



Biblical Heritage Center

Creating Safer Better Lives By Discovering Ourselves & Our Biblical Heritages

2017 • NUMBER 1 • JULY

Once upon a time a minister, professor and rabbi took a journey. . .

By Jim Myers



The title sounds like the beginning of a good joke, but it isn't. It is proof that people with different biblical heritages can work together to tackle religious issues that most people try to avoid. I am the minister, Ike Tennison is the professor and Jeffrey Leynor is the rabbi. I have been on this journey for over thirty-five years now. Ike joined it about thirty years ago when I enrolled in a course in *Classical Greek* he was teaching at the University of Texas at Arlington. Jeffrey became part of our journey a little over twenty-five years ago when I enrolled in a course he was teaching about the *Prophets* at the Jewish Community Center in Dallas.

This journey has taken us on a course that has had many twists and turns as we searched for answers to questions like these:

- (1) There seem to be endless interpretations of the words of English translations of the Bible. What did the words of the ancient Greek and Hebrew manuscripts behind those translations mean to their authors?
- (2) Most people today agree that Jesus was a Jew, but rarely understand what that means. How did his Jewishness affect the life he lived, what he taught, what his Jewish audiences understood and why some became part of his movement while others didn't?
- (3) Today, Christianity and Judaism are mutually exclusive religions with irreconcilable theologies, however they began as two Jewish sects of the *Late Second Temple Period* ó *the Pharisees and Jesus Movement*. How did those Jewish sects become different religions ó one ãa *monotheistic Templeless Priestless Jewish religion*” and the other ãa *monotheistic Templeless Priestless Jewless Gentile religion*ö?

And there is another question that we have always asked from the moment we began the journey:

- (4) *How can we apply what we discover in ways that make people's lives safer and better?*

We have focused on the first three questions the most, now, due to some important discoveries we have made over the past few months, we need to shift more of our focus to answering the question above. This is why we changed the name of the newsletter again. *We will tell you more the discoveries soon.*

BHC

July Memorials

In Loving Memory

**MARJORIE
NEELLEY
PITNER**

**December 30, 1914
July 17, 2007**

*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.**

In Loving Memory

**FANNIE EDNA
GRAHAM
WARD**

**July 15, 1891
July 10, 1982**

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

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

The Forgotten Father: The Man that Raised Jesus

By Jim Myers

For most of his life, he was most likely known as *Jesus son of Joseph*. However, as a result of Gentile theologies that developed in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, in our opinion, the role of Joseph in the life of Jesus has faded into the distant past. It always helps to put subjects into a chronological context, especially when they are discussions about someone's life. Scholars are divided about how long Jesus personally led the *Jesus Movement*; some say three years while others say one year. In either case, they pretty much agree that he began it when he about thirty years old. So, it was at least thirty years before anyone called him *The Son of God* or *The Anointed One* (*Christ*) -- until then people would have known him as *Jesus son of Joseph*.

In the Jewish culture of that period, males played important roles. Something that is glaringly absent from all of accounts of the life of Jesus in the Bible is the absence of references to any male relatives of Jesus -- *father, grandfathers, uncles, brothers or cousins*. The one relative, however, that is the exception -- *John the Baptist*. Mary and Elizabeth (*John's mother*) are described as *relatives* -- the Greek word *syngenis* is used, which simply means *of the same family*. Thus, Mary and Elizabeth may have been first cousins, or they may have been fourth cousins. All we know for sure is that they were kin.¹ But, modern readers of the New Testament have long established *christologies* and the words of those *unknown narrators in the stories* that support their belief systems, but those beliefs would have been unknown to the Jewish people in those stories.

