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What Did The Jesus Of History Really Say?

The Use of Forensic Textual Analysis Based on Philosophical Coherence

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ABSTRACT

It is a fact that the words attributed to the Christ character of the New Testament are the creation of at least five individuals. It is evident that each of the four gospel writers felt free to create their own narrative speech for their own version of the Christ character in order to further the cultic needs of the evolving Christian Church.

In reality, over the space of two thousand years, those words have been amended and expanded by many copyist and editors. To further complicate this already confusing situation, it is also evident that a core of uniquely Hebrew sayings were copied by the gospel writers, almost word for word, into their texts in order to bring their stories to life.

This paper seeks to provide anyone, with an interest in historical reality, a way to differentiate between the actual sayings of the Jesus of History and the biographical narratives of the Greco-Roman writers of the gospels.

By assuming that the Jesus of History was a real person and applying the comprehension skills already available to us, this paper demonstrates that it is possible to differentiate the words of one man, as an expression of one mind, whose words reflect the coherence and internal logic of that individual.

It is proposed that by understanding the 'matrix of reality' of the Jesus of History it is possible to confidently identify those sayings spoken by him.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Question:

When we ask, "**What did the Jesus of History really say**", we are giving voice to two obvious facts of which most people are only subconsciously aware (Ref 01):

1. **The words attributed to the Christ character of the New Testament are a creation of at least four people that we know of. Each of the four gospel writers felt free to create their own narrative speech for their own Christ character and each had their own idea of who that person was.**
2. **Each of us, from our lived experience, know that it is possible to tell the difference between the words spoken by someone familiar to us and a forgery. The words of one man are an expression of one mind and, assuming that the person is sane, those words will reflect the coherence and internal logic of one individual.**

If you read the Synoptic Gospels horizontally you will notice that they were constructed of three main literary elements:

- **Biographical narrative and dialogue** (moving the characters from one scene to another)
- **Miracle stories**
- **A common list of sayings** (that are repeated almost word for word)

This paper demonstrates how to analyse the common sayings attributed to Christ and successfully differentiate between sayings that reflect a coherent Hebrew philosophical paradigm and those sayings that reflect a composite of voices - all expressing an evolving Greco-Roman Christian narrative.

The archaeological and textual evidence for an historical person upon which the Christ myth was based is discussed at length in our book, '**The True Sayings of Jesus: The Jesus of History Vs. The Christ Myth**'. We will not, therefore, be discussing the physical and textual evidence in this paper. Rather, this investigation acknowledges that it is evident that the Christ myth has evolved over two thousand years. It is inevitable, therefore, that the gospels have always been an expression of the cultic needs of the evolving Christian community. Indeed, the words attributed to Christ within each surviving document reflect the changing theology of their many authors and editors over many centuries (Ref 02).

Despite these obvious forgeries, this paper demonstrates that running through the accretions of Greco-Roman cultic propaganda within the New Testament, there runs a seam, like diamonds in volcanic rock, of a unique Hebrew mystical paradigm, which is demonstrably philosophically and historically coherent, but at the same time, distinct from orthodox Rabbinical Judaism.

As an example, consider that each of us views the world through a prism, which we will call our '**Matrix of Reality**'. Our Matrix of Reality is made up of three things:

- **The sum of our past**
- **How we feel about that past**
- **Our expectations for the future**

How we perceive the present and how we react to it depends on our Matrix of Reality. In effect, how we speak, the words that we use, depend greatly on our patterns of thought, the languages we speak and the people to whom we address those words. It is for this reason that human beings can identify the words of the people with whom they are familiar and can usually detect a forgery.

This paper demonstrates that by assuming that the Jesus of History was a real person and by trying to understand his Matrix of Reality it is possible to get a strong sense of his genuine words. By becoming familiar with his patterns of thought and identifying to whom his words were addressed we will begin to understand not only what words he may well have spoken but also begin to glimpse the profundity of his meaning.

1.2 The Problem:

Unfortunately, before anything else, Jesus Christ is a literary character and, like all literary characters, how the reader interprets that character is largely a product of their own preconceived ideas and needs.

For example, the **materialist atheist** will read the Synoptic Gospels and conclude that the contradictions, and historical mistakes, are evidence that the Jesus of History didn't physically exist. They will read the words attributed to Christ suggesting that they should love their enemy and, taking the saying at face value, dismiss it as an impossible datum.

They will focus on the text that confirms their belief and ignore the sayings that seem to hint at a profound insight into the nature of human suffering. Ultimately, the materialist atheist will see what they want to see.

Conversely, most **Biblical Scholars**, at least at the beginning of their careers, believe that Jesus Christ, as the son of God, died for their sins. They see words on the paper but, through a process of cognitive dissonance, take separate phrases out of context and see them as confirmation of their belief but are blind to the obvious contradictions in the text.

For example:

"Why are you saying I'm good? No one is good except the One God".

Luke 18:19

This Greek sentence was probably translated from an original Hebrew saying. It contains a flavour of Hebrew parallelism and word order. Obviously the speaker does not believe that he is God and is at pains to emphasise that he believes that the essential nature of God to be 'Goodness'.

On the other hand, in the Gospel of John, we have the long Greek syntax speeches, which assert the superiority of an alien god-man who sacrifices himself to himself and is untouched by the world and yet seeks total dominion over it. His very life and purpose support and endorse the concepts of animal sacrifice and limited atonement.

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

John 6:35

Most Biblical Scholars agree that the Gospel attributed to Mark was the first Gospel to be written. In it, the Jesus Character makes this statement:

"Why is this generation seeking for a sign? Truthfully, I say to you that no sign will be given"

Mark 8:12

This saying uses several 'Hebrewisms' (a remnant of Hebrew thought and syntax) and is probably a translation of an original Hebrew quote.

Despite this clear statement, made early on in Christian history, the fundamental core of the Synoptic Gospels is built on a series of magical acts and biographical narratives, all designed to 'fulfil prophecy' in order for **the reader to take them as a sign** of the validity of the Christian proposition.

It is evident, therefore, from the above examples that there is more than one 'Jesus' in the Bible, but that conclusion remains beyond the comprehension of both the atheist and the Christian simply because neither of them see 'Jesus' as real.

In fact, both the atheist and the Christian would be alarmed if someone they knew, and cared about, started to contradict themselves in same way that Christ is made so to do. Despite this obvious truth, both the atheist and the Christian are willing to ignore the apparent incoherence of the sayings attributed to Christ, each for vastly different reasons.

