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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE LAST DAYS:

An Honest Covenant Evaluation

Where the NT Confirms the Tanakh, Where It Diverges, and What the Covenant Framework Requires Us to Say

SECTION I: THE FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS — WHAT HONESTY REQUIRES

Miqdash Bethel speaks from the Tanakh as its sole doctrinal authority. Everything after the Torah is commentary. That position requires this study to begin by naming what the research has established about the New Testament as a documentary record — without hostility and without apology, but with the honesty that the covenant demands.

The Manuscript Reality

The original autographs — the actual written documents produced by the NT writers — do not exist. Not one. The earliest surviving NT fragment is the Ryland Papyrus P52, a small portion of the Gospel of John dating to approximately 125-138 CE — roughly 30-40 years after the document was written. The oldest complete NT manuscript, Codex Sinaiticus, dates to approximately 350 CE — three centuries after the events it describes. The NT text we have today was reconstructed by scholars comparing approximately 5,800 surviving Greek manuscripts against each other, and those manuscripts contain more than 400,000 documented variant readings between them.

This does not mean the NT is fraudulent or unreliable in all of its content. It does mean that any claim of verbal, letter-perfect divine authority for the NT text must reckon with a manuscript tradition that is by definition several steps removed from whatever was originally written, by anonymous scribes, over centuries, with documented alterations, additions, and deletions. The Masoretic text of the Tanakh, by contrast, was preserved by a scribal tradition that was itself a covenant obligation — men who counted every letter of every scroll and began again if they made an error. The Dead Sea Scrolls confirmed this fidelity: the Great Isaiah Scroll, dating to 150 BCE, is nearly identical to the Masoretic text copied 1,000 years later.

The Language Question

The NT was written in Koine Greek — the common commercial language of the Roman Empire, not the sacred tongue of the Hebrew covenant. Of the 27 books, not one survives in Hebrew! The claim that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew comes from a second-century tradition recorded by Papias — but no such Hebrew Matthew has ever been found, and Jerome, who went to Palestine specifically to find it, ultimately translated his Latin version from the canonical Greek. Some scholars argue convincingly that the Book of Revelation's unusual Greek — full of Hebraisms, grammatical irregularities, and Semitic idioms — points to a Hebrew original that was mechanically translated into Greek. If true, this is significant. But it remains a minority scholarly position, not an established fact.

What this means for the covenant reader: when the NT cites the Hebrew scriptures, it is almost always citing the Septuagint — the Greek translation of the Tanakh made in Alexandria in the 3rd-2nd centuries BCE — rather than the Hebrew original. Some of the NT's most important prophetic claims rest on Septuagint translations that diverge in significant ways from the Hebrew Masoretic text. The famous **Yeshayahu 7:14** passage — **'a virgin shall conceive'** — is a Septuagint rendering of the Hebrew *almah* (young woman) as *parthenos* (virgin). The Hebrew text does not say virgin. The LXX does. The NT argument builds on the LXX. This is a documented fact, not anti-Christian polemic.

The Canon Question

The 27 books currently in the NT canon were not universally accepted in the first three centuries of the Christian movement. The Book of Revelation was rejected by the Council of Laodicea (363 CE), questioned by Eusebius of Caesarea in the 4th century, resisted in the Eastern Church until the 15th century, and called 'neither apostolic nor prophetic' by Martin Luther in his 1522 preface. The letter to the Hebrews, James, 2 Peter, 2-3 John, and Jude were all disputed for their apostolic authenticity. The NT canon in its current 27-book form first appears in a single letter written by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in 367 CE — over three centuries after the death of the first disciples.

The first person to propose a formal Christian canon was Marcion of Sinope, around 140 CE — a man who was subsequently declared a heretic. His canon included only Paul's letters and a heavily edited version of Luke, because he rejected the Hebrew scriptures entirely, believing the God of Jesus and the God of the Tanakh were different beings. The canonical process that followed was in large part a reaction to Marcion — an effort to demonstrate continuity with the Hebrew scriptures that Marcion had discarded. The irony is profound: the impulse to reject the Tanakh produced a counter-movement that enshrined it — but through the lens of a new theological framework that had never existed in the original Hebrew covenant tradition.

