

# UNDERSTANDING OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

*Learning about the books, beliefs and movements that changed the world.*  
2017 • NUMBER 3 • APRIL

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## ***BHC News & Updates***

Passover begins at sundown on Sunday. Rabbi Leynor's article provides some insights we can learn from Passover that are relevant today. This issue closes with another article about what Passover was like during the time of Yeshua.

Usually Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are on opposite sides of theological issues, but the article by Jim Myers points to something Yeshua and modern rabbis would agree about *ó and it is relevant to discussions about salvation.*

Did you know that ancient biblical manuscripts did not include chapters and verses? *Who Inserted Chapter and Verse Divisions in the Bible?* will tell you where they came from and when.



**Jeffrey Leynor**

## **Passover: *A Spiritual Lesson for Everyone***

*By Rabbi Jeffrey Leynor*

Passover begins at sunset on April 10<sup>th</sup> this year. I have such cherished memories, some of which I've already shared, but there is a lesson here for all of us as well. The "**Exodus**" from Egypt is a universal story. It reflects something about human experience. I maintain that none of us ever voluntarily leaves his or her "Egypt" - *we have to be thrown out!*

"Egypt" to me, is a metaphor for what is familiar, what is known. *Very few of us voluntarily leave what is familiar and known for what is unknown and unfamiliar.*

Most people do not like changes, no matter how small. We become used to doing things in a certain way, expecting certain results. Change is usually put upon us, whether we like it or not. All of us have our "Egypt!" Many people will stay in situations and relationships that are toxic, because they are used to it. When someone suffers abuse, in a number of cases, the abused person remains because the situation is familiar. Even being able to leave and go to a shelter raises anxiety about what will happen next. **(PASSOVER Continued on p. 2)**

## **Yeshua & the Rabbis Agree: Saving Lives is Stronger than Death**



**Jim Myers**

The starting point for understanding Yeshua's (Jesus) message and movement is the story of Creation in the first chapter of Genesis. The high point of the story is the creation of humans. Twice the biblical text asserts that human beings are created *b'tzelem elohiym*, traditionally translated *in the image of God*. The use of anthropomorphic terms to describe God creates a number of obvious problems. However, when we allow the context to define what God's image is, this is what we learn *ó and the Spirit of God hovered above the waters*. In our opinion, in this context, a better translation of *b'tzelem elohim* is *with the Spirit of God* *ó* which means *the presence of God is with each human being*. **(LIFE continued p. 3)**

# April Memorials

*In Loving Memory*

**WILLIAM  
LESTER  
STEWART**

d. April 26, 2005

*May you dwell under His  
wings in complete  
SHALOM forever!*

*In Loving Memory*

**JANET K.  
LEWIS**

b. 1936  
d. 2016

*May you dwell under His  
wings in complete  
SHALOM forever!*

## In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to  
seek those qualities of mind and  
heart which they shared when we  
walked life's journey together.*

*May we help to bring closer to  
fulfillment their highest ideals and  
noblest strivings.*

*May their memories deepen our  
loyalty to those things which we  
valued and shared --  
faith, love, peace and devotion.*

*As long as we live, they too will  
live; for they are now a part of us,  
as we remember them.\**

\* Inspired from prayers found in *Yitzhor  
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer  
Book Press.*

*In Loving Memory*

**CHARLES L.  
"CHUCK"  
GREGORY**

b. January 25, 1925  
d. April 11, 2010

*May you dwell under His  
wings in complete  
SHALOM forever!*



**שְׁלוֹם**  
SHALOM

*Please take a moment to simply speak the names of those we remember this month in our Memorials. For those who knew them, just hearing the name will bring back special memories of precious moments in life. For those who did not know them, it will be an opportunity to honor a life that was very important in the lives of others. Let us remember them together.*

Remembering those who came before us is a very important part of the Biblical Heritage Center's mission. It is our privilege to honor them with Memorials in this newsletter and on our website. If you would like to remember a loved one, email us [jim@biblicalheritage.org](mailto:jim@biblicalheritage.org) or contact us at the address below.

