



A CONCISE INTRODUCTION TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD	anno domini (in the year of our Lord)
BC	before Christ
BHK	Biblia Hebraica Kittel
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
CEV	Contemporary English Version
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
ESV	English Standard Version
HB	Hebrew Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
MSS	manuscripts
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NET	New English Translation
NIV	New International Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version
TNIV	Today's New International Version

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INTRODUCTION

This book is an introductory exploration of the Hebrew Bible (HB), known to Christians as Old Testament (OT). While there are many excellent introductions to the OT, most of them are rather technical in nature and involve a fair amount of scholarly detail which make it difficult for students to absorb.

- This book is intended to be a primer on the issues pertaining to OT introduction and aims at making such material more accessible to students.
- There is an additional rationale for this book. Those who teach Bible on a regular basis inevitably will have students who are ‘strangers’ to the gospel. It is a gargantuan task for such students to come to terms with the issues involved or to attempt to command the sheer scale of information presented.
- To accomplish these objectives, the focus is largely on the books of the OT themselves and explore these books from both literary and theological perspectives. This does not imply that crucial historical and cultural information is ignored. However, it is about coming to terms with the books themselves. Therefore, the presentation pertains to the literary structures of the OT books and the impact this has on their conceptual framework.
- Furthermore, some of the principal theological motifs arising from the OT are taken into consideration but this is done in conjunction with specific segments of the OT. It is important to maintain the connection between specific segments and the concepts arising from them. It is hoped that this will make the OT more accessible.
- A final point of interest concerns the format of the book. Taking into consideration the manner in which students today study and the nature of online and internet material, it was decided to present the book mostly in bulleted format. This will make it easier to locate materials, while also allowing for economy of words in the text.
- The book could serve as a useful tool for anyone teaching the Bible in general or, more specifically, for those who teach introductory courses about the OT. Because this is primarily a textbook, questions are added at the end of each chapter to aid student learning.

- It is envisioned that this book will become a helpful resource for all Bible teachers and students.
- While the primary author is Wann Fanwar, valuable contribution is made by Gerard Bernard who authored Chapter 7 and formulated all the Discussion-Application Questions.

Chapter 1

TEXTUAL JOURNEY

In dealing with any ancient text, it is necessary to wrestle with the journey of the text, where and how it all started, the manner of transmission and the form in which the text currently exists.

- The OT has an exceptional and lengthy journey and knowing this enables us to respect the value of the book even more.
- From a faith point of view, the textual journey is the strongest evidence of the revelatory nature of the OT.
- We begin our odyssey by examining the language(s) in which the OT was written.
- Most of us are handicapped by having to study the OT in translated form. However, a rudimentary understanding of the language of the OT goes a long way to clear up some of the complexities of the text.
- The OT was written mostly in Hebrew with some portions in Aramaic, a cousin language.
- Like every language, Hebrew belongs to a family of languages known as Semitic. The listing below explains the various members of this family.

FAMILY OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES

The Semitic family of languages is made up of two principal branches which then subdivide into smaller branches.

- East Semitic. This is the first major branch of the family and comprises languages that are largely extinct today.
 - Group 1 consisted of Eblaite (from ancient Ebla in modern-day Syria), Old Assyrian, Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian (the language of the Assyrian empire whose capital was the city of Nineveh).
 - Group 2 consisted of Old Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Middle Babylonian, Neo-Babylonian and Late Babylonian. This is the language group used by the various empires based on the city of Babylon.
- West Semitic. This branch of the family is made up of two larger divisions which may be subdivided into smaller families.

- Southwest. This division of West Semitic consists of two subdivisions, classical Arabic (the language of the Arabian Peninsula) and Ethiopic (the language of Ethiopia).
- Northwest. This division of West Semitic comprises four smaller divisions as follows
 - Ugaritic. This was the language of Ugarit which was located in western modern-day Syria.
 - Amorite. This was the language of the Amorite peoples who lived in Canaan.
 - Aramaic. This was the lingua franca adopted by the Neo-Babylonian Empire. It was subdivided into Old Aramaic, Imperial Aramaic and Middle Aramaic. The latter was further divided into Western and Eastern versions.
 - Canaanite. This division consisted of the languages of the Egyptian Amarna period, Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon), Moab, Ammon, Edom (these three were located in modern-day Jordan) and Hebrew (the language of Israel and the Hebrew Bible).

TRANSMISSION OF THE TEXT

One of the most intriguing questions about biblical material pertains to the transmission of materials over the centuries to the form we have in the Bible today. The steps outlined below present a broad scan of this process.

- Oral Transmission. It is safe to say that all biblical material began life in some oral form. This might have been in the form of a story told, a sermon preached or a lesson taught.
- Autograph. Eventually the oral material was put into some written form. The first such form is referred to as 'autograph'. There is no existing autograph of any Bible book.
- Manuscripts (MSS). The first autograph was copied by hand and in most cases rather painstakingly. Then these copies were copied and so on and so forth. Over the centuries these copies became known as manuscripts (MSS). Frequently we can detect groupings of MSS with varying degrees of accuracy or variance. Eventually the text was standardised (canonised) and it is this standard text that we call Bible today.

- In summary, the process looks something like this: original text (autograph) → copy → copy → copy → present copy (canonical).

OT MANUSCRIPTS

Germane to this discussion is the consideration of MSS that impact the OT text. To get a handle on this, we have to explore different sets of MSS sources. The following breakdown of such sources is not comprehensive but allows a fairly broad view of the situation.

