

אריאל
Summer 2021 / Volume 1 / Number 39



ARIEL
MINISTRIES

When No One Else Cares



Plus:

**Jewishness
and the Trinity**

**Is John's Gospel
Anti-Semitic?**

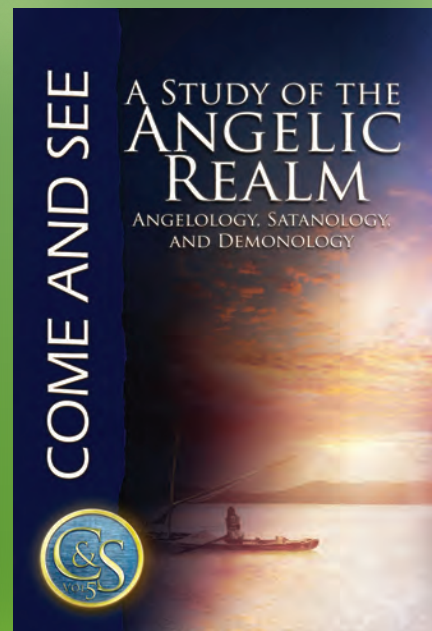
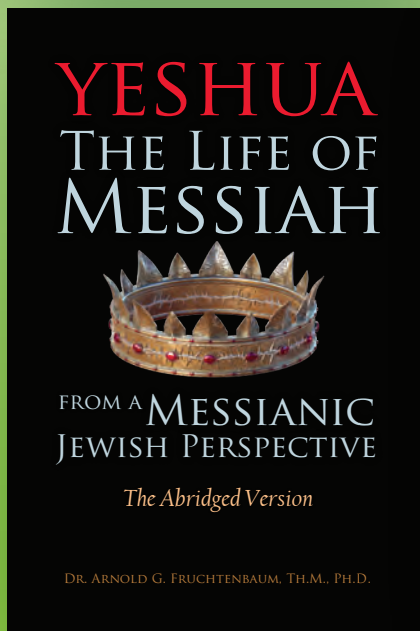
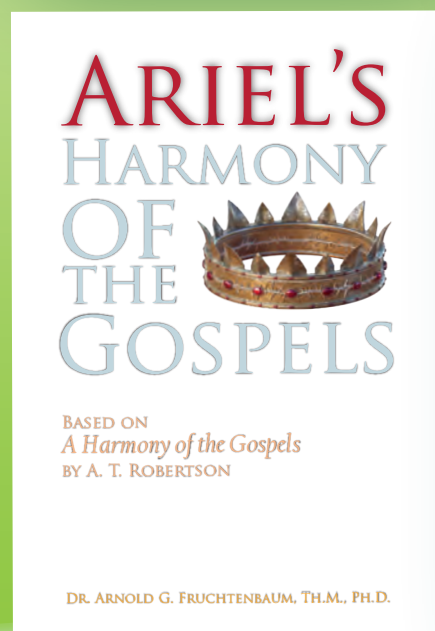
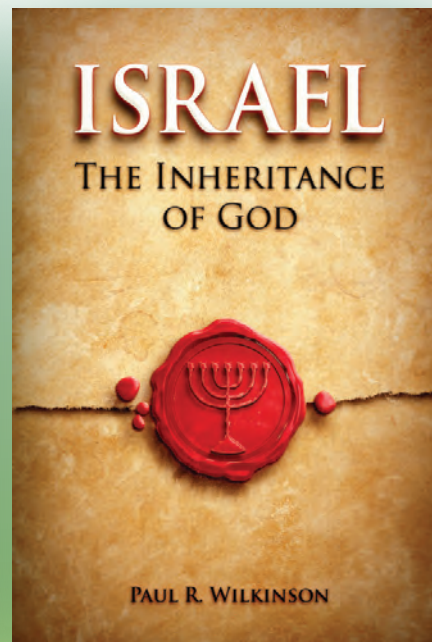
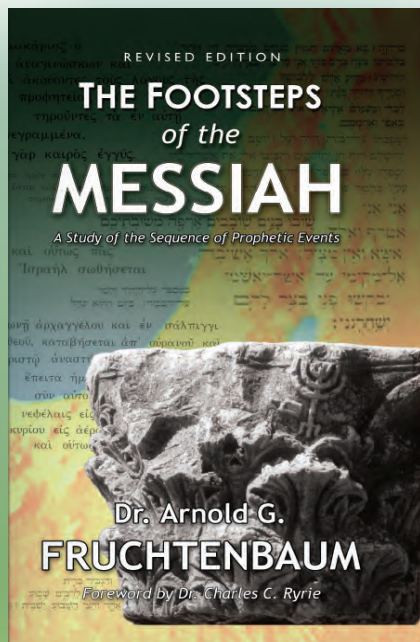
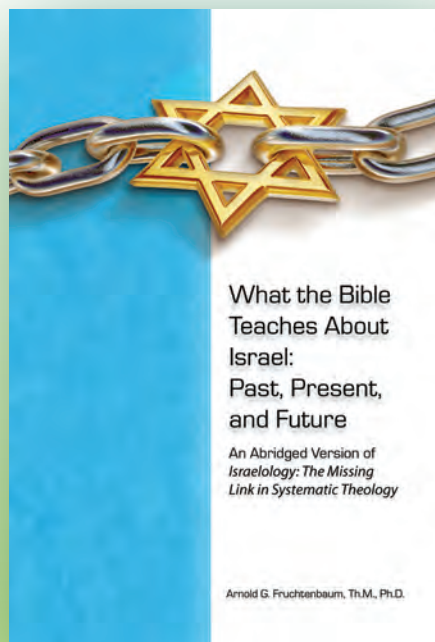
**God vs.
the
Egyptian Pantheon**

**Face to Face
Ministry Update**

ARIEL'S

During July

Summer Sale



"Everything in the Ariel Online Store on sale!
30% off on purchases of \$30 or more."

ariel.org



06 Cover Story

When no one else cares, God does! This is the gist of Dr. Paul Wilkinson's article, in which he masterfully shows the extent to which God is seeking out His people Israel like a devoted shepherd seeking his lost sheep.

14 Theology

The general consensus among the rabbis today is that one cannot believe in the trinity and be Jewish. Even though they acknowledge that the Christian faith is in essence monotheistic, they claim that it is not monotheistic enough to qualify as true Jewishness. They also teach that the concept of a plurality of the Godhead cannot be based on the Hebrew Bible. The purpose of this article by Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, then, is to show from the Hebrew Scriptures the plurality of the Godhead.

20 Anti-Semitism

Is the Gospel of John anti-Semitic? Mottel Baleston answers this question.

24 Feature

In this article replete with hieroglyphs and interesting facts about Egyptian mythology, Dr. Paul Miles makes the case that the one true God is far greater than the false gods of the Egyptian pantheon. After all, unlike the counterfeits, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offers assurance of eternal life and genuine fellowship with Him.

32 Ministry Update

Ariel's Board member Tim Velasco surveys the work of the ministry, touching on each department and each worker to show the extent of their labor for the Lord.

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Purpose Statement

Ariel Ministries exists in order to evangelize Jewish people and to disciple Jewish and Gentile believers through intensive Bible teaching from a Jewish perspective.

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ESCHATOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, IT IS STILL SUMMER.

We are still in this four-month interval that falls between the spring feasts and the fall feasts and that is mentioned in Leviticus 23:22: "When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field when you reap, nor shall you gather any gleaning from your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the stranger: I am the LORD your God." The interval is pictured as a summertime of labor in the fields in preparation for the final harvest. It seems like a somewhat unnecessary pause that separates what Messiah accomplished by His first coming from what He will accomplish by His second coming. Yet, as Dr. Fruchtenbaum masterfully explained in his book *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel*, this interval has a Messianic implication:

The Messianic implication is that this time between the fulfilled program of the spring cycle and the unfulfilled program of the fall cycle is the church age. Indeed, "the gleanings for the poor and the stranger" is a very good picture of the mission of the church itself in gospel evangelism. For example, John 4:35 states: *look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest*. Thus, the interval that separates the spring and the fall cycles becomes a fitting symbol of the obligation of the church to evangelize the world.

Some believers are already on the lookout for the first signs of fall. They see the leaves on the trees turning. They discover flowers withering after a long and hot summer. They perceive the hours of sunlight getting shorter, and they prepare for fall. Other believers have no time to look for such signs. They are too busy harvesting. One such person is a dear friend of mine who labors alongside me in Ariel's Publishing Department. This sister needs to have eye surgery, but she has postponed it until our work on Dr. Fruchtenbaum's Isaiah commentary is finished. Another such person is "the Frucht" himself. Approaching his 78th birthday, he would have every right to kick back and enjoy the fruit of his plentiful work. Yet, he has been busier than ever, writing new commentaries and teaching wherever and whenever the pandemic has allowed it.

Not everyone can teach. Not everyone can easily share the gospel with the dying world. Not everyone can edit or proofread books. But everyone can pray for those who can. So, I am asking you to please pray for us. Carry Dr. Fruchtenbaum and his team through the remainder of the summer months so that we all may finish strong.

In the service of the Lord of the harvest,

Christiane Jurik

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¹ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Feasts and Fasts of Israel: Their Historic and Prophetic Significance* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 2019), p. 132.



Ariel Mission Branches & Representatives

MEET THE TEAM



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ARIEL BRANCHES



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Chris and Lisa Savage represent Ariel Ministries in Australia. Based in Victoria, they teach the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in weekly and bi-monthly classes and day seminars.



Ariel Canada **Jacques Isaac and Sharon Gabizon**

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J. I. and Sharon Gabizon represent Ariel Ministries in Canada. Their projects include door-to-door evangelism of Jewish homes in Montreal and translating Ariel's manuscripts into French. Ariel Canada established a messianic congregation in Montreal called Beth Ariel.



Jackie Fierman

Jackie Fierman has been with Ariel Canada since January of 2005, traveling and sharing about the ministry and teaching Ariel material in Canada and the U.S.A.



Ariel India **Bakul N. Christian**

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Bakul Christian represents Ariel Ministries in India and resides with his wife in Ahmedabad. He teaches Ariel's material all over the country and is responsible for the translations into the Gujarati language.



Ariel Israel **Sasha & Lilian Granovsky**

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The husband-and-wife team has been representing Ariel Ministries in Israel since October 2009. They are responsible for coordinating the translation of our manuscripts and books into Hebrew and Russian.



Ariel China

For safety issues, we must protect the identity of this branch. Please keep them in your prayers.



Ariel Germany

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Thanks to Manfred Künstler and his wife Hanna, Ariel Ministries has had a presence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland since 1985. In 2002, the work was passed on to Georg Hagedorn who, eight years later, turned it into a full branch. Today, this branch is led by a team of brothers and sisters.



