



As we have written in our article regarding Galatians, “The validity of a New Testament statement or composition is not based on acceptance by the Roman Catholic church or by Protestants, nor is it based on alleged authorship or consistency in text transmission. Rather, it is based on compatibility with and affirmation of the Torah.”

We have an immense amount of information at our fingertips—catalogued, imaged and indexed manuscripts, in-depth lexicons, archaeological discoveries, etc. These are helpful and should be used by those so inclined and skilled to verify the strength of our interpretations of scriptures. However, by far the most important evaluative tool we have had since before Yehoshua walked the earth is the Tanakh. The guidance it has provided as to the authority and applicability of later teachings and writings has remained changeless for the last two millennia—and none of the discoveries and revelations since its completion, no matter how spectacular, have shaken that abiding perspective.

In the case of the so-called *Second Letter of Peter*, the earliest documentation available casts obvious doubts as to its initial acceptance. However, while noteworthy, such uncertainty also overshadowed the Letter of Ya’akov (James), a composition we find perfectly acceptable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Writing about 325 CE in his *Ecclesiastical History* (Vol. 3, 25:3), Eusebius wrote, “Among the disputed writings which are nevertheless recognized by many, are extant the so-called epistle of Iakob . . .” This is hardly surprising given the incompatibility between it and Galatians.

The simple and reassuring reality is that one need not be buried deep in the quagmire of ancient history to ascertain the truth; it is amply illuminated by the works themselves—either to affirm or to discredit them.

The text transmission of the New Testament is varied enough that we hardly expect perfection in the texts at hand. For example, its Greek texts have traditionally been considered to fall into three main categories: Byzantine, Western, and Alexandrian. The version of Acts as preserved in the Western manuscripts contains about 10% more content than the Alexandrian version of Acts (the latter being the one underlying most English translations).

Serious students of the New Testament become accustomed to encountering these differences and resolving them to their satisfaction.

That said, 2 Peter is a work which does not survive our scrutiny, not because of issues arising from scribal errors, but from fundamental flaws—three of which we will discuss here. They will be raised here in order of severity.

### **“Righteous Lot”**

2 Peter 2:7-8 reads, “And he delivered righteous Lot, who had been oppressed by the behavior of the lawless in lustfulness. For that righteous one living among them day after day, in seeing and in hearing, his righteous soul was tormented with their lawless deeds.”

This characterization of Lot as a righteous man—curiously repeating the appellation rapidly three times—is the opposite of what we find in the Torah—a selfish, incestual alcoholic who offered his own daughters to be gang-raped by a mob of homosexuals—a fate averted only by his angelic guests. If the Torah, or any other part of the Tanakh, offered Lot redeeming qualities (namely, repentance) or redemption itself in the face of such egregious sin, the appellation of righteousness could be accommodated. Absent that, such a representation stands against the Torah. Moreover, it is a serious affront to the relationship of fathers and their daughters—and, regrettably, reflects the widespread domestic demeaning of women, not only at large, but within conservative religious communities as well.

This observation is not to assert that Lot never repented and died unredeemed. Perhaps he did. However, allowing for that possibility is one matter; assuredly characterizing him as righteous against the biblical record is entirely another.

That said, it is hardly true that the author of 2 Peter arrives at his assessment independently. In the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*<sup>2</sup> (10:6-7), we find the following:

“Wisdom rescued a righteous man when the ungodly were perishing; he escaped the fire that descended on the five cities. Evidence of their wickedness still remains: a continually smoking wasteland, plants bearing

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<sup>2</sup> Written somewhere between the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the early 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

fruit that does not ripen, and a pillar of salt standing as a monument to an unbelieving soul.”

It would be a mistake to overlook the New Testament’s recurring preoccupation with themes well represented in the Jewish Apocrypha that are not well developed in the Tanakh. Heaven, the resurrection and angels, though hardly absent from the Tanakh, figure decidedly more intimately in the latter two collections.<sup>3</sup>

Despite this, though quoting abundantly from the Tanakh so as to clearly demonstrate an abiding dependency on it, the New Testament very rarely quotes from or has direct allusions to the Apocrypha. This disparity more suggests some common sources of the two rather than dependency. In the historical context, the common shift of thematic emphasis should be viewed as an inevitable result of Israel’s and Judah’s losses of sovereignty.