Family life was held in high value in most of the literature of the *Second Temple Period* and the family was generally built around monogamous marriages. The primary purpose of the ideal of marriage was the perpetuation of the family line; therefore the number and survival of children were seen as the family's chief blessings. Male children were viewed as particularly important in the building of families.²

In the case of a firstborn son the commandment to *redeem* him was to be fulfilled on the *thirtieth day* of his life as required by the Torah (Num. 18:16). This required the father to pay a redemption fee of five *selas* and

bring the child to Jerusalem. Laws linked to the redemption of the firstborn son are also found in Exodus 34:20: *“All the first-born of your sons you shall redeem. And none shall appear before me empty.”* The Gospel of Luke (2:22) records that Jesus was taken to Jerusalem for redemption at the Temple.³ The man that would have presented Jesus to a priest, paid the five *selas* and redeemed Jesus, was Joseph.

It was Joseph’s duty to feed, support and protect his family. He was also required to teach his children, which included Jesus, good behavior. Fathers were also aware of the importance of treating their children with compassion and tenderness. However, and this may stretch your BS (*belief system*), if Jesus needed it, Joseph was responsible for taking disciplinary measures and he had the legal right to whip him. When Jesus spoke his first words, that was the signal for Joseph to begin teaching him the *shema*, the *Torah* (beginning with Leviticus) and the *Hebrew language*. Jesus’s grandfather would have been expected to help in his education, especially in teaching the *Torah*, and probably take him to classes at the synagogue. Joseph would have watched Jesus as he grew and, when he demonstrated that he was ready, allow him to participate as an adult in the community and social life. The *Bar Mitzvah* did not originate until a later period.⁴

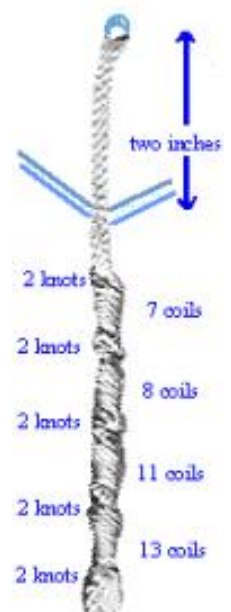
A striking characteristic of the Jewish people in the Late Second Temple Period was the focus on the observance of the *Instructions of the one God*, as revealed in the *written Torah*. There were disagreements between the sects over the authority of their oral traditions. But, daily life in Joseph’s house, from hour to hour of the working days as well as days like the Shabbat and holy festivals, were influenced by the *Torah* (*God’s Instructions*). This is evident in sources from Talmudic tradition, *Josephus* and the New Testament.⁵



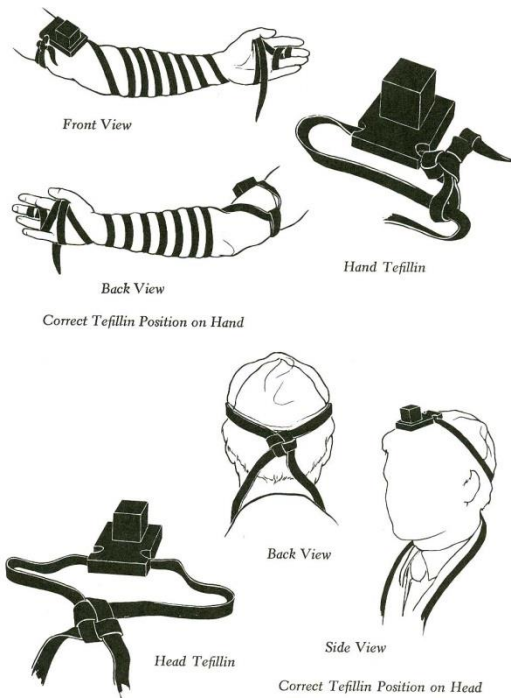
Modern Mezuzah

As early as the first century BCE, the commandment of Deuteronomy (6:9; 11:20) *“And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and in your gates,”* was taken to be an obligation to write the commandments on a small piece of parchment (the *mezuzah*) and affix it to the righthand upright post of a door or city gate. Even the inside rooms of many houses had *mezuzoth* (plural form of *mezuzah*).⁶ Jesus would have routinely seen everyone, including Joseph, acknowledge the *mezuzah* as they entered rooms or when they entered the gates of cities -- *all of his life*. Joseph would have taught him why the *mezuzoth* were there and the ritual for acknowledging them.