The Covenant Position of Miqdash Bethel

Miqdash Bethel does not declare the NT to be a deliberate forgery or a conspiracy. What can be said with intellectual honesty is this: the NT is a collection of documents written in a foreign language, with no surviving originals, assembled by ecclesiastical councils over three centuries, containing extensive use of the Tanakh (primarily through the Septuagint translation), interpreted through a theological framework — the sacrificial atonement of a divine-human Messiah — that has no clear precedent in the Torah or the Nevi'im as the Hebrew tradition reads them. Whether this framework is true is the central theological question. Whether it was present in the original Hebrew covenant text is demonstrably not so. The NT builds on the Tanakh. It is not the same as the Tanakh. The distinction matters enormously for covenant readers.

SECTION II: WHAT IS GENUINE — NT PASSAGES THAT FAITHFULLY CARRY TANAKH END-TIME MATERIAL

With the foundational questions established, this section examines the NT passages about the last days and asks of each: does this faithfully transmit what the Tanakh already said? Where it does, the covenant reader can receive it as confirmation. Where it does not, the discrepancy must be named.

The Olivet Discourse — Mattityahu (Matthew) 24, Markos (Mark) 13, Lukas (Luke) 21

The Olivet Discourse — the extended teaching attributed to Yeshua on the Mount of Olives concerning the destruction of the Temple and the end of the age — is the most significant block of end-time teaching in the NT Gospels. It is recorded in three versions across Matthew, Mark, and Luke, with significant differences between them that have generated centuries of debate.

The Tanakh material it draws on is extensive and largely accurate:

Dani'el 9:27 / 11:31 / 12:11 — The Abomination of Desolation. Matthew 24:15 directly names 'the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Dani'el.' The Greek *shiquts eremon* translates the Hebrew *shiquts meshomem*. The reference is legitimate. The question of whether it applies to the 70 CE destruction of the Temple, to a future event, or to both is unresolved — but the citation of **Dani'el** is accurate.

Dani'el 12:1 — 'A time of distress unlike any other.' **Matthew 24:21: 'For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.'** This is a near-verbatim echo of **Dani'el 12:1**. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Yeshayahu 13:10 and Yo'el 2:10 / 2:31 — The darkening of sun and moon. Matthew 24:29: 'The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven.' This directly cites imagery from **Yeshayahu 13:10 and Yo'el 2:10 and 2:31**. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Zekhariah 12:10-14 — Mourning when they see Him whom they pierced. Matthew 24:30: 'All the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.' The mourning echoes **Zekhariah 12:12-14**. The 'coming on clouds' imagery echoes **Dani'el 7:13 — the 'one like a Son of Man' coming with the clouds of heaven**. The Tanakh basis is solid. The application to **Yeshua** was that **'Son of Man'** is the theological argument of the NT — an argument from within the Tanakh texts, whether or not one accepts the identification.

Dani'el 7:13 — The Son of Man on clouds. Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, and Luke 21:27 all describe **'the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.'** This is a direct citation of **Dani'el 7:13**. The Tanakh basis is solid. Ben Adam in Aramaic — literally **'son of man'** — appears in **Dani'el's** night vision. Whether this figure is individual or collective, whether it is the Messiah figure or the covenant community of **Yisra'el** is the interpretive question. The Tanakh text is being cited; it is not being invented.

Devarim 30 / Yeshayahu 27:13 — The regathering of the elect. Matthew 24:31: 'He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.' The **'great trumpet'** calling the scattered to return appears in **Yeshayahu 27:13**. The ingathering from the four winds echoes **Zekhariah 2:6** and **Yehezkel 37:9**. The Tanakh basis is solid.

Overall assessment of the Olivet Discourse: it is the NT passage most faithful to the Tanakh end-time framework. Its primary sources are **Dani'el, Yeshayahu, Zekhariah, and Yo'el** — all correctly cited, accurately translated, and applied with awareness of their original contexts. A covenant reader of the Tanakh can receive this material as genuine engagement with the prophetic tradition, even while reserving judgment on the theological claims built upon it.

The 1 Thessalonians 4-5 Passage — The 'Day of the Lord'

Sha'ul (Paul) writing to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 addresses the coming of the Day of the Lord:

'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.' — 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

The '**Day of the Lord**' — **Yom Yahweh** — is a Tanakh phrase appearing in **Amos 5:18-20, Yo'el 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31, Tsefanyah (Zephaniah) 1:14-18, Malakhi 4:5, and Yeshayahu 2:12**. The concept of a day of cosmic judgment, divine intervention, and vindication of the righteous belongs entirely to the Tanakh framework. The Tanakh basis is solid.

