

Brief Overview of The Old Testament

The Pentateuch

The First Five Books

(Also known as the **Torah**)

1. GENESIS

Genesis means 'Beginnings'. Very appropriate! And this is where you will find The Creation of the World, Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, The Great Flood, The Tower of Babel etc.

+ The Book of Genesis is mostly concerned with the account of **how the Jewish nation came into being**, with the story of their three famous patriarchs: **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. This lovely narrative explains **why the Jewish people were called Israelites**; how they came to live in the **land of Israel** and the reason they became known as '**God's Chosen People**'.

However, before God's people settled in the land of Israel they all moved to **Egypt** to avoid a severe famine.

Hence . . . by the end of the **Book of Genesis** we have the **beginnings of a nation**, but they're in the wrong country, added to which, the people later all become slaves! They need rescuing. And that's where the next book comes in . . .

2. EXODUS

Exodus means '**Exit**' and this is the story of how the Israelites were **brought out of Egypt** and taken back to Israel. In this book we find the famous story of **Moses** miraculously parting the **Red Sea**, leading his people on their amazing escape from Egyptian slavery, then through the desert to **Mount Sinai**.

It was at Mount Sinai that God gave his people (through Moses) the **Ten Commandments** as well as instructions for making a mobile tent-like temple (**The Tabernacle**) which would become the centre of the Israelites' devotion to God.

God also gave Moses a series of rules and regulations (later known as **The Law**) that would galvanise the slaves into an organized, cohesive nation of people.

The details of all these laws were written down. And that's where the next book fits in. . .

3. LEVITICUS

This book contains **The Law** (all the rules and regulations). It's called 'Leviticus' because it was the **Levites** (the priests from the tribe of **Levi**) who were responsible for ensuring **The Law** was upheld.

The Law was basically designed to keep the people focussed on God, to keep them healthy, to keep them moral and to secure each person's civil rights.

The people were also given an extremely interesting system of **sacrifice**, which became an integral part of their life.

THE FIVE LEVITICAL OFFERINGS

There are many instructions for sacrifice throughout the Pentateuch, but Leviticus chapters 1-7 is completely dedicated to the 5 Levitical offerings which were the main sacrifices used in the rituals. They describe 5 kinds of sacrifices: The burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering. Each of the sacrifices were uniquely fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

4. NUMBERS

How's this for a book title? But don't worry it means something. This book used to be called 'Bemidbar', a Hebrew word meaning '**Away in the Desert**', which is what most of the book is actually about.

Having been at Mount Sinai for a whole year (while they were becoming re-acquainted with God and getting organised after 400 years of slavery in Egypt) the people were now ready to move on and continue their journey back to Israel (then called **Canaan**, or **The Promised Land**).

Numbers is the pinnacle of the story of Israel's exodus from oppression in Egypt and their journey to take possession of the land God promised to them and their fathers.

The book gained the unfortunate title of 'Numbers' because the first part of it records the very first census taken, plus the duties and job description of various people and clans. But after that the book takes over where the story of Exodus left off. As such it draws to a conclusion the themes introduced in Genesis and played out in Exodus and Leviticus: God has promised the Israelites that they shall become a great nation, that they will have a special relationship with God, and that they shall take possession of the land of Canaan. Numbers also demonstrates the importance of holiness, faithfulness and trust: despite God's presence and his priests, Israel lacks faith and the possession of the land is left to a new generation. The book has a long and complex history

So (at Chapter 10, verse 11) the Book of Numbers goes on to tell the story of how a journey, that should have taken them no more than eleven months, became an epic that took them **forty years!**

5. DEUTERONOMY

Forty 'desert wilderness' years later, the Israelites were almost back to Canaan, and Moses, their leader, knew he would not be able to complete the journey with them.

But before he left them, he gave the people a series of **three talks**, basically reminding them of **two things**:

1) The amazing journey they had just made through the desert. A journey that had gone so badly wrong whenever they disobeyed God; but how God had miraculously and abundantly provided for them in the desert when they turned back to him and obeyed him.

