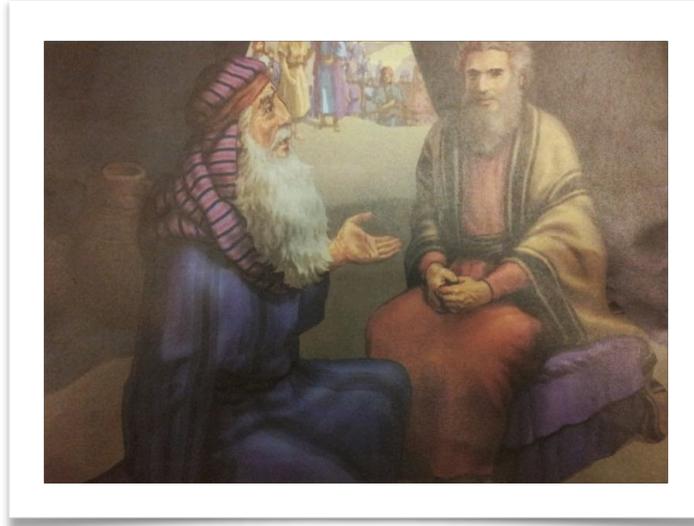


*Treasures of the Torah*

*“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,  
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value,  
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” Matthew 13:45*

**“Can I have a quick word, Moses?”**



**11 February 2023— 13 Shevat 5783**

**Yitro - Exodus 18:1 - 20:23**

Shalom Talmidim,

**Parsha run down.**

Yitro (Jethro) travels from Midian bringing Moses' family to the camp of the people. Moses. Yitro counsels Moses to appoint judges and magistrates. The people are camped at Mount Sinai, seven weeks after their release from Egypt. YHVH is to appear before them but they must consecrate themselves beforehand. YHVH descends upon the mount to the sound of the shofar. YHVH proclaims the ten commandments.

We begin our reading in Exodus 18.

***Ex:18:1 Now Jethro, the priest of Midian and father-in-law of Moses, heard of everything God had done for Moses and for his people Israel, and how the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt.2 After Moses had sent away his wife Zipporah, his father-in-law Jethro received her 3 and her two sons. One son was named Gershom, for Moses said, “I have become a foreigner in a foreign land”; 4 and the other was named Eliezer, for he said, “My father’s God was my helper; he saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.”5 Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, together with Moses’ sons and wife, came to him in the wilderness, where he was camped near the mountain of God. 6 Jethro had sent word to him, “I, your father-in-law Jethro, am coming to you with your wife and her two sons.”7 So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law and bowed down and kissed him. They greeted each other and then went into the tent. 8 Moses told his father-in-law about everything the Lord had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel’s sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how the Lord had saved them.9 Jethro was delighted to hear about all the good things the Lord had done for Israel in***

*rescuing them from the hand of the Egyptians. 10 He said, "Praise be to the Lord, who rescued you from the hand of the Egyptians and of Pharaoh, and who rescued the people from the hand of the Egyptians. 11 Now I know that the Lord is greater than all other gods, for he did this to those who had treated Israel arrogantly." 12 Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, brought a burnt offering and other sacrifices to God, and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat a meal with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God.*

Yitro or Jethro is a priest of Midian and the father-in-law of Moses. Despite Yitro being a high priest of Midian we see that he has no difficulty in acknowledging the God of Israel. He delights in hearing how YHVH has protected the people till now.

Israel's victory over the Amalekites is very recent; learning of this through Moses' testimony goes some way in the conversion of Yitro. Yitro is however referred to by another name in this passage — it is 'Reu'el', which means 'friend of El'.

Moses spent at least forty years in the land of Midian and would have therefore been very familiar with the religious worship of the culture. The Midianites descend from Midian the son of Abraham and Keturah. As history will tell, the Israelites will come to have many conflicts with the Midianites. The Midianites worshipped many gods, Baal being the eminent deity, and it could well be that YHVH may have been known to them. However, we must be careful in not conjoining the name 'El', the Canaanite deity, who was considered to be a distant ancestor of Baal, with the Almighty El Shaddai.

It is in Midian where Moses encountered YHVH in the burning bush event. Yitro, it would seem, is also familiar with offering a burnt sacrifice and even shares it with the elders among the tribes of Israel. Despite the various conflicts between the Midianites and the Israelites, not all of Midian declared themselves hostile to the wandering nation. Yitro, though a priest of Midian, was also a 'Kenite'. It was this group that allied with Israel, and is said to have become assimilated into the tribe of Judah.

