

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

That's true, isn't it? We believe it because it's written in the Bible, and we believe the Bible. Well, OK, not exactly. What is **actually** written in the Bible is,

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ:

But for us English-speakers, we translate the Hebrew words into their closest English equivalents. And there, as Shakespeare says, lies the rub. English, like Hebrew, is a dynamic language full of words with multiple meanings and nuances, where even the exact same words with the exact same meanings can mean two entirely different things depending only on how the voice is used to speak the words. How then can we possibly know what the Scriptures **really** say? What did God **really** mean by what He wrote?

Obviously, the first question we need to answer is, "What did God **really** write?" Another way of stating this same question is, "Did God **really** write what we now call the Scriptures?" How can we know **for sure** that what we have today is really what He intended for us to have as His Word?

Why am I writing about this now? Because I've been asked to remove the photo of B'nai Yisrael from this group's home page, and the reason for this request is rooted in how different people approach the above question.

I believe that there is a Creator, and because of this belief, I believe that He must be powerful enough to maintain control over the universe that He created. Therefore, I confidently conclude, He must be the author of the works attributed to Him, or else He would not have allowed them to not only exist in the first place, but to flourish.

To say that the Scriptures that we hold to be divinely inspired are not written by the very Hand of the Creator Himself is to say that either He doesn't exist, or that He is either unwilling or unable to put a stop to the fraud. Having known Him personally for more than thirty-five years, I certainly can't say He doesn't exist, and because I know that He does I don't dare suggest that He's unwilling or unable to prevent the mass deception that some would have us believe has happened.

So which Scriptures are His Scriptures? Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us:

You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

I don't think anyone would argue that this refers to the Torah, the five books given to Israel through Moses at Mt. Sinai. This makes the Torah self-certifying – it's truly written by God only because it says it is. This is easy to believe, because the external evidence supports that conclusion. The historical evidence of what the Lord has accomplished through His people, Israel, is indisputable, so there is absolutely no reason to believe that the Scriptures attributed to Him through which His mighty hand can be seen are anything other than what they say they are.

So there it is. The only Scriptures that are truly written by the Creator are the five books of the Torah. Right? It must be, because they clearly state that we must not **add to** these books.

So why do we consider the Tanakh to be sacred Scriptures as well? To whom is given the command "You shall not add to the word . . ."? I believe there is no doubt that this command applies only to the people, not to God Himself. I believe that He has always maintained the

option, even dare I say the necessity, of continuing to communicate with the people He created. After the time of Moses, through the time of the David and the kings, and even during the Israelites' exile in Babylon, God continued to communicate with His people, revealing more and more about Who He IS and who we are, and what our relationship with Him is supposed to be. These additional writings comprise the remainder of the Tanakh, and again, both because they are self-certifying and because of the historical evidence, I believe that they are indeed the very Word of our Creator.

The original, Hebrew-language documents are certainly, without a doubt, the inspired Word of God. But those original documents have been lost to time, so how do we know that what we have today is even reliable? The answer is three-fold. First, God told us that He will preserve His Word in Psalm 12:6-7:

The words of the LORD are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times. You, O LORD, will keep them; You will preserve him from this generation forever.

Forever means forever, so even though the original documents have been lost, the words themselves have been preserved, because He said He would preserve them.

Secondly, we have the unbroken line of authority of the Israelite/Jewish people. They were vested with the earthly authority to preserve the Scriptures, and there's no reason to believe that they have not done just that.

Finally, we have the historical evidence of overwhelming numbers of manuscripts that form the basis for what we now know to be all the writings of the Tanakh, as well as other documents including the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Taken together, there's no doubt among scholars and believers alike that the writings known as either the Tanakh or the Old Testament are reliable written communications from our Creator. In the original language, that is.

The tricky part is when we get to translations, as I mentioned at the beginning. Translating from Hebrew into English or any other language is a messy business, precisely because no language, not even Hebrew, is perfectly precise. Hebrew words can have many different nuances, subtleties, and connotations, especially when Hebrew words of today are compared to the same Hebrew words from thousands of years ago. The same is true of English. Words have varieties of meanings and implications, and those meanings can and do change over time, especially over long periods of time. So any translation is going to be presented from the perspective of the beliefs of the translator, whether deliberately or not.

Imagine if a believer in Darwinian evolution were to translate the first eleven chapters of Genesis into English. Does anyone believe that his translation would be accurate? Of course not, because his personal beliefs will color his choice of words and phrases. No earnest believer in the God of Creation would consider such a translation as anything other than heresy.

