

What is the Word of יהוה?

Introduction

With so many different writings and speakers out in the world today how can we know that what we are reading and/or hearing is the true word of the Creator Elohim, יהוה? There are so many ancient manuscripts that claim to be written by various prophets and apostles. How can we know that what is written therein was inspired of our heavenly Father? Finding the answers to these questions is vitally important to the children of יהוה. Why? Because we base our doctrine, the way we live our lives on the daily basis in the faith, on the words contained in various writings.

The purpose of this study is to examine the problem we are faced with today and search for the answer from יהוה. With such a plethora of different writings out there that claim to be “inspired” or “authoritative” we need to carefully evaluate what makes a writing “inspired” or “authoritative” in יהוה’s eyes. Prayerfully at the end of the study we will have a set of solid criteria that we can use to compare every writing and/or message we read and/or hear to. These criteria will be the standard for what is the word of יהוה and everything else would fall short.

Ancient Writings

To help us understand just how serious the problem is for us today here is a list of ancient writings that claim authority or inspiration. I have divided them into Old Testament and New Testament categories. Within those categories there are two subcategories – apocrypha and pseudopigrapha. Please note that while the tables below contain lists of many ancient writings it is not necessarily comprehensive. Many other writings may exist that are not listed.

First we need to better understand exactly what is meant by the terms “apocrypha” and “pseudopigrapha.” The word apocrypha is originally Greek (ἀποκρυφα) and means “hidden or concealed.” For the most part “apocrypha” is used today as a general term to describe all books not considered “canonical” in today’s Protestant Bible, though this definition is not accurate. In reality the apocryphal books are those whose authors, authenticity, value and/or content were disputed to a great or small degree. Some books were considered apocryphal by certain sects of the Christian church while being considered inspired by others. Some of these works will be examined in another section below.

The word pseudopigrapha comes from two Greek words - ψευδής (*pseudes*), which means “lying,” and ἐπιγραφή (*epigraphē*), which means “inscription.” Basically, works that are pseudographs are those which claim to be written by someone who didn’t write it. This was a common ancient practice that was used to help the author’s writing gain a more authoritative status.

- *Old Testament* -

APOCRYPHA¹

1 Esdras	Wisdom of Solomon	Susanna
2 Esdras	Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach	Bel and the Dragon
Tobit	Baruch	Prayer of Manasseh
Judith	Letter of Jeremiah	1 Maccabees
Additions to Esther	Prayer of Azariah	2 Maccabees

PSEUDOPIGRAPHA²

Apocalypse of Abraham	Eupolemus	3 Maccabees
Testament of Abraham	Pseudo-Eupolemus	4 Maccabees
Apocalypse of Adam	Apocryphon of Ezekiel	5 Maccabees
Testament of Adam	Ezekiel the Tragedian	Syriac Menander
Life of Adam and Eve	Greek Apocalypse of Ezra	Testament of Moses
Ahiqar	Questions of Ezra	Book of Noah
Letter of Aristeas	Revelation of Ezra	Orphica
Aristeas the Exegete	Vision of Ezra	Philo the Epic Poet
Apocalypse of Daniel	Prayer of Jacob	Treatise of Shem
1 Enoch	Testament of Jacob	Psalms of Solomon
2 Enoch	History of Joseph	Testament of Solomon
3 Enoch	Jubilees	Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs

- *New Testament* -

APOCRYPHA & PSEUDOPIGRAPHA³

Didache	Gospel of Thomas	Egerton Gospel
Gospel of Peter	Gospel of the Hebrews	Gospel of Ebionites

¹ List can be found at <<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com>> (as of 8/8/2012)

² Partial list. Full list can be found at <<http://www.earlyjewishwritings.com>> (as of 8/8/2012)

³ Partial list. Full list can be found at <<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com>> (as of 8/8/2012)

Infancy Gospel of James	Infancy Gospel of Thomas	Acts of Peter
Acts of John	Acts of Paul	Acts of Andrew
Secret Mark	Apocalypse of Peter	Shepherd of Hermas
Polycarp to the Phillipians	1 Clement	Gospel of Judas
Gospel of Philip	2 Clement	Didascalia

Needless to say we are not short on the number of writings that we have to choose from. What's worse is that the lists above aren't even comprehensive. There are literally dozens and dozens of apocryphal and pseudopigraphal writings that in some way make a claim to inspiration, authority, or authenticity.

Canon

Throughout the history of the Christian church, or the Messianic faith as a whole, there have been several canon lists written and since discovered. What is funny (or not) about the whole thing is that none of the lists align perfectly. As mentioned above, some assemblies in Messiah in a certain part of the world would accept a certain book as inspired of יהוה while others in another part of the world rejected it outright as a pseudograph. What follows are some of those canon lists and their approximate dates.

- Old Testament -

Although a large amount of Old Testament writings existed, including the apocrypha and pseudopigrapha, what was believed to be "inspired" was relatively consistent. The Torah, or the five books of Moses, was universally accepted as inspired scripture since it was written. Every prophet subsequent to Moses through the New Testament times used the Torah as their base and foundation for truth and revelation. Following this we have evidence within the pages of the Bible itself that the words of all confirmed⁴ prophets of יהוה after Moses were taken as the "word of יהוה."⁵

Other evidence of ancient Old Testament canons can be understood from what was translated into the Septuagint (LXX). The Septuagint was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Koine Greek that dates between the 3rd and 1st centuries BCE. Not all of the books contained in the

⁴ More information on what a "confirmed" prophet is will be presented in later sections of the study.