#### ***Judges 1:16***

***16 The descendants of Moses' father-in-law, the Kenite, went up from the City of Palms with the people of Judah to live among the inhabitants of the Desert of Judah in the Negev near Arad.***

It would seem that the celebration of the burnt offering was short-lived, as Moses, the following day, takes his seat as a judge, sitting all day listening to the troubling questions of this fledgling nation, many trying to seek the will of YHVH.

#### **You need a hand Moses!**

***Ex 1:13 The next day Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. 14 When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, "What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?" 15 Moses answered him, "Because the people come to me to seek God's will. 16 Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God's decrees and instructions."***

Yitro sees the immense pressure upon Moses which simply can't be sustained. It would seem that even Moses, has taken on more than he can chew. Thus the counsel of Yitro is greatly received.

In the next few verses, Moses will begin a process of selection to determine those who will help him judge the people.

***21 "But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain—and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult***

case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. 23 If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.”24 Moses listened to his father-in-law and did everything he said. 25 He chose capable men from all Israel and made them leaders of the people, officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 26 They served as judges for the people at all times. The difficult cases they brought to Moses, but the simple ones they decided themselves.27 Then Moses sent his father-in-law on his way, and Jethro returned to his own country.

We can learn from this counsel that when YHVH appoints someone to a position, regardless of status, it is often wise and pertinent to get others to support you. Yitro could see the need. We don't always have to be the one to complete a task. Delegation is the art of good management. Often the Lord may ask of us only to start something and not necessarily finish it.

## Chapter 19

In this next chapter, we see the people journeying toward Sinai. Date wise we see the people entering in the third month. This would make it around the months of May -June or Shevat/Sevat in the Hebrew calendar.

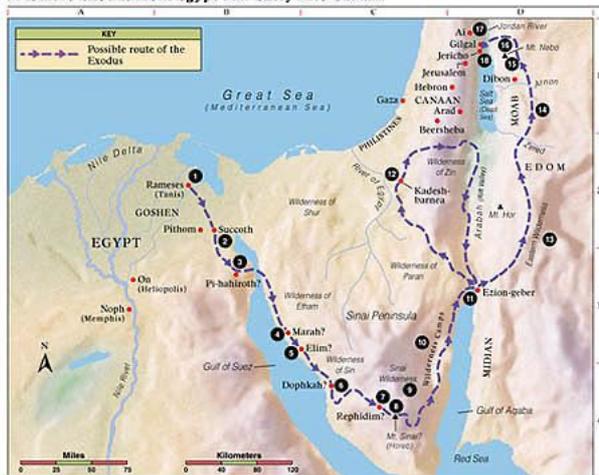
At this point, we remind ourselves that there are two calendars that work side by side in the Hebrew year. These are the Religious and civil calendars.

The month of Shevat is considered to be the month in which Moses delivers, before his death, the final message to the Israelites, as they are about to enter the land.

We are now heading toward another appointed time of the Lord, the feast of Shavuot, the time associated with the giving of the Torah.

The actual place of Sinai has caused much debate, with the location split. Some believe that Mount Sinai is situated in Saudi Arabia as in this map, possibly because of its location near Rephidim,

2. Israel's Exodus from Egypt and Entry into Canaan



However, Christian Scholar Eusebius located Mount Sinai east of the Red Sea, in the area of Midian. (Why not do some of your own research?)

## Arriving at Sinai

**19:1** In the third month after the people of Isra'el had left the land of Egypt, the same day they came to the Sinai Desert. **2** After setting out from Refidim and arriving at the Sinai Desert, they set up camp in the desert; there in front of the mountain, Isra'el set up camp.

Now Moses will be summoned by YHVH to the mount. Here, YHVH gives him the message. The prerequisite of consecration is given to the people as YHVH, will on the third day, appear before them.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if YHVH chose to do that today. I wonder what the people would do and how they would prepare in just three days.

...**3** Moshe went up to God, and *Adonai* called to him from the mountain: "Here is what you are to say to the household of Ya'akov, to tell the people of Isra'el: **4** 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, **then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart.**' "These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra'el."

