daniel has far more in common with writings such as Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah than with Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes. Nevertheless, the ancient Hebrews placed Daniel among these latter books.

Some have observed a parallel between the divisions of the Tanakh and the New Testament. The New Testament begins with five historical books that correspond to the Pentateuch. These are the four gospels and the book of Acts. These are followed by the apostolic epistles which can be compared to the writings of the Old Testament prophets. Closing out the New Testament is the book of Revelation, which forms a parallel to The Writings. Indeed, there is great similarity between the book of Daniel in The Writings and the John's apocalyptic vision.

The number three is full of divine importance. It seems fitting that both the Old and New Testaments lend themselves so naturally to three divisions. E. W. Bullinger, in

Yahweh's Book

his insightful book *Number in Scripture*, shares the following about the number three.

THREE

In this number we have quite a new set of phenomena. We come to the first geometrical figure. Two straight lines cannot possibly enclose any space, or form a plane figure; neither can two plan surfaces form a solid. Three lines are necessary to form a plan figure; and three dimensions of length, breadth, and height, are necessary to form a solid. Hence three is the symbol of the cube--the simplest form of solid figure. As two is the symbol of the square, or plane contents (x^2), so three is the symbol of the cube, or solid contents (x^3).

Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.

All things that are specially complete are stamped with this number three.

God's attributes are three: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence.

There are three great divisions completing time--past, present, and future.

Three persons, in grammar, express and include all the relationships of mankind.

Thought, word, and deed, complete the sum of human capability.

Three degrees of comparison complete our knowledge of qualities.

The simplest proposition requires three things to complete it; viz., the subject, the predicate, and the copula.

Three propositions are necessary to complete the simplest form of argument--the major premiss, the minor, and the conclusion.

Three kingdoms embrace our ideas of matter--mineral, vegetable, and animal.

When we turn to the Scriptures, this completion becomes Divine, and marks Divine completeness or perfection.

Three is the first of four perfect numbers (see p. 23).

Three denotes divine perfection;

Seven denotes spiritual perfection;

Ten denotes ordinal perfection; and

Twelve denotes governmental perfection.

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Hence the number three points us to what is real, essential, perfect, substantial, complete, and Divine.

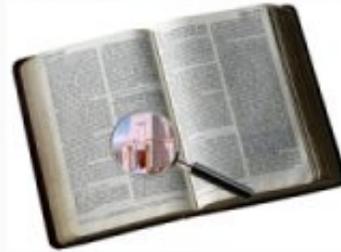
[Emphasis Added]

The Bible is a divine book. God is the author of the Scriptures. It is difficult to imagine a perfect, all-wise and all-powerful God delivering to mankind anything that was not perfect and complete. The Jews traditionally numbered the divine writings as 22 in total, while the Christian Bible contains 66 books (3 times 22).

Though the ancient Jews had reasons to defend their sacred books as 22 in total, the Christian Bible contains the same material divided into 39 books. Some Christians have remarked on the symmetry found in the Christian divisions of the Old Testament.

We see once more the stamp of the number three. There are 17 books of history, 5 books of wisdom, and 17 books of prophecy. Whether one embraces the Christian divisions of the writings of the Old Testament, or the Hebrew divisions of the Tanakh, it is a book of divine perfection.

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Amazing grace! How sweet
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That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am
found;
Was blind, but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my
heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace
appear
The hour I first believed.
Through many dangers, toils
and snares,
I have already come;

'Tis grace hath brought me
safe thus far,
And grace will lead me
home.
The Lord has promised good
to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my Shield and Por-
tion be,
As long as life endures.
Yea, when this flesh and
heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the
veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve
like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here
below,
Will be forever mine.
When we've been there ten
thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing
God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Written by John Newton,
1779