- MSS based on Hebrew. These include the Greek Septuagint or LXX (a late 2nd cent BC translation), Samaritan Pentateuch (2nd cent BC), Peshitta (a Syriac version from the 2nd cent AD), Targums (Aramaic versions from the 3rd-4th cent AD) and Vulgate (a Latin Bible from the 4th-5th cent AD).
- MSS based on Greek. Among these are Old Latin (2nd cent AD), Coptic (3rd cent AD), Ethiopic (4th cent AD) and Syro-Hexaplar (a 7th cent AD translation of Septuagint into Syriac).
- Hebrew Bible MSS. The standard Hebrew today is the Masoretic Text (MT) produced and completed around AD 970. However, there are other MSS that impact the OT, such as, Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS; texts of the Qumran Community dating about 2nd cent BC-1st cent AD and discovered in 1947), Nash Papyrus (1st cent BC), BM 4445 Cairo (9th cent AD), Aleppo Codex (10th cent AD) and Leningrad Codex (11th cent AD).
- Others. Other useful MSS include Origen's Hexapla (a six-column 3rd cent AD OT produced by Origen), Chester Beatty Papyrus (2nd cent AD), Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus (4th cent AD).

JOURNEY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

The journey of the HB (or OT), known as canonisation, may be traced in a few simple steps, while attempting not to over-simplify the process. The normal practice is to examine these steps in geographical terms.

- Palestine. Arguably, Palestine is the place where the original collection was made. This is called Proto-Hebrew Text and includes Old Palestinian rescensions (copies) such as the work of Ezra in the 5th cent BC. It also includes Proto-Samaritan rescensions from the 4th century.

- Babylon. During the Babylonian exile, the Jews resorted to producing MSS of the HB. This is known as Babylonian rescension and formed the basis of the so-called Proto-Masoretic HB and may be dated to the 4th century.
- Egypt. Jews who were spared the enforced Babylonian exile fled the land of Israel and resettled in Egypt, in place like Elephantine Island. From this period comes the Egyptian rescension which was based on Old Palestinian MSS. This led to the production of Proto-Septuagint in the 4th century and then later the Greek Septuagint (also known as LXX).
- Samaritan Pentateuch. The Samaritans who resettled the land of Israel after the exile produced their own version of the Torah (2nd cent BC) which likely used all three sources, Palestine, Babylon and Egypt texts.
- Standardisation. Over time it was deemed necessary to produce a standard Hebrew text. The process began perhaps around 100 BC, continued via the Council of Jamnia (held around AD 100) and completed in AD 970 with the production of MT. The scribes who worked on this project were known as Masoretes, after the system of notations they used called *masora*. This is how the text was given the designation of Masoretic Text (MT) and became the canon of the HB/OT.
- Available versions. Those who study the HB today may access the Hebrew text through several critical versions of HB. BHK (Biblia Hebraica Kittel) is an early example of this and is still useful even though the critical apparatus may be somewhat dated. BHS (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia) is considered the principal tool for HB studies in today's world and offers an excellent critical apparatus. Additionally, today we can also access the Hebrew text provided by the Leningrad Codex and the *Tanakh* Bible also referred to as JPS (after its publisher, the Jewish Publication Society).

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

The most prodigious translation work has been carried out in the English language. The current position of English, as language of the world, ensures that English Bibles are constantly in production. There are numerous English translations making it difficult for the average reader. A bit of explanation is

beneficial to understand the journey of the English Bible itself. Again, a broad survey of the journey is sufficient for this purpose.

- Wycliffe Bible. This is arguably the first English Bible. Its primary source was from Latin and was produced in AD 1382 by John Wycliffe, an Oxford scholar.
- Tyndale Bible. This Bible was perhaps the most influential English translation and would impact all subsequent English translations. It was translated from Greek and Hebrew, around AD 1525, by William Tyndale, an Oxford scholar and a priest.
- Coverdale Bible. The distinction of this Bible is that it was the first complete printed English Bible. It was made in AD 1535 by Miles Coverdale.
- The Great Bible. This Bible was produced in AD 1539 and was also the work of Miles Coverdale.
- King James Version (KJV). For several centuries, the English Bible that would trump all others is the KJV (sometimes also referred to as Authorised Version). It came into existence in AD 1611 under the patronage of King James I of England. KJV was the product of the effort of 54 biblical scholars.
- Modern translations. Modern English Bibles abound in large numbers and new translations are being produced regularly. Some of the major versions available today are New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New International Version (NIV), English Standard Version (ESV), Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB), New English Translation (NET) and many more. For English speaking readers of the Bible this cafeteria of choices is quite bewildering and makes choosing a Bible a difficult task. Perhaps understanding the translation theories employed may alleviate some of the confusion.

TRANSLATION THEORIES

When choosing a Bible, we should understand the theory of translation used and how this affects the reading of the text. The real issue is not about accuracy but about how to present the text in the most natural way in English. There are three principal translational theories and the 'Preface' of a particular version explains the theory employed in that Bible.

- Literal (Word for Word). This type of translation is primarily concerned with semantic (word) accuracy. The best examples of this theory are interlinear Bibles. However, versions such as NASB, KJV, ESV, RSV and NKJV probably belong to this type of translation.
- Dynamic Equivalence. This translation type is also called ‘thought for thought’ translation. The primary concern of such versions is the meaning of the text and pays close attention to the idiosyncracies of both source and receptor languages. The CEV, NLT and TEV belong to this category.
- Optimal Equivalence. More recent translations have attempted to bridge the divide between the two previous theories. They give precedence to the meaning without ignoring the words themselves. Several versions, including NIV, TNIV, NRSV, HCSB and NET Bible, probably belong in this grouping.

ARRANGEMENT OF BOOKS IN THE OT

The arrangement of the books in the OT is a mini-journey by itself. A quick perusal reveals that the listing in the OT is quite different from that of the HB. English and other language Bibles by and large follow the pattern of the Septuagint with only minor alterations. The table below offers a bird’s eye view of the different listings.