*“7 Moshe came, summoned the leaders of the people and presented them with all these words which Adonai had ordered him to say. 8 All the people answered as one, “Everything Adonai has said, we will do.” Moshe reported the words of the people to Adonai. 9 Adonai said to Moshe, “See, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, so that the people will be able to hear when I speak with you and also to trust in you forever.” Moshe had told Adonai what the people had said; 10 so Adonai said to Moshe, “Go to the people; today and tomorrow separate them for me by having them wash their clothing; 11 and prepare for the third day. For on the third day, Adonai will come down on Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people. 12 You are to set limits for the people all around; and say, ‘Be careful not to go up on the mountain or even touch its base; whoever touches the mountain will surely be put to death. 13 No hand is to touch him; for he must be stoned or shot by arrows; neither animal nor human will be allowed to live.’ When the shofar sounds, they may go up on the mountain.”14 Moshe went down from the mountain to the people and separated the people for God, and they washed their clothing. 15 He said to the people, “Prepare for the third day; don’t approach a woman.” 16 On the morning of the third day, there was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud on the mountain. Then a shofar blast sounded so loudly that all the people in the camp trembled. 17 Moshe brought the people out of the camp to meet God; they stood near the base of the mountain. 18 Mount Sinai was enveloped in smoke, because Adonai descended onto it in fire – its smoke went up like the smoke from a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. 19 As the sound of the shofar grew louder and louder, Moshe spoke; and God answered him with a voice.20 Adonai came down onto Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; then Adonai called Moshe to the top of the mountain; and Moshe went up. 21 Adonai said to Moshe, “Go down and warn the people not to force their way through to Adonai to see him; if they do, many of them will perish. 22 Even the cohanim, who are allowed to approach Adonai, must keep themselves holy; otherwise, Adonai may break out against them.” 23 Moshe said to Adonai, “The people can’t come up to Mount Sinai, because you ordered us to set limits around the mountain and separate it.” 24 But Adonai answered him, “Go, get down! Then come back up, you and Aharon with you. But don’t let the cohanim and the people force their way through to come up to Adonai, or he will break out against them.”*

*25 So Moshe went down to the people and told them.*

Here we see Moses standing before the Most High. This is a personal summons. Can you imagine how Moses may have felt?

Moses is to remind the people about YHVH’s sovereign acts and how He has looked after and protected them thus far through their journey.

This next passage is an interesting one and again has brought much debate.

*v4 ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself.’*

What are the ‘eagles wings’? Are the ‘wings of eagles’ symbolic, or do they, as some believe, refer to a place?

It does seem clear in the text that YHVH has been carrying them, and thus the wings of eagles are symbolic of His protection and refer to Him.

*Psalm 91:4 says;*

He will cover you with his feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

*Isaiah 40:31*

...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

The eagle is revered in ancient cultures as being strong and warrior like. It can carry great weight in its pinions even when flying. Its eyes acutely aware of everything around it.

*Deuteronomy 32:11*

*11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,  
Hovers over its young,  
Spreading out its wings,  
Taking them up,  
Carrying them on its wings, NKJV*

**The Lord watches over His people.**

*Psalm 32:8*

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go;  
I will counsel you with My eye upon you.*

*Proverbs 15:3*

*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.*

*Psalm 34:15*

*The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous  
And His ears are open to their cry.*

David wrote in Psalm 23 that even when we go through the valley of shadows, when darkness surrounds, and the road ahead seems uncertain, YHWH is with us. He gives us His word and disciplines us, making us sure-footed. The rod and staff of YHWH represent His truth, discipline and guidance. The road that the Lord guides us down is true, straight and guarded by angels who are commanded to watch over us. He makes our steps sure footed as those of a deer upon the heights of jagged rocks.

Following the summons, Moses then has to consecrate the people ready for YHWH to appear before them. The people are to wash their clothes; this will mean removing the sand of their journey off them. The news given to the people will begin a closer walk with God. They will become a separate and holy people. We see this reiterated in 1 Peter.

***1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.***

The calling out of darkness speaks of a person without YHWH, one who is enslaved within the prison cell of life. Through a process of consecration or becoming holy, we can enter YHWH's presence. However, we must realise that even though we are consecrated, there is a protocol that must be observed and there are boundaries that cannot be crossed. There is order in the court's of the Lord.

Friends, we need to understand that we have to listen acutely to what the Lord is saying and how He instructs His people. He commands that even the priests must watch their steps.

***v22 Even the cohanim, who are allowed to approach Adonai, must keep themselves holy; otherwise, Adonai may break out against them."***

If we breach His commands there is a good chance that we may lose our lives - the path on which we walk becomes unstable. Obedience to YHWH's word creates for us a firm foundation and path that is illuminated for us. In this we truly see the footprints of Christ in the sand before us.

Think of this. Within our own monarchy, here in the UK, there is a protocol in the king's family. His position as ruling monarch demands respect at different levels. His children will always see him as

their father but when an event takes on an official status, his children approach their father as their king.