However: the specific concept of living believers being 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air' — what later Christian theology calls 'the Rapture' — has no clear Tanakh parallel. The ingathering prophecies of Yeshayahu 27, Yirmeyahu 31, and Yehezkel 36-37 all describe gathering to the land, not gathering to the clouds. Eliyahu's ascent in 2 Kings 2 is the only individual 'catching up' in the Tanakh, and that was unique to him. The Rapture concept as developed in later Christian theology is a NT construction not attested in the Tanakh text.

2 Thessalonians 2 — The Man of Lawlessness

2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 describes '**the man of lawlessness**' who '**exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**' This has obvious parallels with **Dani'el 11:36-37** — '**the king will do as he pleases; he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods.**' The Tanakh basis for the concept of a supreme arrogant ruler desecrating the holy place is solid — Antiochus IV Epiphanes fulfilled part of it, and **Dani'el's** sealed text may hold further fulfillment.

However: the phrase '**the man of sin**' as a distinct eschatological figure — the Antichrist of later Christian theology — is developed far beyond anything the Tanakh states. The Tanakh warns repeatedly about false prophets, corrupt kings, and nations that turn against Yahweh's covenant. It does not develop a singular, diabolically empowered 'Antichrist' figure in the way that **1 John 2:18** and **2 Thessalonians 2** describe. The seeds of the concept are in the Tanakh. The fully developed theology is not.

2 Peter 3 — 'The Day of the Lord Will Come Like a Thief'

2 Peter 3:10-13: '**The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.**' The 'heavens and earth passing away' language echoes **Yeshayahu 34:4** and **Yeshayahu 65:17** — '**For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth.**' The cosmic renewal described is Tanakh-grounded. The 'thief in the night' metaphor for the unexpected coming of **Yom Yahweh** echoes **Amos 5:18-20** — **the day coming as darkness, not light, for those who are unprepared.** The Tanakh basis is adequate.

Ivrim / Hebrews 12 — The Shaking of Heaven and Earth

Hebrews 12:26-27 cites **Haggai 2:6**: 'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.' The author uses this to describe the eschatological removal of created things. The Haggai citation is accurate. The cosmic shaking as end-time imagery is present in **Hoshea (Hosea), Yoel, Yirmeyahu, Yeshayahu, and Yehezkel**. The Tanakh basis is solid.

SECTION III: THE BOOK OF REVELATION — THE MOST DIFFICULT CASE

The Book of Revelation — Higgayon Yochanan in some Hebrew manuscript traditions — is the most complex and disputed document in the entire NT canon. It is also the document that most extensively uses the Tanakh as its source material. The research findings here are significant enough to require full transparency.

The Documentary Evidence

The Book of Revelation was the last book accepted into the NT canon. The Council of Laodicea in 363 CE excluded it. Martin Luther called it 'neither apostolic nor prophetic' in 1522. Eusebius, the 4th-century church historian, listed it among the 'disputed books.' The Eastern Orthodox Church resisted it until the 15th century. These are historical facts, not anti-Christian arguments.

The most widely used book in popular end-time prophecy teaching was, for centuries, the most disputed book in the NT.

The authorship is unknown. The text says only 'John,' and the early tradition attributed it to **John the Apostle**. Most modern scholars — including conservative ones — believe it was written by a different 'John of Patmos,' a Jewish-Christian prophet active in Asia Minor in the 90s CE during the reign of the Emperor Domitian. The author was almost certainly a Hebrew-speaking Jew immersed in the Tanakh.

The Tanakh DNA of Revelation — What Is Genuinely There

The single most important finding from the research is this: the Book of Revelation contains 505 documented citations and allusions to the Old Testament, drawn from 28 of the 39 books. Over 325 of these are to the prophetic books — primarily **Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu, Yehezkel, and Dani'el**. The largest single source is **Yehezkel**, which many authorities confirm is referenced in Revelation more than in any other NT document. The second largest is **Dani'el**. Together with **Zekhariah, Yeshayahu, Tehillim, and Yo'el**, these form the entire structural and imagistic foundation of the book.

Specific examples of direct Tanakh derivation:

The Four Horsemen (Revelation 6:1-8) are drawn directly from **Zekhariah 1:8-17 and 6:1-8**, where colored horses patrol the earth on **Yahweh's** behalf. The sword-famine-pestilence-wild beasts formula is **Yehezkel 14:21 and Yirmeyahu 15:3**. Every element is Tanakh.