2) Their Law. Moses cautioned them that, when they were to get into Canaan, and life would become easier and prosperous as they settled, they must not neglect to **keep the Law**.

So, in this book we find a short version of their **history** and **their Law** as Moses recounts the events. (Hence the name **Deuteronomy** which means 'Second Telling').

Congratulations!

You have just completed the first section of the Old Testament/Bible – The five books of the **Pentateuch**.

The Bible actually becomes more fascinating as we move on, but before we continue, I just want to let everyone know how important it is that everyone share and read from the same Bible.

The Coptic Orthodox Church recognized and uses the New King James Version. Some people prefer the Orthodox Study Bible which is fine as well but as a church and a united group we prefer to use the NKJV Bible. You always want to be prepared to answer any question and be able to look it up as a reference in your Bible. So you never want to have a Bible that does not have the correct books in it.

If anyone needs a Bible please let me know.

OLD TESTAMENT	
The Pentateuch Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	The Prophets <i>Major Prophets</i> Isaiah Jeremiah (Lamentations) Ezekiel Daniel <i>Minor Prophets</i> Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi
The History Joshua Judges Ruth 1 & 2 Samuel 1 & 2 Kings 1 & 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther	
Poetry & Wisdom Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Songs	

Brief Overview of **The History Books**

If you remember that at the end of the last section, Moses had brought his people out of slavery in Egypt, given them the Law from God, and had led them through the desert to the **Promised Land** . . . well, almost.

Moses has now died, and his successor, **Joshua**, is the one to lead his people on the last leg of the journey and settle them into the **Promised Land**. And that's what the first book of this section is all about.

1. JOSHUA

To get into Canaan, the people had to cross the Jordan River, and here we find **another** story of a **miraculous water-crossing**, similar to the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus, where the people actually crossed on dry land again.

If you have ever heard of the Battle of Jericho, where the walls came tumbling down, well here's where that story fits in. Plus many more amazing battle stories as **Joshua** leads his people through the **Promised Land**.

2. JUDGES

By and large, the general 'law and order' of God's people was maintained by the priests, the **Levites**, who were the official keepers of **The Law**. But after the death of Joshua, there was often a need for a military-style leader to fight off invaders or to put down border battles etc. These leaders were known as **Judges**, and were raised up by God on an arranged basis when the need arose. In this book, we read the succession of twelve of them, and two of the more famous of them were **Gideon** and **Samson**.

3. RUTH

The **Book of Ruth** is a delightful **love story**. It is set during the times of the Judges (the previous story), and provides a beautiful insight into the rural life and culture of that period. The book tells of Ruth's accepting the God of the Israelites as her God and the Israelite people as her own.

Ruth, by the way is the great-grand mother of David the Prophet and the ancestor of Jesus Christ as mentioned in Matthew

4. 1 & 2 SAMUEL

These two books were originally **one continuous scroll** which was later divided into two parts because of the length. Hence their name.

1 Samuel tells the story of the prophet **Samuel**, and the story of Israel's very first king – **King Saul**.

2 Samuel tells the story of Israel's next king – **King David**. This was the God fearing young man who began life as a shepherd, killed a **gigantic Philistine called Goliath** with a **sling-shot**, rose to become Israel's greatest king, wrote many of the Psalms, established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, but also badly fell from grace at one point.

5. 1 & 2 KINGS Regarding the names of these books – ditto the above.

1 Kings tells the story of Israel's third king – **King Solomon**. This was the king who built the first magnificent temple to God in Jerusalem. Solomon began his reign wisely and became **famous for his wisdom** but the book also recounts the disastrous effects that happened because of his decisions.

2 Kings tells the story of what happened to Israel after King Solomon's death. Bad leadership caused civil war, and the nation virtually split into two countries. The Southern

area became known as **Judah**, and the northern area retained the name **Israel (Samaria)**.