⁵ See [Daniel 9:2](#) where Daniel was reading "the scrolls" and found the "word of יהוה unto Jeremiah the prophet" for one example of this. Daniel, a prophet himself, took the words of prophets that came before him as the very words of יהוה Himself.

LXX were universally accepted as “inspired,” though. Those books include those contained in the list of Old Testament apocrypha above.

More evidence can be found in the writings of extra-biblical authors. Yeshua ben Sirach (Yeshua son of Sirach), the author of the Old Testament apocryphal book entitled “Wisdom of Yeshua son of Sirach,” devotes several chapters in his work to “famous men, and our fathers that begat us.”⁶ Yeshua wrote this work sometime between 170 and 150 BCE. The order of these famous men he praises is very telling. As he proceeds through chapter 49 he implies and it is believed by some⁷, that the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve Minor Prophets are all either inspired or authoritative. Josephus also mentions that the Jews of his time only had twenty-two books.⁸ He mentions the five books of Moses specifically, four books containing hymns to Elohim, and thirteen books written by the prophets after Moses.

We can also find a canon list in the writings of a man named Melito who lived during the 2nd century CE. This particular writing of Melito’s is only found preserved in Eusebius’ Ecclesiastical History.⁹

MELITO’S CANON

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus
Numbers	Deuteronomy	Joshua
Judges	Ruth	1 Samuel
2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles	Psalms
Proverbs	Ecclesiastes	Song of Songs
Job	Isaiah	Jeremiah
The Twelve (minor prophets)	Daniel	Ezekiel
Esdras ¹⁰		

The only book missing from Melito’s Old Testament canon list is Esther.

Lastly, we have the testimony of our Master, Yeshua the Messiah.

⁶ Sirach 44:1.

⁷ See “Bible Canon, §6.” The Jewish Encyclopedia. Found at < <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3259-bible-canon>> (as of 8/8/2012).

⁸ Josephus, Flavius. “Against Apion, Book I, 8.” The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged. Trans. William Whiston. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987.

⁹ Eusebius Pamphilus. “Book IV, Chapter XXVI.” Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged. Trans. Christian Frederic Crusé. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.

¹⁰ Ezra and Nehemiah were counted together as one book where Esdras is the Greek name for Ezra.

Luke 24:44 (LITV) – “And he said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you yet being with you, that all the things must be fulfilled having been written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, concerning me.’”

Yeshua here confirms that he believed that at least the Torah (Law), the Prophets, and the Psalms were to the level of prophetic, inspired scripture. It is from this testimony, and that of the different sources provided above that the “church fathers” determined which Old Testament books to use. But, whether they were correct or not is something that we will determine later in the study.

- Ebionite Canon -

The Ebionites were a group of Messianic believers in the early first century who rejected all the gospels except for one known as the “gospel according to the Hebrews.”¹¹ They were well known by what was called the “Ebionite Heresy” whereby they denied the pre-existence of Yeshua and rejected Paul as an apostle and all his epistles. Whether this is indeed a “heresy” or not is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to note that this New Testament canon, though included only one book, is still an early canon.

- Marcion’s Canon -

Marcion was a heretic who lived from 85 to 160 CE. He was known as a heretic because he purposely threw out all of the Old Testament scriptures as being unrelated to the Elohim of the New Testament. His canon and that of his followers contained the following books.

MARCION’S CANON¹²

Gospel of Luke (modified)	Romans	1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians	Galatians	Ephesians
Philippians	Colossians	1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians	Philemon	

Marcion’s canon dates to around 144 CE. As is clearly distinguishable Marcion was strictly a Paulinist (follower of Paul of Tarsus) and nothing else. He believed that only Paul was a true apostle appointed by Yeshua the Messiah and therefore only accepted his letters and the Gospel written by Paul’s traveling companion Luke.

¹¹ Eusebius Pamphilus. “Book II, Chapter XXVII.” Ecclesiastical History: Complete and Unabridged. Trans. Christian Frederic Crusé. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998.

¹² “The New Testament Canon.” The New Testament Canon. 08 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon3.html>>.

- *Muratorian Fragment* -

The Muratorian Fragment is mostly believed to be the next oldest known list of New Testament books dated to about 170 CE.¹³ It was discovered by and named after a man named Ludovico Antonio Muratori. The surviving text of the manuscript itself contains the following books.

MURATORIAN CANON¹⁴

Gospel of Luke	Gospel of John	Acts
Corinthians (2)	Galatians	Romans
Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
Thessalonians (2)	Philemon	Titus
Timothy (2)	Apocalypse of John	Jude
John's Epistles (2)	Apocalypse of Peter	

The fragment itself begins mid-sentence and starts with describing the Gospel of Luke as the "third" gospel. So, it is reasonable to assume that the Gospels of Matthew and Mark were included in the original document, though there is no way this can be verified.

- *Origen's Canon* -

Origen's list¹⁵ of canonical books can be dated to around 240 CE. It contains all the books that are currently in the Protestant Old Testament, but in slightly different groupings. He goes on to mention there are four gospels, various letters of Paul (he leaves the details out), various letters from apostles (i.e. Peter & John), and at least the Apocalypse of John. He also mentions the disputes that existed over some epistles that were circulating.