Ariel Hungary **Ivan & Rita Nagy**

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Ivan and Rita Nagy represent Ariel Ministries in Hungary. The husband-and-wife team has developed a Come & See website in Hungarian. They also host several home Bible study groups, teaching from Ariel's materials. Their goal is to make teachings available to Jewish and Gentile believers and unbelievers in Hungary.



Ariel Italy

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Paolo and Martina Speciale represent Ariel Ministries in Italy. The husband-and-wife team coordinates the translations of our manuscripts and books into Italian. Their goal is to share the Messianic Jewish perspective in Italy through live teaching, social media pages, and seminars.



Ariel New Zealand

Web: <http://ariel.org.nz/>

This branch is led by Johan Jansen van Vuuren, Nigel Christensen, Matthew Lord, Don Thompson, and John Cavanagh. For information about the many activities of this branch, please contact info@ariel.co.nz.



Ariel Ministries Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

This branch is devoted to teaching the Word of God from a biblical Jewish perspective in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. We also travel throughout the United States. If you are interested in hosting a teaching session, symposium, or seminar, contact us at dfw@ariel.org.



Ariel Ministries Liberia

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Wion and Shirley Wleh represent Ariel Ministries in Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa. The husband-and-wife team teaches the Scriptures from the Jewish perspective in workshops, seminars, and weekly classes designed for pastors and laypersons alike.



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Missionary and author John Metzger represents Ariel Ministries in North Carolina. He is a teacher and speaker who actively travels throughout the central and eastern part of the U.S., speaking at various churches and conferences.



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Gary is the manager and camp facilitator of the Shoshanah campus in Upstate New York. Every summer he help host Ariel's Program of Messianic Jewish Studies.



Roberto Anchondo – Field Representative **(El Paso, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico)**

Roberto Anchondo represents Ariel Ministries in parts of the Southwest regions of the U.S. and some cities in Mexico. He is currently discipling groups of men in the Jewish perspective. He also works with numerous churches in Mexico, teaching the importance of standing by Israel.



Jack Nakashima **(Rock Hill, SC.)**

Email: jacknariel@gmail.com

Jack Nakashima represents Ariel Ministries in Rock Hill, SC. Previously serving in Israel, he is now available to teach and disciple in the U.S.



GERMANY

The German city of Cologne was founded in the first century as the Roman capital of the lower Germanic province *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*. In 310, Emperor Constantine received a request from the Cologne City Council to repair a dilapidated bridge. Money was tight in the city on the Rhine. A Jew named Isaac wanted to help out. However, in order to do so, he would have to represent an office in the city council, the people of Cologne wrote to Constantine. In response, the emperor decreed in the year 321 that Jews be allowed to hold official government positions. Little did the emperor know what a historically valuable testimony he was creating with this decree, for the document is the earliest surviving written proof of Jewish life in Europe north of the Alps.

This year marks the 1,700th anniversary of Jewish life in Germany. The celebratory year opened with an official ceremony in February, and multiple events were planned to give Germans with different religious backgrounds easy access to the vibrant Jewish culture in their midst. The German government presented the overall goal of the festivities on their website: “As many people as possible should have the opportunity to discover Jewish history and also to get to know the everyday life of Jewish people in Germany. This will send a strong signal against any form of anti-Semitism.” The government is funding the different projects and events with nearly 24 million euros. The plan is to end the festivities in the fall with the celebration of “Sukkoth XXL,”

the largest Feast of Tabernacles in the world.

The overall public awareness that the anniversary creates in Germany has facilitated Ariel Germany’s work to reach Jewish people with the gospel.



JÜDISCHES LEBEN IN DEUTSCHLAND

The German government developed this logo (“Jewish Life in Germany”) for their website. The country is celebrating 1,700 years of Jewish life in Germany by hosting numerous events, festivals, and projects that allow people of all religious backgrounds to familiarize themselves with their Jewish fellow citizens.

Passing on What He Has Learned

Donald Clairmont has been a friend of Ariel Ministries for many years. He has attended Ariel’s School of Messianic Jewish Studies when it was still simply called Camp Shoshanah and served as the ministry’s field rep in the Denver area in the late 1990s. Today, Donald lives in Golden, Colorado, with his wonderful wife Addy and is actively and faithfully discipling different men. We asked him to share how he first met Dr. Fruchtenbaum and what the meeting meant for him.

“I am a former Roman Catholic (RC). Having an uncle who was a priest in that church, I came from a very strict RC background. I came to saving faith through The Navigators, a para-church organization based in Colorado, while I

was serving in the United States Navy. I was somewhat discipled through the Overseas Christian Servicemen’s Center (OCSC), now Cadence International. After my active-duty military career, I attended Bible College in Colorado and lived in the Jewish community for a number of years in the Denver area.

Let me start by giving you a little background as to how Arnold Fruchtenbaum and I first met—way back in 1988. The pastor of the church I attended at that time invited me to come and hear a week-long study on the book of Revelation that Arnold was presenting. I was not really interested in going, as I had just seen a booklet at the local Christian bookstore titled *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988: The Feast of Trumpets*. For me, this book put a real damper on anything having to do with eschatology and end time events. Of course, I reluctantly went that first night, just to see whether the teacher had anything legitimate to say. That was all it took! I had never heard anyone present such a concise exegetical exposition of the book of Revelation as Dr. Fruchtenbaum did that evening. I was hooked!



Donald Clairmont from Colorado shares what Ariel Ministries means to him.

At the time, I was using Charles C. Ryrie’s book *Basic Theology* to disciple young men. Arnold informed me it was a good book for discipleship and that he

used it as well. It was about that time I transitioned from using Ryrie to using Ariel Ministries' manuscripts. At the time, those manuscripts were being typed up and Xerox copied by Roxanne Tretheway. I found it fascinating to study the Scriptures from a Jewish perspective, and so I began to broaden my personal studies of God's Word and the discipleship process of others from this same perspective.

I have since used Ariel's manuscripts over the years in helping to mentor young men on a one-on-one basis and in small groups of two or three. I have found these studies biblically sound, easy to understand, and very practical in communicating the study of God's Word. Since the posting of the *Come and See* series a few years back on Ariel's website, it has become so much easier to have my students read the texts and listen to the MP3s before we come together. Then, when the *Come and See* series started being published in book form, I began using the different volumes as well. Because of the questions and study suggestions at the end of each chapter, they are very good reference tools to have at hand and I

highly recommend them to anyone in their discipleship endeavors."

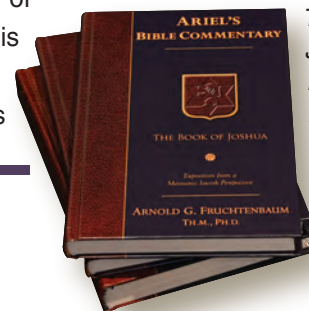
Responding to Dr. Fruchtenbaum's Newest Commentary

A few weeks ago, we were able to publish *Ariel's Bible Commentary: The Book of Joshua*. Like all of Dr. Fruchtenbaum's commentaries, this book is written from a Messianic Jewish perspective. With great care and respect for rabbinic writings, the author used the original source texts to inform the reader about Jewish traditions and thoughts regarding Joshua. Where necessary, he refuted the rabbinic writings. Where appropriate, he presented their scholarly wisdom in support of his own exegesis. One of our wonderful volunteer proofreaders commented on this method:

"When working through this commentary, I learned that the joy of discussing and playing with thoughts is a general Jewish phenomenon and not only what my Jewish relatives

would do around the dinner table. When reading through Joshua in the Bible, I was struck by Joshua's faithfulness to God and his perfect obedience to Moses. Fruchtenbaum's commentary has made me even more aware of this. What Moses began Joshua continued in many ways. I was already filled with deep respect for Moses and his relationship with God; this is equally true of Joshua. I hope that I will be able to follow their examples for the rest of my life.

Furthermore, when studying the different battles in Canaan, the meaning of God's promises to the people of Israel has become clearer to me. I learned that there was no 'brutal slaughtering' but the fulfillment of a divine punishment through the instrument of Joshua and the people of Israel. This has made the justice, the faithfulness, and the truth of God even more clear to me. I am truly filled with deepest gratitude for all that was revealed to me in this book."



The commentary on Joshua was recently released by Ariel's Publishing Department and has already blessed many readers.



ITALIA

We thank the Lord for the precious opportunity Martina received to share her personal testimony and her role in the ministry during a women's conference organized by a large church. Many churches in Italy have been devastated by false Messianic teachers. Consequently, our involvement in Jewish ministry is seen by many as "dangerous." But our God is almighty, and it is wonderful to see that His power goes beyond any machinations of the enemy. The Lord blessed the meeting

with His presence and joy. Although the conference had to be held via Zoom due to COVID restrictions in Italy, the ladies enjoyed a special evening of fellowship. They were so encouraged by what Martina was able to share with them that they invited her for a second conference that will be on Jewish outreach. We praise the Lord for what He is doing in our country. His power and desire to reach His people does not stop to amaze us!



When No One Else Cares

By Paul Wilkinson

Then He led out
His people like
sheep and guided
them in the
wilderness like a
flock ... He chose
David His servant
and took him from
the sheepfolds;
from following the
nursing ewes He
brought him to
shepherd Jacob
His people, Israel
His inheritance.
(Ps. 78:52, 70-71)





“For thus says the LORD: Your hurt is incurable, and your wound is grievous. There is none to uphold your cause ... All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you; for I have dealt you the blow of an enemy, the punishment of a merciless foe, because your guilt is great, because your sins are flagrant.” (Jer. 30:12-14)

Then He led out His people like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock ... He chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the nursing ewes He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, Israel His inheritance. (Ps. 78:52, 70-71)

Psalms 78 helps us understand, in a very vivid and pastoral way, the level of care with which God has tended the “flock of Israel.” Weak and vulnerable like sheep, the Israelites were utterly dependent upon their heavenly Shepherd to faithfully lead, feed, heal, defend, and deliver them. This was beautifully encapsulated by David in his timeless shepherd-psalm:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I

shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalm 23)

God always expressed indignation towards those who ill-treated His people, especially after He Himself had dispersed and scattered them among the nations in judgment. Through the Prophet Jeremiah, the LORD promised that *He Himself* would one day seek out, save, and shepherd His beloved flock:

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and will keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock. For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.” (Jer. 31:10-11)

At key times in Israel’s history, both psalmist and prophet alike appealed to God to take up His shepherd’s staff and rescue His people. Many times, the LORD wrought deliverance for Israel by raising up righteous men and women who courageously put their lives on the line. They did so in humble, loving obedience to the Lord and because they cared more about the welfare of the people than they did their own. The superintending presence and power of Israel’s faithful Shepherd is unmistakable, for example, in the biblical accounts of Esther, Mordecai, and Nehemiah:

Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, “Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my young women will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, and if I perish, I perish.” (Est. 4:15-16)

For Mordecai the Jew was

second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people. (Est. 10:3)

Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king’s letters ... But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel. (Neh. 2:9-10)

Seeking the welfare of the Jewish people ought to have been the consistent practice of the church from its foundation. Sadly, those who have exhibited genuine love and concern for the flock of Israel have been the exception rather than the rule.