Table 1: Listings of Books

HEBREW BIBLE	SEPTUAGINT BIBLE	ENGLISH BIBLE
<i>Torah</i>	<i>Pentateuch</i>	<i>Pentateuch</i>
Genesis	Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers Deuteronomy	Numbers	Numbers
	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
<i>Nebi'im (prophets)</i>	<i>History Books</i>	<i>History Books</i>

(Former Prophets)

Joshua

Judges

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

(Latter Prophets)

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Kethubim (writings)

Psalms

Job

Proverbs

Ruth

Song of Songs

Ecclesiastes

Lamentations

Esther

Daniel

Ezra

Nehemiah

1 Chronicles

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Kings

2 Kings

3 Kings

4 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Wisdom Books

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

Prophets

(Major Prophets)

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

(Minor Prophets)

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Joshua

Judges

Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Wisdom Books

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Songs

Prophets

(Major Prophets)

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

(Minor Prophets)

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

2 Chronicles

Zechariah
Malachi

Zechariah
Malachi

LITERARY WORKS IMPACTING THE OT

When we study the OT, we also have to consider the literary milieu of the biblical period. There were many writers and many books making up part of the literary landscape for both Jews and Christians. Some of these works have a direct impact on our knowledge of the periods involved. Others appear to possess only literary value.

Apocrypha

A set of books that made their way into certain ancient versions, for example, Septuagint, but were later dropped from the OT canon are known today as Apocrypha.

- Some of these books (like, 1 & 2 *Maccabees*) have great historical value because they tell us about the events of the inter-testamental period.
- Others, like *Tobit* or *Bel and the Dragon* make for entertaining reading.
- Yet others, like *Wisdom of Solomon*, provide a closer look into the thinking of people during this period.
- The Apocryphal books enable us to plug the gap between the OT and the NT.
- They enlighten us as to the events, thoughts and aspirations of the people who lived between the two testaments.
- It is important to note that both Judaism and Protestant Christianity do not grant canonical standing to these books; they are not part of the Bible.
- At one time, the Roman Catholic Church treated the books on the same level as the rest of the Bible but today they are given a secondary standing as deuterocanonical (second canon).

For those who wish to know, the following is a list of the Apocryphal books.

- 1 Esdras
- Judith
- Tobit
- 1 Maccabees
- 2 Maccabees

- 3 Maccabees
- 4 Maccabees
- Odes (Prayer of Manasseh)
- Wisdom of Solomon
- Sirach/Ecclesiasticus
- Psalms of Solomon
- Baruch
- Letter to Jeremiah
- Apocryphal additions to Esther and Daniel (Prayer of Azariah, Song of Three Children, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon)

Rabbinic Writings

From a religious perspective, Jewish writings of various periods have a great bearing on OT studies. These are mostly commentaries, supplements and reflections on the HB. The great rabbis and scribes who produced these works left us a legacy to be treasured, a legacy of ideas and interpretation crucial to our knowledge of how the HB was used by the Jews.

- Midrash. This is made up of legal comments on or exposition of the Torah and includes narratives, homilies and parables. Midrash is divided into two types, *Halakah* (legal material) and *Haggada* (non-legal material). Most of these works may be dated from 100 BC to AD 300.
- Babylonian Talmud. This is a collection of works comprising of *Mishnah* (codified law from about AD 200) and *Gemara* (commentary on *Mishnah* from about AD 500). The *Talmud* incorporates oral laws, Torah interpretations by Rabbis and commentary on *Mishnah* by later Rabbis
- Palestinian Talmud. Dating to about AD 200, this collection is mostly *Gemara* and much shorter than its Babylonian counterpart.

Ancient Texts and the OT

The literary backdrop of the OT also includes works from neighbouring nations which have some impact on OT studies.

- Some of these are stories that appear to parallel biblical stories.
- Others contain laws that mirror and help elucidate biblical legal materials. Some of the more important documents are briefly described below.