### (PASSOVER continued from p. 1)

Financial problems, illness, death and changes in status all bring with them the specter of the unknown. When my wife Karen died, my first thoughts were about, "What am I supposed to do now? Will I be able to continue this by myself?" These questions appear in many forms to in the lives of the people I work with.

Think for a moment. What is your "Egypt?" Where in your life have you become too comfortable with known quantities, good or bad? What can you do when life changing things are forced upon you?

Here is where I take a lesson from Passover. My observation over many years is that occurrences which take people out of the familiar are the only times that people really change anything. This is because nothing can

**(PASSOVER continued from page 2)**

ever be the same. That is a scary notion. Things may not ever be the same, but they can be different. These are the times when humans grow. *There is no way through the desert, except through the desert.*

It is interesting that in the Biblical story of the Exodus, the Israelites and other Semites, the mixed multitude that left with them go out into the *Midbar*, the Hebrew word for *wilderness*, not *desert*. A desert can be waterless, lifeless, but there is life in the wilderness. More important, it is in the *Midbar* that the Israelites receive the Torah, a constitution of instruction, which allows them to eventually become a nation.

It is in the wilderness, that a number of Biblical personalities encounter their Higher Power or Highest Self. This experience leads them to their destinies, to their purpose. I feel it is the same for all of us. It is the unfamiliar and the unknown which brings us to where we need to be.

*Life without Risk is no life, Love without Risk, is no love.* I always encourage people not to waste the valuable lessons the unfamiliar and the unknown teach. There is no real progress when we remain in the safety of our "Egypt." **BHC**

**(LIFE continued from p. 1)**

The Torah's declaration that all humans are created *in the image of God* serves as the theological, moral and ethical foundation of Judaism. It places the responsibility and obligation of saving and protecting human lives on every person. The destruction of life is viewed as a desecration of God, while the preservation of life is understood as strengthening the divine presence in the world. The value of human life for Yeshua is clearly seen in his teachings that focus on the establishment of positive obligations to save life, even at the expense of other commandments.

Interestingly, even the structure of the Torah reflects the central theme of Yeshua's teachings *do acts of tzedaqah; preserve and save lives*. In the opening of Genesis, *God clothes the naked by making coverings for Adam and Eve*, while at the end in Deuteronomy *God buries Moses*. Providing clothing for the needy and burying the dead are *acts of tzedaqah*; things that all Jews in Yeshua's world would recognize and understand.

*Tzedaqah* is a word that most Christians have no meaning for. It is usually translated *righteousness* in English Bibles, a theologically loaded word that many find difficult to understand. Two options for better understanding the meaning of *acts of tzedaqah* are *acts of love* and *act of lovingkindness*. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, *tzedaqah* was translated *agape* *unconditional love*.

An amazing discovery for me was that the theological and spiritual importance of *acts of tzedaqah* for Yeshua is found in Rabbinic Judaism today. A Talmudic passage quoted in the morning service includes some of the primary acts that encompass the meaning of *acts of lovingkindness*. The *Talmud* informs us (*Shabbat 127a*) that people receive special rewards for doing such things as *honoring our parents, showing hospitality to strangers, visiting the sick, helping a needy bride, attending the dead, and making peace between people*.

Without an understanding of Yeshua's culture, when we read about the *acts of lovingkindness* he calls *tzedaqah*, we see acts we call *charity*. The word "*charity*" suggests benevolence and generosity, a magnanimous act by the wealthy and powerful for the benefit of the poor and needy. In Christianity a person does charity because of a sense of *compassion* or *pity*. In Judaism a person does them because it is a duty, a commandment.



## ***Your Contributions Support The Real Yeshua Project***

***Discovering Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus. Viewing his life & teachings through the eyes of his Jewish culture.***

In the Hebrew Bible and Jewish culture, *human life is so valuable that people are legally obligated to take extraordinary precautions to protect people from harm.* Why? As I said above, the destruction of life is viewed as a desecration of God, while the preservation of life is understood as strengthening the divine presence in the world. The creation of human life was the pentacle of the first creation account, which means humans, and the quality of their lives, are very important to God.