- *Athanasius' Canon* -

Athanasius of Alexandria (296-373 CE) was a prominent theologian and bishop in the 4th century. He is famous for being integral in codifying the doctrine of the trinity through the

¹³ Some scholars have proposed that its similarity between canon lists in the East during the 4th century shows that its dating is much later than 170 CE. Given the uniqueness of its contents compared to other lists found in the 2nd century I am inclined to believe that the list is older than is typically believed to be. More information on this point can be found in a work entitled "The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of Canon" by Geoffrey Mark Hahneman.

¹⁴ "The Muratorian Fragment (about A.D. 170)." The Muratorian Fragment. 08 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.bible-researcher.com/muratorian.html>>.

¹⁵ "The New Testament Canon." The New Testament Canon. 08 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.bible-researcher.com/canon3.html>>.

various councils presided over by Constantine the Great. His main opponent in these times was a man named Arius, who didn't believe in the pagan doctrine of the trinity. Arius lost the battle with Athanasius and the controversy later became known as the Arian Controversy¹⁶.

In his Thirty-Ninth Festal letter, written in approximately 367 CE, Athanasius included the following list of books he deemed as inspired.

ATHANASIUS' CANON¹⁷

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus
Numbers	Deuteronomy	Joshua
Judges	Ruth	Samuel (2)
Kings (2)	Chronicles (2)	Ezra (with Nehemiah)
Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes
Song of Songs	Job	The Twelve (minor prophets)
Isaiah	Jeremiah (with Baruch)	Lamentations (with Jeremiah's Epistle)
Ezekiel	Daniel	Matthew
Mark	Luke	John
Acts	Epistle of James	Epistles of Peter (2)
Epistles of John (3)	Epistle of Jude	Epistle to the Romans
Epistles to the Corinthians (2)	Epistle to the Galatians	Epistle to the Ephesians
Epistle to the Philippians	Epistle to the Colossians	Epistles to the Thessalonians (2)
Epistle to the Hebrews	Epistles to Timothy (2)	Epistle to Titus
Epistle to Philemon	Apocalypse of John	

This is the first canonical list that contained all of the books in our current Protestant New Testament and it stuck. Other canon lists can be found later, but in the end this is the one that won out. In the same letter, immediately after listing the books he believed to be inspired of יהוה, he states, "These are the fountains of salvation that he who thirsts may be satisfied with the living words they contain. In these alone the teaching of godliness is proclaimed. Let no one add to these; let nothing be taken away from them."¹⁸ Given the influence that Athanasius had over some extremely vital doctrines in the Christian church it is no doubt that his words were eventually heeded without question.

The question we asked at the beginning of the study still remains: what is the word of יהוה? Do the lists compiled by various "early church fathers" above give us the evidence we need to prove inspiration? Is the long term acceptance of certain books as "canonical" enough? Do the opinions of believing historians and theologians of the past carry enough weight for us to

¹⁶ "Arian Controversy." Wikimedia Foundation. 09 Aug. 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arian_controversy>.

¹⁷ "Athanasius on the Canon." Athanasius on the Canon. 08 Sept. 2012 <<http://www.bible-researcher.com/athanasius.html>>.

¹⁸ Athanasius. "Series 2, Volume 4, Concerning the Divine Scriptures, Point 6." A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. New York: 1892.

concretely establish what the word of יהוה truly is when we read something? Before answering these questions we need to take a look at some modern-day Biblical canons. It is extremely important to note here that the various branches of Christianity that these canons are associated with each think their version of the Biblical canon is completely and totally inspired of יהוה.

- Protestant Canon -

The Protestant Bible is the most well known and widely used. Since the canons that follow all contain the books within the Protestant Bible it is proper to list its books first.

PROTESTANT BIBLE

Genesis	Exodus	Leviticus
Numbers	Deuteronomy	Joshua
Judges	Ruth	1 Samuel
2 Samuel	1 Kings	2 Kings
1 Chronicles	2 Chronicles	Ezra
Nehemiah	Esther	Job
Psalms	Proverbs	Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon	Isaiah	Jeremiah
Lamentations	Ezekiel	Daniel
Hosea	Joel	Amos
Obadiah	Jonah	Micah
Nahum	Habakkuk	Zephaniah
Haggai	Zechariah	Malachi
Matthew	Mark	Luke
John	Acts	Romans
1 Corinthians	2 Corinthians	Galatians
Ephesians	Philippians	Colossians
1 Thessalonians	2 Thessalonians	1 Timothy
2 Timothy	Titus	Philemon
Hebrews	James	1 Peter
2 Peter	1 John	2 John
3 John	Jude	Revelation

Protestants, and any other group or affiliation that uses their canon (ex. “Sacred Name Assemblies”) will almost universally maintain that these 66 books and only these 66 books should be considered the inspired word of יהוה. Everything outside is just the writing of man outside the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, not all branches of Christianity agree.

- Catholic Bible -

In addition to the books of the Protestant Bible above, the Catholic Church recognizes several other ancient writings as being “canonical,” or part of the inspired canon of scripture. The additional books are as follows.

CATHOLIC BIBLE

Tobit	Judith	Additions to Esther
Wisdom of Solomon	Wisdom of Yeshua ben Sira	Baruch
Prayer of Azariah	Susanna	Bel and the Dragon
1 Maccabees	2 Maccabees	

All truly “Catholic” Bibles will contain these additional books, which are more commonly known as the “Apocrypha” or “Deuterocanon.”

Although there are many different canons¹⁹ I am going to skip to one of, if not the most comprehensive. The Ethiopic Christian canon contains all the books of the Protestant Bible and most of the additions found in the Catholic Bible in addition to the books in the list that follows.