Let's continue the discussion of adding to God's Word. By the time of the first-century Jewish community in Judea, the Torah was less than 1,500 years old, parts of the Tanakh were less than 500 years old, and the Septuagint was a mere 300 years old, yet they all had been sufficiently tested by time to have been considered authoritative Scripture by anyone who believed in the Creator. Why? Because those who were entrusted with the keeping of Scripture said they were, and that was the only verification needed.

Now something as monumental as the arrival of the Messiah would no doubt merit some notice, and it certainly did. God continued to inspire written records of His interaction with mankind,

further explaining and expounding on what He told us "In the beginning." The apostles of Yeshua's time recognized His message as the fulfillment of everything they had been taught from the Torah and Tanakh. They finally knew what had been shown to Moses on the mountain.

See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain. Exodus 25:40

Then you shall erect the tabernacle according to its plan which you have been shown in the mountain. Exodus 26:30

They saw what we have seen: that the Tabernacle, the priesthood, the commandments, the entire system we know as the Torah was **ALL** a representation of what exists, and has always existed, in Heaven – in the spiritual realm.

This is the whole point of book of Hebrews – explaining how, like a set of blueprints or an explanatory diagram, the whole Tabernacle system is a physical representation on earth of the reality that exists in Heaven.

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." Hebrews 8:4-5

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:23-26

This was exciting news – for once everything was made clear: the need for the sacrifices, the calendar of festivals, the priestly order. Everything now, seen through the light of Messiah, made perfect sense!

This is the message of the transfiguration of Yeshua – Peter and James and John were able to see what Moses saw, a glimpse into the heavenly realm. Now they understood!

We know that sin causes death and that death must be a spiritual death, not a physical one, since Adam and Eve clearly didn't die the instant they sinned. We know that only mankind was created in the image of the Almighty; the animals are far lower creatures than any man. How then can the blood of animals – bulls, goats, sheep – be a worthy payment for man's sins? Thinking that the actual blood of the animal being sacrificed is what "pays the penalty" for our sin is to denigrate ourselves to the level of animals. The reason sacrifices are required is because it takes a repentant **heart** to decide to bring the sacrifices! It's always been about the heart – right from the start.

For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

A man with a heart that chooses to obey will be repentant and contrite when he sins. It is this repentance, demonstrated by the willingness to obey the commandments as a way to publicly acknowledge his sin by bringing the required sacrifices, that prepares us for the restoration of our relationship to God. It is His grace, His mercy, that accepts our repentance, because the blood

payment has already been made. What blood payment? That of Messiah, slain from the foundation of the world. The blood of a man, a sinless man whose death is not counted as payment for his own sins.

This is the Good News – the Gospel – the joyous message that God has been writing on the hearts of men since time began! This is the message of Passover – the Blood of the Lamb! This is the message of Sukkot – God dwelling with mankind!

Why can't people see this? For the same reason Eve chose to eat the fruit. She listened to the voice of the accuser, telling her to trust her own judgment rather than the Word of God. The accuser is still in the business of telling folks to trust their own reasoning, their own judgment, rather than listen to the plain truth that God has declared.

This should be rather difficult to do, in light of the overwhelming evidence of what God has said. But it is done, far too often, because the accuser has a well-established plan of attack to accomplish his goal. He always starts with, "Has God really said . . . ?"

Did God really inspire the Apostolic Scriptures? Can they be relied upon? Would God – *could* He – add more to His story than what we already have in the Tanakh? He had already added the historical record of King David, and more, to the Torah; surely this was more worthy to be recorded!

The evidence of the authenticity of the Apostolic Scriptures – historical and spiritual – is abundant, but like our Darwinian translator of Genesis, corrupted versions have been produced and the accuser knows each and every one of them. Take the Shem Tov version of Matthew, for instance. It was translated 1,500 years after the events of the Gospel, by a man whose expressed purpose was to disprove 1,500 years of belief in both the divinity and messiahship of Yeshua. A more distorted and heretical translation I have yet to see, but still folks are fooled into first believing it's an accurate translation, just because it's in Hebrew, and then, based on that conclusion, they're forced to discredit the original document, because according to this translation the original clearly teaches against everything the Torah teaches as true. But does the original **really** teach against Torah? Of course not. If a corrupted translation, one that seeks to teach the **opposite** of what the original teaches, is itself against Torah, that only proves that the original, the **opposite** of the fraudulent translation, must be in harmony with Torah!