The Torah documents and presages the establishment of a nation. Thereafter, for all their moral, ethical and spiritual content—though applicable to the individual as well as the community—the Prophets and the Writings reflect the physical and political state of a nation, primarily in its own territory. True, writings such as Ezra and Nechemyah (Nehemiah) post-date the Judean exile, but even they involve some level of geopolitical restoration and, hence, national aspirations.

However, after Alexander’s conquest, followed by Antiochus Epiphanes, then the Romans, the Jews became largely resigned to a more tenuous, provincial existence, periodic rebellions notwithstanding. Those preoccupied with nationalism still remained and even held power, but the nation’s moral, ethical and spiritual conscience was now compelled by subjugation to consider that which transcends physical life.

So, returning to 2 Peter’s tie to the Wisdom of Solomon, we are observing in it a clear dependency rather than simply a shared cultural consciousness recently aroused that is more typical of the New Testament overall—and this dependency, slavish as it is, sets the work against the Tanakh.

There are dozens commandments against which 2 Peter could have run afoul and discredited itself, but offering one’s daughters to be gang raped on one occasion and committing incest twice with them is particularly depraved. Of all the places where young women need pure love and protection, it is certainly in the home. And because their abuse is an ongoing and widespread tragedy, our midrash regarding Lot’s treatment of his daughters must be unequivocally and vigorously condemning.

If we could simply excise those two verses to leave an unblemished exhortation, the composition might survive, but we do not take such measures without supportive

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<sup>3</sup> In this context, it is also appropriate to note here that the New Testament also draws from various oral traditions not found in the Tanakh. The examples affirmed therein do not contest the Tanakh’s instructions, but represent affirm ways of fulfilling them, in contrast with the ones Yehoshua condemned.

evidence, of which there appears to be none. The verses fit the larger context—larger than that of the composition itself, as we will soon note—and they are consistently represented in the various textual transmissions of 2 Peter. They thus incriminate the author, not merely as incompetent, but as a perverted advocate of incest. This accords well with the Roman Catholic record, but not with holy disciples of Yehoshua.

## Judean Affinity

One cannot read 2 Peter and Y’udah (Jude) without noticing their striking affinity—to the point that one is obviously dependent on the other. The following parallels are illustrative, if not exhaustive:

Yehudah	2 Peter
4 For certain men stole in, those of old having been written before to this judgment, ungodly ones perverting the grace of our God into unbridled lust, and <b>denying the only Master</b> , God, even our Lord Jesus Christ.	2:1 But false prophets were also among the people, as also false teachers will be among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, and <b>denying the Master</b> who has bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.
6 And those <b>angels not having kept their first place</b> , but having deserted their dwelling-place, He has <b>kept in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment</b> of a great day.	2:4 For if God did not spare <b>sinning angels</b> , but <b>delivered them to chains of darkness</b> , thrust down into Tartarus, having been kept <b>to judgment</b> ;
7 as <b>Sodom and Gomorrah</b> , and the cities around them, in like manner to these, committing fornication, and going away after other flesh, <b>laid down an example</b> before-times, undergoing vengeance of everlasting fire.	2:6 and covering the cities of <b>Sodom and Gomorrah</b> with ashes, He condemned them with an overthrow, <b>setting an example</b> to men intending to live ungodly.
8 Likewise, indeed, also these dreaming ones even <b>defile flesh</b> , and <b>despise rulership</b> , and <b>speak evil of glories</b> .	2:10 and most of all those going after <b>flesh</b> in the lust of <b>defilement</b> , and <b>despising rulership</b> , darers, self-pleasing; they do not tremble <b>at glories, speaking evil</b>
10 But what <b>things they do not know, they speak evil of</b> these. And what things they understand naturally, <b>like the animals without reason</b> , they are <b>corrupted</b> by these.	2:12 But these <b>as unreasoning natural beasts</b> , having been born for capture and <b>corruption, speaking evil in that of which they are ignorant</b> , they shall utterly perish in their <b>corruption</b> ,
11 Woe to them, because they went the way of Cain, and <b>gave themselves up to the error of Balaam for reward</b> , and perished in the speaking against of Korah!	2:15 forsaking a straight path, <b>they went astray, following the way of Balaam</b> the son of Beor, who loved the <b>wages</b> of unrighteousness,
12 These are sunken rocks in your love feasts, <b>feasting together with you</b> , feeding themselves without fear, <b>waterless clouds being carried about by winds</b> , fruitless autumn trees, having died twice, having been plucked up by the roots;	2:13 being about to receive the wages of unrighteousness, having deemed indulgence in the day to be pleasure; spots and blemishes reveling in their deceits, <b>feasting along with you</b> ,
13 wild waves of the sea foaming up their shames, wandering stars <b>for whom</b>	2:17 These are <b>springs without water, clouds being driven by tempest, for whom</b>