A People Sought Out

One of the most striking themes running through Scripture is the deep concern that God has for the forsaken, mistreated, and deprived. As the psalmist confidently asserted, “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their supplication” (Ps. 102:17). We have an early and vivid illustration of God’s compassion in the book of Genesis, after Hagar and her son Ishmael had been banished to the wilderness of Beersheba. With supplies exhausted and her son’s death anticipated, Hagar lifted up her voice and wept. As the account continues,

God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar?



Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy, and he grew up. (Gen. 21:17-20)

God hears the cry of *every* man, woman, and child and makes no distinction according to ethnicity or gender when that cry is raised heavenwards. It was, after all, His love for *the whole world* that moved Him to give His only begotten Son, “that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). The unfathomable depth of divine compassion was magnified whenever God’s people found them-

selves in dire straits. When Israel’s sin had reached its full measure, God told the Prophet Jeremiah that even if Moses and Samuel were interceding on behalf of the nation, He would not relent from bringing disaster on Jerusalem. He rhetorically asked,

“Who will have pity on you, O Jerusalem, or who will grieve for you? Who will turn aside to ask about your welfare? You have



rejected me, declares the LORD; you keep going backward, so I have stretched out my hand against you and destroyed you — I am weary of relenting.” (Jer. 15:5-6)

But the prophecies of Jeremiah did not end in chapter 15. There were another 37 chapters to go! Remarkably, after pronouncing judgment upon the southern kingdom of Judah, whose “wound”

of sin had become “incurable” (Jer. 30:12), God promised that *He Himself* would heal His people and restore them. The reason He gave was striking: It was because the surrounding nations cared little for His people. More than that, these nations had celebrated their demise, even taking God out of the equation by claiming that *no one* was interested in the nation’s plight. How wrong they were! As the Lord declared to His people,

“There is none to uphold your cause, no medicine for your wound, no healing for you. All your lovers have forgotten you; they care nothing for you ... [T]hose who plunder you shall be plundered, and all who prey on you I will make a prey. For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, declares the LORD, because they have called you an outcast: ‘It is Zion, for whom no one cares!’” (Jer. 30:13-17)

I personally prefer the KJV rendering of verse 17, because it reveals more clearly the essence of what God was saying: “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.” The Hebrew word in view here is *dārash*, which occurs 164 times in the Old Testament. It can mean “to seek after diligently,” “to enquire about,” or “to care for.” It is used, for example, by David when he lamented in the cave that there was “none who takes notice of me; no refuge remains to me; no one cares [*dārash*] for my soul” (Ps. 142:4).

Some of the most significant occurrences of this word are to be found in the book of Deuteronomy. There *dārash*

is used, for example, in a prophetic context when Moses spoke about the Israelites seeking the Lord in the latter days:

And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD will drive you ... But from there you will seek the LORD your God and you will find Him, if you search [*dārash*] after Him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut. 4:27-29)

This word is later used in Kings and Chronicles in relation to certain rulers of the southern kingdom of Judah (Asa, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah), all of whom prospered greatly when they were wholeheartedly seeking the LORD. In the days of King Asa, for example, we read that the nation “entered into a covenant to seek [*dārash*] the LORD, the God of their fathers, with all their heart and with all their soul” (2 Chron. 15:12). They even made a solemn vow that “whoever would not seek [*dārash*] the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman.” (2 Chron. 15:13) The word is used 24 times in the book of Psalms alone. In Psalm 24, for example, David announced the prerequisites for ascending the hill of the Lord and the reward for those with clean hands and a pure heart:

He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. Such is the generation of those who seek [*dārash*] Him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. (Ps. 24:5-6)

In the Jeremiah 30 prophecy alluded to above, God told His people in no uncertain terms that the surrounding nations





to which Judah had turned for help in times of crisis would be conspicuously absent when the armies of Babylon invaded. The impotent gods and idols of these nations would not be there to help God's people. Yet, for all their infidelity, the Lord still cared, even yearned, for His chosen ones. The book of Obadiah, the shortest in the Old Testament, along with other prophecies like Ezekiel 25-26 and 35-36, expresses God's indignation towards Israel's proud neighbors: the

Ammonites, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Philistines, the Chere-thites, and the people of Tyre. These nations gloated when calamity, ruin, and desolation befell God's people, but God declared in His righteous anger that He would avenge Israel. He also brought the following word of consolation to His people:

"And for the house of Israel there shall be no more a brier to prick or a thorn to hurt them among all

their neighbors who have treated them with contempt ... Thus says the Lord God: When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and manifest my holiness in them in the sight of the nations, then they shall dwell in their own land that I gave to my servant Jacob ... They shall dwell securely, when I execute judgments upon all their neighbors who have treated them



with contempt. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God.” (Ezek. 28:24-26)

Today's implacable enemies of Israel will soon discover what the seemingly invincible warrior Goliath and the defiant Philistine armies behind him discovered to their great cost in the Valley of Elah. When an indignant shepherd boy armed only with a staff, a sling, and five smooth stones stood before them “in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the

armies of Israel” (1 Sam. 17:45), he boldly declared that the battle belonged to the Lord. David then confidently announced in the face of Goliath's taunts that the whole earth was about to learn “that there is a God in Israel.” (1 Sam. 17:46)



The Good Shepherd

It is in the book of Ezekiel that we find one of the most profound expressions of God's searching heart. In chapter 34, the revelation of God as shepherd comes into sharp focus both prophetically and pastorally. There the Lord expressed His great indignation towards the shepherds or leaders of Israel who cared little for His flock. *Dârash* took center stage as the prophetic drama unfolded:

“My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search [dârash] or seek for them ... As I live, declares the Lord GOD ... since there was no shepherd, and because my shepherds have not searched [dârash] for my sheep ... Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand and put a stop to their feeding the sheep ... For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search [dârash] for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness ... And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and He shall feed them:

He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken.” (Ezek. 34:6-24)

I believe the reference to “David” here is unmistakably Messianic, the prophecy pointing to the time when Jesus would visit His own people. When He did, they were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt. 9:36). As Jesus said of Himself on one notable occasion,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep ... I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them ... I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.” (Jn. 10:7-16)

Jesus is revealed in the New Testament as the good, great, and chief Shepherd of God's flock and the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (Jn. 10:1-18; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4, 2:25). He has entrusted the care of His beloved church to His under-shepherds, or “pastor-teachers,” as Paul defined them (Eph. 4:11). When the Lord restored and recommissioned Simon Peter by the Sea of Galilee, three times He asked him: “Do you love me?” Simon



was given a threefold instruction that was to characterize his future apostolic ministry: “Feed my lambs,” “Tend my sheep,” “Feed my sheep” (Jn. 21:15-19). It is my personal conviction that the ministry of pastor-teacher is the highest, costliest, most neglected, and most underappreciated calling in the church. I believe it is a ministry that, more than any other, reflects the heart of Jesus for His flock. The gravity of such a call was highlighted by Peter himself in his first letter, when he wrote:

I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Messiah, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet. 5:1-4)

Conclusion

When Israel as a remnant nation finally turns to the Messiah Jesus during the tribulation period, they will realize the extent to which He had sought them out, like a devoted shepherd seeking his lost sheep. The Apostle Paul once asked the believers in Rome a most solemn question: “Has God rejected His people?” (Rom. 11:1). I believe the Lord Jesus has been asking His church the same question for the past two thousand years. Paul’s own answer was emphatic:

“God forbid!” Sadly, this question remains a stumbling block to many professing Christians. Nevertheless, when the glory of the Lord finally rises upon Israel (Isa. 60:1-2), the nation that will have been completely forsaken by all but God Himself will be elevated to a place of highest honor. Furthermore, the city of Jerusalem, which has so often been conquered, divided, and fought over by the nations, will be given a new and most remarkable name. As we read in this momentous prophecy from the book of Isaiah:

The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate, but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her [Hephzibah], and your land Married [Beulah]; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married ... Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your

salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him.” And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD; and you shall be called Sought Out [Dârash], A City Not Forsaken. (Isa. 62:2-12)

This article is an excerpt of a chapter in Dr. Paul Wilkinson’s newest book, titled *Israel – The Inheritance of God*, published by Ariel Ministries and available here: www.ariel.org.



Dr. Paul R. Wilkinson is an author and conference speaker who has contributed to Christian television, radio, and film. He holds a B.Sc. in Mathematics from the University of York and a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Theology from Manchester. He has also studied at the International School of Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Paul lives in Oldham, England.





"Israel: The Inheritance of God sheds light on the reasons behind God's choice of Israel as His people. When studying these reasons, one has to dig deep into the Scriptures. The picture that emerges is of a God whose connection to Israel is unbroken because of His own nature and character. Since He put His name on Israel and thus made the people His possession, He must fulfill the promises He made to Israel. The focus shifts from Israel to the God of Israel, and the reader cannot help but walk away with a deeper adoration for this God."

— Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

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JEWISHNESS AND THE TRINITY

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



GAF



The general consensus among the rabbis today is that one cannot believe in the trinity and be Jewish. In his book *The Jewish Messiah*, Dan Cohn-Sherbok expressed this sentiment with the following words:

All Jewish thinkers reject trinitarianism as incompatible with monotheism. Modern Jewish thought is equally critical of any attempt to harmonize the belief in God's unity with the concept of a triune God. Contemporary Jewish theologians of all degrees of observance affirm that Judaism is fundamentally incompatible with what they perceive as the polytheistic character of Trinitarian belief.¹

The consensus among the rabbis is that even though the case can be made that the Christian faith is in essence monotheistic, it is not monotheistic enough to qualify as true Jewishness. Furthermore, the concept of a plurality of the Godhead or a trinity of the Godhead cannot be based on the Hebrew Bible. The purpose of this article, then, is to show from the Hebrew Scriptures the plurality of the Godhead.



God Is a Plurality

The Name *Elohim*

It is generally agreed that *Elohim* is a plural noun having the masculine plural ending “im.” The term is used of the true God in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth.”² The word is also used of false gods in verses such as Exodus 20:3: “You shall have no other gods [*elohim*] before me.”

While the use of the plural *Elohim* does not prove a triunity, it certainly opens the door to a doctrine of plurality in the Godhead since it is the word that is used for the one true God as well as for the many false gods.