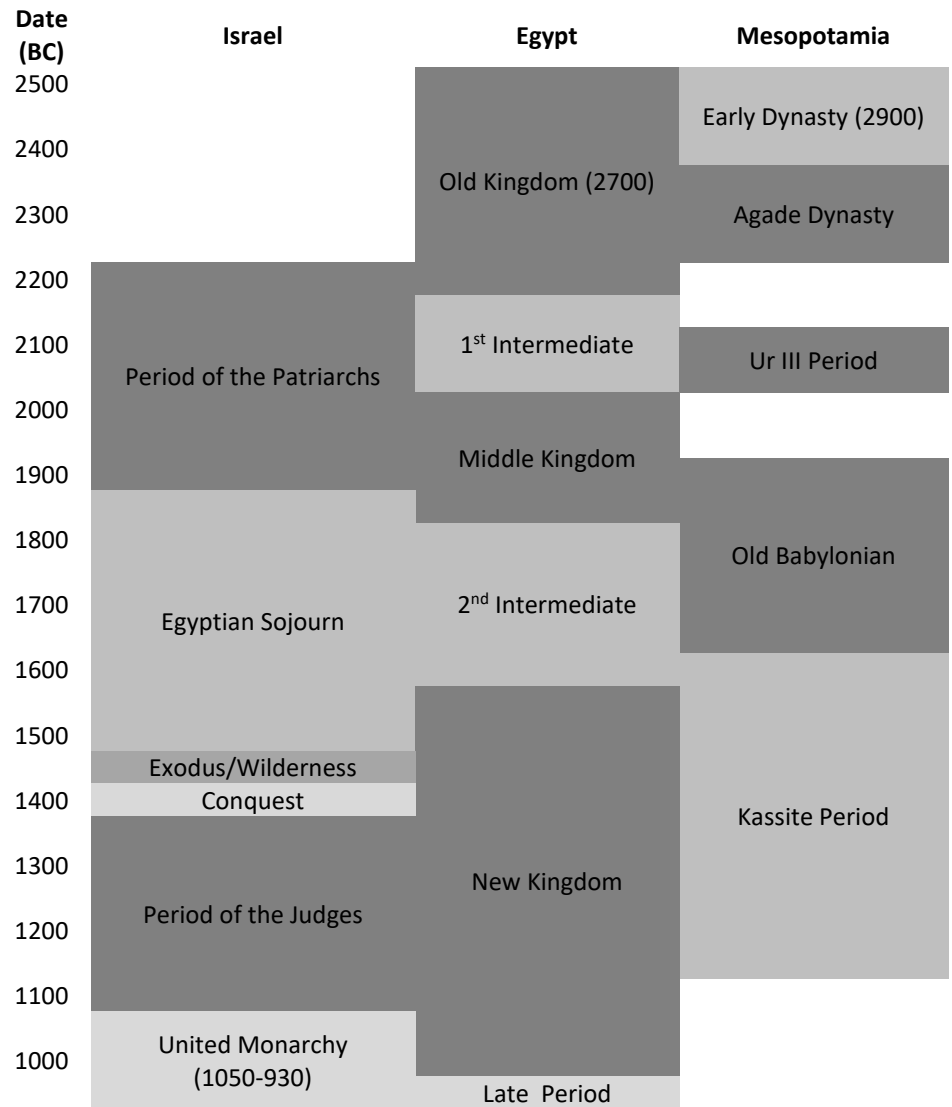
- Enuma Elish. This is a Sumerian account of creation with some intriguing parallels to the Genesis story.
- Gilgamesh Epic. This is another Sumerian epic which contains a flood story that is similar to the Genesis flood narrative.
- Hittite Treaties. These are legal documents about covenants made by Hittite emperors with their vassal kingdoms. They help us to understand the biblical concept of covenant and the structure of the book of Deuteronomy which follows patterns employed in these treaties.
- Ugaritic Texts. They provide crucial information which parallels the biblical period of Judges.
- Atrahasis Epic. This is an Akkadian story about creation, population growth and flood. It also exhibits parallels to the Genesis stories.
- Amarna Letters. These are letters to Egyptian Pharaohs painting graphic details of a so-called Habiru invasion, believed to be the Israelite conquest.
- House of David inscription. This inscription refers to the kings of Judah as the house of David.
- Sennacherib Prism. It provides corroborating evidence of the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem during the time of King Hezekiah.
- Balaam Text. Offers details about a prophecy made by Balaam.
- Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Tells us about the Israelite king, Jehu, paying tribute to the Assyrian emperor, Shalmaneser.
- Merneptah Stele. This inscription gives us the earliest mention of Israel outside the Bible.
- Hammurabi Stele. It records the famous Code of Hammurabi, a set of legal stipulations which help us understand the legal background to the laws in Leviticus.
- Cyrus Cylinder. The Cylinder records Cyrus' decree for a group of people to rebuild their temple, possibly referring to the Jews.

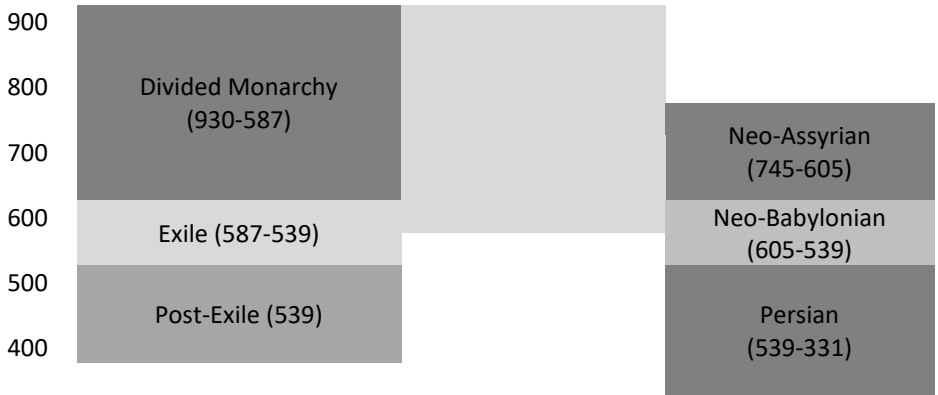
OT TIMELINE

A journey into the OT inevitably must delve into the historical material informing the biblical texts. With regards to OT history, this is a rather gigantic task. Perhaps it is the better part of discretion to adopt a minimalist approach at this point. The following chart presents a simplified macro view

of the history of Israel alongside its two most dominant neighbours, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The history presented below stretches from about 2500 BC to about 300 BC.

Table 2: OT Timeline





STUDY QUESTIONS

- What are Semitic Languages? How does Hebrew fit into this group?
- Trace the development of the biblical text from its original form to the present form.
- Explain what is meant by: MT, LXX, DSS and MSS.
- Trace the history of the English Bible from its earliest days to the present.
- What are the three translation theories? Briefly explain each one and provide at least one example for each.
- Identify the following: Apocrypha, Mishnah, Talmud, Enuma Elish and Gilgamesh Epic.

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- The OT as we know it today has gone through a long process of development. Does knowledge of this process strengthen or weaken your faith in the reliability of the OT text? Why?
- Does it matter which English version we use? Why? If you were to give an English Bible to someone who is new to the OT, which version would you recommend? Why?

Chapter 2

TORAH (PENTATEUCH)

The first section of the HB is the Torah, known to English readers as Pentateuch.