It follows then that, in order to grasp and understand this Hebrew Jesus, we must abandon our preconceived ideas and prejudices. Indeed, we must approach these sayings assuming that they were spoken by a living breathing man and hold him to the same scrutiny as we would anyone else.

2. Methodology

2.1 Textual Criticism:

In order to understand the difference between the **Jesus of History** (the physical person) and the **Christ character** from the letters of Paul and the Synoptic Gospels you will need to understand the concept of textual criticism. If you read each gospel complete, like a book, that would be to read 'vertically'. This is how we read a novel, which is fine as far as it goes but if you are trying to truly define and comprehend a character from several books you need to read '**Horizontally**'.

To read 'horizontally' you take each mention of an event, in each individual version of a story, and directly compare them for logic and coherence.

By so doing, you will be able to see how 'consistent' a narrative is. When it comes to history, you will be able to get a feel of how accurate a report might be. In this paper, I will confine myself to a discussion of the sayings attributed to Jesus Christ in order to demonstrate how the reader might reliably identify those sayings that may have been spoken by the physical Jesus of History.

It is also a good idea to try to read the earliest documents in the original Greek or Hebrew and this is made possible by the many online interlinear resources that have been made available to the interested student - link in the acknowledgements.

2.2 The Jesus of History - his Matrix of Reality:

2.2.1 The Sum of his Past - Historical Context:

The Greco-Roman gospel writers assumed that, in the first century, there was only one kind of Jew and with that mistake obscured the most important thing about the Jesus of History; they assumed that 'Galilean' was a postal address not a religious and cultural identity.

To be fair, there is a good historical socio-political reason why this is the case: after the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt in 136 CE, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The Judean elites, the surviving members of the Sanhedrin, moved north to the Galilee. It was over the next five centuries that 'Rabbinical Judaism' was born and the name 'Jew' (Judean) replaced the more accurate term, 'Hebrew'. By doing so, the gospel writers created a Galilean Jesus divorced from the realities of his first century Galilean life.

2.2.1.1 Historical Context - Galilee (Israel) versus Judah:

Israel, until its destruction at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BCE, was a kingdom in the southern Levant, which stretched from the city of Gezer in the south to the city of Dan in the north and from the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea to the east of the Decapolis - within its borders it held the fruitful Jezreel Valley, the Galilee and the River Jordan. The capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel was the city of Samaria. The Kingdom of Judah, on the other hand, lacked a sea port and its barren highlands were difficult to farm. The Kingdom of Judah would fit three times into the size of Israel (Ref 03).



MAP OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL CIRC 8TH CENTURY WITH THANKS TO PROFESSOR ISRAEL FINKELSTEIN
HIS BOOK 'THE FORGOTTEN KINGDOM: THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF NORTHERN ISRAEL'

FIG 1: Simplified map of Judah and Israel relevant to the 1st century CE

We know from the Merneptah Stele that a group of people called 'Israel' had been an annoyance to the Egyptians in late 13th century BCE sufficient for them to mount a military campaign against the fledgling Israeli Kingdom.

After Egyptian control over all of Canaan had begun to wane in the 12th century BCE, it allowed the formation of a complex polity based around the Sea of Chinnereth (Sea of Galilee), the Jezreel Valley and Samaria. In the 9th century BCE, Israel was a large cosmopolitan kingdom 115 km north of Judah. The name Isra'el means 'The People of the God El' and whilst the Israeli people were genetically similar to the Judeans they were culturally, philosophically and spiritually different as the English and the French have always been; and like the English and the French, the people of Judah hated the Israelis.

The Omride Dynasty began in the early 9th century BCE and it was its opulence and international power that, much later, inspired the Judean myth of Solomon's court detailed in 1 Kings 4.

Judah, on the other hand, was a barren hill country. The land was difficult to farm and prone to drought. Its principal crops were violence, olive oil and goats. For that reason, in the 9th century, Jerusalem was still a small village set over just 4 hectares with only one water source. Judahite bandit kings had made a living alternately raiding, or working for, the Philistine coastal cities of Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod.

In 722 BCE, Assyria completed the destruction of Israel, which had begun in 738, when Judah had betrayed Israel's alliance with Damascus to the Assyrians. The young pro-Assyrian King Ahaz of Judah was advised by the Prophet Isaiah to refuse to join the Israel/Damascus alliance.

King Ahaz promptly betrayed the Israeli Alliance to the Assyrians and, in return, Judah became a protected client kingdom - a part of the Assyrian Empire (Ref 04).

As the city of Samaria fell, Israeli refugees flooded south to Jerusalem and Lachish. With Israeli engineers and technology, Jerusalem went from being a small village to a major city in the space of a few years. Under **King Hezekiah**, in order to unite the Israelis and the Judeans against the threat of Assyria, the Judean elites began a persecution of Israeli spirituality and culture.

2.2.1.2 Historical Context - Israeli spirituality:

Israel worshipped only one God, El. He was the ancient Canaanite God who gave the northern Hebrew peoples the name 'Isra'el', after Jacob (the father of Israel) wrestled with an angel sent by El'Shaddai (El of the mountain).

"And God said unto him, Thy name [is] Jacob: thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Isra'el shall be thy name: and he called his name Isra'el."

Genesis 35:10

When Moses spoke to God within the burning bush it was to 'El' he was speaking. El is non-physical and encompasses everything. In modern terms, El is beyond the realm of human thought because he is non-binary - neither female nor male. As such, he interacted with humans through the power of angels.

The worship of El included his **feminine aspect** represented by the **Asherah** - she was often depicted as having the lower body of a tree. It must be emphasised that, for the Israelis, the Asherah was not a 'Goddess', in the sense of a separate god. She was just a different way of seeing God. Today, Judaism speaks of **the Shekhinah** - the 'Grace' of God as being 'female'. In the following passage the Israeli women are arguing against the Prophet Jeremiah (Son of Hilkiah).

"And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?"

Jeremiah 44:19

Archaeological excavations reveal altar spaces in Hebrew homes. The 'household idols' variously referred to in the Bible are also linked to the hundreds of female Pillar-Base Figurines, which have been discovered all over the southern Levant. The **'Queen of Heaven'** is none other than Asherah - the female aspect of El. It is obvious from the text that El and Asherah did not demand animal sacrifice.