Jews dressed like the rest of the Greek world, with a tunic and cloak (*tallit*) above garments beneath. The tunic was usually of linen and the cloak of wool, though the latter could also be of linen. Fringes (*tzitzit* – see picture at right) were attached to the four corners of a rectangular cloak, but not to those round in shape like the Roman toga. The fringes (*tzitzit*) often called *tassels*, consisted of a set of strings that had to be folded and knotted in specific ways. In each *tassel* was the *“thread of blue,”* dyed with the blood of a snail found on the northern part of the coast. Joseph would have taught Jesus how to make a *tzitzit* and rules related to clothing.⁷



The cloaks they wore were not like the prayer shawls of later times and today that are worn only on special occasions. A cloak at the time of Jesus was an ordinary overgarment that was taken off in the house and at work. After work or when guests arrived it was put on again. Joseph would have taught Jesus that the *tassels* were reminders of God’s reign and His commandments -- *important warnings against sin*.⁸ They were also viewed as having a special powers to heal when worn by great teachers as seen in the New Testament -- *Suddenly a woman who had suffered from bleeding for twelve years came up behind Jesus and touched the fringe of his garment* (Matthew 9:20)



An early memory of Jesus would probably have been watching Joseph put on *tefillin* (*phylacteries*). They were pieces of parchment containing verses from the Torah, which were attached to the head and arm. *Tefillin* were part of ordinary dress, not just used for prayer as in later customs. They were removed for work or upon entry into a ritually impure place, and replaced as soon as possible afterwards. Often only the *tefillin* on the head were removed as was demanded later for normal meals. From the second century BCE onwards, the words of Exodus *It shall be to you a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes*, were seen as a requirement for Jews to write specific texts on parchment and tie them to the head and arm.

A very big event in the life of Jesus had to be the day Joseph gave Jesus his first set of *tefillin* and led him through the steps of putting them on. Their importance in the society will be seen in the teachings of Jesus many years later when he reprimand some Pharisees for *enlarging their phylacteries* to demonstrate their piety (Matthew 23:5).⁹

But one of the most important things Jesus saw and heard Joseph do least twice every day was the recitation of the *shema*. At that time, the *shema* was not regarded as part of the daily prayer service (*tefillah*) and it was different from the *shema* today. **Part 1** (*Ten Commandments*) is no longer read. I encourage you to read the words of *shema* out loud and consider what it would have be like to hear your father read those words twice every day, especially in your childhood *ó* and what it would have been like to live in communities in which this was taking place in the homes, synagogues and at the Temple.

Part 1 (Deuteronomy 5:6:21)

I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, Yahweh your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Observe the Shabbat day, to keep it set apart, as Yahweh your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Shabbat of Yahweh your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to guard and keep the Shabbat day.

Honor your father and your mother, as Yahweh your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's.

When the child Jesus heard the words, *öHonor your father . . . ö*, he would have thought of Joseph.

Part II

(Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one! You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

When Jesus heard the words, *öYou shall teach them diligently to your children,ö* he would have learned why Joseph did the things he saw him to every day and what he would do some day.

Part III

(Deuteronomy 11:3-21)

His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots. How He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben. How the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel — but your eyes have seen every great act of Yahweh which He did.

Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden; but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which Yahweh your God cares; the eyes of Yahweh your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love Yahweh your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled. Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest Yahweh's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which Yahweh is giving you.

Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth.

Part IV (Numbers 15:37-41)

Again Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of Yahweh and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be set apart and holy for your God. I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Yahweh your God."