- The translation of Torah has been the object of much debate. The traditional translation has rendered Torah as 'law'. This however is a misnomer.
- Torah may be simply defined as 'instruction' because it is derived from a Hebrew verb which means 'to instruct.'
- The Torah refers to the first five books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

AUTHORSHIP

The authorship of the Torah is a rather perplexing question and there is no consensus in today's biblical scholarship.

- Traditional and conservative views posit Moses as the author and date the books to the 15th cent BC.
- Critical scholarship has strenuously challenged this traditional view and replaced it with a system of 4 sources (referred to as source criticism). The four sources, Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and Priestly (J, E, D and P), represent different editorial processes from various periods of history.
- This theory asserts that the Torah was probably completed only after the Exile (see Bernard, 2009, for a more complete discussion of the theory). However, there is no convincing reason to reject the traditional theory and the critical theories no longer holds sway over Torah studies.

TORAH SCROLL

What is more intriguing for us is the fact that the entire Torah was written on a single scroll, often referred to as Torah Scroll. Not only are all five books written on one scroll but they are intentionally connected to each other in such a manner that we get the impression that Torah is actually a single work

broken up into five parts. A quick examination of the connectors allows us to view the Torah as a five-part book.

- Genesis. The first Torah book begins with stories about beginnings (the world and Israel) but ends with story about ‘the sons of Israel.’
- Exodus. The second book contains stories about Israel and the Sanctuary. It begins with the story about ‘the sons of Israel’ and end with ‘Tabernacle’.
- Leviticus. The third book contains laws for Israel and the Sanctuary. It begins with ‘Tent of Meeting’ and ends with ‘the Lord commanded Moses on Mt Sinai.’
- Numbers. This is a collection of stories about Israel’s wilderness journey. The fourth book begins with ‘the Lord spoke to Moses in the Sinai desert’ and ends with ‘the commandments of the Lord through Moses.’
- Deuteronomy. The final book, a collection of Moses’ last sermons to Israel, begins with ‘the words which Moses spoke.’

A diagrammatic view enables us to see this connection better:

Genesis ↔↔Exodus ↔↔Leviticus ↔↔Numbers↔↔ Deuteronomy

Creation ↔↔ ‘the sons of Israel’ + ‘the sons of Israel’ ↔↔ ‘Tabernacle’ + ‘Tent of meeting’ ↔↔ ‘the Lord commanded Moses on Mt Sinai’ + ‘the Lord spoke to Moses in the Sinai’ ↔↔ ‘the commands of the Lord through Moses’ + ‘the words which Moses spoke’ ↔↔ Moses’ death

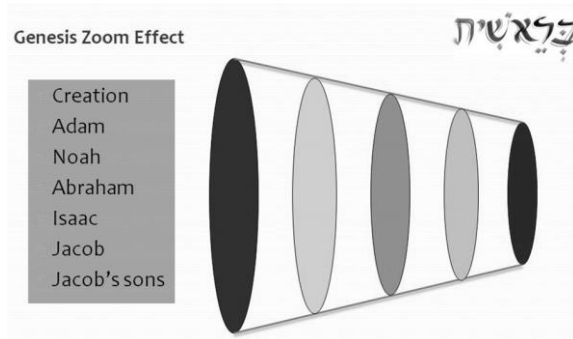
GENESIS

The structure of the book of Genesis may be viewed in a number of ways but the zoom structure appears to fit the book best.

Zoom Structure

Genesis is best understood through the eye of a camera zoom lens. The photograph begins with a wide angle, ‘the heavens and the earth,’ and zooms to the stories about Jacob’s children. This is the zoom structure of Genesis and is illustrated below. With each stop in the zoom, the focus is clearer and more detailed.

Figure 1: Genesis Zoom Structure



Narrative Cycles

The first Torah book is Genesis and consists of two macro narrative cycles.

- Pre-Patriarchal Cycle. This is made up of two smaller cycles, the Adam Cycle (Gen 1-5) and the Noah Cycle (Gen 6-9). This segment relates stories about the beginning of the world and humanity and a second beginning precipitated by the flood.
- Patriarchal Cycle. This Cycle concentrates on the life and times of a particular family. It is divided into three smaller narrative cycles, the Abraham-Isaac Cycle (Gen 11:27-25:11), the Isaac-Jacob Cycle (Gen 25:19-35:29) and the Jacob-Joseph-Judah Cycle (Gen 37-50). Most of Genesis zooms on the story of a single clan or family. Chapters 12-50 actually begin with a larger picture of the creation of a clan but end up with focusing on one specific family.

The pre-patriarchal narratives contain two principal narrative cycles.

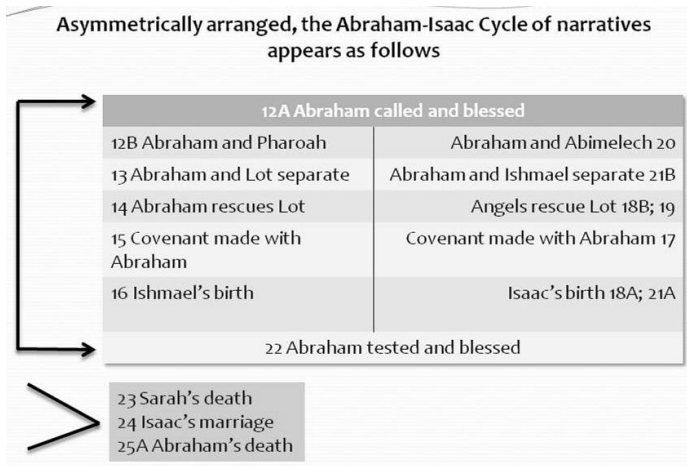
- Creation Episodes. The creation stories involve general creation (Gen 1:1-2:4a), the specific creation of humanity (Gen 2:4b-25) and the fall of mankind.
 - General creation depicts the order of creation in two panels plus one structure. On days 1-3 we encounter the creation of environments for life, light, water-water and land respectively. On days 4-6 these life environments are filled with objects, light objects, water-water objects and land objects (including mankind) respectively.
 - Day 7 is a unique day called Sabbath. Its uniqueness is both syntactical and conceptual.

