

# OLD TESTAMENT INTRO HANDOUT

Revolve Church, Winter 2024 || Session 1 of 4

## Basic Terms:

- **Law / Ten Commandments:** Words given by God to Moses and Israel at Mt Sinai to guide them in holiness, providing for ethical society and for purity with regard to the sanctuary
- **Patriarchs:** The ancestors of Israel, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's sons
- **Torah / Pentateuch:** The first five books of the OT: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- **Judge:** Individuals who sought to bring justice and leadership to Israel from oppression by other peoples during the time period before the monarchy.
- **Priest:** Ritual specialists, from the tribe of Levi, who instructed the people in the law, performed rituals, and guarded access to the sanctuary
- **Wisdom:** The pursuit of both understanding and preserving order in the world that could only be achieved by acknowledging the central position ("the Fear") of the Lord
- **Prophecy:** Proclamation of the divine plan in all its fullness
- **Apocalyptic:** Specialized form of prophetic literature that usually included symbolism and visions guided by an angelic interpreter
- **Tabernacle / Temple:** The place where God's presence dwelt: the tabernacle being a portable tent shrine built in the wilderness according to God's instructions, until it was replaced by the temple in the time of Solomon. Not meant for regular corporate worship (like we think of a sanctuary in our culture), but as a place where God could live among his people
- **Ark of the Covenant:** A chest made of wood overlaid with gold that was the most sacred object of Israel. It represented the footstool of the invisible throne of the invisible God.
- **Sacrifice:** An act of giving something of value to God (usually an animal or grain). Some involved a blood rite that was intended to eliminate the effects of sin; others were gifts to accompany petitions or thanks
- **Sacred Space:** An area marking God's presence, with restricted access and strict rules of behavior. Several zones of increasing sanctity surrounding the Holy of Holies. Risk to the people of losing the benefit of God's presence if the space was not preserved.
- **Exodus:** The events during which the Israelites were brought out of their slavery in Egypt and began their journey to the land God had promised them
- **Exile:** Technically, a reference to the time when the people of Judah were in Babylon (587-539 BC), but applicable to any time when the Israelites were taken away from their land after being conquered. The north (Israel) was exiled by the Assyrians after the destruction of Samaria in 722 BC; the south (Judah) was exiled by the Babylonians after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 587 BC.
- **Remnant:** A term used in various ways throughout the OT - sometimes referring to those who survive a catastrophe and sometimes to those who are left in the land after

deportation. Primarily used to refer to those who are deported and in exile. The faithful remnant refers to the group who are brought back from exile to begin restoration

- **Conquest:** The wars through which God gave the Israelites possession of the land of Canaan promised to Abraham
- **United Monarchy:** The period of Saul, David, and Solomon when all 12 tribes were united under a single king
- **Divided Monarchy:** The time after the reign of Solomon when the kingdom was split in two. Judah was composed of two tribes in the South (capital: Jerusalem), and Israel was composed of the remaining ten tribes in the North (capital: Samaria)
- **Messiah:** A term that would not achieve its full theological significance until the end of the OT period, referring to God's anointed king from the line of David
- **Classical and Pre-Classical Prophets:** The former being the writing prophets from about 750 BC who offered messages to the people of indictment, judgment, instruction, and hope. The latter being those who preceded them (such as Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha)
- **Day of the Lord:** The time when the current state of affairs will be replaced with the Lord's intended order - either locally or universally.

# Interpretive Pointers

- **The Bible is about God.** It is easy to focus on the characters in the story and make the Bible a book about examples and lessons (like a fable). Instead of looking to the Bible to get tips for living and decision making, remember that our first line of interpretation should be to seek to understand how the passage is revealing God.
  - Ask: What does this teach about God? (highlight it in yellow)
- **The Bible is a cultural artifact.** Although the Bible is God's Word, it is also an ancient book that contains information communicated to an ancient audience. Our interpretation must recognize this rather than thinking of it as if it had been written recently. It is important to remember that although it was written for everyone, it was written TO Israel.
- **What would the audience have understood?** Even though later readers of the Bible often can get more meaning from passages because of what God has been doing in history, our first obligation to the text is to try and understand it as the communication between the original author and his immediate audience.
  - Ask: How would the original audience have understood this?
- **The nature of prophecy and fulfillment:** Prophets had messages given by God and understood those messages and communicated them competently to an audience who likewise understood them. They proclaimed God's perspective and plan. Fulfillment is identifying how the plan works out in history. In prophecy, God is more interested in revealing himself than in revealing the future.
- **Laws reveal the holiness of God.** The law should not be considered a collection of rules. Like every part of scripture, the law serves as revelation of God's character. It illustrates what holiness looks like and how it is maintained.
- **History writing.** In history writing today we value highest the perspective of the eyewitness. In the Bible what is most important about history is often what an eyewitness could not see (the unseen reality). Events are not as important as outcomes that reflect God's activity and unfolding purpose.
- **Literary analysis.** A book of the Bible is not thrown together randomly, but is carefully written with literary purpose. We can understand the literary strategy of the book by observing the selection of what is included, how it is arranged, and the emphasis placed.

