

What Role Should the Old Testament Play in Christians' Lives?

As a rabbi and teacher, I am often charged with trying to make difficult concepts understandable. One way to make things more understandable is to use parables, as Yeshua (Jesus) did. Other times, I try to use analogies. At still other times, I try to use examples from my personal experiences to help focus and direct so that concepts become easier. One of the questions I am often asked is about the relevance of the Tanakh (Old Testament) in the lives of modern believers in Yeshua as their Messiah.

To help people understand why the Tanakh is still of great value, not only figuratively and spiritually but also personally, I direct the student or questioner to the movie *Star Wars*. Now, I know that today when we say "Star Wars," people ask "Which episode?" But to people my age, "*Star Wars*" means the very first movie, Episode 4.

I can still remember when I first saw it. I was a senior in high school, and the movie had become instantly super popular. The computer-generated video techniques used were brand new and absolutely amazing to watch. From the opening scrolling of the backstory through the destruction of the Death Star, everyone was glued to their seats, enthralled with the action taking place on the big screen.

We met Luke and Leia as well as Han Solo, Chewbacca and Darth Vader. We were introduced to the Millennium Falcon, the Rebel Alliance and the Evil Empire. We learned of light sabers and the Force, and we left the theater with the theme music playing over and over in our minds.

The truth is that most of us who watched the movie were so

moved by the epic story and action that we left the theater totally satisfied and didn't even think about the fact that right there in the opening title of the movie were the Roman numerals "IV." That's right. The movie was so powerful an experience that most people didn't care at all that what they watched was part 4 of a series.

We had met the characters and experienced their actions to save the world, yet we were totally satisfied not knowing all of the details. Why was there was an empire and rebellion? Where did the Jedi come from? How did the emperor come into power? We didn't even know who built C3PO. The list of things we didn't know at the end of Episode 4 is huge, yet most of us didn't care. What we did know is who was good and who was evil, and that in the end, the good guys won and salvation was provided.

The truth is that for many believers in Yeshua, the New Testament writings are like Episode IV, an extremely powerful story of good versus evil, the evil emporer, Satan, against the hero, Yeshua. There's an unseen Force that provides unlimited power and, at the end of the book, those who joined with the hero are victorious and saved from destruction. The bottom line is that it is great that those who read the New Testament find their Redeemer, Yeshua, and their lives are impacted and, like the end of the movie, they leave with a different song on their hearts.

However, when one of these people is then asked to explain the *why* and *who* of their faith, their answers tend to be very shallow in nature. Not because their faith is shallow, but because their knowledge and understanding are.

You see, just as we need Star Wars Episodes 1-3 to understand and explain the narrative that leads to and explains Episode 4, we need the Tanakh (Old Testament) in order to understand the New Testament. Without Tanakh, we don't know where sin comes from and we don't know that a plan for redemption was

set in place before man was even formed from the earth. Without the Tanakh, we don't understand the foundation of redemption, which we find examples of in Exodus and in Ruth. We cannot understand the offering of Yeshua's sacrifice without Leviticus and Deuteronomy. We don't understand the significance of the day and hour Yeshua died without Exodus. These are only some of the things we cannot possibly understand that are missed when we don't give the Tanakh its full value as believers in Yeshua.

Let me be clear: there is great value in the New Testament, and in it we can find redemption and salvation. But, when you want to share your faith both by example and by words, the answers to the questions of "why" are only to be found within the earlier episodes of the Tanakh. {eoa}

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