

## DEUTERONOMY

### Lesson 43 - Chapter 31 Continued

As we near the completion of the book of Deuteronomy, we are witnessing the transition of Israel's leadership from Moses to Joshua. In chapter 31 we see the actual consecration ceremony of Joshua and of the Lord calling Moses and Joshua to the tent of meeting where Yehoveh ordained Joshua as Israel's new supreme leader on earth.

We also spent some time last week looking at the prophetic books of Ezekiel and then Revelation so that we can both understand what our attitudes should be, and what God's purpose is, for prophecy. I broached this subject because there is much prophecy in the final 4 books of Deuteronomy even though we might not have expected to stumble across it here.

It was my intention to get to Deuteronomy chapter 32 and the Song of Moses today, but alas, there was too much to talk about so it will have to wait until next week.

Due to our naturally curious minds (and in some part that curiosity is a skepticism brought about by our inherent evil inclinations) we are not satisfied with only knowing what God has plainly revealed to us; we also demand to know what God knows and keeps only for Himself. Since by definition those hidden things are NOT KNOWABLE by us (at least until God sees fit to lift the veil) then you can be sure that our speculations about things that are yet future to us, whereby the details were not written down for us, are not correct except in the most general sort of way. As the anecdote says, even a stopped clock is right twice per day.

We worshippers of Messiah have been terribly guilty of laying the groundwork that could cause many Believers and unbelievers to miss the fulfillment of God's prophecies by our penchant for trying to guess how these future things will happen and then becoming so infatuated with our own ideas on the subject that they become indisputable fact (even doctrine), written in stone. Much of the Church has been teaching for centuries that 1) gentile Believers have replaced the Jewish people as God's chosen and therefore all that was to happen through them will now happen through us (better known as Replacement Theology), and 2) that Israel was NOT coming back to the land from their Roman Exile.

Therefore when the Jews did come back and form a new Jewish nation barely 60 years ago, it went almost undetected by a large portion of the Church (and remains that way to this day). It was seen as little more than a natural reaction to WWII, and put into place by the UN. Or worse yet major portions of the Church deny that the return of the Jewish nation is actually the

fulfillment of prophecy; rather, it is that the Jews are just intermediate caretakers of the Holy Lands until the Church takes it over. This denial of fulfilled prophecy is because if the return of the Jews were acknowledged a significant portion of our cherished Christian doctrines and faith pillars would have to be dropped or amended. Therefore, as you are all well aware, the subject of Israel is nowhere to be found on the radar screens of some of the major Christian denominations.

So be forewarned; we can (and should) look forward to what is happening and what is about to happen in these the latter days. But do not become too enamored with a particular denominational view, or a particular author's vision, on the details of the Tribulation timing or sequence; or at what exact moment the Rapture should happen, or the details of the events leading up to Messiah's return, or even how it will play out when the actual moment of His coming occurs. Otherwise you just might miss it; or worse, you just might deny it when it happens, which will set you at cross-purposes to the Father.

Blindness to (or denial of) fulfilled prophecy is the focus of what will engage Moses at the end of chapter 31 and then the rather long chapter 32 that is called The Song of Moses.

The words of Moses are also going to lead us right into another difficult and challenging subject today; one that is touchy. That subject is: how did the two canons that form our Bible (the books of the Old and New Testaments) become decided upon and made official and come into being? Who made those decisions? And should one canon carry more weight than the other?

Let's begin our study by re-reading the last few verses of Deuteronomy 31.

### **READ DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 31:19 – end**

This is the prologue to the Song of Moses found in chapter 31. No other section of Deuteronomy has been more studied, written about, and revered than the Song of Moses. This is almost a canon within a canon; it reveals such depth in such relatively few words that we could camp here a long time.

God instructs Moses to write a song and teach it to the people before he dies. It is apparent that while Moses is the primary author, Joshua was either eyewitness to the creation of this song or may even have been Moses' scribe. It is significant that this song was to be written down and then taught orally to the people of Israel. Those things that are written down always

seem to carry more weight than those things that are not. That does not in any way mean that God's teachings that were transmitted orally were not inspired or were less valid. It is just as in the Rabbinical method called *kal v'homer*, light and heavy, whereby we are often faced with having to decide which of God's many immutable principles have preeminence in a given situation; one criteria is that the written things of God usually carry more weight than the unwritten.