How much more must we observe the protocol as we come before our glorious King of kings?

Today I fear, there is so much familiarity among the brethren in the modern Christian church. Of course, through grace and by our own royal priest and saviour, Yeshua Messiah, we can enter into the presence of the Most High with boldness because we know or should know who we are. We are part of His Royal family. However we must respect these honoured positions. The Lord will not allow disrespectful familiarity in His presence. Such should be our focus when we enter into His presence, that there is no room for any other thought. His presence simply overwhelms us.

On a side note, I find it very difficult to hear in the midst of a worshipping congregation the prayer that welcomes the Holy Spirit into our midst. This is first, ignorance and disrespectful and secondly, worshippers are allowed by God's grace to come into His presence. It is not the other way around. This is the degree in which many have become familiar with God.

However, we can indeed speak to our great God as a child speaks to a father, a brother to a brother and a friend to a friend, but let us make this clear, when we speak to the King of kings, we speak to Him with reverence and fear, giving Him the worship and adoration of which He alone is worthy. Even so, He must find our approach and offering acceptable.

No one else, no other god, stands in this position. There needs to be a return to this protocol of worship. But though we are commanded to attribute such great worth to the Most High, we do so because we love Him and His commands are not burdensome.

When we see such disregard and familiarity in the church today, when respect and reverence is not spoken about among the leadership, when we think we can worship YHVH as we please and not how He wants, and when such profanity has crept into the worship, is it therefore not surprising that it feels sometimes that YHVH has hidden His face from us, that perhaps the Lord has removed Himself from the sanctuary? Friends, let us make this clear; YHVH's eyes search for those who will worship Him in Spirit and Truth or *'by the Spirit and by the Truth'*. It is the Spirit that guides us into truth and holiness. The way of worship comes from the Holy Spirit. Worship is the manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit in us and thus what is given by God goes to God. That is why we cannot give God what we want. He receives only that which comes from Him. Yeshua said .....*'But you know Him, for He abides with you and will be in you'*. John 14:17. Do you see then that it is the Holy Spirit, working in us, that gathers the praises of God's people.

***Chapter 20: Adonai said to Moshe, "Here is what you are to say to the people of Isra'el: 'You yourselves have seen that I spoke with you from heaven. 20 You are not to make with me gods of silver, nor are you to make gods of gold for yourselves. 21 For me you need make only an altar of earth; on it you will sacrifice your burnt offerings, peace offerings, sheep, goats and cattle. In every place where I cause my name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you. 22 If you do make me an altar of stone, you are not to build it of cut stones; for if you use a tool on it, you profane it.' "***

In these final passages, the conditions of meeting with YHVH will prevail. The giving of His commandments are to His chosen people and to all who will become part of these sojourners through time until the end.

Friends, a little bit further into the journey of the peoples, Israel will defile herself and prostitute herself with other gods as she submits to the practices of other nations. She will embrace the gods of other cultures. She will marry outside her tribal boundaries and break covenant with the God who has just given them His assurance of love, protection and benevolence. Despite His efforts, they will soon forget the day when they stood at Sinai, when they declared their obedience to Him. This was a unique moment, friends. This is when YHVH chose to make a covenant with a group of people and not with a man as He did with Adam, Noah, Abraham and Jacob. YHVH

seeks the acceptance of the covenant and the agreement from among the people. Does this not show us how much He wants us to be involved with the things He is doing?

Things don't seem to have changed, do they? Though we continue to remain wicked, the light of His word illuminates our sorry state in the mirror. However, His Love for us remains unmovable — dedicated and faithful is His work in us. If we desire it for the sake of salvation and for His glory, we will continue until it is fully complete.

The Israelite's journey is one of discovery where a new identity is forged in the fire of the baking sun of the desert. It is in the wilderness where fresh water will flow, where the sand is turned into a lush and fertile plateau. It would also seem, that it is a place where YHVH likes to meet and hold counsel with us. We can have some idea of this when we next meet with Him as we enter His prescribed Moed. At these times, I am convinced that Abba will send us into the cave or the desert for a quiet word beforehand.

Before we end this time together, let us remind ourselves that YHVH sets boundaries before us. He will choose those who can cross them and those who can't. The parable of the wedding feast tells us about a man who snuck in.

***Matt 22:11 "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 12 He asked, 'How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?' The man was speechless.13 "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'14 "For many are invited, but few are chosen."***

In closing, we are reminded that Yitro was a Midianite high priest who came to know the One True God of Israel. He was changed and the YHVH allowed him to give counsel to Moses. Nothing stays the same when we encounter the living God, our El Shaddai.