A person that is hungry, thirsty, ill, homeless, threatened, oppressed, or lonely is a person whose life is valuable to God and it is His image that is being desecrated. What should we do when the image of their God is desecrated? Yeshua taught that people are to take responsibility for their actions. When they encounter a hungry person, saving a life and honoring God requires giving the hungry person food. This also reflects our kinship to all people, because the hungry person comes from the same lineage as us.

A mystical tradition imagines that our act of compassion for the poor awakens divine compassion. The eighteenth-century Hasidic teacher Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev taught:

*Just as a Jew gives tzedakah to the poor and robes himself in the attribute of lovingkindness, and shows lovingkindness toward a poor person, similarly this causes God to robe Himself in the attribute of lovingkindness and to make divine lovingkindness flow ... to all of the worlds and the worlds below, as the rabbis said: "Anyone who shows mercy to humankind brings mercy on oneself from the heavens." (Talmud, Shabbat 151b)*

*Acts of tzedakah* lift individuals out of poverty which help create a more equitable world. At the same time, doing *tzedakah* increases our own awareness of the lives of the people in the world around us, and that should arouse in us compassion for those in need. Conditioning ourselves to do *tzedakah* also brings us into a closer relationship with God and that has the potential to increase divine compassion in the world as a whole.

The Jewish Scriptures repeatedly uses the terms *mishpat* (justice) and *tzedakah* to refer to three key moments in which God asserts sovereignty over humanity:

- (1) *the creation of the world*
- (2) *the liberation from Egyptian slavery*
- (3) *the ultimate redemption of the messianic era*

A major theme of these events is *the salvation of humanity.* In creating the world, God establishes the human being as exalted over other creations, in bringing about the exodus from Egypt, God saves the Israelites from their Egyptian oppressors, and in effecting the ultimate redemption, God promises to bring about a perfected world that allows for no poverty, suffering, or oppression.

Something that Yeshua and the later rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud agree on is the power of *tzedakah* over death.

*"... but those that did acts of tzedakah go into eternal life." (Matthew 25:46)*

*Yet tzedakah can save from death! (Bava Batra 10a)*

Death is viewed by both the *Tanakh* and the *Talmud* as the most powerful force in the world. It puts a period to the sentence of life. The Rabbis chose a force that is spiritual *tzedakah* as the force in the world that is

stronger than death. *Tzedakah* is not a physical, tangible object. It is not money. It is the act of helping a person in need. It is an act of treating a person with the Spirit of God with dignity that honors God. It is the right and the righteous thing to do. To put it another way, which just happens to agree with the teachings of Yeshua, *righteousness is more powerful than death*.

“The Torah begins and ends with acts of kindness” (Sotah 14a). There are several things that stand out regarding this passage. First, it is not the gigantic, heroic, once-in-a-lifetime things we do that God demands of us. It is the simple daily acts, the repetitive acts of goodness, thoughtfulness, and concern for the other, that make us “religious,” that is, ethical and spiritual. Helping a neighbor, providing food for the hungry, giving clothes for the needy, and offering assistance with a life-cycle event — such as a birth, a wedding, or a burial — are the mark of the religious person in the Yeshua movement. **BHC**

**Source Materials:**

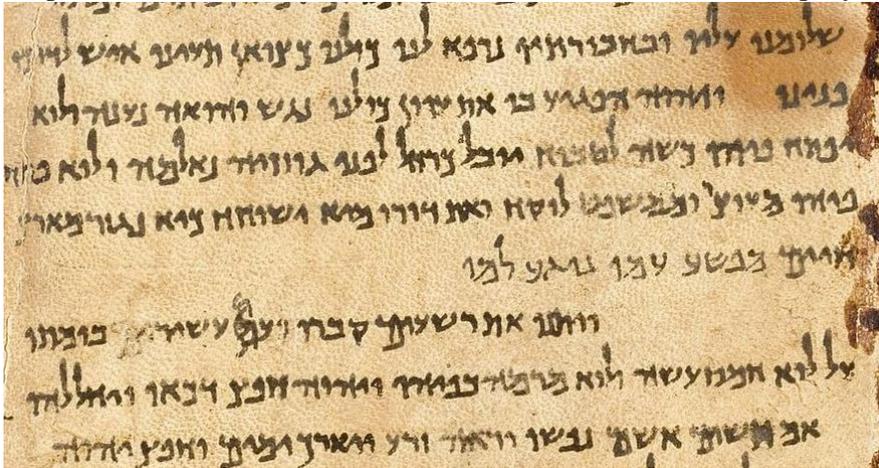
*The Wisdom of Judaism* by Rabbi Dov Peretz Elkins