ETHIOPIC BIBLE

1 Esdras	2 Esdras	Enoch
Jubilees	1 Meqabyan	2 Meqabyan
3 Meqabyan	4 Baruch	Sirach
Jossipon	Ser-atä Seyon	Te’ezaz
Gessew	Abtelis	1 Covenant
2 Covenant	Ethiopic Clement	Ethiopic Didascalia

The Ethiopic Bible contains books that most believers have never heard of nevertheless considered to be the inspired word of יהוה. But, the Ethiopic church considers them such regardless.

- Conclusion -

Though the information provided above is far from a comprehensive study on the development of the canon of scripture the main point has been conveyed. This entire section is written to emphasize one very clear and historically accurate fact. The idea of a fixed “canon” of scripture was very fluid and constantly changing. Evidence of this fluidity is still with us today in the Biblical canons of the various sects of Christianity. Anciently, certain books were added to and

¹⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_canon for more canon lists of various sects of Christianity.

removed from various church fathers' canon lists for hundreds of years. Some thought a certain book was inspired of יהוה, while others saw it as a heretical pseudograph, and still others simply considered it "disputed."

It is true that there were always certain books that appear in most if not all canon lists. But, does this fact alone mean that a certain book is to be read as though it is the very word of our Almighty Creator? Modern scholars have come up with what they consider to be the four main criteria for canonicity.

- Apostolic Origin – the book must be attributed to and/or written by a direct apostle of Yeshua the Messiah or their close companions
- Universal Acceptance – the book must have been acknowledged by all major Christian communities in the ancient world
- Liturgical Use – the book must have been read publicly for the church's edification
- Consistent Message – the book must contain teachings that are consistent with or complementary to the other accepted writings

One huge question comes up when considering these, however. Are these criteria that were set by יהוה Himself, or by man? Can we find these criteria in the pages of what is now considered scripture? Did any of the confirmed prophets of יהוה speak these criteria so we could all live by them? The answers to these questions are obvious. These criteria cannot be found in any ancient manuscript as having come directly from יהוה or one of his prophets. These criteria were and are man's and man's alone.

Should we not look to יהוה to determine what His word is? Who knows better than He does? We will now look into what we know to be His words to see what information He gives us to determine whether something is His word.

The Prophet's Test

Being a prophet of יהוה in the past was very seldom, if ever, an easy role. Most of the confirmed prophets of יהוה lived their lives in exile, were hated by their brethren, were constantly burdened with the needs and desires of the people, and/or were burdened with the knowledge of a coming destruction or exile of Israel. A huge responsibility fell on the shoulders of those that were called by יהוה to be His prophets. They were to deliver the very words of the Creator to His children regardless of whether the message was positive or negative.

However, just as the responsibility of the prophets was huge, so the requirements for a prophet were strict. Not just anyone could meet the qualifications for a true prophet. It is these qualifications that will help us to properly discern the word of יהוה from the word of man.

- In the name of יהוה -

A true prophet of יהוה is one that is bold enough to and will speak his prophecy in the name of יהוה. Doesn't it just make sense? Would we, or should we even give ear to one who comes and prophesies in the name of another elohim? Or, should we listen to them if they come speaking a prophecy in their own name? Of course not. The only true being that holds the future in His hands is יהוה. He is the only one that has the ability to reveal what will come to pass in the future and therefore only prophecies spoken in his name should be listened to and heeded.

Deuteronomy 18:18-20 – “I will raise up a prophet to them, from the midst of their brothers, like you, and I will give My words into his mouth and he will speak unto them all that I command him. {19} And it will come to pass, the man who listens not unto My words which he will speak in My name, I, I will require *it* from with him. {20} But the prophet that acts presumptuously to speak a word in My name, which I did not command him to speak, or that which he will speak in the name of another elohim, even that prophet will die.”

יהוה makes it very clear that the true prophet will not only speak His words, but he will speak the words in His name. Speaking the words in יהוה's name is what causes us to open our ears to pay close attention. If we hear, “thus says יהוה,” or “hear the word of יהוה,” or “the word of יהוה that came unto Jeremiah,” we should stop what we are doing, open up our ears completely, and pay very close attention to whatever the supposed prophet should say.²⁰ “Thus says ‘the Lord’” or “God says” isn't enough. The name of the Almighty must be used when speaking His words. Along with His name comes His authority and He, along with those sent by Him, are our sole authorities.

This part of the Prophet's Test comes along with a very steep price, which is exactly why I personally feel יהוה required it. If the supposed prophet comes speaking something in the name of יהוה that יהוה didn't give to him the penalty was death. Likewise, if a supposed prophet came to יהוה's people speaking in the name of a different elohim, death was his or her penalty. This means that if someone comes speaking in the name of an angel, or in their own name, we aren't required listen to them. By requiring this steep price for speaking in his

²⁰ Another example of the word of יהוה being given can be found in a form similar to [Daniel 9:22-23](#). In this case Gabriel, an angelic messenger of יהוה, brought forth the word and vision directly from יהוה to Daniel to give him understanding of it. Daniel, as is written in verse 4 of the same chapter, was praying to and petitioning יהוה. If a word or vision such as that sent by יהוה through Gabriel lines up with the rest of the Prophet's Test it should be seen as the word of יהוה.