You may remember from Hollywood films seeing Moses walking with a staff? You may have noticed the logo used in modern medicine - a snake entwined around a staff? These are all representations of the staff 'El' gave to Moses.

The 'Serpent Staff', which God had given Moses, was an Asherah pole.

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it (the snake) by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand."

Exodus 4:4

El was considered to be the God of all living things and always 'Good'. Often depicted above the wings of angels or on the back of the calf — an animal that was sacred to El as it was to the Canaanites. The worship of El centred around groves and high places at which the people offered olive oil and incense.

The High Priest, Isaiah, and **King Hezekiah** began the persecution of the worship of El and Asherah.

***"And he (Hezekiah) did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it...*"**

2 Kings 18:4

Sixty years later, under King Josiah (more of whom later), the Judean elites 'found' a 'new' book of Moses and, with the Deuteronomist Narrative, set about erasing Israeli spirituality and culture from the minds and memory of the people. All of the Hebrew texts were redacted in order to agree with this new Judean cult of animal sacrifice and the war God Yahweh.

2.2.1.3 Historical Context - Judean culture and spirituality:

The Judean elites, on the other hand, worshipped a **war god from the Negev desert called Yahweh**. The Judean god, Yahweh, was in many ways the same as the Babylonian god called Marduk. Yahweh, like Marduk, was morally ambivalent and could be 'Good' one day but destroy people on a whim the next day. This Judean blood god had all the aspects of Marduk, the god of the Babylonians (Ref 05).

Babylonian: "Word of him (Marduk) shall endure, not to be forgotten."

Enuma Elish Tablet V11:31-2

Hebrew: "The word of our God shall stand forever."

Isaiah 40:8

Babylonian: "Command destruction or creation, they shall take place: each at your (Marduk) word."

Enuma Elish Tablet IV: 20

Hebrew: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and I create evil: I am the Lord and doeth all these things."

Isaiah 45:7

Babylonian: "Oh Marduk, you are Lord of all Gods."

Enuma Elish IV: 5

Hebrew: "Our God is above all gods...God of gods."

Psalms 135:5/136:2

Marduk was mirrored by an avatar called **Mushussu**, which appeared in the form of a 'Dragon'. Mushussu had four legs and the body of a serpent. Genesis 3 is a Yahwehist text and describes how the serpent corrupts Eve in the Garden of Eden. As a punishment, Yahweh/Marduk punishes Mushussu and his descendants to live without limbs - condemned to travel the world on his belly.



FIG 2: Mushussu - The Dragon of Marduk - from the Garden of Eden

“(Rabbinical) Jewish religious practice is ‘theistic’, which means that God is seen as a separate and distinct being whose nature is different from that of the world.”

Dr David S Ariel

The foundation of Judean religious practice was the cult of animal sacrifice. Just as bribery is a response to an inherently corrupt political system, animal sacrifice can only exist within a religious system that understands ‘God’ to be separate and removed from the world.

Judean animal sacrifice exists on the basis of the following assumptions:

- It regards life as a material commodity
- God is seen as separate from the appellant
- God is seen as separate from nature
- God is seen as separate from the animal
- Sacrifice is offered to get ‘right’ with God by way of a bribe or as a payment

Rabbinical Judaism argues that animal sacrifice creates a kind of spiritual telephone to god. As a modern example, followers of Orthodox Judaism sacrifice chickens every year on the eve of Yom Kippur. It is clear from the Kapparot prayer that the very basis of animal sacrifice is the **magical idea of transferring ‘sin’ or ill fate to an innocent.**

“This is my substitute, this is my exchange, this is my atonement. This fowl will go to death, and I will enter upon a good and long life.”

Rabbinical Jewish Animal Sacrifice - Kapparot prayer

2.2.1.4 Historical Context - The Rebirth of Judean Supremacism:

In the Battle of Carchemish in 605 BCE the Judeans were defeated by the Babylonians and agreed to pay tribute. Four years later they stopped paying and many of the Judean elites were taken prisoner and deported to Babylon.

In 539 BCE, the Persian King Cyrus defeated Babylon and permitted the Judean exiles to return home as clients of the Persian Empire. All of the Judeans that returned to Judah had been born in Babylon and spoke Akkadian. Most of them had enjoyed positions of power within the Babylonian establishment.

For these returning Judeans, all they knew of Judah was second hand stories, Jerusalem for them was a mythical city of their imagination. Very quickly the Judean elites tried to re-establish the cult of animal sacrifice and forbade the Hebrew people from marrying outside of their own race. They demanded that all mixed marriages made during the exile be annulled. It was at this time the myth of Judean Supremacism was born.

Due to the totalitarian fundamentalism of the Judeans, the Hebrews living in the old Israeli capital of Samaria refused the authority of the Judean temple and created their own separate country. The story of the Good Samaritan is an echo of the racist hatred that Judeans felt for the former Israelites over five hundred years later.

In 330 BCE, Alexander the Great invaded Israel and brought Greek culture and language with them. Many Hebrew people adopted Greek customs and styles of living. Greek became the language spoken in the street and in business. Despite the benefits the Greeks brought to Judah, Judean fundamentalism was like a virus that just wouldn’t die.

In 175 BCE, Onias III the High Priest of the Jerusalem Temple was deposed by his brother, Jason, who had essentially purchased the position from Antiochus IV, who has just ascended to the Seleucid throne. Despite this agreement, three years later Jason was himself deposed by Menelaus. When Antiochus IV left the city to lead a military campaign against Egypt in 168 BCE, Jason tried to take back his position as High Priest and gain control of Jerusalem. Due to the fact that many Hebrew people were quite happy with Greek rule and civilisation, a civil war broke out. When Antiochus returned to Jerusalem he had no choice but to put down the revolution. As a result, a great amount of Hebrew autonomy was lost. This led to the Maccabee family uniting the Judean elites against the Seleucids and the Hellenised Hebrews. After the Seleucids were defeated, the now Hasmonean dynasty enforced a fundamentalist version of Judaism on the Hebrew people (Ref 06).

This religious totalitarianism inevitably led to a greater cultural and religious division between the North (the Galilee) and South (Judah).

By the first century, all Hebrews had to complete animal sacrifice at Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem. The Judean elites hated the Israelites and their religion so much they did everything they could to separate themselves from them. The Judean scribal class became the ‘Separated’, which you will know from the Bible as **“The Pharisees”**.