# OT Theological StoryLine

- Creation
- Fall
- Flood
- Tower of Babel
- Covenant made
- Family established
- Exodus from Egypt
- Law given at Sinai
- Construction of tabernacle
- Conquest
- Covenant renewed
- Israel's unfaithfulness jeopardizes the land
- God delivers through judges
- Ark leaves Israel (voluntary exile)
- Samuel raised up as the kingmaker
- David crowned
- Land expanded
- Ark restored
- Covenant of kingship with David
- Temple built
- Kings fail to reflect God's ideals for kingship
- Prophets advise kings and judge them
- Ahab and Jezebel attempt to replace YHWH with Baal
- Empires under YHWH's control threaten unfaithful Israel
- Prophets warn of coming disaster
- New Covenant proclaimed
- Jerusalem falls, temple destroyed
- People exiled from the Promised Land
- People return from exile
- Temple and Jerusalem rebuilt (no return of the presence of God)
- People await the Messiah and the kingdom of God

# Hebrew OT Order (Acronym, TaNaKh):

**Wait, they're different?!** The primary difference between the order of your OT and the Hebrew OT lies in the organization of the writings. While the content remains the same, the Hebrew Bible groups the books differently, organizing them into three main sections: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim (often referred to by the acronym Tanakh), whereas Christian Bibles generally order the books according to historical chronology and genre.

## Torah (Pentateuch)

- Genesis (Bereshit)
- Exodus (Shemot)
- Leviticus (Vayikra)
- Numbers (Bamidbar)
- Deuteronomy (Devarim)

## Nevi'im (Prophets)

### *Former Prophets (Pre-Classical)*

- Joshua (Yehoshua)
- Judges (Shoftim)
- Samuel (Shmuel) [1 and 2 Samuel combined]
- Kings (Melakhim) [1 and 2 Kings combined]

### *Latter Prophets (Classical)*

- Isaiah (Yeshayahu)
- Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu)
- Ezekiel (Yechezkel)
- The Twelve Minor Prophets (Treisar)
  - Hosea (Hoshea)
  - Joel (Yoel)
  - Amos (Amos)
  - Obadiah (Ovadyah)
  - Jonah (Yonah)
  - Micah (Michah)
  - Nahum (Nachum)
  - Habakkuk (Habakkuk)
  - Zephaniah (Tzefanyah)
  - Haggai (Chaggai)
  - Zechariah (Zechariah)
  - Malachi (Malachi)

## Ketuvim (Writings)

- Psalms (Tehillim)
- Proverbs (Mishlei)
- Job (Iyov)

- Song of Solomon (Shir Hashirim)
- Ruth (Ruth)
- Lamentations (Eichah)
- Ecclesiastes (Kohelet)
- Esther (Esther)
- Daniel (Daniel)
- Ezra-Nehemiah (Ezra-Nehemiah) [combined]
- Chronicles (Divrei Hayamim) [1 and 2 Chronicles combined]

