

SCRIPTURE READING REASONS

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The Seed of Abraham's biblical reading schedule departs from the traditional Torah and Haftarah readings of the Orthodox and Messianic Jewish communities. Having followed those readings for the Torah and Haftarah (and *Brit HaDasha* or New Covenant) for years, I began to wonder why my grasp of the rest of Scripture was slipping. It was because I wasn't reading the whole Bible; just certain sections of it. The Scripture Readings schedule is designed to be read every day of the week, beginning on the first day of the week (Sunday). In a year's time the whole Bible is read, but what makes this reading plan different from most, if not all the others, is that every week you'll be reading the words and works of Messiah Yeshua (or of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts) along with the other four sections of the Word. Most reading plans fail to have the reader in the Gospels and Acts for as long as six or more months out of the year. That's a long time *not* to be reading about the life Yeshua lived in Israel and the works of the Holy Spirit through the Jewish Christians in Acts.

Also, with everyone in your home fellowship and congregation on this schedule it'll mean that everyone coming on Shabat (Sabbath) will have already read the readings for the week and will be able to discuss them with each other. It also allows for the shepherd to select his teaching from one of the sections and know that his flock will have already read it, and so be 'more prepared' to hear the Word of the Lord and to have comments and questions to ask after the sermon about the message and/or the other readings.

I realize that in setting off in another direction from the traditional Torah readings, even when they begin (late March or April for us), the biblical beginning of the New Year; Ex. 12:2 versus in October after the Feast of Tabernacles for the Messianic and Orthodox Communities, I have launched off in a direction that few in the Messianic community might care to follow. Having been led to travel down roads that few in that, or any other community care to walk in, I've been able to present this reading schedule without much concern or reservation for it 'being different.' Many people have reaped spiritual benefits from the *Ruach haKodesh* (the Spirit of the Holy One) as they have read the readings in the order its been set up, and I pray that you will also find it a tremendous blessing.

One benefit is the way that the Scripture readings complement one another or dovetail, and how the Lord uses that to reinforce His Word. Another is the fact that every week of the year you'll be in the Gospels (or Acts), reading the words of Messiah Yeshua, and seeing how the Holy Spirit moved so powerfully through the early believers, while also being in Torah every week (the five books of Moses; Genesis through Deuteronomy). This is very important because true biblical understanding comes from these two foundational sections. Not only that, but every week there are readings from the Prophets, the Writings (e.g. Psalms), and from Romans to Revelation.

The books for the Torah, Prophets and the Writings (the 'Old Testament') generally follow the order of the Hebrew *Tanach*. This will prove important for a couple of reasons. One concerns Matthew, who was the first Gospel to be written (44 AD). Matthew starts with the Lord's genealogy. Many are confused by this because it doesn't make for 'good reading' unless one is 'into' genealogies. Why did Matthew begin his Great News about Yeshua with His genealogy? Chronicles (one book in Matthew's time and not divided into two as it is today) is the book of genealogies about Israel and about King David's lineage from which the Messiah would descend. Matthew intentionally begins with Yeshua's genealogy because Chronicles, not Malachi, is the last book in the Hebrew Bible (i.e. the Old Testament) and thus a biblical, genealogical 'bridge' is formed between the last book of the Jewish Bible (Chronicles) and Matthew's

proclamation of Yeshua as the long expected Messiah, the King of the Jews, who descended from both Father Abraham and King David. The reason why the Christian Bible has Malachi as the last book is because it bases its order on the Septuagint, the official Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, written about 280 to 250 BC, for the Jewish people living outside the land of Israel.

Also, the reading for the New Covenant (Testament) letters and Acts is arranged more in accordance with the way they were chronologically written, even though the (Gentile) ‘Church Fathers’ spoke of Paul’s letters being placed *after* those of the other Apostles, which lends credence to the fact that the Apostles in Jerusalem were ‘before’ Paul in both coming to Yeshua and in terms of their authority and place within the whole Assembly of Jewish and Gentile believers. The Jerusalem Church is rightly called ‘the Mother Church.’ I’ve placed all the New Testament (and Old) in a chronological order to be able to see when they would have been read if any single congregation would have been privy to them. Of course, none of them were, but it gives us a view as to when the Gospels, Acts, Revelation and the letters came about. Placing Paul’s letters according to their chronology in which they were written is very beneficial because it allows us to see how Paul’s understanding and theology developed and matured over time. Reading them in their chronological order allows for this progression to become apparent.