Plural Verbs Used With *Elohim*

Virtually all Hebrew scholars do recognize that the word *Elohim*, as it stands by itself, is a plural noun. Nevertheless, they wish to deny that it allows for any plurality in the Godhead whatsoever. Their line of reasoning usually goes like this: When *Elohim* is used of the true God, it is followed by a singular verb; when it is used of false gods, it is followed by a plural verb. The point made, of course, is generally true because the Bible does teach that God is only one God. Therefore, the general pattern is to have the plural noun followed by the singular verb when it speaks of the one true God. However, there are places where the word is used of the true God, and yet it is followed by a plural verb:

Genesis 20:13a: “And it came to pass, when God [*Elohim*] caused me to wander from my father’s house [literally: *they* caused me to wander].”

Genesis 35:7b: “because there God [*Elohim*] was revealed unto him [literally: *they* were revealed unto him].”

II Samuel 7:23b: “God [*Elohim*] went to redeem [literally: *they* went to redeem].”

Psalms 58:11b: “Verily there is a God [*Elohim*] that judges in the earth [literally: *they* judge in the earth].”

The Name *Eloah*

If the plural form *Elohim* was the only form available for a reference to God, then conceivably the argument might be made that the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures had no alternative but to use the word *Elohim* for both the one true God and the many false gods. However, the singular form for *Elohim*, *Eloah*, exists and is used in such passages as Deuteronomy 32:15-17 and Habakkuk 3:3. This singular form could easily have been used consistently. Yet, it is only used 250 times, while the plural form is used 2,500 times. The far greater use of the plural form again turns the argument in favor of plurality in the Godhead rather than against it.

Plural Pronouns

Another case in point regarding Hebrew grammar is that often when God speaks of Himself, He uses the plural pronoun. One example of this truth is Genesis 1:26a: “And God [*Elohim*] said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” God could hardly have made reference to angels since man was created in His image and not that of angels. The *Midrash Rabbah* on Genesis recognizes the strength of this

passage and comments as follows:

R. Samuel b. Nahman said in R. Jonathan’s name: When Moses was engaged in writing the Torah, he had to write the work of each day. When he came to the verse, And God said: Let us make man, etc. [Gen 1:26], he said: ‘Sovereign of the Universe! Why dost Thou furnish an excuse to the heretics [who believe in the triunity of the God]?’ ‘Write!’ replied He; ‘whoever wishes to err may err.’³

It is obvious that the *Midrash Rabbah* is simply trying to get around the problem and fails to answer adequately why God refers to Himself in the plural.

The use of the plural pronoun can also be seen in the following verses:

Genesis 3:22a: “And Jehovah God [*YHWH Elohim*] said, Behold, the man is become as one of us.”

Genesis 11:7a: “Come, let us go down, and there confound their language.”

Isaiah 6:8a: “And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”

This last verse would appear contradictory with the singular “I” and the plural “us” except as viewed as a plurality (us) in a unity (I).



¹ Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Jewish Messiah* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1997), pp. 75-76.

² Unless otherwise noted, the verses in this article are quoted from the ASV.

³ Harry Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah* (London, England: The Soncino Press, 1961), Vol. 1, p. 59.



Plural Descriptions of God

Another point that can be made from Hebrew grammar is the fact that often nouns and adjectives used in speaking of God are plural. Some examples are as follows:

Ecclesiastes 12:1a: "Remember also your Creator [literally: creators]."

Psalms 149:2a: "Let Israel rejoice in their Maker [literally: makers]."

Joshua 24:19a: "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve Jehovah; for he is a holy God [literally: holy Gods]."

Isaiah 54:5a: "For your Maker is your husband [literally: makers, husbands]."

Everything that has been said so far rests firmly on the Hebrew language of the Scriptures. The Scriptures affirm God's unity. At the same time, they tend toward the concept of a compound unity allowing for a plurality in the Godhead.

The *Sh'ma*

Deuteronomy 6:4, known as the *Sh'ma*, has always been Israel's great confession of faith: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"⁴ The verse is used more than any other to affirm the fact that God is one and to contradict the concept of plurality in the Godhead. But is this a valid use of this verse?

In the Hebrew text, the words "our God" are in the plural and literally mean "our Gods." However, the main argument lies in the Hebrew word for "one," *echad*. In the Scriptures, *echad* does not always mean an absolute "one" but often a compound "one." For instance, in Genesis 1:5 the combination of evening and morning comprises one (*echad*) day. In Genesis 2:24 a man and a woman come together in marriage and the two become one (*echad*) flesh. Ezra 2:63 states that the whole assembly was as one (*echad*), although, of course, it was composed of numerous people. Ezekiel 37:17 provides a rather striking example where two sticks are combined to become one (*echad*). Thus, use of the word *echad* in Scripture shows it to be a compound and not an absolute unity.

There is a Hebrew word that does mean an absolute unity, and that is *yachid*. Found in many Scripture passages,⁵ the main emphasis of this term is on the meaning of "only." If Moses intended to teach God's absolute oneness instead of a compound unity, this would have been a far more appropriate word. In fact, the famous Torah scholar Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (1138-1204)⁶ noted the strength of *yachid* and chose to use that

word in his "Thirteen Articles of Faith" in place of *echad*. However, the *Sh'ma* does not use *yachid* in reference to God.

God Is at Least Two

Elohim and *YHWH* Applied to Two Personalities

As if to make the case for plurality even stronger, there are situations in the Hebrew Scriptures where the term *Elohim* is applied to two personalities in the same verse. One example is Psalm 45:6-7:

Your throne, O God [*Elohim*], is forever and ever:

A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness:

Therefore God [*Elohim*], your God [*Elohim*], has anointed you

With the oil of gladness above your fellows.

It should be noted that the second *Elohim* is the God of the first *Elohim*. And so God's God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness.

A second example is Hosea 1:7:⁷ But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD [*YHWH*] their God [*Elohim*], and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

The speaker is *Elohim* who says He will have mercy on the house of Judah and will save them by the instrumentality of *YHWH*, their *Elohim*. So, *Elohim* number one will save Israel by means of *Elohim* number two.

⁴ NKJV

⁵ Genesis 22:2, 12; Judges 11:34; Psalm 22:21; 25:16; Proverbs 4:3; Jeremiah 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zechariah 12:10.

⁶ Also known as Maimonides or Rambam.

⁷ NKJV





Not only is *Elohim* applied to two personalities in the same verse, but so is the very name of God: [YHWH]. One example is Genesis 19:24: "Then the LORD [YHWH] rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD [YHWH] out of the heavens."⁸ YHWH number one was on earth and rained fire and brimstone from a second YHWH who was in heaven.

A second example is Zechariah 2:8-9:

For thus says the LORD [YHWH] of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD [YHWH] of hosts has sent Me."⁹

Again, one YHWH was sending another YHWH to perform a specific task.

According to *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, the author of the *Zohar* sensed plurality in the Tetragrammaton: ¹⁰

The Cabala, ... especially the Zohar, its fundamental work, was far less hostile to the dogma of the Trinity, since by its speculations regarding the father, the son, and the spirit it evolved a new trinity, and thus became dangerous to Judaism. Such terms as "maṭroni-ta," "body," "spirit," occur frequently ... so that Christians and converts like Knorr von Rosenroth, Reuchlin, and Rittangel found in the Zohar a confirmation of Christianity and especially of the dogma of the Trinity.¹¹

God Is Three

If the Hebrew Scriptures truly do point to a plurality in the Godhead, the question arises: How many persons are there? As was already seen, the names of God

applied to at least two different personalities. A further survey of the Hebrew Scriptures reveals that three—and only three—distinct personalities are ever considered divine. First, there are the numerous times when there is a reference to the Lord YHWH. This usage is

so frequent that there is no need to devote space to it.

A second personality is referred to as "the Angel of YHWH." This individual is always considered distinct from all other angels and is unique. In almost every passage where He is found, He is referred to as both the Angel of YHWH and YHWH Himself. The following list provides several examples:

Examples of Passages that Equate the Angel of YHWH with God

Genesis 16:7	The Angel of YHWH
Genesis 16:13	YHWH Himself
Genesis 22:11	Angel of YHWH
Genesis 22:12	YHWH Himself
Genesis 31:11	The Angel of God
Genesis 31:13	The God of Bethel
Exodus 3:2	The Angel of YHWH
Exodus 3:4	Both YHWH and God
Judges 6:11, 12, 20, 21	The Angel of YHWH
Judges 6:14, 16, 22, 23	YHWH Himself
Judges 13:3, 21	The Angel of YHWH
Judges 13:22	God Himself

A very interesting passage is Exodus 23:20-23, where this Angel has the power to pardon sin because God's own name, *YHWH*, is in Him, and therefore, He is to be obeyed without question. This can hardly be said of any ordinary angel. But the very fact that God's own name is in this Angel shows His divine status.

The third personality that can be seen in the Hebrew Scriptures is the Spirit of God, often referred to simply as the *Ruach HaKodesh*. Some references to God's Spirit are Genesis 1:2; 6:3; Job 33:4; Psalm 51:11; 139:7; Isaiah 11:2; 63:10, 14. The Holy Spirit cannot be a mere emanation because He has all the characteristics of personality (intellect, emotion, and will) and is considered divine in the Hebrew Scriptures.

So then, the Hebrew Scriptures speak of three personalities that are referred to as divine and as being God: the Lord *YHWH*, the Angel of *YHWH*, and the Spirit of God.

The Three Personalities in the Same Passage

There are several passages in the Hebrew Scriptures that speak of all three personalities of the Godhead. One example is Isaiah 48:12-16:¹²

¹²Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel, My called: I am He, I am the first, I am also the last. ¹³Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand up togeth-

er. ¹⁴All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear! Who among them has declared these things? The LORD loves him; he shall do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be against the Chaldeans. ¹⁵I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him, I have brought him, and his way will prosper. ¹⁶Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit have sent Me.

In verse 13, the speaker refers to Himself as the one who is responsible for the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is clear that He cannot be speaking of anyone other than God. In verse 16, He refers to Himself using the pronouns "me" and "I" and then distinguishes Himself from the Lord *YHWH* and from the Spirit of God. Here the

triunity is as clearly defined as the Hebrew Scriptures make it.

Another example is Isaiah 63:7-14. This passage reflects on the Exodus, when all three personalities were present and active. The Lord *YHWH* is referred to in verse 7; the Angel of *YHWH* in verse 9; and the Spirit of God in verses 10, 11, and 14. While often throughout the Hebrew Scriptures God refers to Himself as being the one solely responsible for Israel's redemption from Egypt, in this passage three personalities are given credit for it. Yet no contradiction is seen since all three comprise the unity of the one Godhead.