# One Sentence Summary of Every OT Book

1. **Genesis:** Genesis recounts the creation of the world, the stories of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob), and the origins of the Israelite nation.
2. **Exodus:** Exodus details the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments, and the establishment of the covenant between God and Israel.
3. **Leviticus:** Leviticus outlines laws and regulations for worship, sacrifices, and rituals, emphasizing holiness and purity.
4. **Numbers:** Numbers narrates the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, including their census, trials, and rebellions, as they move toward the promised land.
5. **Deuteronomy:** Deuteronomy is a series of speeches by Moses reiterating the laws and commandments given to Israel, emphasizing the importance of obedience and faithfulness.
6. **Joshua:** Joshua records the conquest and division of the promised land under the leadership of Joshua after Moses' death, fulfilling God's promise to Abraham.
7. **Judges:** Judges chronicles the period of Israel's history marked by cycles of sin, oppression, repentance, and deliverance under various judges.
8. **Ruth:** Ruth tells the story of Ruth, a Moabite woman who becomes an ancestor of King David, illustrating themes of loyalty, faithfulness, and redemption.
9. **1 Samuel:** 1 Samuel introduces Samuel the prophet, Saul the first king of Israel, and David, who becomes Saul's successor, highlighting themes of obedience, kingship, and God's sovereignty.
10. **2 Samuel:** 2 Samuel continues the narrative of David's reign, focusing on his successes, failures, and the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital.
11. **1 Kings:** 1 Kings describes the reigns of Solomon and subsequent kings of Israel and Judah, highlighting the importance of obedience to God's commands for the nation's prosperity.
12. **2 Kings:** 2 Kings traces the decline and eventual destruction of Israel and Judah due to their disobedience to God, culminating in the exile of the people.
13. **1 Chronicles:** 1 Chronicles presents genealogies and summaries of Israel's history from Adam to David, emphasizing David's lineage and preparations for building the temple.
14. **2 Chronicles:** 2 Chronicles continues the history of Israel, focusing on the reign of King Solomon and the subsequent kings of Judah, highlighting the importance of worship and obedience.
15. **Ezra:** Ezra records the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, and the restoration of worship and the law.
16. **Nehemiah:** Nehemiah recounts Nehemiah's leadership in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and restoring the city, alongside efforts to revive the people's commitment to God's law.
17. **Esther:** Esther tells the story of a Jewish woman who becomes queen of Persia and saves her people from destruction through courage and strategic intervention.

18. **Job:** Job explores the question of suffering and the nature of God's justice through the experiences of a righteous man who endures immense trials.
19. **Psalms:** Psalms is a collection of prayers, hymns, and expressions of praise and lament, covering a wide range of human emotions and experiences in relationship with God.
20. **Proverbs:** Proverbs offers wisdom for living a righteous and prudent life, emphasizing the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom.
21. **Ecclesiastes:** Ecclesiastes reflects on the meaninglessness of life apart from God and the pursuit of wisdom, wealth, and pleasure, ultimately pointing to the importance of fearing God and keeping His commandments.
22. **Song of Solomon:** Song of Solomon celebrates the beauty of romantic love within the context of marriage, using vivid imagery and poetic language.
23. **Isaiah:** Isaiah contains prophecies concerning the judgment of nations, the coming Messiah, and the restoration of Israel, emphasizing God's sovereignty and redemption.
24. **Jeremiah:** Jeremiah prophesies the impending judgment upon Judah for its idolatry and disobedience, calling for repentance and offering hope for restoration.
25. **Lamentations:** Lamentations mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the suffering of the people, expressing grief, sorrow, and a plea for mercy.
26. **Ezekiel:** Ezekiel prophesies the downfall of Jerusalem, the restoration of Israel, and the coming of a new temple, using symbolic acts and visions to convey his messages.
27. **Daniel:** Daniel recounts the experiences of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, including their interpretation of dreams and visions, their faithfulness to God, and God's deliverance.
28. **Hosea:** Hosea portrays God's faithful love for Israel despite their unfaithfulness, using the metaphor of marriage to illustrate the covenant relationship between God and His people.
29. **Joel:** Joel prophesies the Day of the Lord, calling for repentance and announcing both judgment and restoration, along with the outpouring of the Spirit.
30. **Amos:** Amos condemns social injustice and religious hypocrisy in Israel, warning of impending judgment and calling for repentance and righteousness.
31. **Obadiah:** Obadiah pronounces judgment against Edom for its pride and violence against Israel, while promising restoration for the people of God.
32. **Jonah:** Jonah tells the story of the reluctant prophet who is sent to preach to the city of Nineveh, emphasizing God's mercy and willingness to forgive repentant sinners.
33. **Micah:** Micah denounces corruption and injustice in Judah and Israel, while promising a future ruler from Bethlehem who will bring peace and justice.
34. **Nahum:** Nahum proclaims the downfall of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, as a consequence of its violence and oppression, offering comfort to Judah.
35. **Habakkuk:** Habakkuk wrestles with God over the problem of evil and injustice, ultimately finding hope and trust in God's sovereignty and justice.
36. **Zephaniah:** Zephaniah warns of the impending Day of the Lord, a day of judgment against Judah and the nations, but also promises restoration and salvation for the remnant.
37. **Haggai:** Haggai urges the people of Judah to prioritize the rebuilding of the temple and to renew their commitment to God, promising His presence and blessing.



38. **Zechariah:** Zechariah prophesies the restoration of Jerusalem, the coming of the Messiah, and the establishment of God's kingdom, encouraging faithfulness and obedience.
39. **Malachi:** Malachi confronts the people's spiritual apathy and religious hypocrisy, calling them to repentance and faithfulness, and announcing the coming of the messenger and the day of the Lord.