The 144,000 sealed (Revelation 7:1-8) are sealed to protect them from destruction — drawn directly from **Yehezkel 9:1-8**, where those marked on their foreheads by the man in linen are protected from the coming judgment. The number and tribal structure echo the covenant census of **Bamidbar (Numbers)**.

The Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:3-12) perform signs that echo **Eliyahu** (stopping rain — **1 Kings 17**) and **Moshe** (turning water to blood — **Shemot 7**). Their 1,260 days parallel **Dani'el's 'time, times, and half a time' (Dani'el 7:25, 12:7)**. The breath of life returning to them after three days echoes **Yehezkel 37:10**.

The Great Harlot (Revelation 17-18) is drawn from **Yeshayahu's** oracle against Tyre (**Yeshayahu 23**) and **Yehezkel's** oracle against Tyre (**Yehezkel 26-28**) — the great commercial city drunk on the wine of her fornication. In **Yirmeyahu 51**, Babylon is described in nearly identical terms. The image is composite Tanakh, applied to Rome.

The New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22) is drawn almost entirely from **Yehezkel 40-48** — the prophet transported to a high mountain, a heavenly messenger measuring the city, twelve gates named for the twelve tribes, the river of life flowing from the Temple. The specific dimensions, the wall, the gates, the measuring — all **Yehezkel**. However, a critical divergence: in **Yehezkel 40-48**, the vision requires a Temple in the center of the city. **Revelation 21:22** says **'I saw no temple in it, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.'** Revelation explicitly reverses the centerpiece of Yehezkel's vision. This is not a faithful transmission — it is a reinterpretation that makes Yehezkel's Temple vision unnecessary within the NT theological framework.

Where Revelation Diverges from the Tanakh

The honest evaluation must identify three significant points where Revelation departs from the Tanakh framework:

First — The Sacrificial Lamb Theology. The opening vision of Revelation presents 'the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world' as the central figure of the eschatological drama. This sacrificial atonement theology — a divine being whose death accomplishes cosmic redemption — is not present in the Tanakh. The Torah's sacrificial system provided for the atonement of specific sins through specific offerings according to specific procedures. It never describes a single sacrifice that accomplishes permanent, universal redemption for all humanity. The concept is theological innovation built on the Tanakh, not derivation from it.

Second — The Divine Identity of the Mashiach. Revelation presents **Yeshua** as sharing the divine attributes of **Yahweh — the Alpha and Omega (the first and last)**, the one who is and was and is to come, the one who holds the keys of death and Sheol. In **Yeshayahu 44:6** and **48:12**, **these titles — 'the first and the last' — belong exclusively to Yahweh.** Revelation applies them to **Yeshua**. **This is the core theological claim of the NT that Judaism found impossible to accept: the elevation of a human being to co-equality with Yahweh. The Tanakh has no precedent for this. The Mashiach (Messiah) in the Tanakh is always a human figure — a king, a deliverer, a servant — never a co-equal divine being.**

Third — The Temple's Irrelevance. **Revelation 21:22** removes the Temple from the New Jerusalem entirely. This directly contradicts **Yehezkel 40-48**, which is the most detailed architectural vision of the restored Temple in all of the Tanakh — **9** full chapters of measurements, dimensions, courts, gates, and covenant service. **If Yehezkel 40-48 describes the literal future Temple, Revelation 21:22 cannot also be literally true. They are incompatible.** Revelation has reinterpreted **Yehezkel's** vision through a post-Temple, post-sacrifice theological lens.

The Jewish Apocalyptic Genre Question

One of the most important findings from the research is this: the Catholic Biblical Association's own introduction to Revelation states that it 'contains an account of visions in symbolic and allegorical language borrowed extensively from the Old Testament, especially **Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel**' and belongs to the genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature that 'enjoyed wide popularity in both Jewish and Christian circles from approximately 200 BCE to 200 CE.'

This matters because it places Revelation within a specific literary tradition that was not Tanakh canon. Documents like **1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, and the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs** belong to this same genre — Jewish texts that used the imagery, language, and framework of the Tanakh prophets to address contemporary crises (usually Roman imperial persecution) through coded apocalyptic symbolism. None of these documents are canonical. Revelation may be the one that was accepted into the NT canon — but its literary method is indistinguishable from the non-canonical apocalyptic texts that surrounded it.