Name those who would presumptuously speak a prophecy would be greatly deterred. After all, all eyes and ears would be on them and if they were found to be false they were to be put to death.

This passage of scripture gives us the first and most important qualification for a true prophet. He or she who is a true prophet of יהוה will come speaking in His name. This shows that the prophet is willing to risk their neck to speak the very words of Elohim.

- Adding To or Taking Away -

There are several passages in the Torah in which יהוה tells us that His word is to remain as He spoke it. It would be highly presumptuous and boastful of us to assume that we know more about what יהוה spoke than He did. Adding to or taking away from the word of יהוה is something He makes very clear is a big no-no.

Deuteronomy 4:2 – “You will not add unto the word which I am commanding you and you will not take away from it. *You are to keep the commandments of יהוה your Elohim which I am commanding you.*”

Deuteronomy 13:1 – “Every word which I am commanding you, it you will observe to do. You will not add unto it and you will not take away from it.”²¹

יהוה says in no uncertain terms that we are not to mess with what He commands us. To do so would be a direct violation of this command. This fact is reiterated by later confirmed prophets as well.

Isaiah 8:19-20 – “And when they say to you, ‘Inquire unto the soothsayers and unto the knower of spirits, the ones peeping and the ones muttering,’ will a people not inquire unto their Elohim? On behalf of the living will they inquire unto the dead? {20} To the Torah and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this word there is no dawn to it.”

Isaiah, a true and confirmed prophet of יהוה, emphasizes the fact that any word not spoken in accordance with the Torah or the Testimony has no light in it. Yeshua the Messiah confirms the same thing.

Matthew 5:17-19 (LITV) – “Do not think that I came to annul the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to annul, but to fulfill. Truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth

²¹ Deuteronomy 13:1 here is actually verse 12:32 in English versions. The Hebrew manuscripts place this verse as the first in the 13th chapter.

pass away, in no way shall one iota or one point pass away from the Law until all comes to pass. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever does and teaches *them*, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.”

Yeshua reiterated exactly what יהוה commanded. He emphasizes the fact that nothing in the Torah or the Prophets will pass away until the heavens and the earth pass away. To even relax one of the commands in the Torah, even the least of the commands, is a transgression.

These scriptures give us a clear understanding of the next two important qualifications of a true prophet of יהוה. First, a true prophet is one that will not speak against יהוה’s Torah, neither adding to it nor taking away from it. Second, the true prophet will “observe to do” the words which יהוה commands.

- Valid Prophecy -

What value does a prophet’s prophecy have if it doesn’t come to pass? Are we to believe such a one is speaking the words of the Creator of the heavens and the earth and who knows all things? The validity and fulfillment of the prophecies spoken in the name of יהוה are extremely important in determining the authenticity of the supposed prophet.

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 – “And if you say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which יהוה has not spoken?’ {22} That which the prophet speaks in the name of יהוה but the word does not become and does not come *to pass*, that is the word which יהוה has not spoken. The prophet spoke it in presumption; you will not turn away²² from him.”

This passage immediately follows the passage discussed above regarding prophecies being spoken in the name of יהוה. Simply put, if a prophecy comes from יהוה it will come to pass. So, if the supposed prophet comes, prophesies something in the name of יהוה (i.e. “thus says יהוה”), and the thing he or she prophesied does not come to pass, they are a false prophet. We are told that we are not to turn away from them in fear. We are also told that he or she is to be put to death for speaking something in the name of יהוה that He did not command them to speak.

²² The Hebrew word for “turn away” in this verse is תִּגְוֹר *tagur*, which comes from the root גִּוַר *gur* meaning “to turn aside from.” Most versions of the Bible translate this as something similar to “you will not be afraid [or fear] him.” Although a literal translation of the word doesn’t yield “afraid” or “fear” the meaning remains the same. The implication of the word is that if you fear something you turn away from it to avoid it. In this case יהוה is instructing the children of Israel to not turn in fear away from the prophet who is proven false.

This is the fourth qualification for a true prophet. If the prophet prophesies something that never comes to pass they are not to be believed or feared. A true prophet must prophesy something that comes to pass.

Simple reason and logic require that we discern something further from this passage. The prophecy spoken has to be something that only יהוה could reveal. In other words, it cannot be something that has an extremely reasonable or probable likelihood of coming to pass regardless of whether it was prophesied or not. For example, let's just say it was pouring outside and I said, "Thus says יהוה, the ground under this stone will become wet when I pick up the stone." That prophecy had an extremely high probability of coming true even if I didn't speak the words before picking up the stone. Another example is if I said, "Thus says יהוה, it will rain in the United States within the next month." The United States is hardly a country that has absolutely no rain for the span of an entire month. Therefore the prophecy is just something that would have happened no matter what. What would be more prophecy-like is if both of those situations were reversed. "Thus says יהוה, though it is raining in torrents right now when I pick up this stone not a drop will touch the ground where the stone was." "Thus says יהוה, the land of the United States will see absolutely no rain for an entire month." Both of these last two examples are things that are highly unlikely and leave much, if not all control over the situation in the hands of the Creator. That is the nature of true prophecy.

- *Leading Away From יהוה* -

It should go without saying that if a supposed prophet prophesies something that is intended to lead people away from יהוה that the prophet is a false one.