Verse 19 says that the people are to memorize this song. A song is essentially a poem set to music. It has always been that the combination of words and musical notes lends itself to long-term retention. Before the ability to write was fairly universal rhymes and songs were used to transmit knowledge and history from generation to generation; and it works very well. How often I have heard an adult sing the A-B-C song under their breath as they try to remember which letter comes before another in our alphabet (I've done it myself). Or how my wife will sing a child's song to one of our grandchildren; a song that she has perhaps not sung for her own delight in decades, yet she can remember every word of it. And equally how quickly the youngest Toddlers will learn and recite a simple song and remember it perhaps for the rest of their lives.

The reason for this Song of Moses goes back to my opening words today: it is being created so that WHEN the prophetic things God is telling Israel about happen, Israel will KNOW that it was of God and not merely some natural or manmade or random event. In this way the people can learn and have hope and not just put their heads in the hands, grieve, and wonder why a calamity happened and what will become of them. In this same way God's wrath can be used for positive discipline instead of negative destruction. Yet even the end-effect of God's wrath is up to each individual because each Israelite can choose to remember this Song of Moses and apply it and gain from it; or they can choose to forget this song and deny what God has told them and suffer nothing but loss.

Was there a time in your life when you REALLY lived for the Lord? When the joy was overflowing and the good fruit was growing? Was there a time when your first thought of every morning, and the last thought before your dreams overtook you, was of God's love and mercy and His principles and wisdom? But for some time the joy in your life has become subdued and the days seem long and pointless? When even praying has become a burden, and life has become dry and confusing, and the hours race by so fast and yet it is all so empty?

Then the Song of Moses is for you because distancing yourself from God's laws and commands will distance you from God. And when you distance yourself from God you distance yourself from His blessings of life and shalom. If what I have just proposed applies to you, then you are confronted with exactly the same choice (likely for exactly the same reasons) that Yehoveh gave to the Hebrews through Moses because the same pattern still applies: you can recognize that your situation and condition was caused by your sin and your pulling away from the Lord, and acknowledge that to Him by returning to the ways of light and truth, and then

accepting His discipline; or you can deny it, thinking that it simply has to do with outside influences or a run of bad luck, or the natural weight of life, or that people are persecuting you. Choosing one way brings renewal and restoration; choosing the other brings ongoing despair and spiritual blindness. A long time from now, when we get to the stories of David and Saul, this principle is at the heart of what happens to each of them.

God is not having Moses write this song and teach it to the people so that when calamity befalls them He can say to them, "See, I told you so". It is for their benefit and it is for OUR benefit.

Please hear me: the Lord told Israel that He didn't want the resulting consequences of their rebellion against Him to be credited to false gods and serendipity. He WANTS Israel to know that He is CAUSING the horrors they are facing; the disaster is of divine origin. He's telling them in advance what will happen just as the New Testaments tells us in advance what will happen if we fall away from Messiah. As Paul says in Romans 11: "**you too will be cut-off**". Fate is a false god, every much as were the false gods of the ancient world. Believing that our lot in life is being caused by fate is to say that Almighty God is not in control; that something else will determine our present and our destiny. That is precisely what Israel is being warned against and the Lord calls this lack of trust "apostasy".

Verse 20 explains that the terms laid out in the Song of Moses will apply after Israel has entered the Land of Rest (Canaan). In that wonderful land Israel become fat. Israel will prosper and life will be relatively easy (that is the meaning of the Hebrew idiom "flowing with milk and honey"). Yet in the midst of those peak years of prosperity and blessing Israel will credit false gods for their bounty. They'll thank the false gods of the sky for sunshine and for rain. They'll thank Ashteroth, the Canaanite fertility goddess, for their bountiful harvest and for their many children. In doing these things they are breaking the covenant of Moses and therefore breaking faith with YHWH.

It is a fact of life (at least in the West) that with prosperity comes satisfaction and complacency. That since all our needs are met we have no need for outside help. The more we get the more we reduce God's role in our lives. After all, if it is our intellect that gets us college degrees and good jobs; our hard work and cleverness that builds our wealth; our wisdom to have regular check-ups and our good fortune to live in a country awash in hospitals, and doctors, and medications that keeps us healthy. And if we pick wisely and choose a good spouse to boot, what purpose is there for God in our lives? If we have accomplished all these things on our own, whom else do we have to thank but our teachers, our bosses, our loan officers, and ourselves? God's place becomes that one little leftover niche that the modern age labels "spirituality"; one niche among many niches. It is a niche that is neither more nor less (but is usually less) important than the others. It is a niche that can be satisfied within us by means of an hour or so of our time on a Saturday or Sunday as we go to Synagogue or Church.