The practical implication the research confirmed: the specific interpretations given to Revelation by any given tradition — dispensationalism's seven-year tribulation, seven raptures, Antichrist figure, mark of the beast, 1000-year millennium — are theological constructions built on apocalyptic imagery that already had multiple possible referents. The **666 'mark of the beast'** most likely referred to Nero Caesar in the first century (a well-documented gematria calculation). The 'Whore of Babylon' most likely referred to Rome or Yisra'el! The seven-headed beast most likely referenced the seven emperors of Rome or the seven hills of Yerashaliym. When these

historically specific images are ripped from their first-century context and projected onto 21st-century politics, the result is exactly what many translate and transliterate: **a thousand different interpretations, each one claiming exclusive access to the text's true meaning.**

SECTION IV: ALL MAJOR NT LAST DAYS PASSAGES — CATALOGUED WITH TANAKH EVALUATION

The following is a comprehensive catalogue of the NT's major end-time passages, evaluated against the Tanakh. For each, the assessment is: Tanakh-Confirmed (the content faithfully transmits Tanakh material), Tanakh-Adjacent (the concept exists in the Tanakh but is developed further), or NT-Distinctive (the content is not present in the Tanakh and represents theological development within the NT itself).

NT PASSAGE	CONTENT SUMMARY	TANAKH STATUS
Matthew 24 / Mark 13 / Luke 21 (Olivet Discourse)	Signs of end, abomination of desolation, cosmic disturbances, Son of Man coming on clouds, gathering of elect	CONFIRMED — Draws directly from Daniel 12:1, 9:27; Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:10; Zechariah 12:10; Daniel 7:13
Matthew 24:36	'No one knows the day or hour' — not angels, not the Son, only the Father	CONFIRMED — Consistent with Tanakh's refusal to give dates for acharit hayamim events
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	The dead will rise first; the living will be 'caught up' to meet the Lord in the air	ADJACENT — Day of the Lord is Tanakh; 'caught up in clouds' (Rapture) has no direct Tanakh parallel
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11	Day of the Lord comes like a thief; children of light vs. darkness; watch and be sober	CONFIRMED — 'Yom Yahweh like a thief' echoes Amos 5:18-20; light/darkness framework is covenant language
2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Man of lawlessness; apostasy first; he sits in Temple proclaiming himself God; held back by a Restrainer	ADJACENT — Concept from Daniel 11:36-37; Antichrist as singular figure and 'Restrainer' are NT-specific developments

2 Peter 3:3-13	Scoffers in last days; heavens pass away; new heavens and earth	CONFIRMED — New heavens/earth from Isaiah 65:17; day of the Lord language from Tanakh throughout
1 John 2:18	'The Antichrist is coming; many antichrists have already come'	NT-DISTINCTIVE — Antichrist as title not in Tanakh; concept developed from Daniel's arrogant king but is NT theological construction
James 5:1-9	Judgment of the rich who have defrauded workers; the coming of the Lord is near	CONFIRMED — Amos 8:4-6 (oppression of workers), the Day of Yahweh as judgment on the wealthy oppressor
Hebrews 12:25-29	Once more Yahweh will shake heaven and earth; receiving an unshakeable kingdom	CONFIRMED — Haggai 2:6 cited explicitly; shaking of creation in Joel, Ezekiel, Isaiah
Romans 11:25-27	Partial hardening until fullness of the Gentiles comes in; then all Israel will be saved	CONFIRMED — Drawn from Isaiah 59:20-21 and Jeremiah 31:33; the pattern of Gentile ingathering preceding Israel's restoration is Tanakh-grounded
Revelation 1-3	Letters to seven churches; visions of the glorified Son of Man	ADJACENT — Son of Man from Daniel 7:13; 'first and last' from Isaiah 44:6 (applied to Yahweh, here to Yeshua — theological shift)
Revelation 4-5	Throne room vision; the Lamb who was slain; the scroll sealed with seven seals	NT-DISTINCTIVE — Throne vision imagery from Ezekiel 1 and Isaiah 6 (Tanakh-based); the Lamb as cosmic redeemer is NT-specific
Revelation 6-7	Four horsemen; martyrs under the altar; 144,000 sealed; multitude from all nations	CONFIRMED — Horses from Zechariah 1:8, 6:1-8; sword/famine/pestilence from Ezekiel 14:21; sealing from Ezekiel 9
Revelation 8-11	Seven trumpets; destruction of earth, sea, rivers; two witnesses; temple measured	CONFIRMED — Trumpet judgments parallel