Deuteronomy 13:2-6 – "If a prophet rises in the midst of you, or *one* dreaming dreams, and he gives unto you a sign or a wonder, {3} and it comes *to pass*, the sign or the wonder which he spoke unto you saying, 'Let us go after other elohim,' which you do not know 'and let us serve them,' {4} you will not listen unto the words of that prophet or unto the *one* dreaming dreams for יהוה your Elohim is proving you to know whether you are loving יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your breath. {5} You will go after יהוה your Elohim, and Him you will fear, and you will keep His commandments, and you will listen to His voice, and Him you will serve, and to Him you will cleave. {6} And that prophet or that *one* dreaming dreams will be put to death for he spoke apostasy against יהוה your Elohim (the *one* bringing you from the land of Mitsrayim [Egypt] and the *one* setting you free from the house of slaves) to thrust you

from the way which **יהוה** your Elohim commanded you to go in it, and you will remove the evil from in your midst.”²³

Even if the supposed prophet speaks a prophecy in the name of **יהוה**, and the prophecy comes true, he or she is still not yet qualified to be considered a true prophet. The prophecy itself may come true, or a sign or wonder that the supposed prophet performs may come to pass, but if either or both are used to pull people away from **יהוה** then the prophet is a false prophet and he or she must be put to death.

Here we have the fifth and final qualification for a true prophet of **יהוה**.

- *The True and Confirmed Prophet* -

Using the passages from the Torah above we have clearly outlined five essential qualifications that every supposed prophet must meet to be considered a true prophet of **יהוה**. The summary of the five qualifications is as follows.

- The true prophet must speak their prophecies in the name of **יהוה**. To do so involves a high level of risk since the punishment for speaking presumptuously in the name of **יהוה** meant the death penalty. Speaking in the name of other elohim, in the name of an angel, in their own name, or in anyone else’s name does not meet this qualification.
- The true prophet’s words will be in complete alignment with the Torah of **יהוה**. Nothing that a true prophet says will add to or take away from the commandments, statutes, judgments, or words of **יהוה**.
- The true prophet will be one who “observes to do” the commands of **יהוה**. A true prophet will be one who not only speaks in total alignment with the Torah, not adding to or taking away from it, but he or she will also be one who strives to obey it. Does this mean that the true prophet is perfect and sinless? No. For we know that even Moses sinned against **יהוה** in striking the rock twice.²⁴ But a true prophet will be one who is obeying the Torah commands including the Sabbath, the Clean and Unclean laws, and the Feast Days to the best of their ability.
- The true prophet must prophesy something that comes to pass. A true prophet will not only speak something that is not easily predictable (see above for examples) but the prophecy will most certainly come to pass exactly as he speaks it. For the words he speaks are the very words of **יהוה**, who alone knows and controls the future.

²³ Deuteronomy 13:2-6 here is actually verses 13:1-5 in English versions. The Hebrew manuscripts place these verses as verses 2-6 in the 13th chapter.

²⁴ See Numbers 20:7-12.

- The true prophet's prophecy that comes to pass must not lead people astray from the way of יהוה. Not only must a true prophet's prophecy come to pass, but the fulfillment and/or result thereof cannot be something that leads people away from יהוה. If the supposed prophet uses the fulfillment of a sign or wonder as a catalyst to lead people to other elohim, or to "thrust you from the way which יהוה your Elohim commanded you to go in it," then they are a false prophet.

If the supposed prophet meets all of these qualifications they successfully pass the Prophet's Test. At that point we, as followers and children of יהוה, need to listen to and heed all of the words of that prophet. He or she is truly sent by יהוה.

The Anointed of יהוה

True prophets are not the only people set apart by יהוה for a special purpose. Prophets are usually called in such a fashion as, "The word of יהוה came unto Hosea..." But, there are those who are set apart for His purposes in a different way. In the Hebrew these people are known as the מְשִׁיחַי *meshichai*, which means "messiahs" or "anointed ones." The priests of יהוה, many of the various kings of Israel and Judah, and of course the Messiah Yeshua himself were all some of these anointed ones.

- Anointed With Oil -

Typically the messiah in question was physically anointed with oil, which was symbolic of their setting apart for יהוה's task.²⁵

One of the more famous and recognizable occurrences of this can be found in the book of 1 Samuel.

1 Samuel 16:3, 12-13 – "And call to Yishay [*Jesse*] in the sacrifice and I will cause you to know that which you will do; and you will anoint to me whomever I will speak unto you...{12} And he sent and he bought him in; and he *was* ruddy with eyes beautiful eyes and a good appearance. And יהוה said, 'Rise, anoint him, for this *is* he.' {13} And Shemuel [*Samuel*] took the horn of oil and anointed him in *the* midst of his brothers; and

²⁵ This was not done in every case. One example of this is with Cyrus the Great who is called יהוה's anointed in Isaiah 45:1. Though he was an anointed one, a "messiah," he was never physically anointed with oil for this purpose.

the Spirit of יהוה rushed upon Dawid [*David*] from that day and onward; and Shemuel rose and went to Ramah.”

Here we see how the anointing of David caused the Holy Spirit of יהוה to rush upon him. A similar event was prophesied and happened to Saul, the king before David.²⁶ Saul began prophesying within a couple days of being anointed by Samuel.

- Anointed by the Holy Spirit -

We also have evidence from the Torah where the Spirit of יהוה coming upon men causes them to prophesy.²⁷ In short, if you are anointed by or filled with the Holy Spirit you can become a prophet of יהוה. Does this mean that one cannot or never will fall away from יהוה and their calling? No. We will look more into this briefly.