Friends, don't listen to those who say, 'Come as you are, and there is no need to change — God does not mind'. That might be ok for a brand new believer, who makes the decision on the day to follow Christ, but for the converted we see that YHVH has chosen a people who will reflect His divine standard. He is changing us from our corrupt dishevelled state and giving us new clothing. Our inner and outer appearance need to match. Our minds must be transformed by God's words and His Holy Spirit working in us.

What changes our hearts is seeing God's word through our own eyes. We must read the word because through the eyes come the things that affect our mind, just as the intake of food affects our bodies.

The laws of God help in this process. We can't cherry pick and be presumptuous. This is not about the law. We have to unpack and understand this. The laws are a guide and a teaching for us. We need to understand precepts and statutes, the whole judicial system written within scripture. There is no us and them (Jew and Gentile) separation. The problem with most Christians, and I do mean this as a sweeping statement, is that they have bundled the laws, precepts and statutes together and have created a whole simmering pot of noodles.

Yeshua said, "I AM the beginning and the End'. He is the Word, He is the Law. The Word walked with the images of God in the Garden of Eden. We are having to learn the Word and the knowledge of Him all over again. But don't worry friends — our learning will be over soon.

We must find encouragement in that YHVH has given to us His Spirit, who is our teacher. Let us spend time today and take as many moments as we can to spend some quality time with Him.

Returning to Matt 22 and the parable of the wedding feast — our attention is drawn to the man's dishevelled or unprepared demeanour. His attire is completely wrong; he is unsuited in more ways than one. Our reading today tells us that to enter into the presence of God, we must come prepared, washed and cleaned and suitably robed.

So we find a little message along our journey of salvation. The passover marked us and took us through the **blood**, and the crossing of the sea — upon the dry ground, the rock of our foundation, to a place where we are commanded to **wash** ourselves and our clothing, removing the sands of the past in order to come nearer to our God.

Thus our onward journey to the house of YHVH continues. The time of the giving of the commandments to YHVH's people is commemorated by the events of this passage. As YHVH gives us a reminder of His laws upon the stone tablets, we can see them symbolically written upon the living stones of His children. Why does God ask that if we should build him an altar of stone that they remain uncut? I believe it's because **He** wants to do the reshaping. He knows where every stone is cut by His chisel, the washing of the waters of time, the cutting and smoothing of the stones like the sea flowing upon the pebbles on a beach and the mountains of the deep, will go.

I love the fact that a God so great and majestic, so sovereign and awesome, asks only that we build Him an altar of earth, 20:21. This can only allude to ourselves, who having been seen by the eye of the Lord before the foundation of the earth, chose to take us from its very soil instead of from some beautiful divine substance from the realm of His own world?

Let us submit to our creator's hands. Let's not tell Him what shape we are, or where He should place the chisel, or how hot the furnace needs to be or how hard the blacksmith must bring down his hammer. Let us not tell him what rules we will obey. Let us put away familiarity and give the Lord respect. He knows what He is doing. Have faith in Him and then we may be allowed into His presence.

Oh, by the way, I think it's time for some washing of clothes, don't you?

Shalom



24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.  
[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.  
[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom  
May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Until next time.

Shabbat Shalom

Grant Marshall: Co-founder Arrows of Ephrayim Ministries.

Co-Pastor: The Lost Sheep Community UK

*Haftarah Yitro: Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 6:1–7:6; 9:5(6)– 6(7) (A); 6:1–13 (S)*

*B'rit Hadashah suggested readings for Parashah Yitro: Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:21–30; 15:1–11; 19:16–30; Mark 7:5–15; 10:17–31; Luke 18:18–30; Acts 6:1–7; Romans 2:17–29; 7:7–12; 13:8–10; Ephesians 6:1–3; 1 Timothy 3:1–14; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:5–9; Messianic Jews (Hebrews) 12:18–29; Ya'akov (James) 2:8–13; 1 Kefa (1 Peter) 2:9–1*

## Glossary

**Midrash:** In Judaism, the Midrash is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)

**Targum:** Targum Onkelos (or Onqelos), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

**Targum Jonathan:** Targum Jonathan), otherwise referred to as Targum Yonasan/Yonatan, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

**Tannaim:** Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10- 220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

**Talmud:** The Talmud means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud Bavli), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (Talmud Yerushalmi) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

**Jubilees:** The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided.

**Vulgate:** This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.