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BOOK REVIEW, THE BIBLE AS IT WAS

The Bible as it was, by James L. Kugel, I must say it is an extraordinary literary work. I thank God for opening new eternal avenues to be able to understand his eternal supreme Words, to be able to see and grasp the actual real life that is behind the Word, the culture, and mannerisms. (Psalm 119:32-33) "I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart (understanding) Teach me o lord the way of your statutes, and I will keep it to the end. (Proverbs 25:2) "It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out. Books such as The Bible as it was, prove that in the mercy of God, God has made provisions for his souls who seek, to find, provisions for those who ask, to be given, provisions for those who knock, the door shall open, according to the promise of the eternal one, Jesus who rose from the dead. (Matthew 7:7) The bible as it was, is a guide to the Hebrew Bible, such as I have never seen before. From Creation to The Exodus, through Sinai, all are vividly revealing, opening the pages of scripture, to a movement of life as if you are on the same journey, living it all, feeling it all. In this book, Kugel takes us through the first five books, the Torah, and shows the way it was interpreted both in later scripture and up through the early centuries of the common era. Each chapter begins with a summary of what the passage is discussing. He cites everything from, Prophets to Apocryphal books. He ends each chapter with a summary of how the passages were understood through these interpreters in the ancient world. I must say this is a fascinating work and essential for any student of scripture. Kugel is creatively able to design each chapter, taking

each story of the Torah, summarizing the story, and leading you through questions, drawing from an unbelievable number of sources and other Jewish commentaries through the biblical age. This book makes the interpretive Journey so much easier, again I thank God for his eternal Wisdom and his Provisions of Knowledge. The focus of this book is how the Pentateuch was understood when these sacred writings were beginning to be canonized as the bible. There is more to the Bible than just what the text actually said. There were also traditional interpretations of these texts that were understood as the meaning behind these texts. It was the Interpreted Bible, (the texts plus the traditional interpretations) that became canonized as sacred Scripture for both Judaism and Christianity. This Book is an attempt to reconstruct this traditional Bible, the bible as it was understood in the closing centuries. The story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) serves as a good example of how we read our own traditional interpretations back into the Scripture when we read it. We tend to understand the story of Adam and Eve as the story of the Fall of Mankind based on the traditional interpretation that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was the devil. However, the serpent is not identified with the devil in Genesis or really any other Biblical book until Revelation! This is an example of a traditional interpretation that existed at the beginning of the common era that was (and is today) understood as the key meaning behind the story of Adam and Eve. After the first chapter which talks about the ancient interpreters and their assumptions, the bulk of this book walks through the Pentateuch from Genesis through Deuteronomy and highlights the traditional interpretations associated with the different stories. This part of the book takes up about 500 pages. I took it as an opportunity to read through the Pentateuch again myself. For a given chapter in this book, I would first read the biblical text it covered to get a sense of what I thought it said and meant. Then I would read the chapter describing the ancient interpretations of that text. I found this to be a helpful way to read this, even though it took a

long time. To be able to see and feel the Word of God open with so much clarity, the long studious search is not grievous nor task full. It is fulfilling and tremendously motivational, to say the least. The Bible as it was, inspires a realm, with the Holy bible that makes you feel you have found a never-ending eternal river of treasures of Knowledge; making you constantly thirst for more understanding and the security and rest, that you know you can draw from its source at any time. At times you read in the Bible, in the Old Testament, passages, and you want more revelations, but because the cultural traditions sometimes are not expounded on, you only get that moment of clarity without the full effect of how they lived it and felt it. The Bible as it was bridging any gaps or lack thereof, making you cross that bridge with more comfort and satisfaction, knowing that you feel like a live eyewitness to all that has occurred. That is so beautiful, that is called Understanding. (Proverbs 4:7) "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom and above all thy getting, get understanding.

The wisdom narrative throughout this book is visible. In the beginning before the creation in (Proverbs 8:22-27) "The lord made me the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was formed, before the establishment of the earth. When he made the heavens, I was already there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep. Wisdom, the great plan underlying all reality, was of divine origin and widespread in the ancient world. The way the Author of The Bible as it was spent considerable time, with patience, breaking down in detailed analysis all the occurrences, shows dedication and stamina in this skillful literary work. I notice very much in many of the narratives of this Book that it feeds into the Holy Bible much of the noncanonical books and it is much of the reasons that it expounds on the original texts' explanations and occurrences that are not in the canon. With that being said, what is in the canon must be primarily duly noted and taken as the authenticity, and

exclusive authority for the education and teaching of doctrine, by the Holy Spirit for the interpretation of Scripture. We can take into account the excellency of great research orchestrated by Kugel in *The Bible as it was*, and since it shows consistently that the noncanonical references used, show no deviation from the original texts of the canon. On the contrary, it feeds into the canon's great support of revealing structure, which opens up avenues of life, into the original texts, that only enhance the canonical books with more comfort, and more familiarity to understand even more; a foundation of revelation that makes you rest in more appreciation of the Word of God. *The Bible as it was*, is that it was those interpreters, often anonymous and today largely unknown, who significantly molded our understanding of the Bible. *The Bible as it was*, a great companion to the Bible. They both excellently correlate together, forming a very powerful combination for all interested students and prognosticators of The Word of God.

I find it extremely interesting the transient path of the Prophet Abraham. In this Book *The bible as it was*, tells about Abraham, his life expounded on and magnified with more insight, it tells more of his origin, and how he is extremely wise and skillful in astronomy and astrology. In the Book of Genesis, I read that God tells him to leave his homeland and kinsfolk to go to a land that he will show him, but it doesn't go into detail as to why God tells him to do this. (Genesis 12:1) Now the Lord said to Abram, go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. *The Bible as it was* goes into such details about Abraham that I did not know. I know God wanted to separate him from the past culture he knew because it was a culture that worshiped other gods, all the surrounding nations were like this. This was the extent of the information that I was able to gather from the original canon book of Genesis. *The Bible as it Was*, now delves into territories I did not

even know about Abraham's character and his abilities, and it begins to make sense why God put his eternal eye on him. Ur of Chaldea in The Bible as it was, calls it Astronomy land. The Chaldeans exercised themselves with the practice of Astronomy and attributed all things to the movements of the stars, believing that whatever is in the world is governed by forces, seeking out the cycles of the sun, moon, and the planets and the fixed stars, as well as of the things of heaven and what happens on earth, they supposed the world itself was god, sacrilegiously making out that which was created to be like the One who had created it. God will not have this. This narrative explains why God called Abraham out of his homeland, to free him from the contaminated mind, and to show him the Way to Eternal Truth. I really love this interpretation of Abraham's awakening in The Bible as it was, "He (Abraham) grew with this idea and was a true Chaldean for some time until opening the soul's eye", powerful. From the depth of sleep, he came to behold the pure ray in place of deep darkness, and he followed the light and perceived what he had not seen before, One who guides and steers the world, presiding over it and managing its affairs. I did not know until reading The Bible as it was, that Abraham was skilled at understanding all things. The details of the dangers Abraham faced because of his eternal awakening about the true God were not expounded on in the Genesis canon. For this knowledge and so much more throughout the Book, The Bible As It Was, I highly recommend it as a must-read, as a companion to the interpretive study of The canonical Books of the Bible.