The Apostolic Scriptures have been proven accurate, in the extant Greek manuscripts, far beyond any measure applied to similar ancient writings, including the Tanakh. The claims of mistranslations, inaccuracies, contradictions, and so on are far more prevalent in older documents, including the Tanakh, as would be expected due to their age. This website does the best job I've seen of detailing this proof:

<http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=6068>

To be sure, there are flawed translations today, distorted by the doctrines of men, but that doesn't mean that the original canon cannot be trusted. We can trust that we still have enough extant manuscripts to construct an accurate, faithful canon because we trust in the One who promised to preserve His Word! He can do it despite the changes of languages over the centuries; He can do it despite the doctrines and personal agendas of the men who copy and translate His message. He can do it because He can do anything; we know that He **has** done it because He said He would.

Once a person comes to accept the fact that the Apostolic Scriptures are indeed the Word of God, just as is the Tanakh, the inevitable conclusion is that Messiah Yeshua is, just as He says, God in the flesh. This is the second fact that the accuser seeks to deny. "How can God be in a human body and still be God in Heaven?" he asks. How indeed. How did God manifest Himself in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, and still be God in Heaven? How did He put His Glory in the

Holy of Holies and yet remain on the Throne?

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. For throughout all their journeys, the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel. Exodus 40:34-38

Have you ever seen the Pacific Ocean? Picture yourself scooping a mason jar full of water from the Pacific. Is the water in that jar every bit the same as the water left in the Pacific Ocean? Is the Pacific Ocean any less the Pacific Ocean because of the small amount you now hold?

The God Who created the universe is so far above our understanding, whether He manifests Himself in a cloud, fire, the Ark, or as a Man. He can (and did) do all this without ever once giving His Glory to anyone other than Himself. (Isaiah 48:11) **We** cannot restore our relationship with Him! **We** cannot earn our righteousness! All our attempts at pleasing Him are as **filthy rags!** We **must** accept His way of restoration, His plan of salvation! To try any other way is to insult the very One whom we seek to please. To reject the One He sent is to reject the One Who sent Him!

Yeshua answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent." John 6:29

Yeshua said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me." John 8:42

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me. John 13:20

The enemy must discount the divinity of Yeshua, in order to convince believers that they aren't turning from God Himself. The enemy must discount the Apostolic Scriptures, because they prove the divinity of Yeshua. The enemy doesn't care if you follow the Torah on the outside, as long as your heart turns from the One Who WROTE it! The enemy knows that it's all about our hearts, so it's our hearts he seeks to deceive. He knows that it's not about our outward actions, because he's seen millions of people eternally separated from God even though they "went through the motions" and did what they thought they were "supposed" to do, believing that their actions were sufficient and a repentant heart was irrelevant. Obeying the Torah is not the path to salvation – it's the reward for it!

When our local congregation, long under the influence of anti-missionaries, chose to challenge the divinity of Yeshua, I recalled how often this deception led to complete apostasy, and so I felt duty-bound to warn them of the path they were on. Later, after the apostasy was complete, one person wrote to me and said, "I heard you say once that you've seen so many people who have embarked on this study end up denying the divinity and lordship of Yeshua. I can only wonder if that's because that's the truth that is waiting to be found." I was stunned to read these words. Has the deceiver been so successful with someone I thought KNEW MESSIAH PERSONALLY? Had I been deceived as well, that this person (and others) never really walked with Him nor had a personal relationship with Him to begin with? How very sad. Before I address the logic of this statement, however, I'd like to relate a story to you.

When I first met my husband, Dennis, I wasn't exactly a by-the-book law-abiding citizen. Oh nothing more serious than a speeding ticket, of course, but it was an overall attitude that said I could decide for myself which laws needed to be obeyed and which ones could be ignored. This

included the recently-passed law requiring all passengers and drivers to wear seatbelts. I grew up not wearing seatbelts, never felt they were really necessary, never knew anyone who had been injured by not wearing one. In my limited experience, they were optional, and therefore so was the law that required their use. Then I married Dennis, a man who obeyed every law without question. Suddenly I had a decision to make. Do I rely on my own judgment and continue ignoring the law? Or do I submit to the authority of my husband, who insisted that I wear a seatbelt at all times, whether I understand the need for it or not? Thankfully, I chose to obey him, even though I still wasn't convinced of the usefulness of seatbelts.