- The specific creation of humanity comprises the creation of a garden home (Eden), the first man (Adam) and the first woman (Eve).
- The fall narrative accounts for the appearance of sin which foils the paradise God had made.
- Flood Story. The story of Gen 6-9 addresses the question of how God response to rampant sin. The catch word is 'judgement'.
 - Gen 6:1-4 reveal God's assessment of the evil permeating the earth.
 - Gen 6:5-8 unveil the judgement pronounced against an evil planet.
 - Gen 6:9-7:24 speak of the warning provided through Noah and the execution of the judgement in the form of a universal flood.
 - Gen 8:1-22 show God recreating the earth and then making a promise to never flood the earth again.
 - Gen 9:1-29 tell of a covenant God made with Noah and the new humanity. The story ends by showing that despite all this, the world of humans is not truly changed; sin still causes havoc.

The patriarchal narrative cycles revolve around certain characters, Abraham, Jacob, and two of Jacob's sons.

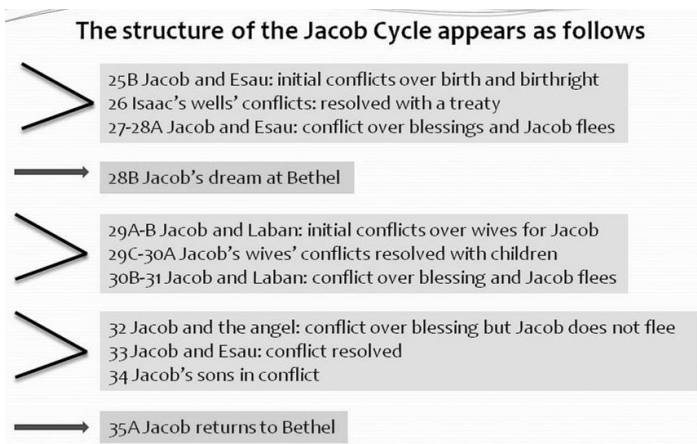
- The Abraham-Isaac narratives are arranged in panel form capped by a three-part concentric piece.
- Abraham's stories come in pairs which give rise to the panel structure below.

Figure 2: The Abraham-Isaac Narrative Cycle



- The Jacob Cycle has its own distinctive arrangement. It is made up of a trio of three-part concentric patterns separated by two stories about Bethel (which means 'house of God').
- Conflict is the dominant motif of this cycle.

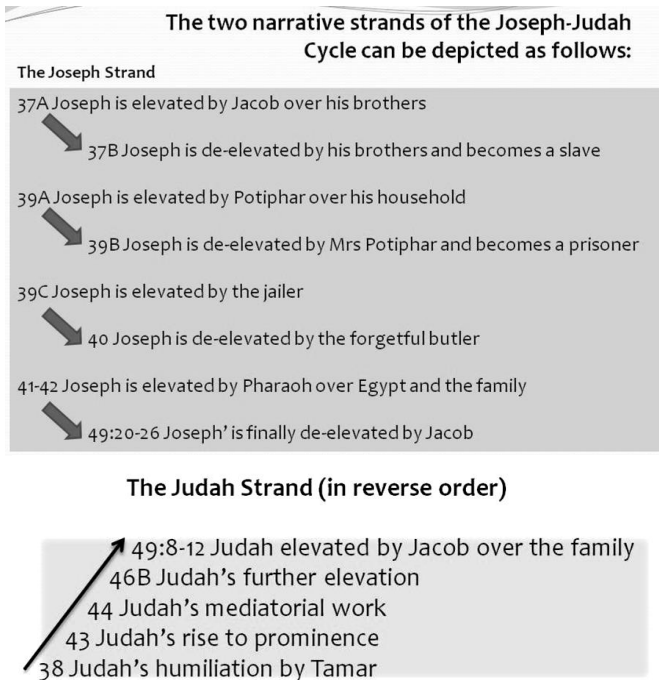
Figure 3: The Jacob Narrative Cycle



- Genesis 37-50, the final cycle of the book, narrates the contrasting experiences of two of Jacob's sons, Joseph and Judah.

- Joseph's story serves as narrative foil to the real story, Judah's. The story of Joseph is a roller-coaster of elevation and de-elevation, whereas Judah's story is a continuous ascent to the pinnacle of familial and historical supremacy (see Gen 49). The two diagrams below pictorialises these contrasting movements (see Fanwar, 2007, for a complete discussion of these narrative techniques).

Figure 4: The Joseph-Judah Narrative Cycles



Judah's Ascendancy: Narrative Clues

Most readers of Genesis are enamoured by the Joseph stories but fail to notice their role as narrative foil to the Judah story. It is Judah who is chosen by God as father of Israel's history, and ultimately progenitor of salvific history (Gen 49:8-12; Ps 78:67-68). A close reading of the narrative reveals specific clues for Judah's ascendancy (see Fanwar, 2009, for further discussion).