*There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice through Jewish Law & Tradition* by Rabbi Jill Jacobs

*Encyclopedia Judaica* © Keter Publishing House Jerusalem Ltd., Israel; Volume 14, col. 180

## Who Inserted Chapter and Verse Divisions in the Bible?

The ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the books found in modern Bibles did not contain the numeric chapter and verse divisions of our modern translations. In antiquity Hebrew texts were divided into



Great Isaiah Scroll

*parashot* (paragraphs) that were identified by two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. *Peh* indicated an "open" paragraph that began on a new line, while *Samekh* indicated a "closed" paragraph that began on the same line after a small space. The earliest known copies of the *Great Isaiah Scroll* from the *Dead Sea Scrolls* used *parashot* (paragraph) divisions, but they differ slightly from the Masoretic divisions found in the *Tanakh* (Jewish Scriptures).<sup>1</sup>

**Archbishop Stephen Langton** and **Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro** developed different schemas for systematic division of the Bible in the early 13th century. Stephen Langton (c. 1150 ó 9 July 1228) was an **English Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church** and Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and his death in 1228.<sup>2</sup> Hugh of Saint-Cher, O.P., (c. 1200 ó 19 March 1263) was a **French Dominican friar** who became a cardinal and noted biblical commentator.<sup>3</sup> It is the system of Archbishop Langton on which the modern chapter divisions are based.<sup>4</sup> With the launching of the Gutenberg printing press in 1450<sup>5</sup> and the growing popularity of English translations of the Bible, Archbishop Langton’s chapter divisions became more popular. Many attribute the **Rabbi Isaac Nathan ben Kalonymus**’s work for incorporating the chapter divisions in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>6</sup>



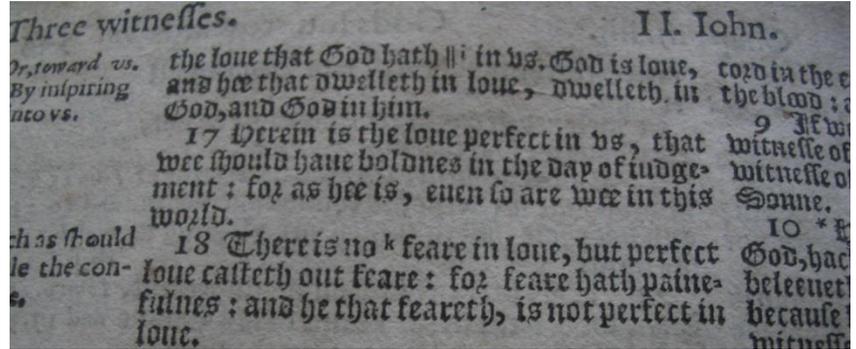
Archbishop Langton



Robert Estienne

The first person to divide New Testament chapters into verses was Italian Dominican biblical scholar **Santi Pagnini** (1470-1541),<sup>7</sup> but his system was never widely adopted. **Robert Estienne** created an alternate numbering in his **1551** edition of the Greek New Testament which was also used in his **1553** publication of the Bible in French. Estienne (1503 - 7 September 1559) was a 16th-century printer and classical scholar in Paris. He was a former Catholic who became a Protestant late in his life and the first to print the Bible divided into numbered verses. His system of versification was widely adopted, and it is now found in almost all modern Bibles.<sup>8</sup> The first English New Testament to use Estienne's verse divisions was the **1557** translation by **William Whittingham** (c. 1524-1579).