		Exodus plagues; two witnesses echo Elijah/Moses; temple measurement from Ezekiel 40
Revelation 12-13	Woman clothed with the sun; dragon; beast from sea and land; 666 mark	ADJACENT — Woman/child/dragon draws on Isaiah 66:7 and Micah 4:10; beast from Daniel 7; 666 historically referenced Nero Caesar
Revelation 14-16	144,000 with the Lamb; three angels; harvest of earth; seven bowls	CONFIRMED — Harvest imagery from Joel 3:13; bowl/cup of wrath from Jeremiah 25:15-17; song of Moses from Exodus 15
Revelation 17-18	Babylon the Harlot; merchants mourning; her destruction	CONFIRMED — Directly drawn from Isaiah 23 (Tyre), Ezekiel 26-28 (Tyre), Jeremiah 50-51 (Babylon); images applied to Rome
Revelation 19	Marriage supper of the Lamb; Word of God on white horse; defeat of the beast	ADJACENT — Yahweh as warrior from Isaiah 63; banquet imagery from Isaiah 25; but the divine warrior is here identified as Yeshua
Revelation 20	Binding of Satan; thousand-year reign; Gog and Magog; Great White Throne	ADJACENT — Gog and Magog from Ezekiel 38-39; resurrection/judgment from Daniel 12:2; millennium is NT-specific development
Revelation 21-22	New Jerusalem descends from heaven; no temple; river of life; tree of life	DIVERGES — New Jerusalem dimensions from Ezekiel 40-48, but the explicit removal of the Temple (Rev 21:22) contradicts Ezekiel's central vision; river of life from Ezekiel 47:1-12; tree of life from Genesis 2-3

SECTION V: THE STUMBLING BLOCK — WHERE CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM IRRETRIEVABLY DIVERGE

What is the central stumbling block between Christianity and Judaism?. It is not the end-time framework. It is not the covenant promises. It is not even the identity of the Messiah as a human figure. It is the divine-humanity and sacrificial atonement theology that the NT constructs — and which the NT itself uses the Tanakh to try to prove.

The Sacrificial Messiah and the Tanakh

The NT's central claim is that **Yeshua** of Natsaret died as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of humanity, fulfilling and superseding the Levitical sacrificial system. This claim is built primarily on four Tanakh texts: **Yeshayahu 53 (the Suffering Servant)**, **Tehillim 22 (the Psalm of the forsaken one)**, **Tehillim 110 (the Priest-King after the order of Melkhizedek)**, and **Zekhariah 12:10 (the pierced one)**. In each case, the NT interpretation is one possible reading of the text, but not the only reading — and in the case of **Yeshayahu 53**, not the reading that the Hebrew text most naturally supports.

Yeshayahu 53's Suffering Servant — the eved Yahweh — in context is identified in Yeshayahu 41:8, 44:1-2, 45:4, 48:20, and 49:3 as Ya'akov/Yisra'el itself. The servant is the covenant nation — exiled, suffering, seemingly cut off, yet ultimately vindicated. The Jewish interpretive tradition has consistently read chapter 53 within this context: the servant is collective Yisra'el, not a single individual. The NT reading that the servant is an individual who dies and rises is not impossible from the text — but it requires the reader to depart from the surrounding context of chapters 40-55 where the servant is explicitly named as Yisra'el.

The Levitical sacrificial system of the Torah does not contain the concept of one sacrifice permanently removing all sin for all time. Each sacrifice in the Torah was specific: a sin offering for specific sins, a guilt offering for specific violations, a burnt offering for specific occasions. **The Torah never describes a single sacrifice that accomplishes universal, permanent atonement.** The NT's sacrificial theology is building on the vocabulary of the Torah while taking it in a theological direction the Torah itself does not go.

The Divine Messiah and the Tanakh

Every Messiah figure in the Tanakh is fully human. **Koresh (Cyrus)** — the only Gentile given the title *mashiach* — was a Persian king. **Davi'd** — **the paradigmatic mashiach** — was a man after **Yahweh's** own heart who sinned, mourned, waged war, and died. The ideal future **Davidic** king in **Yeshayahu, Yirmeyahu, Mikhah, and Yehezkel** is consistently described as a righteous human ruler: 'a shoot from the stump of Yishai' (Yeshayahu 11:1), 'a righteous Branch' (Yirmeyahu 23:5). None of the Tanakh's messianic texts describe the Messiah as sharing

divine ontology with Yahweh. None describe him as pre-existent, as creator of the universe, or as the one through whom all things were made.