As I pointed out above, the same words were heard in the homes, synagogues and at the Temple. They were read by family members, synagogue leaders and priests ó by Jews around the world. In homes, the shema was recited before starting the day's work at sunrise and after the working day ended at sunset. At the Temple they were read by priests who came together during the interval in the morning services.¹⁰ Take a moment to consider the impact just this ritual would have had on Jesus, his neighborhood friends, his community members and leaders, as well as the priests and leaders of the Jewish nation who not only also recited the *shema*, but knew everyone else was reciting the same words!

Two meals were usually eaten each day, a light breakfast and the main meal in the evening, after work. They were preceded by a ritual washing of hands and meals began with a blessing like this -- öBlessed are You, Yahweh our God, who brings forth bread from the earth.ö Bread stood for the whole meal and an additional blessing was required if wine was served. One person in each group pronounced the blessing(s) for all. Then the bread was öbrokenö and everyone ate. *Be sure to note that Yahweh was blessed, not the food.* After the meal a second blessing was recited that could have been as simple as this -- öBlessed be the Master of this bread.ö¹¹ This invariable order is also described in the New Testament -- Matthew 15:36; 26:26; Mark 6:41; 8:6; Luke 9:16; 22:19; Acts 27:35; I Corinthians 11:24.

Communal meals, for groups of *haberim* (friends), were also held often on the eve of the Shabbat, and sometimes on other nights. They include the study of the Torah and continued late into the night when they warmed to their discussions, or a popular teacher or visiting sage was there. It was the custom at Qumran to ökeep vigil in common for a third of the night each night of the year, to read in the Book, to study its decree and to bless God in commonö, which was just a highly developed form of the *haberim* meals.¹²

The importance of the Shabbat ó sunset Friday until sunset Saturday -- was so obvious that hardly any text, Jewish or non-Jewish, omits to mention it when speaking of the Jews in this period. The main features of the Shabbat were **abstention from work, attendance at the synagogue and common meals**, in the family or in other groups. The *Torah* forbade all work on the Shabbat and the *Prophets* and the *Writings* added further details -- *business transactions, burden-carrying outside the house and travelling were excluded.*¹³ Luke 4:16 makes it clear that Shabbat was a very important day for Jesus ó *And as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Shabbat.*ö

It is also clear from Acts 15:19-21 that male Gentiles that Paul brought into the Jesus Movement, in lieu of circumcision, were required to do the following, which also included keeping the Shabbat and going to a synagogue ó *Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from (eating) things strangled, and from blood because Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.*ö

Review Exercises & Considerations for Discussions:

- (1) What were the responsibilities of Joseph to his family?
- (2) How many things did Jesus see Joseph do every day that were linked to the Torah?
- (3) How did things like daily dress, prayer rituals and meals become teaching times for children?
- (4) Think about what it would have been like to live in Jesus's world and being surrounded by reminders about your God and His Instructions and Commandments ó especially when you saw merchants, community leaders, judges, priests, the rich and the poor ó all wearing things like *tzitzit*, *tefillin* and *reciting the shema*?
- (5) What affects did the rituals above have on individuals and communities?
- (6) How do children learn morals, values and behaviors today?
- (7) Is it possible for a nation to survive without its people holding clearly defined morals and values, and thoroughly being educated about their meanings and how to implement them in their daily lives?
- (8) What happens to a nation that doesn't successfully accomplish #7 above?

¹ <https://ebible.com/questions/17939-how-are-mary-the-mother-of-jesus-and-elizabeth-the-mother-of-john-the-baptist-related>

² *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two: Historical Geography, Political History, Social Culture and Religious Life and Institutions*; Edited by S. Safrai, M. Stern, D. Flusser and E. C. van Unnik; © 1976; Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA; p. 748.

³ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 768-769.

⁴ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 769-771.

⁵ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 793.

⁶ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 796.

⁷ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 797-798.

⁸ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 797-798.

⁹ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 798-799.

