



Above is my logo, representing my calling and current active work in fulfilling it.

I will first explain the acronym EAST discussing the symbolism of **East and West in the Bible**, and in two major cultural memes (The Lord of the Rings, and Woodstock) that illustrate the spiritual meaning of east and west.

I will then explain what each of the **individual letters E. A. S. T.** represent.

Finally, I will explain the symbolism of the **other graphics in the middle** of the logo.

You will notice my logo features the acronym EAST. It stands for:

**E**ngaging  
**A**uthoring  
**S**torying  
**T**eaching

## **Why “EAST”?**

I’m a man of the West. Both geographically (I live in California) and in my affinities: I grew up watching admiring the “men in white hats” in the great TV westerns (“Gunsmoke” “Bonanza”). I owned horses in my teens and rode Western, not English. I admire the best in Western civilization, and the American founding ideals. So why would my logo be “EAST”?

**The directions East and West have symbolic meaning in Scripture.** Genesis tells us that *“YHWH God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and there he put the man he had formed”* (2:8). This indicates the Garden (a *paradise*, a place of shalom, free of sickness of soul or body, free of evil and death), is on the east side of, but within the land of Eden. Eden was larger than the garden. Outside Eden there were other lands named in Genesis 2:11-13. Had Adam not fallen, he apparently would have eventually **moved westward in Eden.**

After the Fall, God placed cherubim with flaming swords at the Gate of the Garden, which is on the east side (Gen. 3:24). This shows that **the entrance to the Garden was on the east.** If you want to get back to the Garden, you have to travel west. And moving eastward is moving away from the Garden.

All through the Bible, **East** and **West** have this meaning:

- Cain is cast out of the land and wanders in Nod, which was **east of Eden** (Gen. 4:16).
- Lot moves east and settles near Sodom, *“Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east”* (Gen. 13:11).
- When, after forty years in the desert, Israel enters the land of promise, the circle around Moab and **enter the land from the east, traveling west** (Numbers 21:4). This shows that entering the land “flowing with milk and honey” is like **returning to the Garden.**
- Later, when Israel goes into exile, they are taken away to the east, away from the Land, and **to return from exile, they must travel west.**
- The entrance to the Tabernacle in the wilderness was on the east side. Every Israelite approaching the tabernacle with a sacrifice, knew that there was no way to reach the bronze altar but through the gate that faced east. Thus as they move toward the place of atonement, they are **moving westward.** The Holy of Holies was on the west end of the court.
- We read, *“On the east side, toward **the rising of the sun**, those of the standard of the forces with Judah shall camp according to their armies;* (Numbers 2:3). The four tribes under the banner of Judah guarded the entrance to the place of worship and could confront any enemy or unlawful entry coming from the east.
- The Temples of Solomon and Herod faced east, toward the rising sun.
- When the *Shechinah*, or “Glory,” the manifest presence of God departed from the Temple, it **moved eastward** toward the Mount of Olives, away from the Holy Place (Ezekiel 10).
- In the New Testament, the magi seeking the Messiah child come from the East, moving **westward to find Him.**
- When Yeshua (Jesus) had finished instituting the New Covenant with the matzah (unleavened bread) and the third cup at His last Passover Seder (“the last supper”) with the twelve apostles, we read “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mt. of Olives.” (Mark 14:26). **The Mt. of Olives is on the east side** of Jerusalem. He went east to face his betrayer those who arrested him and would hand him over to crucifixion.
- Ezekiel’s Millennial Temple even faces east. “Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house

**toward the east**, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar." (Ezekiel 47:1). Yet the living water was flowing down from the "right side" (east), toward the south and westward. Though it eventually flows everywhere (Zechariah 14:8).

- We read that when Messiah comes again for the second time, "For as the lightning **comes from the east and flashes to the west**, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

It is often believed that Jews face east when praying. This is not really true. After the Great Dispersion, when praying, Jews face Jerusalem. But what of the Jews who dispersed eastward from Jerusalem, say to Iraq and Iran? When praying facing Jerusalem, they face west.