<b>blackness of darkness has been kept to the age.</b>	<b>the blackness of darkness has been kept to the ages.</b>
17 But you, beloved, <b>remember you the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ;</b>	3:2 that <b>you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandments of the Lord</b> and Saviour through your <b>apostles:</b>
18 That they said to you, <b>In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts.</b>	3:3 knowing this first, <b>that in the last days mockers shall come</b> with mockery, <b>walking after their own lusts,</b>

Of this affinity, Frederic Gardiner wrote, “It is impossible to suppose that such a resemblance, as is here presented to us, could have been accidental. The similarity consists, not merely in general design and argument, but extends to the order and arrangement of the two epistles; to the use of particular illustrations and comparisons, and even of the same words and phrases, and those sometimes of an unusual character. Such resemblance can hardly be accounted for by supposing that one of the writers had been in the habit of listening to the preaching of the other. The idea that both drew from some common, but now unknown, source, is destitute of any shadow of evidence ; and, while it must be pressed to the utmost limit to account for the verbal coincidences of the epistles, could, in the end, only have the effect of doubling the present difficulty.”<sup>4</sup>

Conservative Christians will blithely chalk up the similarities to inspiration of the holy spirit. However, the interjection of Lot precludes this. Besides, one must ask, what end would such obviously selective borrowing serve? One might cite the commonalities of the synoptic biographies as exemplars, but the disparity of relative subject import between the biographies and this material nearly mocks such a comparison. Neither is this the realm of history, such as Kings and Chronicles; it is recycled exhortation employing recycled analogies.

For example, in the synoptics, we have many parallel accounts that often have an odd intermixing of verbatim strings with distinctive ones, yet still describing the same episode. In both similarity and distinction, the accounts are quite matter-of-fact, and, by combining them, we become more informed.

In 2 Peter, we also encounter verbatim quotes of Yehudah intermixed with the author’s own words, but the variations are purely stylistic rather than to convey different information. 2 Peter’s author not only likes Yehudah’s ideas, but is taken with many of his precise expressions, yet he feels he can improve on the delivery of them. In this attempt, he reveals himself as a self-conscious writer, but he does not, in his parallelism, deliver any new information to his readers. Far from being driven by the holy spirit, he is quite uninspired—at least, not in the way many would have him be.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Similarity Between the Epistle of Jude and the Second Epistle of Peter*, Gardiner, Frederic; *Bibliotheca Sacra*, BSAC 11:41 (Jan. 1854)

Though scholars have been divided, it seems apparent that the comparatively elegant, compact harmony of Y'hudah versus the embellishments of the 2 Peter author well attest to Yehudan primacy, as does the internally-evident lateness of 2 Peter (as we will discuss in the next section).

One final observation as to this affinity returns us to 2 Peter's loose, yet unmistakable sourcing of the Wisdom of Solomon. Yehuda does much the same, except his is a direct quote, in his case, from I Chanoch (Enoch) 1:9, 5:4 and 60:8. Though they do so differently and draw from different compositions, their kinship is readily apparent. It also discloses the existence of a community claiming Yehoshua as Moshiach, yet being clumsily indiscriminate as to what they consider guidance scriptures, departing strikingly from the overwhelming New Testament perspective.

### **Paul's Writings**

As 2 Peter draws to a close, we find the following remarkable statement (3:15-16):

“And consider the long-suffering of our Master as salvation, as also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you, according to the wisdom given to him, as also in all his letters, speaking in them concerning these things, in which are some things difficult to understand, which the unlearned and unsettled pervert, as also they do the rest of the scriptures, to their own destruction.”

The reader vastly long-distanced from the gradual development and coalescence of what we know as the New Testament, who knows nothing other than its compositions being inseparably bound between covers, will likely take this statement for granted. New Testament historians do not, and that includes us.

For the disciples and their communities, “the scriptures” were essentially the Tanakh. There was no New Testament, nor, in the early years, were there even any of the complete compositions that would eventually populate it. Its eventual compositions were not what gave them their common identity nor what held them together.