- ‘Younger-son’ motif. Throughout Genesis, the person chosen by God is a younger son as was the case with Seth, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Judah is a younger son, fourth by birth chronology (after Rueben, Simeon and Levi) and fifth by rank (after Rueben, Simeon, Levi and Joseph).
- Deception story. Deception is a motif which accompanies the characters who are the chosen ones. This is certainly true of Isaac and Jacob and also true of Judah.
- ‘Three sons’ concept. In Genesis, the chosen one is also part of a three sons narrative. We have Cain-Abel-Seth, Japheth-Ham-Shem and Nahor-Haran-Abraham. The line of God’s people is traced through Seth, Shem and Abraham. Only three of Jacob’s sons are individually named and introduced and they are the ones vying for control of the clan. The three sons are Rueben (ch 34), Joseph (ch 37) and Judah (ch 38).
- Narrative specificity of Gen 37. A close reading of chapter 37 uncovers the complete absence of God as an active player of the narratives. The apparent elevation of Joseph runs against the grain of the book. He is the beneficiary of human attempts to make him somebody rather than specifically revealed divine effort. He is elevated by his father (Jacob), by his master (Potiphar) and ultimately by his king (Pharaoh). The silence of God is highly significant. However, it should be noted that Joseph senses the presence of God in his life (cf. 45:5) and the narrator explains Joseph’s life in Egypt as part of God’s plan (cf. 39:2, 21).
- The most important narrative clue to Judah’s ascendancy is the motif where the ‘chosen’ one is always introduced last. This was the case with Seth, Shem and Abraham. It is true of Judah who is the last of Jacob’s sons to be introduced. In the final analysis, Judah is ‘praised’ by his father (Gen 49:8-12) and is chosen by God (Ps 78:68).

What was Judah’s trump card? In every episode where Judah is the principal character, he is saving or attempting to save someone’s life.

- In Gen 37, he attempts to save Joseph from the ire of his brothers. His methodology (to sell Joseph as slave) may have been questionable but it worked.
- In Gen 38, he saves Tamar, his daughter-in-law, from almost certain death. Recognising that her predicament lay squarely on his shoulders, he takes responsibility for and ensures her safety.

- In Gen 43, Judah saves the clan from starvation by convincing his father to do the inconceivable, allowing Benjamin to go to Egypt in accordance with the demands of the Vizier (who happened to be Joseph). His personal 'life-and-death' assurance proved to be effective when a similar argument by Rueben had proved inadequate to convince Jacob.
- In Gen 44, Judah produces an amazing effort to save Benjamin from the apparent desire of the Egyptian Vizier to punish the young man over an unjust indictment. Judah's speech in this episode is the longest speech in the book.

Judah's ascendancy and God's preference for him may be attributed to the fact that this dubious character possessed a 'salvific' or redemptive nature which perfectly suited him to be the progenitor of God's own salvific plans.

EXODUS

The second book of the Torah narrates the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

- The Israelites had settled in Egypt during the famine migration which occurred at the time when Joseph was Vizier of Egypt. This would have been during the 2nd Intermediate period of Egypt, also called the Hyksos Period.
- However, the rise of the 18th dynasty or New Kingdom saw a large scale reversal of fortunes for the Israelites who found themselves as slaves in Egypt.
- The moment of deliverance is immortalised historically under the title 'Exodus'. This event became the benchmark of all deliverances that God would perform for Israel.
- The book of Exodus traces the initial steps in Israel's return to their own land. After the Exodus, and all the events that accompanied it, Israel was led into the Sinai desert to meet God and receive a covenant commitment from him.

The book may be divided into four parts as shown below:

- Bondage (1:12-7:7) – oppression, Satan's act
- Exodus (7:8-18:27) – deliverance, God's act
- Torah (19:1-24:18) – Covenant

- Tabernacle (25-40) – Worship

Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17)

The Ten Commandments are the introduction to a range of materials often referred to as Book of Covenant (Exod 19-24). This material sets out the agenda of God in making a covenant with Israel. At the heart of the covenant is the statement of principles for universal human conduct. However, the Ten Commandments are not always readily understood by those who read the Bible.

Here we make short detour through these commands which have been at the heart of the Judeo-Christian ethic.

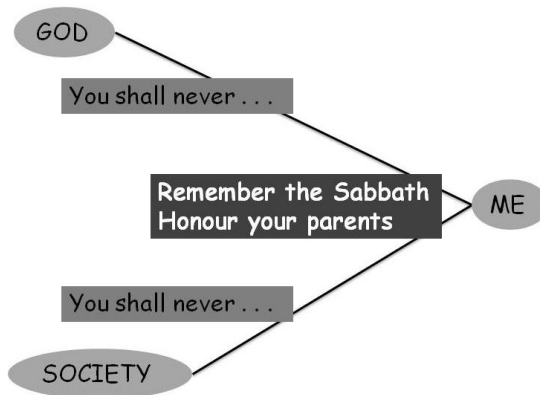
- Exod 20:1-3. This is the Preface to the Ten Commandments and describes the relationship between Yahweh and Israel and records actions God had already performed on their behalf.
 - 'I am Yahweh.' This divine self-predication became the classic HB expression of divine reality
 - 'Your God.' This relational statement connects Yahweh and Israel directly.
 - 'Who brought you out.' Here is the relational rationale for the covenant.
 - 'You shall have no other gods.' God's relational desire is for an exclusive relationship with Israel (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37; Matt 6:33)
- Commandments 1-3: Exod 20:3-7. These commandments comprise four sentences constructed in two pairs. pairs
 - You shall not have for yourself other gods implies that there is none other (Isa 45:5-6).
 - You shall not make for yourself other gods suggests that there is no fitting representation or comparison (Isa 40:18, 25).
 - You shall not bow down to them means that there is no one else to worship (Isa 42:10).
 - You shall not misuse Yahweh's name demands there can be no downgrading of God's name through either false oath or profanity (Lev 19:12). It also implies that no one has the right to downgrade God in any manner (Isa 42:8).
 - These three Commands come with penalty and promise.