After the death of Rabbi Hillel, in the first half of the first century, the Yeshiva (School) of the formidable Pharisee, Rabbi Shammai, acquired total control of the Sanhedrin (the Judean Court). Rabbi Shammai hated Gentiles and forbade any Jew to enter the house of a Gentile or buy food from a Gentile. Pharisees, from his school, avoided touching others in case they became defiled - often wearing gloves for this purpose. You may have seen Jewish men at prayer in front of the Wailing Wall, this form of public display of prayer, then as now, was a factor of the school of Rabbi Shammai. At the prescribed hour of prayer, all work must cease and no matter where the Pharisee was he would pray.

2.2.2 How the Jesus of History felt about his Past:

2.2.2.1 Judean Fundamentalism and Civil War:

In the late 7th century BCE, King Josiah was supposed to have been the Messiah who was going to lead the Judeans to world domination. Unfortunately, the Pharaoh of Egypt killed Josiah at the battle of Megiddo. After the Babylonian exile, the Judean elites had created a cult of Judean supremacy based on the mythical King David and King Solomon.

"And of all my sons, for the Lord has given me many, he has chosen my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of Yahweh over Israel."

1 Chronicles 28:5

In the face of the Greek and then the later Roman invasion, the physical 'Kingdom of God' based on Solomon's throne was replaced by a **fanatical belief in a new Messiah and a new kingdom at the end of the world, when the dead would rise**. It was this fanaticism that had fuelled civil war after civil war in the southern Levant.

Into this country, torn by civil war and foreign invasion the Jesus of History was born. The Jesus of History warned his students to avoid being like the 'Actors' - the students of Rabbi Shammai and the Pharisees.

The Galileans were cosmopolitan and culturally tolerant. In light of this historical reality, we can finally make sense of the statement attributed to Jesus:

"And when you pray, do not be like the actors (Pharisees), for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

Matthew 6:5

In **John 20:19**, the Greek writer inadvertently reveals that Galilean Hebrews were in danger from the Judeans:

"... where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Judeans..."

In translation from the Greek into English, this line has been altered to read 'Jews' instead of 'Judeans', which makes a nonsense of a Jew fearing the Jews living in a country controlled by Jews.

"...Jesus was walking in Galilee, for he was unwilling to walk in Judea, because the Judeans were seeking to kill him."

John 7:1

Due to the Greco-Roman anti-Semitism inherited by the Christians from Saint Paul the word 'Jew' has been conflated with 'Hebrew' and has inevitably made a nonsense of nearly all interactions with Judeans by the Jesus of History. Historical records demonstrate that his caution was not without cause. By the time the Pharisees reached Spain they had become 'Rabbinical' Jews. As an aside but in the interests of giving sociological context, we know from the medieval records how the Pharisees must have appeared to the innocent Hebrew people in the Galilee who did not share their literalistic view of their religion.

"In medieval Spain the Rabbis showed little tolerance toward violators of the law, toward heretics and especially toward apostates."

Professor Sacha Stern

The Pharisees were, and are, more than happy to use violence to enforce conformity within the Hebrew population.

"We are free of heresy, except for a few towns near Christian Kingdoms, where one suspects that some heretics live in secret. Our predecessors have lashed a part of those who deserved to be lashed, and they have died from the lashing."

Rabbi Samuel Ibn Naghrela

2.2.3 How the Jesus of History felt about his future:

2.2.3.1 Culture of the Galilee:

All four Synoptic Gospels refer to the Jesus of History as a 'Galilean'. He was therefore an Israeli. The city of Sepphoris was the first capital city of Herod Antipas, which lies only 23 km from the 'New' city of Tiberius on the south-western bank of the Sea of Galilee. In the first century, the Galilee was prosperous and cosmopolitan. We know from the archaeology that in Sepphoris Hebrew life was largely Hellenised but at the same time distinctly 'Jewish' - most houses had a Mikvah (ritual bath). Therefore we can say that Hebrew life there would have appeared as 'Jewish' as Jewish life has been for the Hebrew people living in the diaspora over the last two thousand years. They kept the same dietary restrictions and visited their local synagogues - an example of which has been found in the nearby town of Magdala just a few hours walk north of Tiberius.

We know from inscriptions and from texts found at Nag Hamadi that people spoke Greek as well as Hebrew and Aramaic.

2.2.3.2 The significance of Nazarene Vs. Nazareth:

In the first half of the first century CE, the city of Nazareth did not exist. The village had been abandoned after the fall of Israel seven hundred years earlier. It was no longer a village much less a city (as it's described in the gospels) - from the archaeology we can see evidence for only a medium sized farm that might have been inhabited in the first century. The Talmud and the Old Testament fail to mention Nazareth, neither does Saint Paul mention the place.

Origen of Alexandria, the Christian apologist, lived in **Caesarea Maritima** just thirty miles from the present site of Nazareth, and he said that he had no idea where the 'village of Nazareth' was located. In the first Gospel to be written, 'Mark' calls the Jesus of History "The Nazarene" but from his narrative it is obvious that he didn't know what it meant.

Reading the New Testament, it is obvious that the later writers were trying to rationalise a name they also didn't understand. By the time the other three gospels were written, Nazareth was being re-inhabited by the Judean exiles from Jerusalem and had become something of a village. It was logical for the Greco-Roman 'Matthew' to assume that Nazarene meant 'someone from Nazareth'. In fact, the Greco-Roman writer of the Gospel attributed to Matthew invented an entire narrative to support his assumption and inevitably the writers of Luke and John copied his narrative. Their narrative tells us that Nazareth was a city and it was built on a hill and had a convenient cliff from which its citizens could throw people they didn't like. Unfortunately, Nazareth is in a valley of rolling hills and has no cliff. Obviously, Nazarene didn't mean from a city called 'Nazareth'.

The term 'Nazarene', is not a reference to a place but is, in fact, the name of a Galilean religious movement. The name comes from the Hebrew verb root **Na'Sar**.

The word **Na'Sar** means a 'Watchtower, Guard or Keep'. All of these words are used in the sense of a defensive position - protected but, at the same time, vulnerable to attack. In other words, Nazarene means **'Keepers of the Watchtower'**. This phrase is a spiritual analogy and is made clear by the Prophet Habakkuk (Ref 07).