Conclusion

The teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures, then, is that there is a plurality of the Godhead. The first person is consistently called "*YHWH*," while the second person is given the names of "*YHWH*," "the Angel of *YHWH*," and "the Servant of *YHWH*." Consistently and without fail, the second person is sent by the first person. The third person is referred to as "the Spirit of *YHWH*," "the Spirit of God," or "the Holy Spirit." He, too, is sent by the first person but is continually related to the ministry of the second person.

If the concept of the triunity of God is not Jewish, as the modern rabbis claim, then neither are the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish believers in Yeshua cannot be accused of having slipped into paganism when they hold to the fact that Yeshua is the divine Son of



⁸ NKJV

⁹ NKJV

¹⁰ The Tetragrammaton is the four-letter Hebrew name of God, יהוה. It is transliterated as *YHWH*. The pronunciation of the name has been avoided since at least the third century B.C. Initially, the name was substituted with *Adonai* ("the Lord"), later itself replaced by *ha-Shem* ("the Name"). The name *Jehovah* is a hybrid misreading of the original Hebrew letters with the vowels of "Adonai."

¹¹ Kaufmann Kohler and Samuel Krauss, "Trinity," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Isidore Singer, ed.; New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls, 1907), Vol. 12, p. 260.

¹² NKJV



God. He is the same one of whom God said:

²⁰"Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. ²¹Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name *is* in Him. ²²But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. ²³For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off." (Exodus 23:20-23)¹³



New Testament Light

In keeping with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures, the New Testament clearly recognizes that there are three persons in the Godhead, although it becomes quite a bit more specific. The first person is called "the Father."

The second person is called "the Son." The New Testament answers an

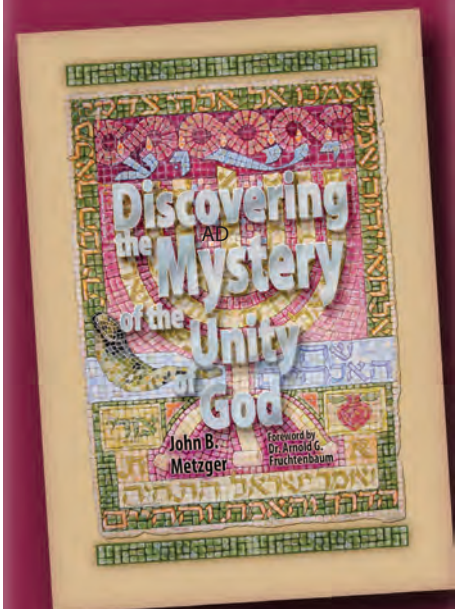
important question that was asked in Proverbs 30:4:

"Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What *is* His name, and what *is* His Son's name, If you know?"¹⁴

The riddle in this verse consists of six questions, the first four of which are rhetorical. The answers to these questions are obvious since only God Himself could accomplish these things. The fifth question is also easy since the name of God was revealed to men long before the book of Proverbs was written. The name of God is *YHWH*. It is the sixth question that is tricky: "What is the name of His Son?" Psalm 2 already revealed that God has a son. Here it is stated again. What is not revealed, however, is the name of that Son, hence the teasing "If you know." At this stage of progressive revelation, no one *could* know His name. It is only in the New Testament that His name is revealed as Yeshua. In accordance with the Hebrew Scriptures, He was sent by God to be the Messiah. Furthermore, He was sent for a specific purpose: to die for our sins. In essence, what happened is that God became a man (not that man became God) in order to accomplish the work of atonement.

The third person of the Godhead is called "the Holy Spirit." Throughout the New Testament, He is related to the work of the second person, in keeping with the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures. We see, then, that there is a continuous body of teaching in both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament relating to the triunity of God.

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¹³ NKJV

¹⁴ NKJV



IS THE GOSPEL OF JOHN ANTI-SEMITIC?

A RESPONSE TO A FRIEND

by Mottel Baleston

A Response to a Friend

Mottel Baleston has a friend who works bi-vocationally as a pastor and as an administrator of a university. Pastor T. told him of an ongoing friendship with a Jewish colleague in a similar position at an Israeli university and of a challenge this colleague had put before him. Here is Mottel's response:

Dear Pastor T,

It is great that you are able to continue your dialogue with the Israeli academic with whom you struck up a friendship at the conference for university administrators. Let me address the issue your Israeli friend brought up as a reason that keeps him from faith in Jesus as Messiah. That issue is the appearance of an attack on the Jewish establishment of the day by Messiah Jesus, particularly as seen in the Gospel of John. I myself have friends who were educated in the Israeli higher education system and were taught that those passages form the basis for the anti-Semitism that had permeated much of institutional Christen-

dom over the centuries and has resulted in much violence directed toward Jewish families. Once my friends accepted that narrative uncritically, it allowed them a justification for disregarding the claims of Messiah.

One disadvantage most people have in viewing the events of the first century from a 21st-century perspective is that it becomes impossible to put the historical conflict between church and synagogue out of our thinking. The record is clear that the majority of church institutions from the year AD 350 up through the Holocaust held an understanding of the Jewish people that was negative to one

degree or another. While there were certainly many individuals and a few denominations that embraced the concept that God has an enduring covenant with the Jewish people corporately, the majority of those within Christendom (distinct from Christianity) had such false, non-biblical, and toxic views of the Jewish people that they were willing to engage in violence toward them. They did so either on a small scale or in mammoth events, such as the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the pogroms in Europe in which four members of my grandmother's family were slaughtered in 1919 by individuals who



considered themselves Christians. Of course, the Holocaust, even though primarily an outgrowth of pagan Nazi theology, was facilitated on the local level by church members who wrongly imagined that the New Testament justified their violence.

Thus, many Jewish people tend to identify Christendom as wanting to squash and end the institution of the synagogue. While that is demonstrably true for certain church groups, it is not true of all. As a result, when these Jewish people read the Gospel of John, their assumption is that they are reading about the start of the church and that one of the goals of that new organization was to criticize, humiliate, and surpass the institution of the synagogue, as though there was a conflict between Judaism and Christianity. That is a fully false understanding of the actual context of the early followers of Yeshua the Messiah.

THE CONTEXT OF THE FIRST CENTURY

The world of Judaism in the first century was not as uniform and relatively monolithic as modern Rabbinic Judaism has become. While Judaism has various levels of observance from the most Orthodox to those who are ethnically Jewish but ignore the traditions, there is little questioning today that the core of classic Judaism is expressed in the writings of the rabbis in the collection of volumes called *The Talmud*. What most people fail to recognize, even within the Jewish community, is that this is a relatively recent state of affairs. Anyone who teaches on the university level and who is well versed in Jewish history

understands these simple facts:

1. During the years 150 BC through AD 79 (over 200 years), there was a vigorous and sometimes violent struggle within Judaism for dominance. The groups we today call the Sadducees and the Pharisees were engaged in a competition to determine the future landscape of Judaism. In the year 103 BC, the Jewish Hasmonean prince and high priest Jannai had eight hundred Pharisees killed after he took power. Each group disseminated propaganda against the other groups, each seeking dominance over the future direction of Judaism. The Sadducees were very willing to compromise doctrine in the interest of political alliances with the Romans and others. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were evolving an ever more legalistic approach to Mosaic Law. Arguments broke out in local synagogues over which group to support.

2. Other pietistic Jewish groups objected to the way both Pharisees and Sadducees were handling things and went off into the deserts to practice a more pure Judaism. The Essenes around the Dead Sea area were an example of this. Arguments broke out in local synagogues about this issue.

Into this mix Yeshua was born in the Judean town of Bethlehem. He was from the tribe of Judah and counted King David as one of His ancestors. So far, it is a thoroughly Jewish story. In Luke 4, we have the account of Yeshua walking into the synagogue in Nazareth—the synagogue His family attended—and announcing that He is the long-awaited Jewish Messiah. After His announcement, something very traditionally Jewish happened: An argu-

ment broke out within the synagogue. Some were willing to listen to Yeshua's Messianic claim; others thought He was crazy. Once again, this is typical for the Jewish history of the day. No one there would have thought that Yeshua was trying to start a new religion by claiming to be the Messiah. They understood that the Messiah and the Messianic age were the long-awaited hope of the Jewish Bible.

As time went on, more and more Jewish people came to believe that Yeshua was Messiah. Some were educated rabbis, but most were ordinary people. The arguments that broke out over this new movement were absolutely no different than the arguments that had occurred during previous Jewish movements. They were an inner-family dispute. No Gentiles were involved. It was just “us Jews.” There was no separate “Christianity” in existence at this point as most people think of Christianity. It was a fully and completely Jewish dispute. Some of us thought that Yeshua was Messiah, many were not sure, and a few dramatically opposed Him.

In a similar way, when John referred to “the Jews” in a negative way (for example, in John 10:31), he used the basic Greek word available to him, *Ioudaios*, which by then basically meant “Judean.” The disciples of Yeshua were mostly common Jewish people of the land from Galilee. So, when the Judean Temple authorities sought to stone Yeshua in 10:31, John referred to them as “Judeans,” and “Jews” is the way it is commonly translated in English Bibles.

The most vehement statement from Yeshua came as He was speaking with some Jews who imagined that, as descendants of Abraham, they did not need atonement, did not need to be

saved. To them, He said: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires” (Jn. 8:44). Yeshua did not charge the entire Jewish nation with this statement. In fact, He was in the company of many Jewish people who were His followers when He made that accusation. It was directed toward one segment of the Jewish community.

The denunciations seen in the book of John of the religious Jewish establishment are actually mild when you compare them to some of the denunciations made by secular Jewish people in modern Israel when they speak in a critical way of the Haredai ultra-Orthodox rabbis. Secular Jews charge that the ultra-Orthodox are on welfare and do not pay taxes. They complain that their sons do not serve in the Army, that they control many functions of the government even though they are a minority, and that they generally make the lives of secular Jews much more difficult than they need to be. I am toning down the things I have personally heard from secular Israelis. At the same time, the ultra-Orthodox say very harsh things against secular Jews.

The denunciations in the book of John are a similar inner-family dispute. It was not a dispute of Christians against Jews, as there was no Christendom at this point in time. The Jewish community was faced with a decision: Would they continue to follow the dictates of the Pharisaic rabbis, would they follow the safe path of the Temple Sadducees, or would they believe the message of Yeshua as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah? It is a Jewish question within our own community.

Any intelligent Jewish adult standing in the middle of Jerusalem in the year AD 30 would have had this understanding.