The first Bible in English to use both chapters and verses was the **Geneva Bible** published shortly afterwards in **1560**. The combination of chapter and verse divisions soon gained wide acceptance as a standard way to notate verses. This system has since been used in nearly all English Bibles and the vast majority of Bibles translated into other languages.<sup>9</sup>



The insertion of chapter and verse divisions make it easier to find specific portions of scriptures, but they often interrupt or destroy the original contexts. This affects the reader's ability to follow the storylines and be aware of important points in the contexts. There is a big difference between the two ways of reading Genesis below.

<i>Contextual Divisions</i>	<i>Chapter &amp; Verse Divisions</i>
(1) Introduction	1:1-2
(2) Day One	1:3-5
(3) Day Two	1:6-8
(4) Day Three	1:9-13
(5) Day Four	1:14-19
(6) Day Five	1:20-23
(7) Day Six	1:24-31
(8) Day Seven	2:1-4a

Notice how the artificial divisions disrupt the flow of the story, especially when it comes to Day Seven. Instead of simply keeping it in the first chapter with the other six days, it was placed in the second chapter. And then the end of the first account and beginning of the next account are placed in one verse. Always allow the context to guide you first and ignore the artificial divisions. You will be amazed at what you often find. **BHC**

<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapters\\_and\\_verses\\_of\\_the\\_Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapters_and_verses_of_the_Bible)  
<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Langton#Chapters\\_of\\_the\\_Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton#Chapters_of_the_Bible)  
<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh\\_of\\_Saint-Cher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_of_Saint-Cher)  
<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen\\_Langton#Chapters\\_of\\_the\\_Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Langton#Chapters_of_the_Bible)  
<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes\\_Gutenberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johannes_Gutenberg)  
<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac\\_Nathan\\_ben\\_Kalonymus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Nathan_ben_Kalonymus)  
<sup>7</sup> <http://oxfordindex.oup.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100301169>  
<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Estienne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Estienne)  
<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapters\\_and\\_verses\\_of\\_the\\_Bible](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chapters_and_verses_of_the_Bible)

## Passover during the time of Yeshua



The Temple was the center of activity in the Jewish world. It had to be able to accommodate and include the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for its rituals. At midnight the Temple gates were opened and before the sun rose Temple courts were already filled with people. *The special feature of Passover at the Temple was the slaughter of the paschal lamb by all worshippers.*<sup>1</sup> Obviously, there was simply not enough space and time for every family to sacrifice a lamb at the Temple. Therefore, group sacrifices of single lambs were done at the Temple by a few, while most Passover sacrifices were carried out outside the Temple.

Lambs were sacrificed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, on the eve of Passover, at the ninth hour (about 3 pm) of the day. The *Mishnah* (Oral Law) describes the activities that took place within the Temple. Those who wished to sacrifice formed groups, each of which slaughtered one lamb for the entire group. The priests allowed the **Court of the Israelites** to be filled three times. The Passover lamb, unlike with the usual animal-offerings, was sacrificed by the Israelites themselves. In the Temple, as with all peace-offerings, it was offered in the inner court and its blood tossed on the altar. After one group completed the ritual, the doors were opened again and the next group entered. The lambs were then eaten in the households and courtyards throughout the city.<sup>2</sup>

*At the close of the first festival-day, the people participated in the harvesting of the barley sheaves.* These usually came from **Beth Makleh**, beside the **Kidron brook**, but if, due to the late arrival of winter, it proved difficult to find ripe barley nearby, and the sheaves thus could not be harvested in this area, they were brought from afar.<sup>3</sup> The Torah states that the barley should be waved *ōthe morrow after the Shabbatō* and that a count should be made for seven weeks until *ōthe morrow after the seventh Sabbath,* when the *Feast of Shavuot* (Pentecost) was to be celebrated.<sup>4</sup> However, the Sadducees and Pharisees disagreed about when that was.<sup>5</sup>

The Sadducees interpreted *ōthe morrow after the Shabbatō* to mean literally *ōthe day after the first Shabbat after Passoverō* (the very next Sunday).