"I charge myself to stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He shall say unto me and what I shall answer when He corrects me."

Habakkuk 2:1

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me and a strong tower from the enemy."

Psalms 61:2

The phrase **'Keepers of the Watchtower'** hints at 'Mindfulness' or watching of the gate of the mind and comes from the 'Two Ways' and 'Narrow Gate' doctrine. These images are also mirrored in the Qumran Community, the Tanakh and many of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

John the Baptist, the Jesus of History and then his brother, James the Just, were chief Rabbis of the School of the Keepers of the Watchtower - the Nazarenes. It is also interesting that the name 'Mary Magdalene' could also mean 'The Lady of the Tower'.

We know from the Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis that the Nazarene movement **rejected the Judean cult of animal sacrifice** and believed that the Judeans had **forged the Hebrew scriptures**.

Today, most independent Biblical Scholars agree that the Hebrew scriptures were redacted and forged, sometime in the late 7th century BCE, in order to agree with the Deuteronomistic narrative. Indeed complete books and stories were added to support the myth of Judean supremacy, so much so that the essential nature of God was changed from a non-physical 'light' that exists within all things to a physical and morally ambivalent anthropomorphic tyrant.

2.2.3.3 Hebrew Mysticism - The Merkabah and Kabbalah Tradition

The Jesus of History, as an Israeli Hebrew, was the inheritor of a thousand years of Hebrew mystical tradition. The prophetic experience was based on complex techniques of deep meditation and concentration. The Judean Rabbinical tradition (the Pharisees) was largely disapproving of the direct experience of God used by the prophets.

As an example: **Merkabah Mysticism** comes from the traditions surrounding the visions of Ezekiel and are heavily influenced by Babylonian and Persian mystical traditions in the 6th century BCE. After the return of the Judean elites, scholars tried to understand and repeat the direct experiences of God as detailed in the book of Ezekiel.

Groups like the **Essenes** and **the Nazarenes** sprang up in the Galilee in the 1st century BCE.

Honi the Circle Maker, (Honi HaMe'agel) was famous for being able to control the weather and is credited with creating many miracles. At this time, mysticism was the very root of Galilean Judaism and Hebrew thinking.

Menahem the Essene, a contemporary of the Jesus of History and a friend of Herod the Great, appears to have used the Merkabah mystical techniques.

Kabbalah means 'To Receive'. It is a form of mystic thought, which was reborn in France during the 12th century CE. Kabbalah is based on the earlier traditions of the Merkabah and **Sepher Yetzirah**. The **Bahir** was printed sometime in the 13th century CE, it was possibly one of the most influential books of the neo-Judean mystical movement.

Rabbi Moses de Leon wrote the book called '**the Zohar**' in the late thirteenth century CE. Largely thanks to the influence of the Bahir and the Zohar, a more mystical interpretation of the Old Testament was again possible within the Hebrew community.

Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer was born in the Ukraine in the seventeenth century CE and came to be known by the nickname: **Baal Shem Tov**. It was this extraordinary man who started the movement of Hasidim, which exists to this day.

2.2.3.4 The Jesus of History and Animal Sacrifice:

In order to understand why the Jesus of History might disrupt and 'Cleanse' the temple we must ask ourselves did he accept the principal of animal sacrifice? We know from contemporary records that he did not!

"And so, though they (Nazarenes) were Jews who kept all the Jewish observances, they would not offer sacrifice or eat meat; in their eyes it was unlawful to eat meat or make sacrifices with it. They claimed that these books are forgeries and that none of these customs were instituted by the fathers. This was the difference between the Nasaraeans and the others; and their refutation is to be seen not in one place but in many."

Epiphanius of Salamis, The Panarion - on Nasaraeans.

All of the Synoptic Gospels include the story of Jesus disrupting the animal sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. The Gospels attributed to Mark, Matthew and Luke tell us that it was for this demonstration that the Jesus of History was executed.

We know from the archaeology that the temple could hold 200,000 people. It had a garrison built into the north-east wall and was obviously heavily guarded. It is inconceivable that one man could disrupt the animal sacrifices alone. He would have been restrained and arrested instantly.



FIG 3: The Temple in Jerusalem circa the 1st century

In the context of these facts of Israeli history, the reaction of the Jesus of History to centuries of his people being forced to participate in such a barbaric ritual as animal sacrifice is totally understandable.

"It is written that this should be a house of prayer but you have turned it into a (Spelaion Leston) cave of robbers."

Mathew 21:13 and Luke 19:46

'**Cave of Robbers**' doesn't really work as a translation. In the Hebrew it would have had the implication of a 'violent predator'. A more accurate modern day translation might be: ***"You have turned it (the Temple) into a 'Crime Scene'."***

2.2.3.5 The Jesus of History: A Matrix of Reality - Summary:

From the above facts, we can see that the word 'Jew' cannot be used to describe all the Hebrew people. A Galilean Rabbi of the Nazarene school would have viewed Judeans and the Judean cult of animal sacrifice as a threat to their own religious and cultural identity. As an obviously well educated and cosmopolitan teacher, it must have been apparent to the Jesus of History that Judean fundamentalism set against the power of the Roman state could only result in the destruction of the Hebrew home lands. You wouldn't need to be a god to see that disaster was inevitable.

Now that we have a realistic chance of understanding the Matrix of Reality for the Jesus of History let's look at two notable examples of his sayings in order to illustrate how we can discern which sayings may or may not have been spoken by the Jesus of History.

3. Research

Many scholars have noted that when the gospels are read horizontally, it is evident that several **clusters of 'Sayings'** had been **copied** 'word for word' from a **common source**. When we carefully read those **'Sayings'** it is clear that they inculcate a distinctly Hebrew philosophical paradigm and syntax. What is even more interesting is that those sayings often contradict the logic of the Christ narrative and miracle stories in which they have been preserved.

If we assume that a real living person spoke some of the sayings attributed to Jesus Christ then we have to admit that the man would have been a Hebrew and whatever he may have said would have come from a Hebrew matrix of belief. However, like many Rabbis from the Kabbalistic and Hasidic traditions, those sayings and commentaries may contradict a strictly Judean philosophical paradigm.

Consider the following example of 'Cluster' analysis:

3.1 'Cluster One - The Kingdom of God:

Possibly the most important sayings attributed to the Jesus of History are those discussing 'the Kingdom of God'. The Judean Pharisees asked him when the 'Kingdom of God' would come.

