

Through the Old Testament in One Night

CATEGORIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

- Five Books of the Law
- Twelve Books of History
- Five Books of Poetry, Wisdom, and Worship
- Five Books by Major Prophets
- Twelve Books by Minor Prophets

Five Books of the Law

The books are sometimes referred to as the Torah or the Pentateuch. This group comprises: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books are ascribed to Moses and were written around 1400 BC. They tell us about the formation of the Israelites.

Twelve Books of History

These books are: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. They describe the ups and downs of God's people and God's pleasure or displeasure with them.

Five Books of Poetry, Wisdom, and Worship

These books exalt the nature and character of God and apply the principles of holiness and righteousness to daily life. This section includes: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

Five Books by Major Prophets

These books tell the history of Israel from the perspectives of specially anointed proclaimers of truth. The Major Prophets include: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel. These books were declared "major" because of their length.

Twelve Books by Minor Prophets

These books also recount the history of Israel. These books are very short (hence, minor). The Minor Prophets include: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah and Nahum (prophesied before the destruction of Jerusalem)—also Habakkuk and Zephaniah (immediately preceding destruction)—and finally, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (from the generations of the remnant who rebuilt Jerusalem).

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SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT DATES

- 1800 BC – Abraham, Patriarchs
- 1450 BC – Moses
- 1050 BC – Beginning of the Israelite Monarchy (Samuel, Saul)
- 1000 BC – King David, United Kingdom of Twelve Tribes
- 950 BC – Solomon Builds First Temple in Jerusalem
- 930 BC – Division of the Kingdom into North and South
- 850 BC - Elijah
- 722 BC – Fall of Northern Kingdom to Assyria, Ten Tribes Disperse (Diaspora)
- 586 BC – Southern Kingdom Falls to Nebuchadnezzar (Babylonian Captivity)
- 538 BC – Persians overthrow Babylon
- 458 BC – Ezra Restores Worship in the Temple
- 445 BC – Under Nehemiah’s Leadership, the Walls of Jerusalem are Rebuilt
- 400 BC –Prophetic Ministry of Malachi Ends (Judea still under Persian Rule)

Six Periods of Rule (Approximate):

- Persian (538 – 332 BC)
- Greek (332 – 322 BC)
- Egyptian (322 – 198 BC)
- Syrian (198 – 164 BC)
- Maccabean (164 – 63 BC)
- Roman (63 – Christ)

BOOK BY BOOK SUMMARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. Genesis is a book about “beginnings” or “origins.” It gives an account of the creation of the universe, the fall of the human race, and God’s raising up of a chosen people. Several memorable characters and events include: Adam and Eve, Eating the Forbidden Fruit, Noah and the Flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph
2. In Exodus, God rescues the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and forms them into a nation under his law and with his presence. Several memorable characters and events include: The Enslavement of the Israelites, Moses, the 10 Plagues, the Passover, the Red Sea Crossing, and the 10 Commandments.
3. Leviticus contains instructions on the sacrificial system, the priesthood, and living holy.
4. Numbers describes the struggle of God’s people with idolatry and their wandering in the wilderness (complaining and testing God’s patience) for 40 years.

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5. Deuteronomy (meaning “second law”) expands upon the laws found earlier in the Pentateuch. It deals with the ceremonial, civil, and social laws, and the ratification of the covenant.
6. Joshua tells of the entrance into the Promised Land and its amazing conquest and division (partitioning) for settlement. Several memorable characters and events include: The Battle of Jericho, Rahab the Spy, the Sun Standing Still, and the Entrance into the Promised Land.
7. The book of Judges tells about the spiritual decline of the generations after the conquest. Several memorable characters and events include: Deborah, Gideon, and Samson’s Defeat of the Philistines.
8. The book of Ruth demonstrates that despite the spiritual decline of his people, the Lord still works behind the scenes to save them. Ruth embraces the God (YHWH) of her mother-in-law, Naomi. Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David. She and her husband Boaz are mentioned in the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5).

First and Second Samuel tell about the foundation of the monarchy under Saul and David.
9. First Samuel contrasts the goodness of Samuel with the rottenness of Saul. God rejects Saul as king.
10. Second Samuel recounts the rise and fall of David as King. It contains tales of the king’s conquests, adultery, and murder of Uriah.
11. First Kings recounts the story of Solomon and the division of the tribes of Israel into Northern and Southern Kingdoms. This book also introduces the prophet Elijah, a worker of great miracles.
12. In Second Kings, there is a divided kingdom. Elijah goes to heaven.
1 and 2 Chronicles retell the entire story of Israel from the perspective of the priests.
13. First Chronicles recounts Israel’s history from David to Solomon.
14. Second Chronicles continues the story of Solomon and his building of the temple.

Jerusalem is destroyed in 586 BC. This is the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity.
15. Under Ezra, the temple is rebuilt.
16. Under Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt.
17. The book of Esther tells how the Lord God protected his people and did not abandon the exiles who remained in Babylon. Haman’s evil plots to kill the Jews backfires on him. Other prominent characters in the story include: Ahasuerus, Vashti, and Mordecai (Esther’s relative).
18. In the book of Job, a righteous man is tested by God. Major themes of the book include: human suffering, God’s sovereignty, demonic accusation, and restoration.
19. The Book of Psalms consists of 5 divisions and deals with a large variety of subjects including: prayers, praises, instructions, and laments.

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20. Proverbs is a book of practical wisdom for everyday life.
21. Ecclesiastes explores the theme of the vanity of life without God.
22. The Song of Solomon is an erotic love song.
23. Isaiah prophesied to the Kingdom of Judah. He has powerful prophecies about the Messiah and salvation.
24. Jeremiah prophesied during the period that witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem.
25. In Lamentations, Jeremiah cries over the defeat and destruction of Jerusalem.
26. Ezekiel prophesies during the Babylonian Captivity. Although God's people are in exile, there will be a time of restoration.
27. The theme of Daniel is God's faithfulness during difficult times. Daniel has many visions of the future for both Jews and Gentiles.
28. The book of Hosea is about the prophet's marriage to a prostitute. The book contrasts God's love and faithfulness to Israel's spiritual adultery.
29. Joel proclaims a terrifying future using the imagery of locusts.
30. Amos warns Israel of coming judgment.
31. Obadiah is a proclamation against Edom, a nation which borders Judah.
32. Jonah announces judgment against the Ninevites, but they repent.
33. Micah describes the pervasive moral decay of Israel.
34. Nahum describes how Nineveh returns to its wicked ways.
35. The prophet Habakkuk enquires into why God is not dealing with Judah's sins. God says that he will use the Babylonians. Habakkuk is perplexed because the Babylonians are more wicked than God's people.
36. Zephaniah deals with the "Day of the Lord."
37. Haggai declares that the people fail to put God first. They put their interests ahead of building the temple.
38. Zechariah encourages completion of the temple.
39. Malachi speaks against laxity and compromise.