¹⁰ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 800-801.

¹¹ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp.801-802.

¹² *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 803-804.

¹³ *The Jewish People in the First Century Volume Two*; pp. 805-806.

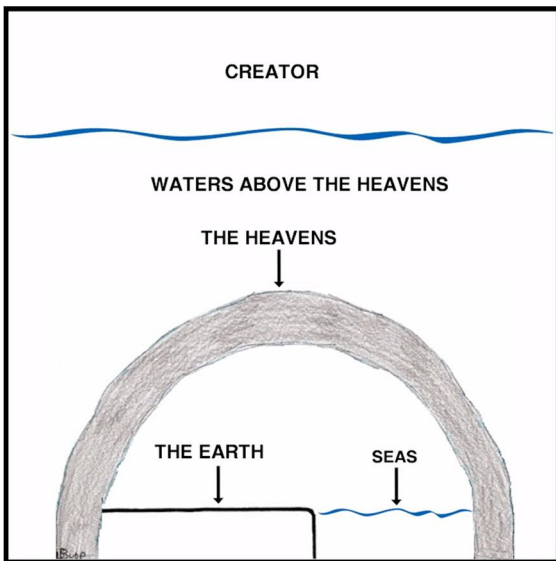
The Importance of Creating Sacred Spaces in Life

By Jim Myers

“Holy places” and “sacred spaces” are important in the Bible. It could be “physical place” or “space of time.” In the Hebrew Bible “holy” does not mean “religious,” it means “set apart for a specific purpose.” The Hebrew word translated “holy” is **QADASH** and its first appearance in the Bible is Genesis 2:3 ó

*And the Creator blessed the seventh day and “set it apart,”
because in it He rested from all His work which the Creator had created and made.*

In the ancient world the phrase “the god rested” had a very special meaning -- it signified the completion of a god’s temple. A temple was the place from which a god’s wisdom was proclaimed. The wisdom of the Creator in the biblical text is embedded in the stories of the first seven days of creation when the Creator created the Heavens, Earth, all of their hosts -- and His Temple. I bet that for most Bible readers, the story of the Creator’s Temple is unknown. Just for the record, most Bible readers do not understand what the Creator created and named the “Heavens and Earth” in the first chapter of Genesis were either.



- (1) *The Heavens was a solid dome structure beneath the surface of a primordial ocean that separated the waters into the waters above the Heavens and the waters below the Heavens.*
- (2) *The Earth was dry ground that appeared inside of the Heavens after the Creator gathered the waters to a specific place and called it seas.*
- (3) *Everything inside of the Heavens was the Creator’s Temple.*

Who did the Creator want His wisdom shared with? This is a temple for all mankind. A key point of this wisdom is that the Spirit of the Creator is with every human ó go and do acts that reveal the presence of the Creator to your generation.

This doesn’t mean for people to go and create the things He did ó heavens, earths, etc. It means go and create things for the same reason He did. What was that reason? Create things that are TOV. Everything the Creator created and made, He measured by a standard. Seven times this phrase appears in the first chapter of Genesis ó “and He saw that it was TOV.” What does something have to be to measure up to the Creator’s TOV Standard?

It must protect life, preserve life, make life more functional and/or increase the quality of life.

The Creator’s TOV Standard is found throughout Jewish and Christian Scriptures, but different words are used instead of TOV -- righteousness, justice, mercy and love. If you really want to know how important TOV was for Jesus, read Matthew 25:31-46. The word *righteousness* is used to describe acts of TOV:

“ . . . and the righteous will go into life eternal.”

Jesus’s salvation message was based on *doing acts of TOV*, not on believing someone’s version of the “right things” surrounded by people praying and asking God to send help they desperately need today. **BHC**

Thanks for reading our newsletter!

*We hope you found this information interesting
and that it will help make your life safer and better too.*

*We are posting new information daily on our website, Blogs, Facebook and Twitter.
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