There is however, a tradition of easterly oriented tabernacles, temples, and altars in Jewish history. The major reason for this is the biblical tradition. Also, it is the **direction of the rising sun**. The rising sun brings a new day, light returning thus symbolizing hope. The sun comes from the east and moves west. The prophet Malachi said,

***"But to you who fear my name, the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."*** (4:2).

This is clearly a messianic prophecy. The metaphor of the "Sun (read: Son) of Righteousness" rising, coming **from the east and moving over the sky in a westward direction** is a picture of the coming of Messiah, salvation's movement.

I will further explicate this theme through a discussion of two powerful cultural memes of the twentieth century. One, a now classic literary work — "The Lord of the Rings"; the other a now iconic and legendary event that symbolizes the baby boomer generation of which I am a part — "Woodstock."

## **J.R.R. Tolkien and "Into the West"**

The "Author of the Century" (the 20<sup>th</sup>) was J.R. R. Tolkien. His magisterial "The Lord of the Rings" (LOTR) is triumph of the imagination; the creation an alternative world, Middle-Earth, where the battle between good and evil is played out on a cosmic scale, over many ages...just like in our world. The film trilogy ("The Fellowship of the Ring", "The Two Towers" and "The Return of the King"), was directed by Peter Jackson. At the 2004 Academy Awards, "The Return of the King" made a clean sweep of the Oscars; eleven (11) in all. It won an Oscar in every category for which it was nominated. It tied "Ben Hur" and "Titanic" for the most number of Oscar wins ever by a film.

In a series of polls, commissioned by the BBC and book shops Britain, done in the late 1990s, asking what people considered the five books that were the greatest of the century,

LOTR came out consistently as number one. Only in one case did it take number two, and that was second only to the Bible!... which is a special case, and is also not a 20<sup>th</sup> century book.

So according to these surveys, LOTR is “the Book of the Century,” (See T.A. Shippey. “*J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*. London: HarperCollins Publishers. 2000).

LOTR is the Master Story of Middle-Earth as the Bible is the Master Story of our world. The origin and nature of evil, illustrated so masterfully in the dynamics of the “One Ring,” speaks to so many hearts as ringing true to our experience (temptation, addiction, the lust for power), and on the grand scale it reflects the evil forces of the 20<sup>th</sup> century manifest in the World Wars I and II .

**This East-West theme is evident in LOTR**, echoing the Bible. **The West** in Middle-Earth refers to the large region includes the lands of Numenor, Arnor, Beleriand, Lindon, Eriador, Gondor, Rhovanion, the Grey Havens and others, essentially all the lands west of Rhûn and Mordor. The West is generally the realms and peoples opposed to Sauron, who favor virtue and the Dúnedain, the race of Men descended from the Numenorians of old.

It describes the Free Peoples of Middle-earth like the immortal Elves, Men, Dwarves, Hobbits and Ents particularly during the Third Age. The West is normally referring to 'the good' versus the bad from the East. (i.e. Sauron, Harad and Easterlings).

(<https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/West> )

The idyllic “Shire,” home of the hobbits, was far to the West. When the “Fellowship of the Ring” (the company of nine) set out on their journey, they travel **the East-West Road, going eastward** to toward the “land of Mordor where the shadows lie.” The paradisaical Elven havens (Rivendell and Lothlorien) were near the Misty Mountains, still in the West. The lands east of the Misty Mountains come to be increasingly under the shadow of the evil power of Sauron, the dark lord, leading up to the War of the Rings.

There are basically two groups of “Men.” The good ones are coming from the West (Dúnedain, *Men of the West, or the Westersesse*), and the bad ones, the *Easterlings*, mostly fight under Morgoth and Sauron who come from the East.

We read in LOTR,

“Reluctantly, Frodo turned his back on the West and followed as his guide led him, out into the darkness of the East.”

( J.R. R. Tolkien. *The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt edition. 1954. p. 703)

Frodo responded to the call to take up the quest to be the ring bearer, he had to turn his back on the West, and **face the darkness of the East**. Mount Doom, where the ring had to go to be destroyed was far to the East, in the land of Mordor, the lair of the dark lord Sauron where darkness, evil and danger lie. Frodo and Sam faced many obstacles, dangers and barriers traveling to the East, but their quest (mission) to save Middle Earth required this.

After Frodo Baggins and Sam completed their quest of saving Middle-Earth by dropping the “One Ring” into the fires of Mt. Doom and bringing to a close the “War of the Ring,” they travel back westward to the Shire.