"The Kingdom of God will not come through observation; neither will they say, 'It is here' or 'It is there' for understand, the Kingdom of God is within you!"

Luke 17:21 and Thomas 70

In order to understand Luke 17:21 it is helpful to look at the Matrix of Reality of the Jesus of History. The saying is related to Genesis, which explains that our essence - the core of who we are is the life of God:

"And the LORD God formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Genesis 2:7

In the Hebrew, it is obvious that God gives his soul as life to create the soul of man. According to Lurianic Kabbalah - God - is the 'Soul of Souls' - he lives in the world 'through' us. We have several **'Clusters'** from the Jesus of History that are based on the same core teaching.

"If your leaders say to you, 'Look the Kingdom of God is in the sky', then the birds will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather the kingdom of God is within you and outside of you. When you know yourselves then you will be known, and you will understand that you are children of the living Father, but if you do not know yourselves, then you live in poverty, and you are that poverty."

Gospel of Thomas 3

We know from early external sources exactly what the Hebrew followers of the Nazarene school understood the Kingdom of God to be:

"(The Nazarenes) speak...of a nature which is both hidden and revealed at the same time and which they call the thought-for kingdom of Heaven which is in a human being. They transmit a tradition concerning this in the Gospel entitled 'According to Thomas', which states expressly, 'The one who seeks me will find me in children of seven years and older, for there, hidden in the fourteenth aeon, I am revealed'."

Hippolytus of Rome

It is evident then that when the Jesus of History says the sovereignty of God is within you, he is saying that you only have to turn your heart toward your essence in order to feel the presence and power of God.

3.1.2 The End of Days and the Resurrection of the Dead:

It is important to note that theology of the Greco-Roman religions of the 1st century CE did not include a concept of the 'Kingdom of God' on Earth. Both the Greek and the Romans understood their gods to be remote and their control over earthly events somewhat tenuous. If the Jesus of History was addressing an audience made up of Greco-Romans they would not have had a philosophical matrix by which to comprehend what the Jesus of History was talking about. This begs the question, 'To whom was the Jesus of History speaking?' We know from the text that he was speaking to the most fanatical of the Judeans, the Pharisees.

As we have already explained, the Judeans believed in the End of Days and the Resurrection of the Dead. A time when God would establish a Judean supremacy on Earth through the military might of a human messiah. They would, at last, rule over a utopian Judean Kingdom that King Josiah had failed to create and all the Gentile Nations of men would be their slaves.

We can therefore suggest that the Jesus of History was using his audience's expectations in order to make a point of teaching - a way to diffuse the growing apocalyptic fanaticism. The Jesus of History specifically taught against the Judean idea of the 'End Times' and the 'Resurrection of the Dead', which was consuming his people at the time.

"Now concerning the resurrection of the dead, did you not read that which was declared to you by God, saying 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but the living."

Matthew 22:31, Luke 20:38, Mark 12:27

3.1.3 Linguistic Syntax:

Luke 17:21 has evidence of Semitic word order, with the verb '**Erousin**' (they shall be declaring) early in the sentence and the use of future indicative as an imperative may indicate a Hebrew translation. The use of the Greek 'Idou' as a replacement for the Hebrew *Hinne* is often considered indicative of a Greek translation of a Hebrew sentence.

3.1.4 Linguistic Style:

Dr Robert W. Funk pointed out that the Jesus of History, particularly the earliest sayings from the Q-Source, had a very distinctive way of speaking and teaching (Ref 08):

- **Most of the sayings are a commentary on a passage from the Hebrew scripture or an existing teaching**
- **Most of the sayings use exaggeration, humour, and paradox**
- **Most of the parables and statements are designed to shock and to go against the social and religious grain**
- **He uses metaphorical images without explicit application**

The cluster from Luke 17:21 is a perfect example of the teaching style of the Jesus of History.

3.1.5 Notes on Greek Translation:

The Church wants its adherents to go '**out**' to Christ not '**in**' toward God! Relatively recently, the Church realised the danger of translating this Luke 17:21 correctly. It is now fashionable for Biblical Scholars to change the traditional translation in order to avoid awkward questions about the logic of their Christology. Most modern translations use, 'The Kingdom of God is **among** you'. An even more Calvinist spin can be put on this phrase, '**The Kingdom of God is within some of you**', if you don't mind adding a few words to your 'god' in order to correct his obvious mistake.

The text from the earliest Greek texts read:

"Basileia tou Theou entos humOn estin"

"Kingdom - of - God - inside - of you - is"

The truth is, the offending word is '**Entos**', which can only mean '**Inside**' - nothing more! The King James Bible and the Spanish Reina Valera Bible both translated this phrase correctly as 'within you'.

3.1.6 Example of an obvious forgery:

If we apply our historical and philosophical context we can easily see that John 3:3-7, as a counterpoint to Luke 17:21, obviously makes no sense:

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'."

John 3:3-7

Notes:

1. John writes in perfect Greek but adds an obvious Hebrewism: Amen, Amen or Verily, Verily, which seems somewhat artificial in the Greek original.
2. Most scholars translate the Greek 'Idein' as 'See' but 'Perceiving' would be more accurate.
3. The concept of being 'Born again' of 'Water and Spirit' comes directly from Greco-Roman mystery religions that later came to be incorrectly called 'Gnostic'. For example, the Eleusinian Mysteries of ancient Greece that are thought to date back to the Bronze age. This was taken verbatim from Saint Paul Letter to Titus 3:5
4. The concept of Spirit giving birth to a being that is still obviously alive is illogical and would be considered 'Blasphemous' within Hebrew culture.

4. Discussion

4.1 Analysis of John 3:3:

Genesis 2:7 is the foundation on which the Hebrew understanding of human life and our relationship with God is built.

We can see from other sayings of the Jesus of History, in which he explains that 'Elohim' (God) is the father of all life.

"Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that you may become sons of your Father, who is in the heavens; for he makes his sun rise on the wicked and the good, and sends his rain on the just and the unjust."

Matthew 5:45

Indeed, for the Jesus of History, God is everywhere and within everything.

However in John 3:3 the author is saying that the 'spirit' can be given during a physical ritual involving water. This takes the Hebrew use of the Mikvah (ritual bath), which the Nazarenes used daily, and turns it into a magical initiation ritual of a Greco-Roman mystery religion, where a secret invisible 'power' is passed from one person to another. This is a concept that is entirely alien to Hebrew spirituality and culture but is ubiquitous within ancient eastern mystery religions.