Then one day, over fifteen years ago, I was driving by myself in my station wagon, heading down a slight incline with a bend in the road, and it was raining lightly. All of a sudden a semi-tractor rig pulled out from the blind turn right onto the road in front of me. My instincts caused me to slam on the brakes, and I narrowly missed the back end of the rig's trailer. The force of the braking, however, sent my little station wagon careening on its side, headlong into a nearby parking lot, spinning circles as it went. When I finally landed and came to a stop, the car was totaled, one wheel was clear across the road I had started on, and I was simply amazed that I was still alive. A quick inventory of my senses reported that I had suffered not even a scratch, not even the slightest bump anywhere on my person. Amazing! While the car went every direction at once, I was safely fastened to the front seat and never moved an inch from that spot. After calling my husband, I called my midwife, because, you see, I was two months pregnant with my son and was worried about what effect all the spinning and sliding had on my precious baby. An ultrasound the next day confirmed that neither of us had suffered any ill effects from the accident! I can assure you from that moment on, I was a firm believer in the value of seatbelts!

My faith in Yeshua is a lot like my spiritual seatbelt. I may not always understand the reason why, but I know from personal experience that He is my safety net, He is my protection, and obeying Him is the only way I'll remain safe.

*He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be shaken.
Psalm 62:6*

*Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.
Proverbs 30:5*

Some of the other things the letter-writer wrote included, "every day there is a new heartache," "I've been in a state of spiritual crisis," "grieving in ways I've never experienced," and "I feel so often that the wind has been knocked out of me and I can't breathe." Doesn't that sound like someone who's been in a crash without their seatbelt?

What person would choose to drive a car without their seatbelt, ignoring every warning, and then, when lying there broken and bleeding after a crash, would conclude that this must be the way cars are meant to be driven? If you leave the shelter of His Word, there is nothing left but heartache, crisis, and grief. Finding exactly what you've been warned you'll find only proves the need for the safety measures in the first place.

The enemy is cunning. He's heard all the arguments, all the reason, and has devised his own flawed responses. Don't listen to him. Trust the One Who created you, the One Who sacrificed for you, the One Who loves you beyond all measure, beyond all reason.

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.
Proverbs 3:5*

The "Messianic Movement" is what we call the group of believers who, realizing that the man-made doctrines of Christianity are a rocky, desolate cliff, grab on to the rope swing called "Hebrew Roots" and take the jump, leaving traditional Christianity behind. The other side of that divide is, of course, the man-made doctrines of Judaism, and at first it appears that Judaism is our

destination, since it is in front of us and apparently what we are swinging toward. Along the way, however, most of us realize that the rope swing is not just the study of all things Hebrew, but in reality it is the study of the Root itself (Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12) – the Messiah, who cannot be fully understood until He is fully trusted. So we avoid clinging to the other side, Judaism, and instead, like a pendulum, wait for the swinging to stop and we find ourselves gently lowered into the River of Living Water, cleansed with the love that quenches our thirst. This River runs between the two cliffs, and in fact is what carved the cliffs, and is therefore the reason for the cliffs' existence in the first place. It is the culmination of our search for truth, where all the questions, confusion, and contradictions are washed away.

*As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.
Ephesians 4:14-16*

The truth is that Torah and Messiah are one and the same; the Torah cannot be fully understood apart from the Messiah, and the Messiah's message is meaningless without the foundation of Torah. Like two sides of the same coin, you can't grasp one without the other. To be sure, you can observe one side without seeing the other, but the reality is that both exist as the completion of the other.

To "obey the Torah" without accepting the Messiah is like playing charades with a blind man – all your efforts, no matter how exacting they are, are for your own entertainment alone. They accomplish nothing. Likewise, professing faith in Messiah while denying the instructions He gave us is denying Him as well. The Torah was given to us to teach us how to live the lives we were meant to live; the Messiah's earthly walk demonstrated just such a life. If He wasn't fully Torah-Observant then He wouldn't be the Messiah; we are called to imitate His example, which is explained in detail in the Torah.

In the name of love and unity, I have removed the picture in question from this group's webpage. I hope you can see now why it saddens me to do so, for the very people who are asking that it be removed continue to believe that they are "B'nai Yisrael" yet they deny the very means by which they can make that claim, while those of us who remain faithful followers of the Redeemer are the true heirs according to promise, B'nai Yisrael, the children of God.

And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. Galatians 3:29

We cannot demand adoption into the family of God, nor can we earn our position in B'nai Yisrael. It is only by turning our hearts towards Him, by accepting by faith what our minds cannot fathom, by clinging to His grace and mercy, that we can truly count ourselves as redeemed and swept into His loving arms forever.

He is Who He says He is, and the only proof we have is that He said so. It's the only proof we need.

~ Ruth Pell