In “The Two Towers,” Treebeard performs an Elvish song, some of whose verses run like this,

ENT:

“When Winter comes, the winter wild that hill and wood shall slay;  
When trees shall fall and starless night devour the sunless day;  
When wind is in **the deadly East**, then in the bitter rain  
I’ll look for thee, and call to thee; I’ll come to thee again!

ENTWIFE:

“When Winter comes, and singing ends; when darkness falls at last;  
When broken in the barren bough, and light and labor past;  
I’ll look for thee, and wait for thee, until we meet again:  
Together we will take the road beneath the bitter rain!

BOTH:

“Together we will take the road that leads **into the West**,  
And far away will find a land where both our hearts may rest.”

( J.R. R. Tolkien. *The Lord of the Rings*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt edition. 1954. p. 477. **Bolding** mine)

The lands in Middle-Earth across the ocean **far to the West** are the “Undying Lands.” These lands are where he first and eldest of the Children of Ilúvatar (the Supreme Creator), the Elves, and are considered to be the fairest and wisest of any race of Arda (earth) given sapience. These lands are hallowed by the Valar and the Eldar, their deathless inhabitants.

In TA 3021 (Third Age), Círdan the Shipwright accompanied Elrond, Galadriel, and Gandalf, the Keepers of the Rings, on a voyage to the Undying Lands, where they intended to remain. [https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/Undying\\_Lands](https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/Undying_Lands)

After Frodo and Sam complete their quest of saving Middle-Earth by dropping the One Ring into the fires of Mt. Doom to be destroyed and bringing to a close the “War of the Ring” this honored and exalted company were also joined by Frodo and Bilbo Baggins, hobbits who were among the very few mortals invited to the Undying Lands.

Eventually, Samwise Gamgee, the heroic but under-sung hobbit of the Shire who accompanied the Ring-bearer, Frodo Baggins, and the Dwarf Gimli along with his great friend Legolas made the journey to the Undying Lands (also called “The West,” “The Far West,” “The Uttermost West,” “The Isles of the West”).

Finally, I include in full the beautiful song performed in full by Annie Lennox at the end credits of “The Return of the King” film in 2003. It is conceived as a bittersweet Elvish lament sung by Galadriel for those who sail over the “Sundering Sea” (also called the “Western Sea”).

Bittersweet, because though the Undying Lands are blissful for those who go there, there is the sorrow of parting from those who will never arrive there, and the sorrow that many still languish in the East.

These echo the sorrows in our world when death parts us from our loved ones. "The last enemy that will be destroyed is Death" (I Corinthians 15:26). Until then there is sorrow in our world. But for those who know and trust the Sin-bearer", the Messiah, death shall be destroyed and we shall reach the Undying Land of his Kingdom. Then it shall be that "*Death is swallowed up in victory!*" and "*O Death, where is your sting!*" (I Corinthians 15:54-55). Until then, we long for "the West."

The lyrics are by Lennox, Fran Walsh, and Howard Shore (**bolding** mine at the end).

### "Into The West"

Lay down  
Your sweet and weary head  
Night is falling  
You've come to journey's end  
Sleep now  
And dream of the ones who came before  
They are calling  
From across the distant shore

Why do you weep?  
What are these tears upon your face?  
Soon you will see  
All of your fears will pass away  
Safe in my arms  
You're only sleeping

What can you see  
On the horizon?  
Why do the white gulls call?  
Across the sea  
A pale moon rises  
The ships have come to carry you home

And all will turn  
To silver glass  
A light on the water  
All souls pass

Hope fades  
Into the world of night  
Through shadows falling  
Out of memory and time  
Don't say,

"We have come now to the end."  
White shores are calling  
You and I will meet again

And you'll be here in my arms  
Just sleeping

What can you see  
On the horizon?  
Why do the white gulls call?  
Across the sea  
A pale moon rises  
The ships have come to carry you home

And all will turn  
To silver glass  
A light on the water  
**Grey ships pass  
Into the West"**

## **"We've Got to Get Ourselves Back to the Garden."**

Those who have gone way from God are described Biblically as having gone east, as it were, in the way of Cain...having followed Lot's choice. We who, by the grace of God, know our destiny is to go **into the West**, are called on an eastward quest, a mission to face down evil there; to a rescue mission to the lands and places still far away from the presence of God to bring them the message of Messiah's salvation. Those places may not be literally or geographically in the east (though many are), but spiritually they are "East of Eden" (recalling the title of the classic John Steinbeck novel, a modern Cain and Able story).