John is also saying that the Kingdom of God is something that can be 'seen' but this directly contradicts the teaching of Luke 17:21, which says that the Kingdom of God will not come through observation.

We can also see that John writes in complex and perfect Greek that promotes the changing needs of a developing church rather than express a coherent philosophical paradigm. The line of irrationality expressed in this saying appears very similar to the writings of Saint Paul and inculcates his Christology.

"He Saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the water of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit."

Titus 3:5

Summary: Both Luke 17:21 and John 3:3 discuss the 'Kingdom of God' but it is obvious that both statements could not have been spoken by the same person. John 3:3 has an entirely different matrix of reality, a different linguistic style and syntax. We could go further and say that there is a high probability that Luke 17:21 was spoken by a Hebrew of the Galilee whilst John 3:3 was, in all likelihood, spoken by a Greco-Roman with a matrix of reality entirely steeped in the Greek mystery religions.

4.2 Exegesis Versus Eisegesis:

For anyone studying any 'religious' text, the question you must ask yourself is 'Does REALITY matter?' We purposely capitalise the word 'reality' in order to emphasise the fact that we are not talking about the modern concept of 'Truth', which is entirely subjective. We are talking about objective reality. For example, Dr Martin Luther King Jr said:

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Dr Martin Luther King Jr - Lincoln Memorial, Washington D. C. 1963

Exegesis is the process of systematically understanding a text by examining the matrix of reality of the speaker, his or her linguistic syntax and style. What is the sum of their past, how do they feel about that past and what are their expectations for the future.

Taking our example above, we could not truly understand Dr King's speech if we didn't understand the historical and cultural reality of anti-Black racism in the America of the early 1960s.

If we believed that all Americans were the same, we would not have a chance of understanding about 95% of the words attributed to Dr King.

Also, we need to understand to whom Dr King is speaking and what he might have wanted his audience to understand by his words. Principally Dr King is trying to persuade white Christian Americans to judge black people on their individual merit rather than on the colour of their skin.

That Dr King lived as a real human person is a fact. That he said these words is a fact. As a sane human being, he decided what words to use in order to express his ideas and he had a specific intention of how his words should be understood. This is reality.

Eisegesis, on the other hand, is the process of studying a text in order to express your own ideas and agenda irrespective of the inherent logical meaning of the text. As an example of eisegesis, using Dr King's speech above, imagine that I tell my students that what Dr King was really saying was that only **his** four children should be judged by the content of their character and everyone else must be judged by the colour of their skin. I could go further and say that Dr King saw himself as God and that his children were to be the first of a super race of god-kings. My points might be interesting but they would not be true.

Of course, most sane people would think this form of textual study is somewhat silly and intellectually dishonest but you only have to study at a seminary or a bible class to see examples just like this. It must be pointed out, however, that this style of textual analysis is not a 'Christian' invention.

It is a tradition, within Hebrew culture, to take a phrase or passage of the scripture and use it to make a point that might be entirely contrary to the inherent meaning within the text or contrary to logic or reality. If you take the time to read the commentaries of some of the great Rabbis you will read this kind of eisegesis. The Zohar is a perfect example of an incredibly profound book expressing mystical truth by basing it on text that doesn't support the primary statement. Unfortunately, this can be very dangerous for people with an inherently poor standard of literary comprehension and should be avoided where possible.

4.3 Faux Hebrew - Mick Jagger and Elton John:

In recent years, Biblical Scholars of one form or another, have taken to asserting that the writers of the gospels were Hebrews based on their use of Koine Greek, whilst at the same time ignoring everything that the gospel writers actually said.

As we have seen the purest examples of 'Hebrewisms' are to be found in the earliest sayings of the Q-Source but they are not limited to the obvious sayings of the Jesus of History. It is true that the writers of the New Testament did use Hebrewisms to give a Jewish flavour to their texts. It is obvious that the Greco-Roman gospel writers were writing for a Greco-Roman audience and were confident that their deception would not be noticed. The following examples illustrate my point:

- Only Matthew and Luke mention the 'virgin' birth. Luke copied Matthew who couldn't read Hebrew and translated the word '**Almah**' in Isaiah 7:14 as 'Virgin' when it should read 'Young girl'. Luke 'doubled down' on the mistake and built an entire narrative story to support his mistake.
- Hebrews 10:5 is used to support the idea of the Messiah (which references Psalm 40), fraudulently states, "Sacrifices and offerings You have not desired, but a body You have prepared for me." Original text from Psalm 40 actually reads much differently, "Sacrifices and meal offerings You have not desired; My ears You have opened."
- Luke 4:29 — Nazareth is built on a Mountain? No it's in a valley of rolling hills.
- Matthew is so keen for his Christ to fulfil Hebrew texts that he misreads the Hebrew in Zachariah 9:9 and has him riding two donkeys instead of one, which, if anyone has ever tried it, would count as a small miracle in itself.

In the 1st century CE, Rome was in love with all things Jewish mysticism. The Emperor Vespasian paid Jewish Rabbis to perform exorcisms for his entertainment. It is evident that the Greco-Roman writers of the New Testament were intentionally creating a false impression of Hebrew identity in order to further the cultic needs of the evolving Christian community.

In the same way today, since the 1960s, America has had cultural imperialistic influence on popular music. For this reason, musicians like Elton John and Mick Jagger both sing their songs with a strong American accent despite the fact that both of them are entirely English. America was and is their biggest market and they are in the business of selling records. That being said, both of these men were heavily influenced by American musicians. In many ways, their Faux American accent may be entirely subconscious.

We can therefore say that anyone trying to understand what the Jesus of History really said, should be very wary of making assumptions based on language and syntax alone.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Hebrew Thought and Spirituality:

As we have already demonstrated with our thought experiment involving Dr Martin Luther King Jr, without understanding Hebrew thought and spirituality, both as it was in the 1st century CE and as it is today, it is impossible to understand what the Jesus of History was trying to say and if you can't grasp his philosophical paradigm then it is also impossible to confidently differentiate between the true sayings of the Jesus of History and the many holy frauds.