Prosperity taken out of context is a dangerous thing. In the USA, even the Church has drunk the Kool-Aid as they say. Too many modern churches measure their success by means of their material prosperity. Too many modern church leaders say that (as Jesus' Disciples) we can measure OUR spiritual success by means of OUR earthly prosperity. It is interesting that in Europe the opposite is the case. In Europe, what little remains of the Church views the prosperity of its members with suspicion. Therefore the churches are poor and their buildings in disrepair.

Yehoveh says that in time Israel will take their prosperity out of its context and become very pleased with themselves and give credit to other gods instead of understanding what true prosperity is and thanking the only existing source of THAT kind of prosperity: the God of Israel. And since this perverse thinking pervades His people **this kind of thinking** will become the means of their end. And it will be the Song of Moses that will testify to Heaven and Earth and to all future generations that the Lord has warned them, and that what will befall them will not be because He has become unfaithful to them. Rather it is because they have abandoned God. In fact says Adonai in verse 21, even now.....even as they camp in Moab preparing to enter the Land of Promise.....the seeds for this kind of thinking that will inevitably lead to their disastrous rebellion have already been sown in their minds and are taking root. This is not because of what they've been taught, but rather it is a result of their sin natures that deny its truth and eternal nature.

Verse 24 explains that Moses wrote this song and included it into what we call the book of Deuteronomy. Moses was then to take the scroll and give it to the Levites, the priestly tribe. The Levites (who were in charge of carrying the Ark) were to take the scroll and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant. As of this time the Ark contained the two stone tablets of the 10 Commandments, Aaron's budding rod, and a jar of manna. Keeping the scroll of Deuteronomy next to the Ark is a symbolic way of showing that it was built on the principles of what was inside the Ark. But in another way the scroll of Deuteronomy was also subservient to those tablets written on by the finger of God.

I have shown you in earlier lessons that the God-principle of loving the Lord with all of our mind, soul, and strength (every part of our being), and loving our neighbors as ourselves forms the foundation of the 10 **dabar** (the 10 Words) that we call the 10 Commandments. The 10 Words are the basis for all of the other commands and rules and laws that the Lord would establish and that (in Deuteronomy) Moses would expound upon and teach.

When Moses completed this work, and when the Song was ready, he taught it to the people of Israel explaining that he agrees with God that it is inevitable that after he dies Israel will begin the process of falling away from God. Why is Moses so certain of this? Because if it happened while he was alive and still in his leadership role, how much more it will happen when a person less venerated than he (Joshua) tries to guide these stiff-necked people!

Here is where I want to stop and take one on my infamous detours. The reason has to do with God's instruction in verse 26 whereby the Levites are to place the Torah next to the Ark that contains the 10 Commandments.

As I said at the beginning today, one of our subjects will be the canon of the Bible; or better the two canons that together form our modern Old and New Testaments as we call them (gosh, I really dislike those terms). What this passage from Deuteronomy begs from us is to try and understand just how (or if) we are to place the various books and writings of Holy Scripture into any kind of hierarchy. The symbolism of placing Deuteronomy OUTSIDE of the Ark, but beside it, demonstrates a firm connection between the 10 Commandments and the book of Deuteronomy and also a clear hierarchy of merit. And never think that the Church does not view Scripture that same way (of some books having more merit than others) in our era. Torah Class exists because Christianity has no issue with the concept of prioritizing Scripture; today the priority is that the New Testament is all that a Christian ought to concern him or herself with. The Gospels hold the highest position in the New Testament, usually followed by Paul's Epistles, then Peter's and John's and then perhaps Revelation.

The term canon simply means that the material that a collection of books contains has been agreed to as authorized by some religious body or council. So how and when did the contents of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and the New Testament become a canon?

Interestingly, even though it occurred at a much earlier time than the New Testament, the canon of the Old Testament is a bit easier to trace (although not everyone would agree with all the detailed conclusions about it). The modern Christian position is that it happened about 20 years or a little more after the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans (placing it at about 90 A.D.). At the little village of Jamnia (the story goes) some influential Rabbis who had been keeping a very low profile since the destruction of Jerusalem met and decided upon the canon of the Old Testament. This is simply not true and frankly doesn't even pass the smell test. Jewish writings explain that this council of Rabbis met for a number of reasons, and the only real issue concerning Scripture was whether to include the books of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Further, there is no decisive record or evidence that any decision was even made on the matter of those two books; all we know for certain is that the Rabbis met and argued the merit of them.