It was the Roman Catholic Church that placed Paul’s Letter to the Romans, and the rest of Paul’s letters, immediately after Acts. This was meant to elevate the Roman Catholic Church above all the other congregations and also, ‘to place in the background’ the letters from the Apostles of Jerusalem—Kefa (Peter), and Yohanan (John); and also the two half brothers of our Lord: Yakov (Jacob; James), and Judah (Yehuda; Jude).

Paul did not write the Letter to the Hebrews because the author speaks of only hearing the Message of Salvation from *others* (Heb. 2:1-3). Paul, though, always spoke of his Gospel as having been given to him by the risen Savior; not any man. In other words, Paul would never write that he heard the Gospel from others. There are other internal reasons why Pauline authorship of Hebrews isn’t accepted among most scholars, and Hebrews 2:1-3 is one of a number of solid reasons for it. For instance, Paul always begins his letters by saying his name and that he is a bondservant, etc. This isn’t found in Hebrews. The Greek style of writing is not Paul’s. Just as music aficionados can tell the difference between say, Beethoven and Bach, it’s just as easy to see that the Greek for Hebrews is very different than Paul’s Greek in his letters.

This next section was taken from a website on the authorship of Hebrews and why it wasn’t the Apostle Paul:

“The internal evidence presented by the book of Hebrews itself indicates an author other than Paul.

1. The style of Hebrews, except in the closing verses (13:8-25), is quite unlike any other writing of Paul’s that has survived.
2. In keeping with the **style** of a person well educated in formal rhetoric, the Greek of Hebrews is highly literary and very ornate.
3. The **vocabulary** is sophisticated, and it includes 150 words that are not found elsewhere in the New Testament and 10 that do not occur in any other Greek writings that have survived for our study.
4. The **structure** of the epistle conforms to conventions found in Greek rhetoric used when a speech was designed to persuade its audience to action. Much of this rhetorical achievement is lost when the original Greek of Hebrews is translated into modern language, but in the original it is elegant and euphonious Greek prose. The high rhetorical quality of Hebrews indicates that its author most likely had the most advanced literary education of any of the New Testament writers.
5. The author does not introduce himself as Paul typically does (cf. 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1st Tim. 1:1; and 2nd Tim. 1:1), which established the Apostle’s credentials as having

been called by the Lord to be an apostle.

6. Its theology, though very compatible with that of the Pauline letters, is very distinctive. The apostle Paul, for instance, never alludes to Jesus as a priest, which is the major motif of Hebrews. In fact, Hebrews is the only New Testament writing to expound on Jesus as the Great High Priest and final sacrifice.
7. An even more persuasive argument that the apostle Paul was not the author of Hebrews is the way the author alludes to himself in Hebrews 2:3, stating that the gospel was confirmed ‘to us’ by those who heard the Lord announce salvation. The apostle Paul always made the point that, even though he wasn’t one of the twelve original disciples who walked with Jesus during his earthly life, he was nonetheless an apostle of Jesus Christ, and usually identifies himself as such in his letters. It seems unlikely that Paul here in 2:3 would refer to himself as simply someone who received the gospel from those who had heard the Lord.”¹

I’d also like to add that Heb. 13:23 speaks of Timothy having been set free (from jail). Nowhere in Paul’s letters is that seen, so it seems that Timothy’s jail time happened after Paul was dead (or at least, had stopped writing letters, his last one actually being a letter to Timothy (2nd Tim.), written about 64 AD. The Letter to the Hebrews was written about 67 AD.

I’ve also changed the traditional order of the first five books of the New Covenant, as recent scholarship has placed the dating of Mark after Matthew and Luke. The chronology in which the Gospels were written was Matthew (44 AD), Luke (62 AD),² Mark (66 AD) and John (90 AD).

In the reading schedule, books like Nahum, Lamentations, 1st Thessalonians and Philemon, which don’t have chapters after them, mean that the whole book or letter is to be read.

May Yeshua bless you as you embark on this Scripture Journey with Him,

Aram Yehoshua

¹ Taken from <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/who-wrote-the-book-of-hebrews/> and also, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorship_of_the_Epistle_to_the_Hebrews.

² Acts was written in 64 AD.

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