I am a child of the 1960s, the "Woodstock Generation." The iconic rock festival, "Three Days of Peace and Music," of 1969, in upstate New York, crystallized the cultural ethos of the baby boomer generation, of which I am a part. My generation is sadly responsible for many bad choices and ideologies espoused, like the "sexual revolution" with all its excesses, that have brought destructive consequences. Now, fifty years after, we know that many of us went "the way of Cain," moved to the east of Eden. Though there was also a strong and glorious Jesus movement among us in the 1970s.

The song "Woodstock" became an anthem of the 60's counterculture. In the song there is a yearning to get "back to the Garden." In Joni Mitchell's song, made famous by Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, here are the relevant verses,

"We are stardust  
We are golden  
We are billion-year-old carbon

**And we've got to get ourselves  
Back to the garden**

By the time we got to Woodstock  
We were half a million strong  
And everywhere there was song and celebration  
And I dreamed I saw the bombers  
Riding shotgun in the sky  
And they were turning into butterflies  
Above our nation

**We are stardust  
We are golden  
We are caught in the devil's bargain  
And we've got to get ourselves  
Back to the garden"**

(Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock," Ladies of the Canyon. Warner Brothers Records, 1970)

Note, however what is said here—an idealistic hope for a paradise, to “get back to the garden.” But the aspiration is to **“get ourselves”** back to the Garden. Nearly all the themes of the 1960s counterculture and the later Eastern-religious-oriented New Age movement that emerged in the 1970s, are foreshadowed here.

This is a humanistic, self-salvation where autonomous humans create their own utopia. But the belief in the Darwinian biological evolutionary origins of humanity from carbon life forms (“We are billion-year-old carbon”) does not give humanity much hope for a Return-to-Eden significance. If we are determined by the impersonal, deterministic, forces of macro-evolution, we lack that capability, freedom and dignity.

Not surprisingly then, the song expresses the identity crises of a generation—“I feel like I’m a cog in something turning.... And I don’t know who I am, but life is for learning”. The identities crises of the 1960s fueled new frontiers of individualism—self-discovery, self-crafting, self-realization, self-fulfillment projects, and by the 21<sup>st</sup> century all kinds of gender plasticity leading to gender dysphoria, where at last count, there are at least fifteen different gender labels. (See “The Gender Revolution,” special issue, *National Geographic Magazine*, January 2017). Not much like getting back to the original beauty and harmony of the Garden in Eden!

The song does get it right when it says, “we are caught in the devil’s bargain,” admitting there is a supernatural war going on beyond the materialism of Evolution. In the Biblical story, we know there is a fixed human nature, in that we are made in the Image and likeness of God. Our enemy, Satan, does all he can to distort and disfigure the Image of God in humanity.

Another iconic rock band of the 1960s out of Los Angeles was “The Doors.” Lead singer Jim Morrison was a superb, but dark, poet. His lyrics once gripped me and **pulled me...**

... **to the darkness of the East**, as it were. The last song of their album, “The Doors,” shocking in its dark chaos and nihilism, is entitled “The End.” In the midst of its lyrics, lies this,

*“The West is the Best  
The West is the Best  
Get Here ...  
And We’ll do the Rest”*

(The Doors, 1967. Sunset Sound Recorders, Hollywood)

Yes, the West is the Best, in the symbolism discussed herein. But we cannot get there in our finite and fallen human condition. We should thus rather say,

*The West is the Best  
If we get there,  
It will be by His grace  
Through our faith...  
And He will do the Rest.*

Humanity needs a Messiah, a Savior, who will come and restore us to the Garden. We cannot get back by ourselves. He came, as promised by the Hebrew prophets, to the Jewish people 2000 years ago. He is Yeshua/Jesus the Messiah. He faced down the dark lord (Satan), defeated him as the “Sin-Bearer,” made the way for us to gain freedom from the dark forces that have held us down. He began a movement that is still gathering force, to move a redeemed company of humans “westward,” back to the Garden.