The NT's identification of **Yeshua** with the **Logos** who was **'in the beginning with God' and 'was God' (Gospel of John 1:1)** is a theological claim without Tanakh precedent. It draws on the concept of **Yahweh's** Wisdom personified in **Mishlei (Proverbs) 8**, on **Yahweh's** Word (**davar**) as creative agent in **Beresheet 1**, and on Hellenistic philosophical categories (**the Logos was a concept in Greek philosophy centuries before the NT**). Whether this theology is true is a theological question. Whether it is taught in the Tanakh is not a theological question — it demonstrably is not.

Was This a Deliberate Deception?

Was the NT written to confuse Tanakh believers or create another religion that destroys the concept of the Hebrew Messiah?

The honest answer is: **the evidence does not support deliberate deception as the primary explanation, but it does support the emergence of a genuinely new theological system that used the Tanakh's language while moving in a different direction.**

The earliest NT writers — **Sha'ul (Paul)** especially, who wrote before any of the Gospels — were wrestling in real time with the theological meaning of what they believed had happened to **Yeshua**. Their letters are exploratory, sometimes contradictory, sometimes self-correcting. They do not read like a coordinated conspiracy to destroy Hebrew messianic theology. They read like Jewish people trying to make sense of a shattering experience within the framework they knew — the Tanakh — while arriving at theological conclusions that went beyond anything the Tanakh had said.

The danger came later. When the community of Yeshua's followers became primarily Gentile, when the connection to Hebrew language and covenant living was severed, when the Tanakh became 'the Old Testament' — a superseded document — rather than the living covenant word of Yahweh, the theological system that had started as a Jewish interpretation of Jewish scripture became something else entirely: a Greco-Roman religion that used Jewish scripture to prove Jewish scripture was no longer necessary. That trajectory was not inevitable. It was the product of specific historical choices — the separation from the synagogue, the Gentile dominance of the movement, the influence of Hellenistic philosophical categories, and the devastation of 70 CE that effectively ended the Jerusalem-based Hebrew community.

The Covenant Position: What to Do with the NT

For a covenant reader operating from **Miqdash Bethel's** position — **the Tanakh as sole doctrinal authority** — the appropriate relationship to the NT is:

Receive the Tanakh-confirmed material. Where the NT faithfully transmits Tanakh end-time prophecy — the Olivet Discourse's use of **Dani'el**, **Yeshayahu**, and **Yehezkel**; the Day of the Lord language; the ingathering of Israel; the cosmic judgment — receive it as confirmation from within a tradition that, at its Jewish roots, was drawing on the same source. The overlap is real and extensive.

Hold the NT-distinctive material with discernment. Where the NT develops theological positions not present in the Tanakh — the divine Messiah, the Rapture, the Antichrist as a singular figure, the permanent universal atonement through one sacrifice — these must be assessed on their own terms. They cannot be validated by appeal to the Tanakh because the Tanakh does not teach them. That does not make them false — it makes them claims that stand or fall on other grounds.

Be especially careful with Revelation. Revelation has been interpreted a thousand different ways by a thousand different translators. Its apocalyptic imagery was time-specific to first-century Rome in many of its referents. Its Tanakh content is extensive and genuine. Its theological reinterpretation of that content — removing the Temple, elevating the Lamb to divine status, developing the Antichrist — represents significant departures from the Tanakh framework. Use Revelation's Tanakh material. Hold its theological innovations in suspension. Never build a peace framework — or any covenant framework — on Revelation alone without verifying it against the Hebrew source texts it is drawing from.

The central warning. The most dangerous use of Revelation is by people and movements who use its imagery to justify political violence, to identify their enemies as the Beast or Babylon, or to calculate dates for the end. The Tanakh prophets warned against false prophets. **Dani'el** was told to seal the book. **Malakhi** offered an open invitation to *teshuvah* rather than a calendar for destruction. Any reading of Revelation that produces hatred, date-setting, or certainty about who the enemy is — that reading has departed from the covenant spirit of the texts it claims to interpret.

*Truth does not require the destruction of what is partially true to establish itself.
The derekh olam — the ancient path — was laid before any of these documents existed.*

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