HISTORICAL INTER-JEWISH CONFLICTS

Over the centuries there have been many other inter-Jewish family disputes that were severe:

- The revolt of Judean Jews against Roman occupation from AD 66 through 70 resulted in many Jewish communities outside the Holy Land pledging allegiance to Rome.
- By the year 1100, the question of whether the Talmud was authoritative divided the Jewish world, with half of the synagogues embracing the Karaite view that only the Bible was divinely inspired. This simple historical fact would come as a shock to most within the Jewish community today.
- During the 17th century, the Turkish Jew Sabbatai Tzvi claimed to be the Messiah, and he was able to gain over 100,000 followers, dividing synagogues and provoking debate within the Jewish world.

For the serious student of Jewish history, these three conflicts within the Jewish community are just the most notable. There were many more, and they put the first-century debate between Messianic Jews and Rabbinic Jews in its historic context. For most of its history, Judaism has had a wide variety of movements within it.

Only after 1,700 years of Christendom drifting far away from its Jewish roots did it reach the insane point where

it persecuted the very group that gave birth to it. Only as a result of that history do we read into the passages in John some imagined conflict of Christianity against Judaism. This is a classic logical fallacy. At the time, no such dispute existed. It was a family argument.

For those of us who are Jewish believers in Yeshua, we understand that He was rightly pointing out the hypocrisy of many in leadership, something the Prophet Jeremiah did as well. Yeshua followed in a long Jewish tradition, even as He is the one and only divine Messiah.

None of the foregoing diminishes to a single degree the intention of God to fling open wide the doors into His family and make access available to all, Jews and non-Jews equally, through the finished work of Messiah Yeshua. None of the foregoing diminishes at all the plan of God to establish His new creation, the *kehillah*—the church, the body of believers in Messiah Yeshua—born on the day of Pentecost.

Pastor, thanks for listening. I need to have a bit more time to put these thoughts into the form of a formal article. Again, for me the Gospel of John is not an anti-Jewish book. It is a book written within a Jewish context that promotes my Jewish Messiah as the one Savior for all peoples.



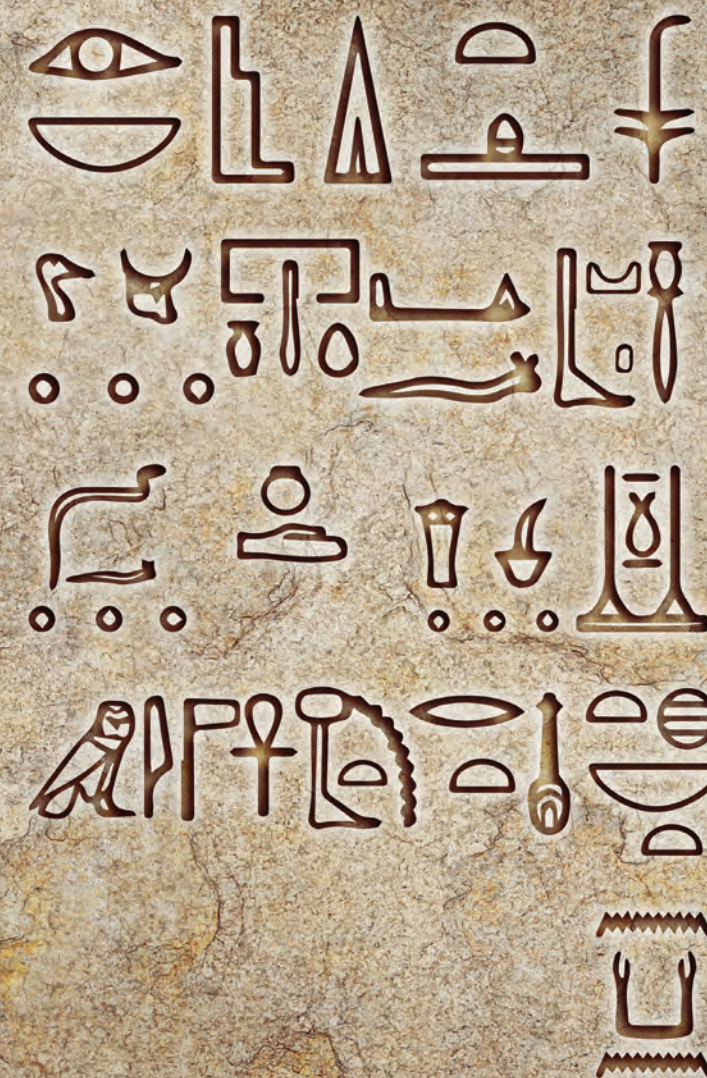
Your brother,
Mottel Baleston

OUR GOD IS GREATER!

REFLECTIONS ON AN EGYPTIAN OFFERING FORMULA

BY PAUL MILES

AΩ





The picture above on the left has a Middle Egyptian hieroglyphic text that contains an offering formula.¹
Here is a transcription of the text along with a translation:



1) *ḥtp-dī-nsw wsir nb*

1) An offering which the king gives to Osiris, lord of



2) *ʾbdw dī=f prt-ḥrw t ḥnkt kʾw ʾpdw*

2) Abydos. May he give a voice offering of bread, beer, oxen, fowl,



3) *šs mnḥt snṯr mrḥt nwd df(ʾ)w*

3) alabaster, linen, incense, oil, ointment, provisions,



4) *ḥt nbt nfrt wʾbt ʾnḥt nṯr ḥm*

4) and everything good and pure upon which a god lives



5) *n kʾ n*

5) for the *ka* of [blank space]

These hieroglyphs are written right to left on a material called “cartonnage,” which is made of linen and plaster. This particular tab of cartonnage seems to have broken off from the bottom of a mummy mask that was built in the early 18th dynasty. Nobody is certain what it was attached to, but currently, the best guess is that it was attached to the mummy mask on the right (notice the broken bottom).² By some calculations, the Queen of Sheba ruled during the 18th dynasty,³ so the mask might have been a contemporary of King Solomon, but others would suppose that it was closer to the time of Moses and the Exodus.⁴ The face on the mask is a woman, but it is not intended to represent any specific person. The mask was probably prefabricated with the face and text to be sold later to anyone who wanted it and was affluent enough to buy it.

The offering formula is one of the most common texts that you will find in Middle Egyptian writings. The purposes of the formula are described:

¹ It is housed at the Manchester Museum (accession number 8106). You can visit the museum online to see this and other artifacts at <http://harbour.man.ac.uk/mmcustom/narratives/>.

² The mask is also at the Manchester Museum (accession number 7931). See more at <http://harbour.man.ac.uk/mmcustom/Display.php?irn=105871> (accessed November 30, 2020).

³ John Ashton and David Down, *Unwrapping the Pharaohs: How Egyptian Archaeology Confirms the Biblical Timeline* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2006), ch. 28. Available online at <https://answersingenesis.org/archaeology/ancient-egypt/a-correct-chronology/> (accessed November 28, 2020).

⁴ This would align with Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible: 101 Archaeological Discoveries that Bring the Bible to Life* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020).


The offering formula merges two related functions: official and personal. In official terms, the status of the deceased as one of the blessed dead was linked to the successful performance of official functions in royal service and ethical behaviour in life... The second, personal, function relates more to the private family-based aspects of the funerary cult of the deceased... the offerings made at the burial could be perpetuated by family members (particularly the son and heir), or by people visiting the tomb or passing by the stela.⁵

The most common form of the Egyptian offering formula has three components:⁶


 ḥtp-dī-nsw

“an offering which the king gives”


 prt-ḥrw
 “a voice offering”





 n k' n
 “for the ka of”

This short text is interesting for a few reasons, and I think if we study it, we will notice the obvious: that the one true God is far greater than the false gods of the Egyptian pantheon. This article will discuss each of these three sections of the offering formula as seen in the

artifact and then consider some reasons that our God is greater than the counterfeits. There will be a quiz at the end, so pay attention!


 ḥtp-dī-nsw


“an offering which the king gives”










The first phrase, , is rather obscure, and Egyptologists have debated much about the specifics of its etymology, potential evolution, and precise meaning,⁷ but it is transliterated as ḥtp-dī-nsw,⁸ meaning “an offering which the king gives.” Then it designates to whom the offering is given, in this case,  wsir nb, “Osiris, lord of”  bdw, “Abydos.” It is generally accepted that originally the offerings were purchased from royal estates and magazines, that the kings would offer the provisions to the gods, that the gods would then eat and drink to their satisfaction, and that once the gods were satisfied, they would pass the leftovers along to nourish the human’s soul on whose behalf the offering is made.⁹

The Ancient Egyptian religion had over 2,000 Egyptian deities and Osiris was the god of the dead. Eventually, the tomb of the 1st-dynasty king Djer in Abydos was believed to be that of Osiris himself (though there were other alleged locations for pieces of Osiris’s body as well). Cities had patron gods; Ra was the patron deity of Dendera, Ptah of Memphis, Anubis of Cynopolis,





and so on, so Osiris became “the lord of Abydos.” The Greek philosopher Plutarch (ca. A.D. 46-199) wrote that “the fortunate and most powerful of the Egyptians strive to have their funerals in Abydos to be buried together with the body of Osiris.”¹⁰

This is remarkably different from what we mean when we speak of the one true God as being “the God of Israel.” We do not mean that Israel has its own patron god while other nations have their legitimate gods as well. No, we mean that God is the only God, He is supreme over the entire universe, and Israel recognized Him when others did not. God does have a special relationship with Israel that includes several promises that He has fulfilled, is fulfilling, and will fulfill, but this does not mean that Gentiles are free to invent their own gods as the Egyptians did.


 prt-ḥrw
 “a voice offering”

The symbol for “voice offering” is  prt-ḥrw and includes the symbols  t “bread” and  hnkt “beer.” After is the list of goods that are being offered (you might recognize some of the symbols),  k' w “oxen,”  pdw “fowl,”  sntr “incense,”  mrht “oil,”  nwd “ointment” and the more general  df(‘)w “provisions.” The fourth line is particularly interesting as it

⁵ Mark Collier and Bill Manley, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs* Revised ed. (London: British Museum Press, 1998), pp. 35-36.

⁶ If you have a Middle Egyptian dictionary, you are likely to see these signs written left to right. I have written the hieroglyphs right to left to make it easier to refer back to the artefact in question. Also, the hieroglyphs can appear differently; as we will soon see,  can be  and  can be  but this does not change the meaning.

⁷ See, for example, Detlef Franke, “The Middle Kingdom Offering Formulas—A Challenge,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 89, no. 1 (December 2003): 39-57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/030751330308900104>.

⁸ We do not know much about Egyptian vowels, so the standard practice is to pronounce a short “e” as in “bed” after most consonants, an open “a” as in “father” for ‘ and ’, a long “e” as in “reed” for i, and a long “u” as in “blue” for w. So, for example, the phrase, ḥtp-dī-nsw, would be pronounced, “hetep-di-nesu” (the h is a little weird, but that’s the gist of it).

