



# **The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us**

*Douglas A. Knight, Amy-Jill Levine*

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In *The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us*, preeminent biblical scholars Douglas A. Knight and Amy-Jill Levine deliver a broad and engaging introduction to the Old Testament—also known as the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible—offering a wealth of compelling historical background and context for the sacred literature that is at the heart of Judaism and Christianity. John Shelby Spong, author of *Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World* writes, "Levine and Knight have combined to write a book on the Bible that is as academically brilliant as it is marvelously entertaining. By placing our scriptures into their original Jewish context they have opened up startling and profound new insights. This is a terrific book."

## **The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Meaning of the Bible: What the Jewish Scriptures and Christian Old Testament Can Teach Us for online ebook**

### **Geoff Glenister says**

This is a fantastic resource - incredibly thorough, and covering a wide range of topics. The authors give the Scriptures historical context as well as touching on some of the Archaeological issues with taking some of these stories literally. The one critique I would hesitantly give is that at times it seems this book is a bit *too* thorough. In other words, this book is not for the faint of heart - it is meant for those who wish to dig deep.

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### **Philip Dampier says**

I like Amy-Jill Levine and find her insights very interesting.

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### **Jeremy says**

#### **Amazing Read!**

I finally finished reading this hefty work and I must say it was well worth every page. Each chapter brought a new perspective to the Biblical story that I believe is much needed in our current moral context. Both writers endeavored to draw insightful connections between the Scriptures and the prevailing contexts- a needful and necessary breath of fresh air for Biblical literalists. I highly recommend this book for those seeking to deepen their understanding of how ancients understood and related to their God. As written in the conclusion, the Bible isn't simple a book of answers; it assists us in asking better questions.

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### **Marlene M. Oaks says**

#### **Sooo Insightful**

This book educates us about context, archaeological findings around Biblical events or non-events (no evidence of Solomon's temple), language and translation and more. As a person who has sought spiritual understanding most of my life, I recommend this book to those who are sincere about finding truths.

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### **HarperOne (an imprint of HarperCollins) says**

“Amy-Jill Levine and Douglas A. Knight have combined to write a book on the Bible that is as academically brilliant as it is marvelously entertaining. By placing our scriptures into their original Jewish context they have opened up startling and profound new insights. This is a terrific book.”

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— John Shelby Spong, author of Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World

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### **Jeffrey McKinley says**

(read 3/20/13) A superb work by two scholars engaged in uncovering what the Bible actually meant to the people who composed it and how it should be interpreted today, rather than trying to craft it into a tool for fundamentalists to exercise control over the masses. For the authors, faith is a personal issue devoid of dependence on whether said events are true literally. While they desire to believe things like the historicity of King David, they acknowledge there is no evidence, pointing out the wise manta; 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.' For an atheist such as myself who has not lost his love for the Judeo-Christian genre of literature, I find the nature of scholarship demonstrated by Any-Jill Levine and Douglas Knight to be satisfying and even to a degree, edifying. While destroying most of the fundamentalist positions held by backwoods hick preachers and their blind followers, they offer to the open-minded person a Bible more alive and existentially exciting than the leather bound club normally used to beat the masses into conformity. Some will not find this book interesting. Others will find this book insulting to their core beliefs. But if you already have a knowledge of scripture and don't cling tenaciously to any dogma, you just might find in these pages an intellectual feast. To paraphrase the authors: If yours is the kind of faith that can be shaken by reading a book or a couple of paragraphs, then your faith is weak indeed.

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### **Jeremy Grimes says**

A great topical book on all things Hebrew Scripture.

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### **Paul says**

An accessible, comprehensive look at the many threads of the Old Testament. It strikes the perfect balance between accepting the text on its own terms and using the latest scholarship to inform the readers' understanding of its cultural context. Highly recommended for anyone trying to make sense of the Old Testament.

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### **John Hanscom says**

Absolutely excellent. One of the best books on the Bible I have read.

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### **Lee Harmon says**

Fascinating reading! Definitely a book that will be on my top-10 list this year. It took me forever to get through it, simply because there is so much information. I might have worn out a highlighter on this one.

You may have read Law, Power, and Justice in Ancient Israel by Knight a year ago. I reviewed Levine's book, The Misunderstood Jew, last year: see <http://www.dubiousdisciple.com/2011/0...> These are two very knowledgeable and interesting scholars, who have now collaborated on a new project.

The focus is on the Old Testament (the Jewish scriptures), and the Jewish flavor is evident. Be forewarned: it's a liberal treatment, perhaps unappreciated by conservative Christians. Be aware also that it doesn't provide the meaning of the Bible, as if any one such meaning can be discerned from so diverse a collection of writings and opinionated Bible authors. But if the world of the Bible fascinates you—from its political atmosphere, to its social and cultural aspects, to the battle for authority between the northern and southern kingdoms, to the hope and hopelessness of dispersion and captivity—this book won't disappoint. An incredibly rich history awaits, as you journey into the power struggles between kings and prophets and Deuteronomists, and the religious atmosphere pervading it all. Bible times were certainly not an era of separation between church and state.

In four parts, Knight and Levine discuss the development of the Bible from many different angles, including:

1. Ancient Israel and the settlement of Palestine.
2. Law and Justice in Israel and the Diaspora
3. Respect and understanding of the Divine, including the temple cult.
4. Emerging politics, economy, sexuality, and what it means to be a "chosen people."
5. Wisdom literature, including the theodicy of Job

Sounds dry, doesn't it? Not even a little. Knight and Levine may not deliver on their promise to explain the meaning of the Bible, but they certainly bring the Bible alive ... and yet reach a melancholy conclusion: the Bible is not a book of answers, but of questions.

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## **D says**

A very thick book. Learned...

Although the biblical tradition forbids human sacrifice, ancient Israelites sacrificed their children, as did their neighbors to the east, west and south. The rationale was to give to the deity what one found most precious. Child sacrifice was a recognized response to national crisis. The sacrifice indicated to the gods and the population the dedication of the parent making the offering, and the child in turn was seen to serve as the protector of the people or city.

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## **Drew says**

Excellent resource for one's library. Scholarly yet accessible, with a deep knowledge of Hebrew and

Christian scripture. An almost insurmountable problem in interpreting scripture is to free one's mind from one's culture. A fish is impacted by the water it swims in and so are we. The broad scholarship in this book opened cracks for new insights and appreciation. I will definitely revisit chapters from time to time.

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### **Andrew Ward says**

I really enjoyed this book, would recommend it to anyone interested in OT scripture. It is full of good insight and is easy and interesting to read.

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### **Bigheadwalt says**

Book is a collaboration by two professors from Vanderbilt that happen to co-teach some classes on the Bible and religion. The book synergizes the different books of the Bible, compiling commonalities and breaking down the original language to get to the intention and meaning of the passages throughout the Bible. Each author writes a chapter, initially alternating, but later in sections. Would love to take a course like this where more in-depth discussions could be held. If synthesized the lectures/chapters better, would give a better rating.

Good read, though.

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