In actually , the coming Messianic Kingdom will be far larger and far more glorious than the Garden of Eden. (See Isaiah 2:1-4, Daniel 2 and 7, Ezekiel 47, the Book of Revelation) The **Tree of Life** that was in Eden, will be there, and finally “its leaves are for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:2).

**Spiritually, our Redemptive Mission faces East.** We face down the evil East of Eden, where people are lost and languishing in the myriad shadows of Death. We go answering His call, to herald, to summon, to reach and recruit, to muster a great company to embark on the great pilgrimage to journey back **into the West**, back to and beyond the Garden to His everlasting Kingdom. We must go East, on mission and work there, participating in God’s mission until it is accomplished. By God’s power working through us, we go to destroy the works of the Devil, to reclaim those taken captive by him. But we see the “Sun (Son) of Righteousness” rising, and we head toward that rising (already risen) Son to bring liberation, healing for the broken and injured, transformation and restoration to God’s glorious design and purpose for humanity in the Garden, and beyond to the Kingdom that is greater than the Garden.

An interesting fact to ponder is that when the original Jesus movement was launched from Jerusalem by Jewish believers and the Gospel of the Kingdom of God was proclaimed, this

**movement spread mostly westward** around the globe (though there was some movement toward the east, as the Apostle Thomas going to India, and there were some Christian communities in Arabia in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century).

It spread westward, from its birth in the land of Israel, then to Asia Minor (Turkey) and the Greco-Roman world and North Africa. From there into central and then northern Europe. From there to the Americas. From there to Asia and China...In our day there is now in China a “Back to Jerusalem” movement of Chinese followers of Jesus, bringing his message further westward with a vision to bring it all the way back to Jerusalem, from whence it began; **traveling westward**, they will enter Jerusalem from the East.

I am man of the West, and spiritually my heart and destiny is there and I long to go there. But I am called to the East. I have faced my own dwelling “East of Eden,” have faced my sin, turned from it, and looked to the Rising Son, and experienced His grace, forgiveness, healing and personal renewal. He has empowered me by His Spirit and His love to join Him in His mission in the “East” to reach, rescue and minister to those still under the sway of the dark lord, suffering the consequences of sin, and are stalked by Death. My heart is in the “West,” ....but I am on mission in “East.”

I will now explain the ways I fulfill this missional calling to and in “the East,” through unpacking the other parts of the logo.

### Engaging –

- **Engaging the Jewish World (EJW)** – the fruit of my years of Jewish studies and experience with Jewish people, this course is a non-formal (not part of a degree-granting formal institutional program). As such we intend and expect that it will be more accessible to more people. Our intended audience is non-Jewish people, who will benefit personally by deeper understanding of the Jewish world, and will bless the Jewish people by learning to better appreciate and wisely engage Jewish people relationally.
- **Engaging contemporary Western Culture** - following my dissertation studies, I continue to critique our current late modern culture from a Biblical perspective. Soon I will be posting articles and a running blog on this topic.
- **Ezekiel Network (the DBI of Operation Ezekiel) & Operation Ezekiel, Inc.)** is our 501c3 non-profit that we use for projects like outreach and publishing.

### Authoring –

- I have **authored** several works which I will be making available:
  1. My M.A. Thesis (1993): **“Samuel: Last of the Judges; First of the Prophets”** . This is a leadership study of Samuel. NOT AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW. PLAN TO PUBLISH.
  2. My PhD Dissertation (2007): **“Faith, Freedom & Radical Individualism in Late Modern America: A Missiological Evaluation.”** – this is a 430 page study of the

modern to postmodern shift in America—emphasizing how the 1960s countercultural revolution was the tipping point for this shift impacting the whole society— and how it exacerbated American individualism, contributing to the breakdown of family, community, church and synagogue in America, and aggravating loneliness and isolation . I offer recommendations for renewal. NOT AVAILABLE RIGHT NOW. PLAN TO PUBLISH.

