

THE LOST BIBLE PROJECT:

DISCOVERING ANCIENT ISRAEL'S EXCLUDED SCRIPTURES

A Description and Invitation for Support
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THE LOST BIBLE PROJECT:

A PERSONAL WORD OF INTRODUCTION

Sometime in the third century before the Common Era, in the place where the Nile meets the Mediterranean, Jewish legend tells us that King Ptolmey of Egypt ordered the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek. Ancient sources, among them the Babylonian Talmud, relate that Ptolmey summoned 72 Jewish sages to Alexandria to complete the translation. Each sage was sequestered in his own room. When Ptolmey was presented with the scholars' masterworks, every translation was identical one to another. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, called *The Septuagint*, or "*Translation of the Seventy Interpreters*," was thus deemed to have divine sanction, and greatly influenced the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.

Echoing the remarkable convocation of scholars in antiquity, the Jewish Publication Society has assembled some seventy scholars from around the world for a landmark publishing event. *The Lost Bible Project* presents to the English speaking world the sacred library of ancient Israel. For the first time in a Jewish context a truly comprehensive collection of the extra-biblical texts of Jewish antiquity that comprise ancient Israel's *seferim hitzoni'im*, excluded scriptures, will be available to scholar and lay reader alike. From the Dead Sea Scrolls to the Septuagint, Apocrypha, Josephus and Philo, *The Lost Bible Project* brings together the texts that transformed Jews and Christians at the turn of the millennium.

The Lost Bible Project organizes and excerpts these extraordinary texts in a unique way: as they relate and illuminate the Hebrew Bible itself. We discover that ancient Judaism began the process of commenting upon and wrestling with its sacred scripture even before the canon of holy books was itself completed! We now know that we cannot fully understand what is in the Bible without also appreciating what was excluded from the Bible. The view from the outside informs the view from the inside. Thanks to the wonder of archeological discovery, and the diligence of modern scholarship, the array of excluded Jewish scriptures of the Second Temple Period of late antiquity have come into focus. The tale of their discovery is a compelling story in and of itself. Yet I believe the ultimate significance of *The Lost Bible Project* is the personal discovery of how our ancestors' spiritual journey informs our faith today.

THE LOST BIBLE PROJECT:
OVERVIEW OF VOLUMES

The Lost Bible: Discovering Ancient Israel's Excluded Scriptures

A popular introduction to the scholarly compendium, telling the story of the texts; the writers who composed them, the archeologists who recovered them, and the scholars who deciphered them.

This volume will also invite comment from teachers and religious leaders on how these texts change our understanding of our history and our faith. Their significance for the emergence of rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity will be explained, and the implication for the modern practice of both religions will be explored.

JPS hopes to engage a recognized writer on religion to author this volume.

***Outside the Bible: Ancient Israel's Excluded Scriptures I-
The Septuagint, Philo, Joseph, and the Jewish Hellenistic Writers***

The first volume of texts concentrates on the beginnings of biblical interpretation during the Hellenistic period, both in the Land of Israel and in the Diaspora. Relevant excerpts from the Bible translated into Greek (Septuagint) and biblical commentary by Philo, often considered the first Jewish philosopher, are included. A host of more obscure Greek Jewish interpreters are brought to light. Finally, the biblical interpretations of late antiquity's best known (and most controversial) Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, are critically considered.

***Outside the Bible: Ancient Israel's Excluded Scriptures II-
The Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Wisdom Writings***

The second volume of texts concentrates on the continuation of biblical interpretation as reflected in the writings of the inter-testamental authors and Second Temple sectarian communities. These interpretations take the form of commentaries on biblical verse, midrashic extensions of biblical figures, historical treatises, legal explanations, prayers and philosophical musings. Scores of texts, from the better known Temple Scroll and Rule of the Community of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Judith, Tobit, and Maccabees from the Apocrypha, to the largely unknown Pseudepigrapha are presented by subject as they relate to the Hebrew Bible.

The international team of scholars is under the editorship of Dr. Lawrence H. Schiffman (New York University), Dr. Louis B. Feldman (Yeshiva University), and Dr. James L. Kugel (Bar Ilan University).