The sad story describes the struggles between north and south; the dispersal of the northern tribes by Assyria (these became known as the **Lost Tribes**); and the later **exile** of the southern tribes into **Babylon** under Nebuchadnezzar.

6. **1 & 2 Chronicles** Again, regarding the name – ditto the above.

These two books contain a shortened re-telling (or chronicling) of the events contained in **2 Samuel** and **1 & 2 Kings**, and the stories mostly concern the southern kingdom of Judah.

7. **EZRA**

It is now 70 years later, and during those seventy years God's people lived in **exile in Babylon** while Jerusalem had lain in ruins after Nebuchadnezzar had ransacked the city and destroyed their precious Jewish Temple built by Solomon.

The **Book of Ezra** records the events of the first two waves of people who **returned to Jerusalem** after the Exile.

- 1) A man named **Zerubbabel** led the first group home, and was responsible for the **rebuilding of the Temple**.
- 2) **Ezra** led the second group home, and was responsible for **rebuilding the spirituality** of the people, and bringing them back to a life centred on God.

8. **NEHEMIAH**

This is the continuation of the account of the 'home-coming' **from Babylon back to Jerusalem**. Nehemiah led the third group home, and was responsible for the massive task of **rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem** to secure the city. The story tells of all the sly opposition and intrigue he faced, and how his strong leadership helped pull his people back to God.

9. **ESTHER**

This **beautiful story** takes place in Persia **just after the Exile**. Esther was a Hebrew girl, cousin of Mordecai, who later became **Queen of Persia** and bravely saved her people from a planned execution of all the Jewish people. (Jewish people today **still** celebrate her triumph in their annual festival of **Purim**, and each year the Book of Esther is read aloud.)

Congratulations! You have just completed the 2nd section of the bible – **The History**.

And this is about as far as the Old Testament history goes in the biblical account of God's people. **Everything else** in the Old Testament actually fits in and around **what you have already read**.

Brief Overview of the **Poetry & Wisdom Books**

1. JOB

The **Book of Job** is a dramatic story that raises the eternal question, **'Why do bad things happen to good people?'** Book of Job begins with an introduction to Job's character—he is described as a blessed man who lived righteously. The Lord's praise of Job prompted Satan to challenge Job's integrity, suggesting that Job served God simply because God protected him. God removed Job's protection, allowing Satan to take his wealth, his children, and his physical health (but not his life) in order to test Job's character. Despite his difficult circumstances, he continues to follow God, he begins a search for the answers to his difficulties. God rewards Job's obedience during his travails and restores his health and doubles his original riches. He sires seven later sons and three daughters;^[2] however, his previous children remain dead

2. PSALMS

Psalms are **praises**; prayers/hymns put to music. And the Book of Psalms is just **exactly** that – a hymn book. It was the **Jewish Hymn Book** of the time, and these beautiful psalms are still used today.

The large portion of the Psalms were written by King David before and during his reign over Israel. Other authors of Psalms include **Moses** (Psalm 90), **Solomon** (Psalms 72 and 127), the sons of **Korah** (Psalms 42-49; 84-85; and 87-88), the sons of **Asaph** (Psalms 50 and 73-83), and Ethan the Ezrahite (Psalm 89)

Most Famous Psalms: 1, 23, 37, 51, 150

3. PROVERBS

- Written by King Solomon: The Proverbs written **back then** are like proverbs **today** – short wise sayings that express knowledge and truth.
- Ignorance is bliss
- Mustn't cry over spilled milk.
- You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar.
- You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink.
- Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

4. ECCLESIASTES

The word 'Ecclesiastes' means 'Philosopher'. The book is said to have been written by **King Solomon**, and it's a search for the meaning of life

Many of the proverbs were **written by King Solomon**, and many were collected by him. Those collected by him were written by sages (wise men). It's amazing to see how many of the famous saying that we **use today** originated with these **incredibly ancient** proverbs! The book is in the form of an autobiography telling of his investigation of the meaning of life and the best way of life. He proclaims all the actions of man to be inherently "vain", "futile", "empty", "meaningless", "temporary", "transitory", "fleeting" or "mere breath", as the lives of both wise and foolish men end in death. (12:8-13)

5. SONG OF SONGS

This book is sometimes called 'Song of Solomon', and **King Solomon** is also credited with the authorship of this book, and it takes the form of a very beautiful **series of love poems**

Well, congratulations again! You have just made your way through the third section of the Old Testament. Just 'The Prophets' to go!