The discovery, reconstruction, and translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls should have finally put the nail in the coffin of such a patently inaccurate assertion that it was not until AFTER Christ that the canon of the OT was established (but it has not). Old traditions and agendas die hard. The Dead Sea Scrolls were written around 100 B.C.; and in them every book of the OT has been discovered except for the books of Esther and Nehemiah. No less a historian than Josephus explains that by his era (around the time of Christ and on to the destruction of the Temple) the canon of the Tanakh had long been fixed at 22 books. While that doesn't seem to jibe with the modern count, one must grasp that several books including Chronicles and Kings

have since been divided into two parts by Christian editors as they were so lengthy, and some books were divided out by literature type (like Proverbs and Psalms).

But going back even further we know that the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (known as the Septuagint) occurred somewhere around 250 B.C., and in it is every book of the OT that we now study. Might there have been ongoing discussions about whether to keep it as it was, or to add or subtract a book here or there? Absolutely; in fact we have records of exactly that thing happening, and it is in that same spirit that the meeting of the Rabbis at Jamnia in 90 A.D. took place.

So the books of the OT were in existence and regarded as the inspired Word of God (Holy Scripture) by the Jewish people at some time earlier than 250 B.C. However there were other Hebrew religious books as well that were in existence at that time; these additional books were not given quite the same merit as the Tanakh but were placed “next to” it; they were judged not to carry the same weight as the Tanakh, but they were just as valid in their content. Just as Deuteronomy was placed “next to” but **not in** the Ark with the 10 Commandments, so were many books that are today popularly known as the Apocrypha placed “next-to” the Holy Old Testament by the Israelites but were judged not to be of equal weight to them. They were regarded as being divinely inspired, but not on a high enough level of inspiration to consider them as “Holy Scripture”.

So how does this compare with the formation of the New Testament canon, as we know it today? Before I address that I want to point out something that might be startling; and before I do that (so that I am not misconstrued) I want to state that without equivocation I subscribe to the New Testament being the fully valid and inspired Word of God.

The Old Testament (at least most of it) is what I would call self-canonizing. That is the very words of those books CLAIM Holy Scripture status. The Torah claims to be the work and words of God, and also claim in them that Moses was to write them down. The Prophets claimed in their writings to be speaking the very words that the God of Israel instructed them to speak. Even several of the Psalms claim to be God-inspired at the least.

The New Testament on the other hand does no such thing. No book of the New Testament is self-canonizing. No book of the NT makes the claim that its contents rise to the status of God-breathed. I've stated a few times that the New Testament is primarily the story of the fulfillment of the OT prophecies concerning a coming Messiah, and then commentary on what this means for Jews on the one hand and gentiles on the other. They explain just WHO the Messiah turned out to be (Yeshua of Nazareth), what He did and commanded during His ministry, and how He came to be and how He died. The story of the life of Yeshua is contained in the books we call the Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke are a little different in nature than the Gospel of John; and those 3 books are together called the Synoptic Gospels because they essentially tell

the same stories only sometimes in a slightly different order, giving slightly different emphasis, and often from somewhat different perspectives.

The NT contains another type of literature called Epistles; an epistle is simply a letter written by a church leader. These epistles (mostly written by Paul) deal with various disputes and problems that arose at numerous church locations around the Roman Empire. In reality most of the letters are commentary and justification for Paul's conclusions. They are commentary on Old Testament passages and commentary on the theological consequences of Yeshua's advent, death, and resurrection. Sometimes the commentary was sorely needed because almost everything the Jewish religious authorities had decided a Messiah would be and do in no way resembled who Yeshua was and what He did.

The epistles of James, half-brother of Jesus, dealt primarily with matters of the church at its headquarters in Jerusalem. James was the supreme leader of the church during Paul's day.

The final type of NT Biblical literature is expressed in the book of John to some degree, but primarily in Revelation; it is called Apocalyptic literature. It deals with the revealing of end-times matters so it is prophetic in its nature; it was about times future to its writer, John.

The nature of the Gospels is also important for us to establish. First, understand that Matthew, Mark and Luke are NOT the names of the writers of those books; their authors are anonymous. The Gospels are somewhat like a biography of Jesus. Second, they were written at the earliest some 20 years or so after Yeshua's execution. And third, it was Jews who wrote them.