The Lost Bible Project

Outside the Bible: Ancient Israel's Excluded Scriptures

Editors

Dr. Louis B. Feldman



Louis B. Feldman is Wouk Family Professor of Classics and Literature Emeritus at Yeshiva University, where he has taught since 1955. Dr. Feldman, who received his Ph.D. in classical philology from Harvard University, is a leading scholar of ancient Judaism and Hellenistic culture. His many publications include *Josephus and Modern Scholarship* (1984), *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (1993), *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (1998) among others. Dr. Feldman has led NEH Seminars for College Teachers on "The Greek Encounter with Judaism in the Hellenistic Period" and on "Classical and Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism." In addition to his research and teaching, Dr. Feldman is associate editor of *Classical Weekly* and managing editor of *Classical World*, and was the editor for Hellenistic Literature for the *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1968-71). He has been honored with a Guggenheim Fellowship and an ACLS Senior Fellowship, and has been a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton University) and a Fellow of the Annenberg Institute for Judaic and Near Eastern Studies (University of Pennsylvania).

Dr. James L. Kugel

James Kugel is Meiser Professor of Bible and Director of the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv. From 1982 through 2003, he was the Starr Professor of Hebrew Literature at Harvard University. He received his Ph.D. at the City University of New York in 1977. Dr. Kugel specializes in the Hebrew Bible, the history of biblical exegesis, and ancient Judaism. His many books include *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now* (2007), a National Jewish Book Award winner, *The God of Old* (2003), and *The Ladder of Jacob: Ancient Interpretations of the Biblical Story of Jacob and his Children* (2006) among others. He is also the author of more than 50 academic articles and reviews. Dr. Kugel is a co-founder and associate editor of *Prooftexts: A Journal of Jewish Literary History*, a member of the editorial board of *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, and editor-in-chief of *Jewish Studies: an Internet Journal*. He is co-editor of the Haifa University Dead Sea Scrolls Publication Project and is an editorial board member of *Themes in Biblical Narrative – Jewish and Christian Traditions*. *The Bible As It Was* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in General Nonfiction and was honored with the Grawemeyer Award for best book in Religion in 2001.



Dr. Lawrence H. Schiffman



Lawrence H. Schiffman is Edelman Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and Chairman of the Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies at New York University, where he has taught since 1972. He received his Ph.D. from Brandeis University in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies in 1974. Dr. Schiffman is a leading scholar of ancient Judaism with special interest in study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. His recent publications include essays in *War and Peace in the Jewish Tradition* (2007), *Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law* (2004), and *Emanuel: Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2003). Dr. Schiffman is also the co-editor of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols., 2000) and the editor of *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after their Discovery* (2000). He is a member of the board of directors of the Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation, and of the council of the World Union of Jewish Studies, and a co-editor of *Dead Sea Discoveries*. He is also a member of the Academic Advisory Board for the Center for Jewish History in New York and a member of the board of advisors for the *Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series*.

THE LOST BIBLE PROJECT

BACKGROUND

The Lost Bible Project was conceived in conversations between Dr. Ellen Frankel of JPS and various scholars in the late 1990's. The need for a comprehensive collection of extra-biblical texts of antiquity presented by a Jewish publisher in a manner that would help elucidate the Hebrew Bible was deemed both deeply desirable and unprecedented. As the preeminent Jewish publisher of the Bible and biblical translation and commentary in English, the Jewish Publication Society was a natural choice for the project, despite its daunting magnitude and cost.

The Lost Bible Project commenced in earnest in 2005 upon receipt of a very generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Together with a second favorable grant, NEH monies have totaled nearly \$200,000. Private gifts and pledges of about \$100,000 have been added to that sum.

To date expenses have totaled approximately close to \$200,000 with additional project costs expected to total \$400,000. The amount of funds still needed to be raise thus amounts to some \$300,000 at a minimum.

Work on the scholarly component is more than 2/3 completed. Of the 131 separate articles that comprise the scholarly compendium, 115 have been submitted. Over 100 of these have been copyedited, and the majority of these pieces are already in advisory review. The concept of a popular one volume introduction by a religion writer, a recent conceptual addition to the series, is only in a beginning phase. However, it is hoped that successful fundraising and fast-tracking of the companion volume will enable the project to be completed in two years.

THE LOST BIBLE:
ANCIENT ISRAEL'S EXCLUDED SCRIPTURES
CONCEPTION FOR INTRODUCTORY VOLUME

- Chapter I: The Lost Bible
What are the excluded scriptures?
Why are they important?
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- Chapter II: The Holy Bible
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