Brief Overview of The Prophets

Without going into any great detail at this stage, just take a quick look at the **two categories** in list of prophets below.

List of the Prophets	
Major Prophets	Minor Prophets
Isaiah	Hosea
Jeremiah	Joel
(Lamentations)	Amos
Ezekiel	Obadiah
Daniel	Jonah
	Micah
	Nahum
	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah
	Haggai
	Zechariah
	Malachi

(A little bit of trivia here: the only reason the prophets were divided into these two categories was that some prophets wrote **very long books** and they became known as the **Major Prophets**, and all the others wrote **shorter books** and became known as the **Minor Prophets**.)

To make good sense of what **the Prophets** were saying, they really need to be seen in their **historical and cultural setting**, and there needs to be an understanding of **who** they were talking to, and **why**.

But generally speaking, the individual books of the prophets tell the story of each one's life and/or his teaching.

Some of the prophets' messages involved the future, and their messages were strong and life changing. But predicting the future was **not** their major role. The prophets' task in life was to **proclaim God's word**. They were **God's mouthpiece** (so to speak) and sometimes they spoke to individual people, sometimes to a particular tribe or sometimes to a particular nation.

Isaiah: chapters 28–33 announce that a royal savior (a messiah) will emerge in the aftermath of Jerusalem's punishment and the destruction of her oppressor.

Daniel: an amazing story depicting as the God of Israel saved Daniel and his friends from their enemies, so he would save all of Israel in their present oppressions from their captivity. Ask what they know about Daniel

Their main basic job description was to **correct the moral and religious life of God's people**. They attacked idol worship, and delivered stinging rebukes when the rich and powerful were abusing and/or ill-treating the poor and helpless.

The previous category of books called **The Poetry and Wisdom**, belong to the golden age of God's people (during the time of King David and King Solomon) when the nation was stable, safe and prosperous. But the **Books of the Prophets** belong to the dark ages of God's people, when the nation had become divided. Dark because the people were turning away from God and embracing the false religions of their surrounding nations, and many of these religions involved living extremely immoral life styles. Therefore God raised up prophets to bring his people back to him.

Needless to say, the prophets' messages were never popular! And as a result, the life of a prophet was **always** tough. They were badly persecuted even by their own people. Some were stoned, some imprisoned and some killed with swords.

Well, that is very basically what this section of books is about. And that has brought us to the end of the Old Testament section of the Bible. So, congratulations again! .

Connection between Old & New Testament

1. The New Testament proclaims its indebtedness to the Old Testament on the very first page. Matthew begins with an Old Testament genealogy that makes sense only to those who are familiar with the people and events to which it refers (1:1-17). If you have never read the Old Testament you will not know who these people are or their significance.
Thus the New Testament signals at the start an engagement with the Old Testament that touches every page and makes great demands on its readers.
2. Prophecies:
 - A. Matthew 1:23 "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us).
Isaiah 7:14 behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel.
 - B. Matthew 4:4 Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
Deuteronomy 8:3 man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.
 - C. Matthew 22:44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
Psalms 109:1 The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
3. Old Testament was the beginning of man, corruption separation from God, how to return back to God and stay on the right path through the Law, sacrifice, prophets.
4. New Testament Jesus Christ our Lord God and Savior was born to show us the way to God, the "Our Father Prayer", fasting, baptism, old testament was circumcision, He was our ultimate sacrifice. Exodus 12:46, John 19:36 For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.