Here, though, is where the rubber starts to meet the road. Even though it is well documented that towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the Gospels and some number of Paul's letters were being passed around between the various church locations, they were NOT considered Holy Scripture; they were not even considered to be of a sufficiently inspired level to be equal in force to the Old Testament Apocrypha. The letters were certainly considered to be authoritative, meaning that they were taken to be rules and regulations about how to handle a variety of matters within the church. They were seen no differently, however, than we view the bylaws set down by any recognized Christian denomination. The records of the Apostolic Father (the generation of church leaders that immediately followed the Apostles) show that under every circumstance their Bible was the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh) and nothing else (even if it were written in Greek). And this is no matter whether that leader was a Jew or a gentile.

Writings from Origen, Ignatius, Clement, Papias and other early church leaders show us that by the first part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. some of the churches located out in the Roman Empire were starting to read portions of the Gospels and portions of the Epistles during church



meetings. It was customary to read Old Testament Scripture during a church service (again, what we today call the Old Testament was for them “the bible”) and then also on occasion read some of those letters (epistles) and Gospels. It seems that while in no way did the first generation or two of the church that started this custom hold up the epistles or Gospels as God-inspired. But the fact that they were being read during a worship service more or less alongside the Holy Scriptures led the following generations to give those Gospels and letters more weight.

The first recorded attempt to actually consider Paul’s letters and the Gospels as “Holy Scripture” happened in 144 A.D. A European named Marcion was the culprit. Marcion was a recent Christian convert; a wealthy and powerful gentile shipping magnate. He was not a church leader but he did write a book that struck a cord among the now thoroughly gentile-dominated church. In his book entitled “Antithesis” he put forth his personal theology and it began with the proposition that all things of Jewish origin and flavor must be eliminated from the church. Therefore the church needed to create a new Christian Bible and once created declare the Hebrew Bible as null and void for Christians. Further Marcion declared that the Christian Bible should consist only of the Gospel of Luke plus certain of Paul’s epistles. But even then it should not include the ENTIRE Gospel of Luke; what amounts to the first 4 chapters were to be eliminated since they dealt with the Jewish lineage of Christ.

Marcion was widely denounced but he did gain a substantial following. No known church body adopted his proposition (at least not in the form he suggested and not until many years passed).

It’s now that the matter gets even more complicated. The Roman Empire was in turmoil and even though it was not yet a divided empire, two power centers had emerged: Rome and Byzantium (Byzantium later became known as Constantinople and today is called Istanbul, Turkey). Naturally the power centers of the church also gravitated there because with the proper political connections the leader of the church in each of those political capitals gained power, visibility and validation. Thus we have the births of the Western Church and (separately) the Eastern Church. The Western Church, the portion of the Church with its leadership based in Rome, eventually grew into the Roman Catholic Church. The Eastern Church based in Byzantium went on to become the various Christian Orthodox denominations that we know today as the Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Slavic, Coptic, and others. Protestantism eventually grew out of the Western Church and most of us identify with one branch or another of either the Catholic or Protestant sub-branches. The Eastern Church is another matter altogether. It does not have its birth or current power structure connected to either the Catholic or Protestant churches, it is entirely separate.

I tell you all this because when we discuss the New Testament Canon there is no such thing as one Church-wide universally agreed upon New Testament even today (although the differences are not major). And there certainly is not one Church-wide universally agreed upon

Bible among Christianity even today (the main difference being the order of the books and where or if the Apocrypha is included and if so how many of the original 15 Apocryphal books are included).

After around 200 A.D. when Marcion's ideas evolved a bit, we begin to see that some of the Gospels and Epistles were being elevated to the status of Holy Scripture. But whether any group accepted these as Holy Scripture depended entirely on not only which main branch of the church (Eastern or Western) but even which city the church was located in. Some churches refused to recognize anything other than the Hebrew Bible as Holy Scripture, and others chose which of the various Gospels and letters that they viewed as having sufficient merit as to be elevated to Scriptural status. In fact, by 200 A.D. many of the books of the Apocrypha were also in the mix as among those that the various churches chose as God-inspired. How did they choose? Church elders and bishops formed councils and they voted with a majority rules protocol.

So, it is that by around 220 A.D. we finally see 1) certain Gospels and epistles being elevated to Holy Scripture status, and 2) therefore the concept of a New Testament being formed. Do you grasp that? It was not until well into the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D (not until about 200 years after the death of Christ) that even the **concept** of an additional body of Scripture (or as we think of it another "testament") was seriously considered; and even then it was only accepted in some parts of the church. Further this newest testament was not at all conceived to be a replacement of (or to be held as above) the cherished Hebrew Bible.