Although those who are anointed of יהוה can be, and in many cases were prophets this by no means excludes them from the Prophet’s Test above. Anyone claiming to speak for יהוה must pass the Prophet’s Test. So, whether we read the words of David, Ehud²⁸, Solomon²⁹, or anyone else anointed by or filled with the Spirit of יהוה we need to make sure that any prophecies spoken by them line up.

The words of these anointed individuals, however, are by nature different than those of normal people. These people were set apart leaders of the assembly of the Most High. They were appointed to positions of authority to lead His children. Their words, commands, and decrees should be considered authoritative and therefore be obeyed as long as they don’t break anything in the Prophet’s Test. More about “authoritative” words will be discussed later in the study.

- The Fallen Prophets -

As mentioned above, simply being filled with or anointed by the Spirit of יהוה doesn’t mean you are free from the ability to fall from that anointing. There are several cases of individuals in the scriptures who were called by יהוה and anointed for His purpose but later fell. One such example is Balaam.

²⁶ 1 Samuel 10:1-10.

²⁷ See Numbers 11:25-29.

²⁸ See Judges 3:15-31.

²⁹ See 1 Chronicles 29:22-25.

Balaam was a well-known diviner that lived at Pethor. He was commissioned by Balak, king of Moab, to come and curse the children of Israel. Now, whether Balaam was a follower of יהוה initially can be debated.³⁰ But regardless he was later commanded to go to Moab and speak only what words יהוה gave him to speak.

Numbers 23:5 – “And יהוה put a word in the mouth of Bilam [*Balaam*] and said, ‘Return unto Balaq [*Balak*] and thus you will speak.’”

Balaam then returns to Balak and delivers the word that יהוה gave him. יהוה gives him these words to speak three different times.³¹ Yet, despite Balaam being the mouthpiece of יהוה to Balak during this time he later falls and leads the children of Israel astray, teaching them to eat food sacrificed to idols and commit fornication.³² This once true prophet, who arguably gave a prophecy regarding the coming and dominance of Yeshua the Messiah³³, fell into apostasy and was later killed by the sword.³⁴

Another example, this time referencing one who was once anointed with oil and set apart by יהוה, is King Saul. Saul, as mentioned above, was anointed by Samuel the prophet and later filled with the Spirit of יהוה. He also prophesied. But Saul disobeyed the command of יהוה given to him by Samuel, was rejected as king by יהוה, and later committed suicide during a battle causing many cities of the Israelites to be conquered by the Philistines.³⁵

So we can see from this that even if the true word of יהוה is spoken through a true and confirmed prophet or anointed one of יהוה that doesn't mean they are beyond falling.

- *Words of the Anointed Ones* -

In addition to prophets called in a “the word of יהוה came unto...” kind of way they can be found amongst those who are anointed by a prophet or filled with the Spirit of יהוה. David was anointed by Samuel the prophet to be the next king of Israel after Saul. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and wrote many Psalms for our benefit and the glory of יהוה during his life. Contained in these Psalms are many prophecies about Yeshua the Messiah and the time of the end. He was a true and confirmed prophet of יהוה called in a different way. The words

³⁰ In Numbers 22:18 Balaam calls יהוה “my Elohim.”

³¹ See Numbers 23:16 and 24:2-3 for the other two occurrences. The latter is another occurrence of one being filled with the Spirit of יהוה then prophesying.

³² See Numbers 25:1-2 and Revelation 2:14.

³³ Numbers 24:17-19.

³⁴ Numbers 31:8.

³⁵ See 1 Samuel 15:17-23 and 31:3-6.

written and spoken by these people, if they pass Prophet's Test, should be seen as the words of יהוה.

The Word of יהוה

From the information we have gathered above we should be able to discern whether something truly qualifies as the Word of יהוה. If the words we hear or read were spoken or written by a true prophet of יהוה, who meets all of the qualifications contained in the Prophet's Test above, then they should be considered the words of יהוה. The first and foremost qualification is the one that should cause our ears to open wide and our minds to start discerning immediately. If we hear someone say, "Thus says יהוה," or we read "The word of יהוה came unto...," then we need to listen up. That person may very well be sent from יהוה to deliver a message to His children. Each and every word they say after that needs to be carefully examined and compared against the Torah and previous confirmed prophecy to verify its validity. However, if one comes in his own name, the name of an angel, or someone else's name entirely, they have already failed the Prophet's Test.

- Authoritative Words -

It is also important to understand that even though every single word of a true prophet of יהוה may not be "prophetic" they were still given authority from יהוה. As long as those prophets are "observing to do" יהוה's commands and are not communicating anything that is meant to "thrust you from the way which יהוה your Elohim commanded you to go in it" then they should be seen as authorities. Their words, instructions, and wisdom should be heeded as those set in positions of authority over יהוה's people.

Proverbs 21:1 – "Rivers of water is the heart of the king in the hand of יהוה; wherever He so desires, He turns it."

The various kings of Israel were anointed ones of יהוה. They were given positions of authority by יהוה and needed to be heeded as such. Though some of Solomon's proverbs, for example, may be prophetic in nature, others may not be. However, we can know that the wisdom found in the other proverbs is from יהוה based on the following.

2 Chronicles 1:10-12 – "Now, wisdom and knowledge give to me and let me go out and come in before this people; for who will judge this, Your great people? {11} And Elohim said to Shelomoh [Solomon], 'Because of that which is in your heart, and you asked not for riches, wealth or glory, or the breath of those hating you, and also you asked not for

many days, but you asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you will judge my people over which I have made you king, {12} the wisdom and the knowledge is given to you, and riches and wealth and glory I will give to you, which was not so for kings which were before you and after you there will not be so.”