Acts 17:10-11 typifies the New Testament's use of the term:

But the brothers at once sent both Paul and Silas to Berea during the night, who, having arrived, entered the synagogue of the Jews. And these were more noble than those in Thessalonika, for they received the word with all readiness, daily examining the scriptures if these things are so.

This is an especially important statement because it discloses the yardstick against which teachings, Paul's, of course, included, were measured. That yardstick has never changed.

Seventeen of the other eighteen New Testament occurrences of the precise phrase, “the scriptures” denote the Tanakh or books therein. Only in 2 Peter do we have any deviation—and it is radical.

(It should be noted here that the Greek word “γραφῆ” translated into English as “scripture” has, by itself, no connotation of sanctity; it simply means “writing.” However, when its plural form takes the definite article, it is referring to what Judaism considered “τα ἅγια γράμματα”—“the holy scriptures,” as we find explicitly in 2 Timothy 3:15.)

The Bereans obviously did not view Paul’s teachings as on par with “the scriptures.” Neither did the author of Acts, for he commends their approach. Paul himself explicitly calls to the authority of “the scriptures” in deference to them four times in his letters and two more times without the definite article. He also liberally quoted from them to validate his own statements.

These and the other writers’ citations and stances abundantly demonstrate, that, while they certainly considered their messages of import, they hardly viewed them on par with the Hebrew scriptures. If we assign such colossal hubris to them suggesting otherwise, we do so naively and raise doubt as to their piety.

What we do observe is considerable urgency on the part of the writers due to both internal congregational disruption and serious competition and outright opposition from multiplying counterfeits—both of which they themselves document. There was both the need to provide a reliable representation of Yehoshua’s life and teachings and to deal with the immediate issues facing congregants and their leadership.

Colossians 4:16 records the practice of relaying letters as circulars: “And when this letter has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the congregation of the Laodikeans; and that you also read the letter from Laodikea.” The writers obviously desired to leverage their messages and other guidance efforts with such measures. However, it remained true that they carefully and persistently cited the authority of the Tanakh to validate their statements, not to suggest parity.

Given this natural stance of both the New Testament writers and their initial recipients, as well as the presence for a time of living witnesses, any reference to their works as being among “the scriptures” would be long posthumous to Peter. In fact, so long as pupils of those witnesses remained, the “apostolic” writings were corroborated with their living testimony.

So this suggestion that Peter himself referred to Paul’s writings as among “the scriptures” is a preposterous anachronism, disclosing the composition as notoriously pseudopigraphic. And it comes from someone who considered at least parts of the Jewish Apocrypha that failed to reconcile with the Tanakh also as scripture.

As we have noted elsewhere, the contents of each New Testament composition reveal, not only important facets of the writers’ or editors’ perspectives, but also those of their recipients. When a work deviates so far from the Tanakh’s barometric

norm, we then sense a detachment of the curators and their intended readership from the Hebrew scriptures as well.

There is also the strange sense that 2 Peter's mention of Paul's writings is nothing more than an endorsement—perhaps serving no more purpose than simply to justify the inclusion of the writings of a relative latecomer into what was about to become the New Testament collection.

The reason for this suspicion is the brevity of the mention, for the issue of Paul's writings being widely misinterpreted to destruction truly was and remains one demanding some elaboration. An example of a misinterpretation and the actual solution is certainly in order, but the reader is left merely to haplessly join the apparently confused and unsettled crowd.

The difficulty of 2 Peter's reference to Paul's writings as among "the scriptures" has long compelled Christian apologists' candor as to their misgivings. Despite that, their reliance on Catholicism's delineation of the New Testament canon then relegates them to transparently weak reasons for affirming it as "God's Word." When serious students of the Bible then have their own personal encounters, both with the questions and the lame answers, doubts rise, both in their teachers and in the Bible itself.

### **Summation**

The three (actually four) features of 2 Peter discussed above disqualify it from inclusion in disciple's guidance books. All of the books of the New Testament bear inevitable scars at human hands, and we are hardly out to seize on these as proof of spuriousness. Instead, we examine each instance carefully, and, as various instances are resolved, the process is reassuring. However, when defects run deeper, back to the original composition, they tend to accumulate within it, betraying its unholy origins.

2 Peter is an excellent example of the paramount principle of comparing a New Testament composition against the Tanakh. We will likely never know in this age who penned 2 Peter. Thankfully, that is irrelevant. We "simply" compare scripture against scripture, bearing in mind which ones are truly foundational.