⁹ Detlef Franke, “The Middle Kingdom Offering Formulas,” p. 40.

¹⁰ Ἐν τῷ Ἀβύδῳ τοὺς εὐδαίμονας τῶν Αἰγυπτίων καὶ δυνατοὺς μάλιστα θάπτεσθαι, φιλοτιμουμένους ὁμοτάφους εἶναι τοῦ σώματος Ὀσίριδος. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*, 20.



reads ht nbt nfrt w'bt 'nht ntr im "everything good and pure upon which a god lives."

Unlike the one true God, the false gods of Ancient Egypt were not omnipotent; they needed sustenance. The Egyptian pantheon did not have a universal god, but rather a committee of lesser gods (remember that the offering formula was given to "Osiris, the lord of Abydos," not "Osiris, lord of the universe"). The hope would be that the provisions being offered would suffice for the god so that the human could eat the leftovers. If there was not enough food, then the human could starve to death in the afterlife,¹¹ but even if there was enough food, there was still the lingering dread of the heart-weighing ceremony. This ceremony is depicted in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* as seen in the following section of the Papyrus of Hunefer:



In the above panels, Anubis (with the jackal head) weighs the heart of Hunefer (deceased man in white clothes) against the Feather of Ma'at. If the heart is impure and heavier than the feather, then the goddess Ammit (part crocodile, lion, and hippopotamus) gobbles it down, but Hunefer is good enough, so Horus (with the falcon head) presents him to Osiris (on the throne).

Having a heart as light as a feather may sound difficult, but those who invented the religion had to make it achievable, so it is not impossible. Part of the ceremony involved pronouncing a negative confession of 42 sins that the person did not commit, which varied between individuals. The archeologist Titus Kennedy says, "The focus was on intent rather than result, which means it was easier to access paradise than a standardized list of sins committed."¹² A light heart symbolized a virtuous life, but evidently, virtue was obtained in part by having sins that you could claim not to have committed even if you were sinful in other ways.

n k' n

"for the ka of"

The final line has n k' n "for the ka of," and the rest of the line is blank. The k' "ka" is the Egyptian idea of a soul, spirit, or life force. The Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge explains:

The physical body of a man was called KHAT, a word which indicates something in which decay is inherent; it was this which was buried in the tomb after mummification... Attached to the body in some remarkable way was the KA, or "double," of a man; it may be defined as an abstract individuality or personality which was endowed with all his characteristic attributes, and it possessed an absolutely independent existence.¹³

The phrase "for the ka of" is followed by the name of the person whose ka the offering should benefit, but there is no name in this blank. It was common practice to make an item with the proper magic formulas written, but with blanks for names to be filled out upon purchase. Apparently, this particular mummy mask never sold, so it sat without a name until it was eventually discovered thousands of years later.

In the first four lines, the hieroglyphs use several short forms of words, but the final line has plenty of blank space, presumably so that the deceased could have a title added after her name. One common title would be m' t-hrw "justified."¹⁴ The final hieroglyph



¹¹ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life* 3rd ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1908), p. 167.

¹² Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible: 101 Archaeological Discoveries that Bring the Bible to Life* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2020), p. 53.

¹³ E. A. Wallis Budge, *Egyptian Ideas of the Future Life*, 163.

¹⁴ A full lexical form is m' t-hrw, but if the mask was intended for a woman, then the feminine (written right to left) might have been m' t-hrwt, or perhaps a shortened version of the same.



in this word is the determinative, , which does not contribute a sound, but rather tells us that the word's meaning has something to do with a mouth or voice. There is some disagreement about the precise etymology of  *m'ḥrw* "justified,"¹⁵ but one idea is that it indicates a man being called "just" or "righteous," or that "the acclamation given to him is 'right.'"¹⁶

Assuming that the deceased was virtuous enough to be called "right," she still needed to purchase enough royal provisions for the god and herself lest she starve to death in the afterlife. Religion was big business in Ancient Egypt, but it could not offer any *real* sense of eternal security, especially for the poor.

Our God is Greater

The one true God is greater than all of the Egyptian counterfeits for several reasons, but for now, we will discuss the following: First, unlike the Egyptian gods, our God is holy; second, unlike the Egyptian gods, our God offers eternal security; and third, unlike the Egyptian gods, our God wants genuine fellowship with men.

Unlike the Egyptian gods, our God is holy. He created everything. Therefore, as the God of the universe, He is the standard of holiness. Because God is holy, He cannot have a relationship with that which is unholy (Hab. 1:13; Ps. 24:3-5; Isa. 6:3; Heb. 7:26). His perfect justice demands that sin be punished (Pss. 9:8; 96:13; Acts 17:31; Rom. 8:3), and so man's natural state is entirely

hopeless to be resolved by man's effort. But the Messiah serves as a substitute for man's punishment, as it is written, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5, ASV). For this reason, He is called "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29, NKJV). Sin does not prevent a man from becoming justified, nor can a man become justified by not committing certain sins as the Egyptians believed. Nobody can become justified by his own virtue, but God makes a provision in that He imputes His righteousness to anyone who believes in the Messiah for eternal life (Rom 3:22; 4:5, 6, 11, 24; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9).

Unlike the Egyptian gods, our God offers assurance of eternal life. In the Egyptian religion, the *ka* could die even in the afterlife; but in the Bible, it is clear that eternal life lasts forever, hence the nomenclature, "*eternal* life." When God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He identified Himself as, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:6 JPS). Moses was 80 years old (Exod. 7:7) and his father lived to be 137 (Exod. 6:20), but Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had long passed away. When the Sadducees, who rejected the resurrection, tried to entrap Yeshua, He responded by appealing to the burning bush because Abraham is as alive today as he was in Genesis (Mark 12:18-27). On what grounds is Abraham alive? First of all, from the moment that a person is

formed in the womb, his soul inherently lasts forever,¹⁷ but even Pharaoh lasts forever, so the real question is, "What do we mean when we talk about Abraham having eternal life?" In biblical terms, the second death is not an annihilation by a crocodile/lion/hippo monster, but rather it is eternal separation from God, which is inevitable for anyone who has never been justified (Rev. 20:11-15). The key difference between Abraham and Pharaoh is that Abraham was justified, that is, he was called "just" or "righteous" (Gen. 15:6). What is more, Abraham did not buy a prefab mummy mask and fill the blank with "Abraham the justified," but rather he was counted as "just" by God Himself when he believed (Gen. 15:6).

Many theologians struggle with the topic of eternal security and suppose that eternal life can be lost. I was discussing this with a man who rejected eternal security, and I asked him if once a saved person dies, he could then lose his eternal life somehow in the afterlife. Of course, he said, "no" (he was not an Ancient Egyptian Pagan, after all!), so I pointed out that we actually both believe in eternal security, but that our disagreement is over when eternal life begins. He believed that eternal life begins at physical death. However, the Bible speaks of justification as an experience in the past (Eph. 2:5, 8; Titus 3:5; 2 Tim. 1:9) so that eternal life is a present possession (Jn. 5:24; 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:1, 38-39; Heb. 7:25). That is to say that at the moment when someone believes in Yeshua the Messiah for salvation, *he has eternal life* and will never lose it. Faith in Yeshua is the *only*

¹⁵ Rudolf Anthes explores the options well in "The Original Meaning of *M'ḥrw*," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 13:1 (Jan. 1954), pp. 21-51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷ For a response to annihilationism (the view that the unsaved will cease to exist), see Paul McCauley, *He That Believeth Not... The Errors of Universalism and Annihilationism Explored* revised ed. (Kilmarnock, Scotland: John Ritchie Ltd., 2016).



prerequisite for justification. The Egyptians are proud enough to think that they can avoid enough sins to warrant themselves a desirable afterlife, but since the one true God is infinitely holy, a man cannot avoid sin enough to warrant God's presence. None of man's works are meritorious (Isaiah 64:6), so the only way for a person to be holy enough to be with God for eternity is if God Himself declares that man to be holy or righteous. And God calls a man righteous whenever he

simply believes in Yeshua for eternal life.







Finally, unlike the Egyptian gods, our God wants genuine fellowship with men. He does not just throw us some table scraps as the Egyptians thought, rather He desires to commune with humans. Eternal life is a free gift that God gives by grace through faith regardless of behavior (Eph. 2:8, 9), but once someone has eternal life, there is another promise that "If we endure, we will also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12a,

NASB). Unlike a pagan god who gives men their own food back to them, the real God offers rewards such as the hidden manna (Rev. 2:17; cf. Exod. 16:15-16) and fruit from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7; cf. Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24). The believer in Yeshua is already eternally secure and now has the opportunity to rule and receive treasure in the Messianic kingdom and eternity.

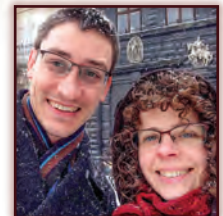
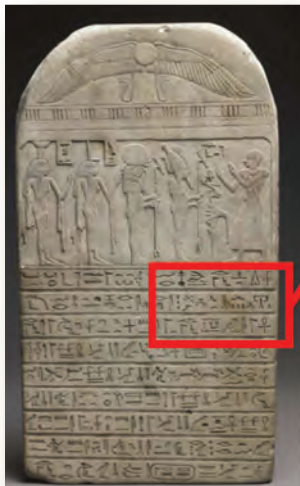
THAT IS A WONDERFUL HOPE THAT THE EGYPTIAN RELIGION COULD NEVER OFFER!

Quiz:

This is a limestone funerary stela of a man named Ankhefenmut from the 26th dynasty.¹⁸ It has several of the same words as the cartonnage text, but some are written differently.

Can you find   *hṯp-dī-nsw* "an offering which the king gives,"   *prt-hrw* "a voice offering"  *k'w* *'pdw* "oxen and fowl" and  *n k'n* "for the ka of" in the enlarged section?

Answers on pg. 36.