יהוה gave Solomon the wisdom that he humbly requested. For this reason we can take the words of Solomon, if they do not go against Torah or any previous confirmed prophetic utterance, as authoritative. Likewise we can see the books containing historical records as being authoritative even if they are not prophetic through and through. For instance, the books of Kings and Chronicles are believed by many to have been written by either a confirmed prophet or scripturally appointed authoritative individual.³⁶

We can apply the same kind of authoritative status to some of the apostolic writings contained in the New Testament.

Matthew 10:1-4 (LITV) – “And having called His twelve disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, so as to cast out, and to heal every disease and every weakness of body. {2} And the names of the twelve apostles are these: First, Simon who is called Peter and his brother Andrew, James the *son* of Zebedee and his brother John, {3} Philip, and Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew the tax-collector, James *the son* of Alpheus, and Lebbaeus, whose last name was Thaddaeus, {4} Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”

Yeshua gave his twelve chosen apostles authority. One of them, Judas Iscariot, fell and was replaced by Matthias.³⁷ This same authority would have passed to him being the new apostle of Yeshua.

Matthew 28:18-20 (LITV) – “And coming up Yeshua talked with them, saying, ‘All authority in Heaven and on earth was given to me. {19} Then having gone, disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all things, whatever I commanded you. And, behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age. Amen.’”

Not only did Yeshua give them authority over unclean spirits and healing sicknesses and diseases, he also commissioned them to preach his words to the world. This commission was not spoken to or laid upon anyone outside of the apostles of Yeshua.

³⁶ Tractate Baba Bathra. “14b-15a.” *Babylonian Talmud*. 8 Sep. 2012. <
http://halakhah.com/pdf/nezikin/Baba_Bathra.pdf >

³⁷ See *Matthew 27:3-5* and *Acts 1:16-26*.

Matthew 19:28 (LITV) – “And Yeshua said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, You who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

These twelve men were clearly given a level of authority above anyone else in the early church. This authority was to extend into the new kingdom Yeshua is to come and set up. These apostles of Yeshua who authored letters currently contained in our New Testament, such as Peter and John, though they don't claim prophetic inspiration, are nonetheless to be taken as authoritative. Since they were appointed and given authority by a confirmed prophet, Yeshua the Messiah, their authority should not be questioned. But, just like a prophet being put to the Prophet's Test, their words need to be compared to that of the Torah and other confirmed prophecy.

The apostles of Yeshua had a unique task in the first century CE. They were responsible for setting up the first assemblies. Given the fact that they were given the authority by Yeshua to spread his message they were permitted and required to set up leaders over these various assemblies. Since the authority of the apostles was to be heeded, the authority of those appointed by them was to be as well.

James, the first bishop of the Jerusalem assembly and brother of Yeshua, was one such authority. He was not appointed as an apostle directly from Yeshua himself, but he was clearly appointed as a leader of the assembly in Jerusalem. His letter addressed to the twelve tribes spread abroad should be seen as an authoritative work. His instructions should be heeded as one set up by the apostles of Yeshua, those given the direct authority of Yeshua. Beyond these men, however, we see no passing on of Messiah's authority. There is no succession of authority displayed in the scriptures beyond those appointed directly by the apostles themselves.

Conclusion

The words in the scriptures we read should be understood in one of three main ways.

- The inspired words of יהוה. – Words that are spoken in a prophetic manner where both the prophet and the prophecy pass all the qualifications in the Prophet's Test above should be considered the very words of the Almighty, יהוה.
- Authoritative words. – Words that are not spoken in a prophetic manner but are spoken by those who have been placed in positions of authority over יהוה's children should be heeded as long as they pass the Prophet's Test. As always the instructions and/or wisdom given to us by or through those in authority over us should be tested by the words in the Torah and confirmed prophets.

- Other words. – Words not spoken in a prophetic manner and not spoken by those in scripturally authoritative positions over us are just that, words. These words may indeed have value, but we are not required to live by or act according to those words. These words may or may not be in contradiction to words inspired by יהוה or those of scripturally authoritative individuals.

It is our duty to test each work that claims to be either the word of יהוה or the words of a scripturally authoritative individual. Yeshua gave us a very clear and distinct warning.

Matthew 7:15-20; 24:11, 24-25 (LITV) – “But beware of the false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inside they are plundering wolves. {16} From their fruits you shall know them. Do they gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? {17} So every good tree produces good fruits, but the corrupt tree produces evil fruits. {18} A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruits. {19} Every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and is thrown into fire. {20} Then surely from their fruits you shall know them...{24:11} And many false prophets will be raised and will cause many to err...{24} For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up. And *they* will give great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. {25} Behold, I tell you beforehand.”

The Apostle John echoes the exact same thing.

1 John 4:1 (LITV) – “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are from Elohim; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world.”

If our Master and Messiah tells us that there will be false prophets so convincing that they could deceive even the elect we ought to be on our guard. Every document we place before our eyes has the potential to become this false prophet to us. Let us be diligent to guard our eyes from these things by testing everything. Lies will crumble and blow away when they are picked apart. The truth, on the other hand, even when picked apart to the very core, still remains the truth.

Psalms 119:142 – “Your righteousness *is* righteousness forever and Your Torah *is* truth.”

HalleluYah!