3. I am currently co-authoring a book, entitles **THE RETURN TO ORAL HERMENEUTICS: As Good Today as It Was for the Hebrew Bible & First Century Christianity,**” with Dr. Tom Steffan (Professor Emeritus of Intercultural Studies, Cook School of Intercultural Studies, BIOLA UNIVERSITY); to be published by Wipf & Stock. This book deals addressed Biblical illiteracy in the West and how we can learn from the great Jewish storytelling tradition (haggadic), and communication theory to revive a love for telling the greatest Story ever told (and all the smaller stories that comprise it). DUE OUT EARLY IN 2020. Stay tuned!

- I have two more books in my head, yet to write (as time and money allow).

## Storying –

- **sTORAHtelling Groups** – I conducted a *Jewish Seekers Bible Study* in Chatsworth, CA during 2012-2014, under Ezekiel Network. We did oral Bible storytelling, mostly from the Hebrew Bible. Each week, we told and discussed one story. People loved it, Jews and Christians. These stories are known by the Jewish people, as their stories, the stories of Israel. Nearly all of them point to the Messiah!
- **Storytelling Engagements Available** - As I am available, I will come and do storytelling for groups. Contact me from the info on the home page.
- **Articles and Studies on the Theory and Practice of Storytelling** – that I and others have written articles have written will be posted online soon.

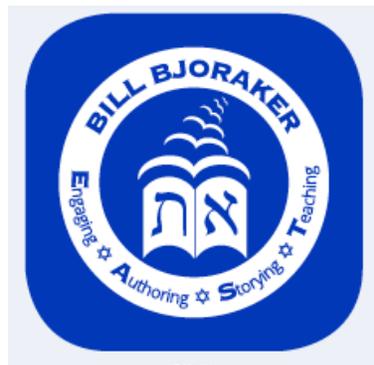
## Teaching –

- I am currently part-time faculty at William Carey International University, in Pasadena, CA. I teach courses in our M.A. program and serve on a few doctoral committees.
- I teach **Old Testament Survey** annually at the SoCal Network Assemblies of God School of ministry (SOM).
- I have taught adjunct or as visiting professor at Denver Seminary, the King’s University, Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) in Manila, Philippines, and in the KADIMA program of Messianic Jewish Bible Institute (MJB I) in Harare, Zimbabwe, for the Lemba Messianic Jews leadership training there. I am teaching there three times this year and next (June, September, January 2020). Including teaching **Hebrew language** (Gimel Dalet, & Hey levels).
- I have a repertoire of graduate level university/seminary courses I teach, including: several courses in **Jewish studies** (National Israel and the Kingdom of God, Jewish Thought: Literature, Mysticism, Philosophy / Jewish Worldview in Cultural Perspective,

The Hebrew Prophets and Yeshua, Messianic Prophecy, Israel’s Divine Healer, Messianic Prophecy, and my Engaging the Jewish World series. SEE BROCHURE ON THIS SITE MENU); **Biblical Storytelling** (an academic course on the theory, and a practical workshop in learning to prepare and present stories); **Theology of the *Missio Dei*; Anthropology and Cross-Cultural Communication**; and **An Overview of Post-Modern, Post-Christian Western Culture**.

Looking at the logo again, its central graphic symbols are an open book with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet **aleph** on the right page and the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet **taph** on the left page.

Then there are pages flying off the book, turning into birds and moving to the right, or the east.



**We note this symbolism:**

- The **open book** represents the Word of God in its written form (the Bible).
- It is open to be accessible, to be read. The pages are flying off, symbolizing **the Word of God coming to life (as birds)**. My calling is to bring the Scriptures to life, through dynamically communicating it through teaching and especially telling its Master Story and its smaller stories.
- We note the that **pages/birds fly to the east**, to where its mission lies (see explanation above). And so must we go to the east to fulfill our mission.
- However note that **the Hebrew alphabet moves from the right to the left; that is from the east to the west**; symbolizing our mission to bring the captives ones (the lame, blind, crippled and imprisoned) of this sinful, fallen world...**into the West**.
- Finally, one of the biblical symbols for the **Messiah Yeshua (Jesus)** is that **He is the Aleph and the Taph** (in Greek, **the Alpha and Omega**), that is **the Beginning and the End**. He is the Author and Finisher of our Faith. The Liberating King is leading a large company of liberated captives in his train,. . . into the West. Are you one of them?