It would not be until the latter part of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, 367 A.D., that a New Testament canon was recognized as official and even then it was ONLY so within the Western branch of the Church. Interestingly every book of the Apocrypha (which the Jews revered but did NOT hold up as Holy Scripture) became Holy Scripture alongside the Hebrew Bible and the newly canonized New Testament. Let me repeat that: the first gentile Christian Bible was the Hebrew Bible right up until around 220 A.D. The first addition to the gentile Christian Bible was the books of the Apocrypha (ironically books revered by the Jews centuries before Christianity emerged). Now that the Apocrypha was (for the first time) given the status of Holy Scripture (by gentile Christians of all people!) it would be a few more decades until a New Testament became a reality and it was included to form the Christian Bible that we're more familiar with today.

Of course in response the Eastern Church adopted their own New Testament that accepted some of the same books that the Western did, but dismissed others and added some more not recognized by the Roman Church (the book of Hebrews has been added, deleted, added again, deleted again, and so on for centuries and is still a bone of contention). It did the same thing with the Apocrypha; the Eastern Church accepted some of the Apocryphal books as Holy Scripture and others as not.

It was Martin Luther in the 1500's that first railed against any inclusion of the books of the Apocrypha in a gentile Christian bible (even though it had been that way for over 12 centuries), especially since they were considered Holy Scripture. And as his writings plainly attest his primary objection was because he found the books of the Apocrypha (to quote him) to be "too Jewish". Upon the Protestant reformation some books of the Apocrypha were removed from the Biblical canon and with the Geneva Bible they were moved to a separate section of the Bible and given lesser weight than the Old and New Testaments (very similar to what the Jews had done with the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha almost 2000 years earlier).

Here's the thing I'd like you to take from all this: it is so terribly ironic that in the last 500 years the church has first removed the Apocrypha and then (for all practical purposes) the Old and original testament of God from the Bible. Oh, it's still there but in name only. The Tanakh has been relegated to a similar status within the modern Church as the Jews first gave to the Apocrypha; a flawed testament of lesser inspiration.

The irony is, of course, that it is **only** the Torah and the Prophets that actually claim divine inspiration. The New Testament does not. Further for us to seriously subscribe to the notion that every reference to the term "Scripture" by a New Testament author is to include his own personal writings is simply nonsensical on its face because there wouldn't be any thought of elevating the status of any of those writings to being "inspired of God" for almost 2 centuries after those authors died. From the moment the Torah and the Prophets were created they were self-declared Holy Scripture. There is no evidence whatsoever that a New Testament author thought that he was writing something that would someday be considered as additional, or replacement, Holy Scripture.

The purpose for today's detour is not to in any way discount or question the divine nature of the New Testament; rather it is to help us see that the New Testament writers and the early church never for a moment doubted the continuing relevance, validity and authority of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). The Torah and the Hebrew Bible formed the foundation for the Christian faith. Yeshua was the fulfillment of the prophecies contained in the Hebrew Bible. It was only several groups of gentile church leaders who (centuries later) ordained manmade doctrines and rules (all vehemently anti-Jewish) that turned the Bible on its head and made the original testament as questionable and the newest testament as irrefutable.

I would humbly suggest that just as Yeshua is Messiah and is God, yet He is also subservient to the Father. Jesus constantly prayed to the Father, asked for His will to be done; and His famous prayer that we call the Lord's Prayer memorializes this principle. We are told that Yeshua is now in Heaven placed next to (placed beside) the Father, at His right hand. This mysterious relationship among the Godhead sets the pattern that we see in Deuteronomy whereby the Torah (which is the Word of God, just as Yeshua is the Word of God) was laid next to the Ark, but was in a real sense subservient to the Ark's contents. Therefore I further

suggest that just as the divine Torah is symbolically laid beside its foundation (the 10 Commandments that reside inside the Ark), so should the divine New Testament be laid beside its foundation, the Torah. The Torah did NOT replace the 10 Commandments anymore than the New Testament replaced the Hebrew Bible. For us to suggest that the Torah is subservient to the New Testament, or worse that the Newer has abolished the Older, is to break the command of our Savior in perhaps His most important sermon to the people:

**<sup>CJB</sup> Matthew 5:17 *"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete."*<sup>18</sup> *Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.*<sup>19</sup> *So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.***

Next week we'll start Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses.