

LEARNING THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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LAW HISTORY POETRY MAJOR PROPHETS MINOR PROPHETS

LAW

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy



POETRY

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon



MAJOR PROPHETS

Isaiah
Jeremiah Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel



HISTORY

Joshua 1 & 2 Samuel Ezra
Judges 1 & 2 Kings Nehemiah
Ruth 1 & 2 Chronicles Esther



MINOR PROPHETS

Hosea Obadiah Zephaniah
Joel Jonah Nahum Haggai
Amos Micah Habakkuk Zechariah
Malachi



5-12-5-5-12

People have commented that the Old Testament is confusing because it's not in chronological order. However, the first two sections, Law and History, **are** in chronological order through Second Kings. The other sections fit into that historical framework.

Here is a summary of each section:

5-The five books of the **Law** written by Moses.

Called the Pentateuch, which means "5-Volumes."

- Genesis means "Beginnings."
- Exodus starts with the Exit of the Israelites from Egypt, moves to receiving God's Commandments at Mt. Sinai, and ends with Building the Tabernacle.
- Leviticus tells of the sacrifices and priestly duties of the Tabernacle and how the Israelites are to stay clean in order to worship the Holy God.
- Numbers gives a count of the tribes and their marching order around the Tabernacle as they prepare to march into the land of Canaan, but the people refuse to go forward.
- Deuteronomy means "Second Law" and repeats the terms and conditions received at Mt. Sinai to the generation born during the 40 years they had been in the Wilderness.

12-The twelve books of Jewish **History** go from the conquest of Canaan to the return to the land under the Persian Empire.

- After Moses, Joshua is the leader who leads the conquest of the land of Canaan.
- After Joshua, Judges are leaders who bring the people back to God's law and deliver them from enemies. They are mostly in chronological order.
- Ruth comes during the time period of the Judges. She is a foreigner who believes in God and moves to Bethlehem. She is the great-grandmother of King David.
- First Samuel tells mostly of the FIRST King of the nation: King Saul.
- Second Samuel tells mostly of the SECOND King of the nation: King David.
- First Kings tells of David's son, Solomon, and how the kingdom splits into two nations. It shares about the kings back and forth which can make it confusing to follow.
- Second Kings tells of the decline of both nations and their removal off of the land, first Israel by Assyria and then Judah by Babylon. Most of the prophetic books are written during this time period.
- First Chronicles recounts much of the same history of Second Samuel for the generation returning to the land from captivity in Babylon. The book starts with lists of family trees.
- Second Chronicles recounts much of the same history of First and Second Kings for the returning generation. It focuses on the Kings of Judah and their worship of God at the Temple.
- Ezra picks up the history of the Jews from Judah who return to the land from their Babylonian captivity.
- Nehemiah is a contemporary of Ezra and tells of the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall.
- Esther recounts God's preserving the Jews under Persian rule.

5-The five books written as **Poetry**.

Most of the books in this section grapple with the question: "If God has dominion over all things, how come things on earth are the way they are? And how do we deal with that?"

- Job is about a righteous man who suffers greatly. Although it's not dated, the descriptions in the book make it likely that he lived before Abraham. The reason he is grouped in this section is because *the style* fits with the other four poetical books.
- Psalms were songs written mainly by David and the musicians he assigned to Temple worship.
- Proverbs were written and compiled mainly by Solomon.
- Ecclesiastes by Solomon explores the meaning of life without God: it amounts to a bunch of nothing.
- Song of Solomon poetically captures the passionate love of Solomon and his bride.

5-The five **Major Prophets**. They are called "major" because their books are long, or the prophecies that are included deal with many nations.

- Isaiah wrote during the time of the Assyrian threat but foresaw the coming of the Babylonian captivity and beyond.
- Jeremiah preached during the last 40 years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.
- The book of Lamentations is attributed to Jeremiah. It is a lament about the fall of Jerusalem written as an acrostic using the Hebrew alphabet.
- Ezekiel was written while he was among the captives in Babylon.
- Daniel was not a prophet by profession, but was a statesman in the Babylonian government. God revealed dreams and mysteries to him on an international scale.

12-The twelve **Minor Prophets**. Their books are short and quick to read. A few are not dated. The first seven deal generally with the situation of **Assyria**.

- Hosea was a prophet to Israel.
- Joel is undated but sees a great plague of locust and the day of the Lord.
- Amos was not a prophet by profession, but a poor farmer from Judah sent to warn the wealthy citizens in the capital city of Israel of the coming destruction.
- Obadiah is undated and tells of Edom's ruin.
- Jonah was a prophet from Israel sent to Nineveh in Assyria as an example to Israel.
- Micah lived at the same time as Isaiah, but preached mainly in rural areas.
- Nahum is undated but tells of the downfall of Nineveh and Assyria.
- Habakkuk foresees the coming Babylonians as the cure to stop Judah's wicked living.
- Zephaniah is also about the Babylonian crisis.
- Haggai is written to the remnant of Jews who returned to the land under Persian rule.
- Zechariah is a contemporary of Haggai and picks up where he leaves off.
- Malachi appears to have been written several years after Zechariah.