

Exploring Facts About Our Bibles

On the previous tour I discussed the **BHC Primary Guideline**:

*My Belief System will include all facts,
open enough to be examined and questioned,
and flexible enough to change if errors or new facts are discovered.*

Today, you will get a chance to use it on our First Exploration Tour of 2021. The graphic above serves as a map of this tour. It provides you with a quick overview of key things we will explore. Bookmark the "[Tours Page](#)" on our website so you will be able quickly find it later when you take someone else on this *Tour*.

Facts About Our Bibles

Facts are sensory perceivable. They are not products of interpretation. Compare the following Facts to your Beliefs about your Bible.

The Bible, in the singular, does not exist.

There are many books called "The Bible" but they are not the same.

Different communities have different Bibles.

The two primary communities in this discussion are Jewish and Christian.

- *Jewish and Christian Bibles are comprised of different books.*
- *The Jewish Tanakh and Christian Old Testaments have the same books, but the books are not in the same order.*
- *Jewish Scriptures and Christian Bibles are written in many different languages.*

Communities & Their Bibles

Jewish Communities have the Tanakh.

Christian Communities have an Old Testament and New Testament.

The Jewish Tanakh and Christian Old Testaments differ.

Old Testaments differ among the various Christian communities.

In order to clearly understand the facts above, [Click Here and see the books of the Tanakh and Christian Old Testaments](#). Each list begins with the same book, *Genesis*, but they end with different books.

- *Tanakh – 2 Chronicles*
- *Roman Catholic Old Testament – Malachi*
- *1611 King James Translation has 13 books that come after Malachi.*
- *Protestant Old Testament – Malachi*

We will explore those differences on a future tour.

How Communities View the Tanakh & Old Testament

The Tanakh and Old Testament are not self-standing books today.

A common assumption among Christians seems to be that because their *Christian Bibles* and *Jewish Scriptures* share the same books, the words in those books mean the same thing in both communities. I have witnessed many conversations like the one described below.

- A Christian, tells a Jew, “*You obviously don’t understand your Bible because, if you did, you would see how it predicts the Messiah Jesus!*”
- The Jew responds, “*Not only do you Christians see things in the text that are not there, you mistranslate and you yank verses out of context.*”

This reveals the primary difference between the way both communities read the words of books found in both of their Scriptures.

Christians read the Old Testament with Jesus.

Jews read the Tanakh without Jesus.

Although they share books, the communities interpret the shared verses differently.

- *Jews read the Tanakh through the lens of postbiblical Jewish commentaries – Mishnah, Talmud, and others.*
- *Christians read their Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament, as understood through the doctrines of 40,000 different denominations/paradenominations.*

I will end this tour with this fact.

Sometimes “original” meanings of the words of the books they share have important differences from both Jewish and Christian readings.

The institutions of modern Judaism (*Rabbinic Judaism*) and Christianity (*Roman Catholic Church*) did not exist until after the 4th century CE. *Protestant Christianity* was created in the 16th century CE.

- *Second Temple Judaism existed between the 5th century BCE until 70 CE.*
- *Jesus led his movement from 27 until 30 CE.*
- *Early Christianity began after 70 CE and ended in the 4th century CE.*

We find different meanings of words of the Tanakh and Old Testament within Jewish and Christian documents. However, “the original manuscripts” of those books exist now, but science-based linguistic models make it possible to reconstruct options of what they meant in the cultures, time periods and places of their authors.

How do the facts above compare with your beliefs about your Bible?

- For ***Exploring Our Biblical Heritages Fans***, this tour ends here.
- For ***Explorers***, if you discovered errors or new facts, create your ***Explorer’s Journal*** and write them down. Why? Your elephant may not let you remember them.

On the next tour we will explore the elephants that control human lives.

Shalom,
Jim Myers

Primary Resource

The Bible With and Without Jesus: How Jews and Christians Read the Same Stories Differently by Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler © 2020; Harper One, New York, NY; p. 3.



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