The Pharisees interpreted the term *ōShabbatō* as *ōfestivalō* and taught that the sheaves should be brought on *ōthe morrow of the first day of Passoverō* (the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan).

It should always be remembered that there were lots of other activities taking place in and around Jerusalem during that time, other than the Temple rituals. Consider the fact that 250,000 to 500,000 pilgrims were added to the regular population at that time. All of the pilgrims had to eat, sleep and do all of the other things humans do on a daily basis. Some slept in Jerusalem, while others stayed in nearby villages or camped out in tents around the city. Visitors came to Jerusalem not only to do religious rituals, but to also make new friends and renew old friendships from previous journeys.<sup>6</sup> And, just like people today, they came to browse among the masses of

merchants and buy things to take back home. It was an environment in which there was a great deal of activity, festivity, and many opportunities to encounter and interact.

The pilgrims could spend their nights outside Jerusalem until the day of sacrifice of the paschal lamb, but on that night they were required to remain in Jerusalem for the entire night.<sup>7</sup> Matthew records Yeshua's activities during this period. Before the feast, he stayed outside Jerusalem, but with the approach of Passover he told his disciples to go to one of the inhabitants of the city and fix a place for their meal. Even though the local resident is not necessarily a follower of Yeshua, he and his disciples were welcomed to his house as a matter of course.<sup>8</sup> It is not clear whether pilgrims were obliged to remain in Jerusalem throughout the seven days of Passover and the eight days of Sukkot, but many traditions from the time of the Temple take it for granted that they remained until the end of the feast-days.<sup>9</sup>



The feasts created many opportunities for the multitudes to interact with scribes, rabbis and teachers *as well as Yeshua and others who claimed to be the messiah*. People could also go to the Temple and listen to greatest scribes read and discuss the sacred scrolls that were stored there. They could also go to the *Stairs of the Rabbis* and listen to their views. *At that time, the focus of the scribes and rabbis would have been on the correct way to do the laws of the festivals*. We can be sure that when they returned home the first thing their friends and neighbors did was ask them about their experiences in Jerusalem and on the journey.

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the offering of the paschal lamb came to an end. During the period between 70 and 200 CE, synagogues and homes became the center for religious rituals that had been exclusively done at the Temple. New ways had to be created to make this possible and that required new interpretations of the laws of the Torah.

Today, a book called the *Haggadah* (from the Hebrew root "to tell") serves as the liturgy and guidebook for the *seder* (the Passover meal). Jews did not use a *Haggadah* or participate in a *seder* in Yeshua's time. The first documented evidence of the *Haggadah* is found in the *Mishnah* (Oral Law edited ca. 200 CE). The arrangement of the table, the psalms, benedictions, and other recited matter of today coincide substantially with the instructions found in the *Mishnah*. *Midrashim* (commentaries) were added later and most of the versions used today reflect those that were completed by the end of the Talmudic period (500-600 CE). Evidence of the wide acceptance of the *Haggadah* was its inclusion in *Rav Amram's siddur* (prayerbook) in the eighth century CE.

**BHC**

<sup>1</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two: Historical Geography, Political History, Social Culture and Religious Life and Institutions*; Edited by S. Safrai and M. Stern in co-operation with D. Flusser and E. C. van Unnik; © 1976 By Stichting Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Testamentum; Fprrtress Press, Philadelphia, PA;p.891-892.

<sup>2</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 892

<sup>3</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 892

<sup>4</sup> Leviticus 23:11-16

<sup>5</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 893

<sup>6</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 903

<sup>7</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 904

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 26:17-18

<sup>9</sup> *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; p. 904

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*Religion has taken center stage in the political arena.* It is more important than ever for people to have solid information about Christianity and Judaism – *otherwise they will be manipulated by people with very different values.* Our goal is to provide an factual information of subjects and events needed to make Religious Belief Systems transparent.

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