Probably the most important thing to understand about Jewish spirituality is that it is entirely focused on our day to day life and our relationship with God. It is not concerned with life after death or the next life. In fact, the Hebrew texts hardly speak of what happens to us when we die. Images of the resurrection of the dead only started to creep into Judean thought after the Greek invasion.

5.2 Repeated Sayings:

Most of the sayings, which fulfil our criteria for legitimacy, have been repeated, almost word for word, between several gospels. It is also important to point out that they are often found, without Christian spin, in the Gospel of Thomas, The Epistle of James and the Didache. Most independent Biblical Scholars agree that these sayings come from a common source document called the Q-Source.

Perhaps only 18% of the sayings attributed to Christ are likely to have been spoken by the Jesus of History but nearly all of them are direct advice on how to deal with the suffering of life and how to live your life in a way that will bring 'Light' into your life.

The sayings of the Q-Source and the Gospel of Thomas follow Hebrew custom and are commentaries on existing Hebrew scripture rather than part of a biographical narrative.

5.3 Textual Divinity Versus Experiential Divinity:

Most people who are attracted to religions tend to believe that truth can only be found in the written word. Let's call this approach '**Textual Divinity**'. People often find a great peace when they abdicate their own personal responsibility to comprehend the world around them and, instead, give themselves up to their adopted text as the 'word of god'.

Conversely, the Jesus of History taught '**Experiential Divinity**', the antithesis of Textual Divinity. The words we can identify as unique to the Jesus of History assume that an intuitive clarity is available to everyone and this clarity he called the 'Light'. It was his belief that this light exists within us all and is an emanation of God himself. Through a process of radical humility and gratitude a glimpse of a fundamental and profound reality could be achieved. Indeed, Nazarene Judaism is deceptive in its simplicity and terrifying in its application because nobody likes to see themselves stripped of all of their justifications and excuses. To see yourself truly as you are is almost impossible to bear.

The essential phrases of the '**True Sayings**' are not revelatory but are a direct pointing to this profound reality. The fundamental principles are distinctly Hebrew. The teachings of the Jesus of History are not comfortable or safe and they will change you in ways that you may not want to be changed (Ref 09).

6. Acknowledgements

- I would just like to thank Dr Robert W. Funk for his work on the search for the 'Historical Jesus' without which this paper would have been impossible. I would recommend his book, "The Five Gospels - What did Jesus Really Say?"
- For anyone interested in investigating this subject for themselves, I would recommend the following free online resources:
 - www.scripture4all.org - for a Greek/Hebrew Interlinear Bible Software.
 - StudyLight.org Lexicons for Greek according to Strong.
 - Bible-Researcher.com: Michael D. Marlowe's article on the Semitic Style of the New Testament is very accessible for beginners.
 - Rav Michael Berg of the Kabbalah centre for his insights into the application of Kabbalah in modern life.

7. References

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 - <http://contradictionsinthebible.com/are-yahweh-and-el-the-same-god/>
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8. **Distinctive Sayings of the Jesus of History:** The Five Gospels by Robert W. Funk
9. **Nature of the True Sayings: The True Sayings of Jesus - The Jesus of History Versus the Christ Myth** by Antonio Sebastian.

8. Further Reading

The True Sayings of Jesus

The Jesus of History Vs. The Christ Myth

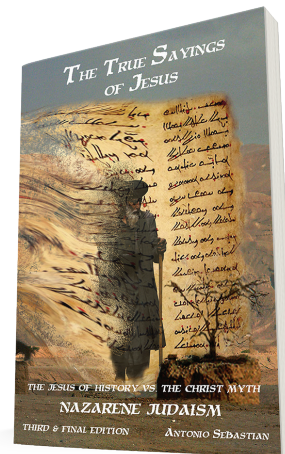
The sayings of Christ are the work of at least five men. Each of the four gospel writers felt free to put words into the mouth of their Greek god but copied, word for word, the teachings of the Jesus of History in order to bring their fiction to life.

The Jesus of History was a real person and by applying the comprehension skills already available to us, it is possible to differentiate the words of one man, as an expression of one mind whose words reflect the coherence and internal logic of that individual.

Using up-to-date archaeology, textual reconstruction and cultural anthropology discover the True Sayings of the Jesus of History and the secrets of Nazarene Judaism.

Before Islam - Before Christianity - Before Rabbinical Judaism

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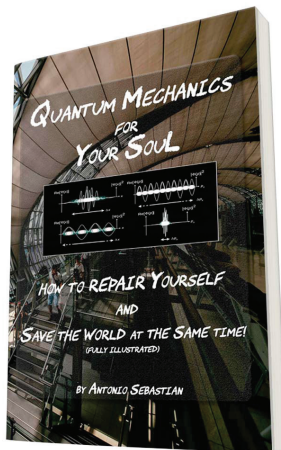
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On an epic journey between Azerbaijan and Scotland, best selling author, engineer and natural philosopher, Antonio Sebastian discovers the world that exists within the world we have all come to know.

He realises that the itch we can't scratch, that's driving the world mad, is the intuitive awareness that the world we see around us is not the same as the world that exists deep inside our hearts.

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With gentle humour, the author smashes the myths that created the world that has blinded us all to our universal reality. Throughout history that reality has been the source of all transcendental wisdom.

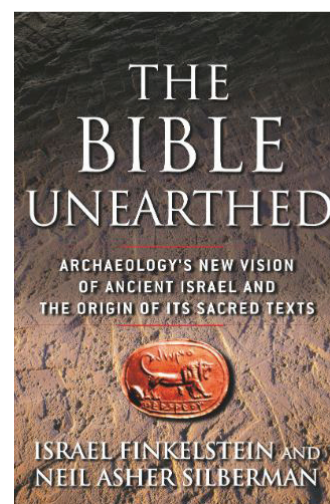


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The Bible Unearthed

In this iconoclastic and provocative work, leading scholars Israel Finkelstein and Neil Asher Silberman argue that crucial evidence (or a telling lack of evidence) at digs in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon suggests that many of the most famous stories in the Bible—the wanderings of the patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt, Joshua's conquest of Canaan, and David and Solomon's vast empire—reflect the world of the later authors rather than actual historical facts.

Challenging the fundamentalist readings of the scriptures and marshalling the latest archaeological evidence to support its new vision of ancient Israel, *The Bible Unearthed* offers a fascinating and controversial perspective on when and why the Bible was written and why it possesses such great spiritual and emotional power today.



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