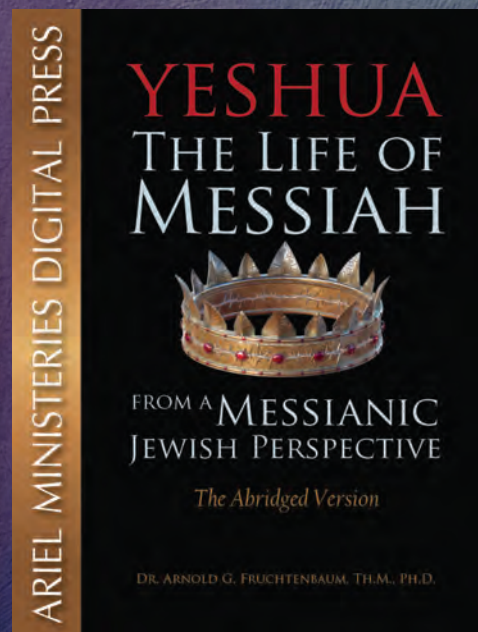
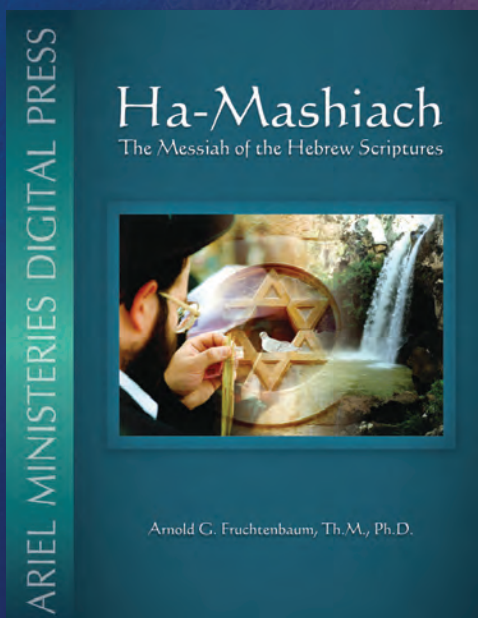
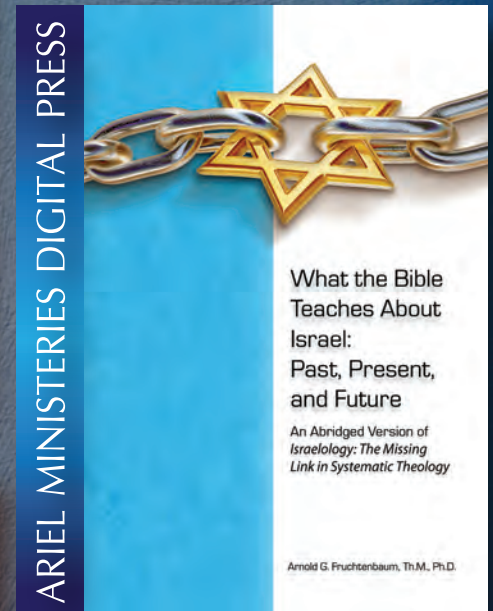
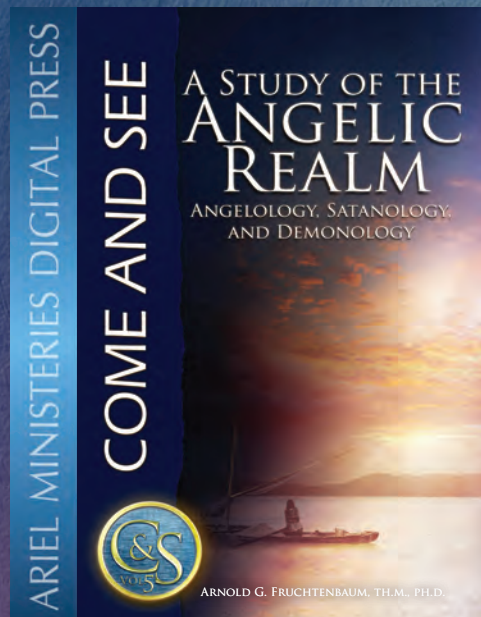
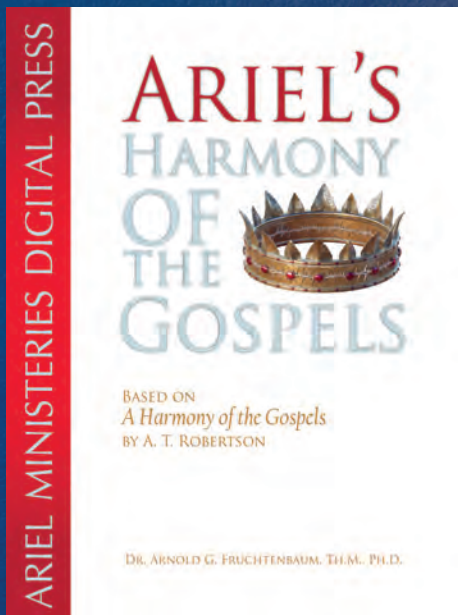
Paul Miles has a bachelor's degree in Russian from the University of Arlington, a Master's degree in Theological Studies from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Doctorate of Ministry in Bible and Theology from Tyndale Theological Seminary, where he also serves as an advising professor. He is the executive director of Grace Abroad Ministries and a charter fellow of the International Society for Biblical Hermeneutics. He lives in Kyiv, Ukraine, with his wife and son. You can visit their blog at www.TheMileses.com.

¹⁸ It is object number EA74892 at the British Museum. Image ©The Trustees of the British Museum. You can see it online at https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA74892 (accessed November 30, 2020).

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**"I hope to
come to
you and
talk face
to face, so
that our
joy may be
complete."**

- 2 John 12





As I write this article, I am in a hotel room in beautiful Sydney, Australia. The outside temperature is a balmy 81 degrees with a few passing clouds and excellent visibility. I see some localized rain in the distance, which I assume is the kind of rain you do not mind getting wet with—warm and inviting, like a shower. I can only assume because I am quarantined in my room until my departure back to the United States. My hotel is near the airport, and from the floor-to-ceiling window, I can see a number of parked Qantas aircraft with their iconic logo of a white kangaroo on a red background. As an Aussie friend and brother said, “That tail reminds every Australian of home.” At present, there are over forty thousand Australians who are still trying to get back home and have not been able to because of government health directives.

These Are Difficult Times

Tasty meals have been delivered to my room three times a day by polite armed police officers who are posted just down the hall from my hotel room door—a far cry from the terrible mistreatment many first-time travelers to Australia had when they came here as convicts sentenced to exile in Botany Bay. Yet, like those first-time travelers, this is my first time to Australia, and the experience has been surreal. After a COVID test in the US two hours before departure, I joined the rest of my crew, our very few passengers, and tons of freight to fly over fourteen hours across the Pacific Ocean. For the first ten hours, it was an inky black sea and a clear starlit sky, but as we passed south of Fiji, the sun started to rise on our left and clouds were visible below us—and so was the blue sea. After a few minor turns to the right to avoid some

storm cells, we started our descent and spotted Sydney just where we expected it to be (always a good thing after flying for so long), dead ahead. We flew to the east of the city with its harbor and the famous opera house clearly visible to our left and arrived safe and sound at our destination. The next two and a half hours were filled with forms and questions and another COVID test. We received a red sticker with a big Q for quarantine on our right arms and were ushered to our bus, our hotel, and finally to our own rooms. I am to remain in isolation until my departure back home.

**In the age of
COVID,
quarantines, and
masks, what I
miss most is the
complete joy of
seeing others
face to face, of
embracing, of
touching, and of
just smiling and
laughing, and
maybe even
—heaven
forbid—
sneezing or
coughing without
the whole world
around you
coming to a halt.**

With the Apostle John, I long for the complete joy of talking face to face (2 Jn. 12) with no mask on, but for the time being, I will do my part as long as the government does not ask me to go against Scripture and conscience. During these difficult times, I need to be reminded of one very important thing: The Lord is at work!

Today I spoke with Chris Savage of Ariel Australia and was encouraged to hear of the wonderful work of teaching and discipling via the internet and phone that he is engaged with daily. What a joy to hear that in the land down under, many young people are on fire for Yeshua and have a heart for the salvation of Israel.

The same could be said of Ariel Israel under the leadership of Sasha and Lilian Granovsky, where the online outreach with a new Hebrew website, Facebook page, and Instagram account has reached over 180,000 Israelis!

Similar stories are occurring in Africa with Ariel's newest branch in Liberia under the direction of Wion and Shirley Wleh; in Germany with the Ariel branch led by a team of faithful believers; in Italy under the direction of Paolo and Martina Speciale; in Hungary under Ivan and Rita Nagy; in New Zealand under the direction of Johan Van Vuuren; in China under Evergreen; in India under Bakul Christian; in Canada under Jacques and Sharon Gabizon and their son Michael, along with the tireless work of Jackie Fierman; in Texas, which is like a country of its own, under Jeff Gutterman; in southwestern US under hermano Roberto Anchondo; and in many other locations throughout the United States via our field representatives John Metzger and Jack Nakashima. The Lord is indeed at work through His servants! But it does not stop there.



The home office in San Antonio, Texas, is led by the steady hands of Wayne Wideman. He — together with Becky Hodges, Annette Armstrong, Hoyle Heinsohn, and Cathi Hubbard — does the often unseen but essential work that allows for the smooth functioning of the ministry.

Then there is the publishing department under the expert direction of my sister in Yeshua Christiane Jurik, who oversees as Editor-in-Chief the editing and publishing of all of our publications, such as the Ariel books, this magazine, and our translations. Assisted by a small but mighty army of selfless proofreading volunteers, she also oversees our social media outreach efforts.

Furthermore, there is Dr. Mark Adler, who works tirelessly developing the excellent online Ariel courses and what we hope will one day be a fully accredited school. His work, together with that of the publishing department, will preserve the legacy of Dr. Fruchtenbaum for generations to come.

Then we have Gary and Missy Demers, who through decades of faithful service have made Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies on the Shoshanah campus what it is today.

Finally, there is the work of our founder and director Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, whose clear and faithful teaching has instructed and blessed thousands upon thousands of people, including this "lost pilot."¹

As I sit in my hotel room in isolation, I am filled with the inexpressible joy of knowing that the Lord we serve is at work through His servants. We may not be able to be face to face with each other—not yet—but He is active and as personal and intimate as ever.

When you pray and when you contribute your time, talents, and treasure to Ariel Ministries, you are supporting a worldwide work that brings the answer to what ails this lost and dying world: Yeshua the Messiah, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16)! To all who work tirelessly, who contribute sacrificially, and who pray diligently, thank you from the bottom of my heart. To paraphrase the Apostle John, I have much to write you but I'd rather not type

on my computer but see you face to face—perhaps this year at Ariel's School of Messianic Jewish Studies, and if not, next year Lord willing.

Shalom from Australia!



Tim Velasco lives on the west side of the Jordan River in South Jordan, Utah. The husband, father, and Captain for a Major US Airline has been serving on the Board of Ariel Ministries since 2019. He combines a deep devotion to the Word of God with a keen interest in the history of the world at the time of Yeshua. Above all else, he wishes to share with Jews and Gentiles alike the saving love of the Messiah.

¹ When you see me face to face, ask me why!



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Answers:

Line 1: *ḥtp-dī-nsw*
“an offering which the king gives”

Line 2: *pṛt-ḥrw* “a voice offering” (right);

k'w 'pdw “oxen and fowl” (left)

Line 3: *n k' n* “for the ka of”

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