- Commandment 4: Exod 20:8-11. This is the great Sabbath Commandment and contains several ideas.
 - 'Remembering' is not an imperative and suggests it is something more enduring.
 - 'Shabbat' is the direct object of remembering.
 - 'To make it holy' is the indirect object and serves as the purpose of remembering.
 - 'Seventh-day is Shabbat.' The Sabbath is the apex of the weekly time cycle; it is a time temple.
 - 'To Yahweh' implies that Sabbath belongs to Yahweh.
 - 'Your God' addresses the relationship with Yahweh.
 - Six days belong to us to do all our work.
 - Shabbat is not for work. The sevenfold designation of workers not working highlights the point.
 - Sabbath is a time for recognising God's creation of and control over the cosmos, acknowledges a covenantal relationship with God and portrays a desire to honour God.
- Commandment 5: Exod 20:12
 - This is the only command with a true imperative.
 - 'Honour' comes from the Hebrew verb *k-b-d* meaning 'to make heavy.' The noun *kabod* is usually translated 'glory'.
 - The reason for this weightiness (honour) is that parent-child is a divinely ordained relationship that cannot be altered.
- Commandments 6-9: Exod 20:13-16
 - The unique features of these commandments are short sentences, similar syntax and sound rhyme effect.
 - Four concepts are presented in these commandments:
 - 'Do not murder.' This command is specific to human life and underscores the principle of preserving human life.
 - 'Do not commit adultery.' The command is specific to marriage and undergirds the sanctity of marriage.
 - 'Do not steal.' This is specific to property and connotes that personal property is sacrosanct.
 - 'Do not bear false witness.' The command is specific to testimony or perjury as in legal cases. The underlying idea pertains to the preservation of people's reputation or name.

- The basic principle in these four commands is, ‘Do not take what belongs to someone else.’ In the Torah, all four commands involve severe penalties, either death or double restitution.
- Commandment 10: Exod 20:17
 - ‘You shall not covet’ employs the Hebrew verb *khamad* which means ‘to desire.’ The verb first appeared in Genesis where the trees in the Garden of Eden are depicted as ‘desirable’ (Gen 2:9). The fruit from the forbidden tree is also depicted as ‘desirable’ (Gen 3:6). *Khamad* has positive and negative connotations.

The Ten Commandments may be summarised in diagram format as follows.

Figure 5: Ten Commandments



Covenant

An important part of the book rotates on the concept of Covenant. The so-called Book of Covenant (Exod 24:7) runs from chapters 19-24 and incorporates the Ten Commandments in to the covenant.

- Covenant comes from the Hebrew word *berit* which refers to an agreement, a treaty or a contract.
- Covenant is an agreement between two parties, a superior one (God) and a subordinate one (Israel).
- The covenant involves specific terms (see Exod 19:5; 20:1-17; 20:24ff.).
- It also comes equipped with particular promises (Exod 19:4-6).

- It includes human commitment (Exod 19:8; 24:3, 7) and punishment for renegeing on commitment (Exod 19:10-13).
- The covenant consists of three elements, relational statement (Exod 19), lifestyle expectations (Exod 20A) and contingency for failure which is portrayed in the use of altar (Exod 20B).

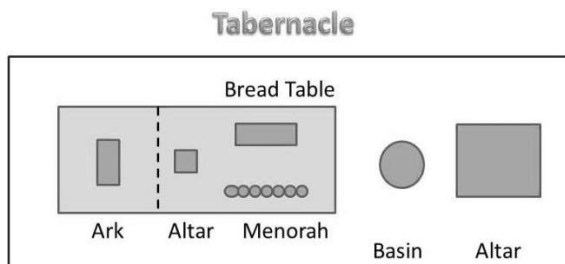
Tabernacle

The second major topic of the book of Exodus is the Tabernacle. God commanded Israel to build the Tabernacle as a symbol of his presence in their midst (Exod 25:8).

- Compartments. The Tabernacle consisted of three separate chambers, an outer court (Courtyard), a larger room (Holy Place) and an inner sanctum (Holy of Holies). The first two chambers were involved in the daily worship and cultic activities but the inner sanctum was used only once, on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).
- Furniture. The services of the Tabernacle were conducted around certain specific furniture with varying symbolisms. In the Courtyard was a large altar for sacrifices and a basin for washing and liturgical cleansings. The Holy Place had a bread table, the *Menorah* (lampstand) and an altar for incense. The three pieces conveyed the constancy and continuity of the priestly ministry on behalf of Israel. The Holy of Holies housed the Ark of the Covenant, Israel's holiest object, which symbolised the very presence of God himself.

The diagram below provides a cross-section view of the Tabernacle. During the reign of King Solomon, the Tabernacle was replaced by a Temple.

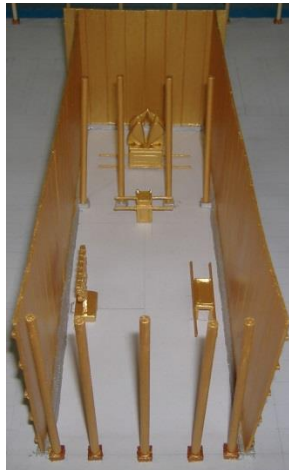
Figure 6: Tabernacle Cross-Section View

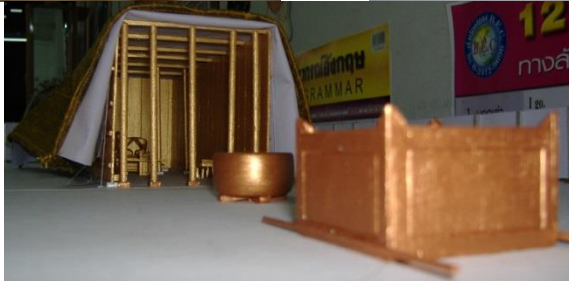


The following pictures of the Sanctuary are from a scale model built by Kunwalpai Poodjing (a former student of mine).

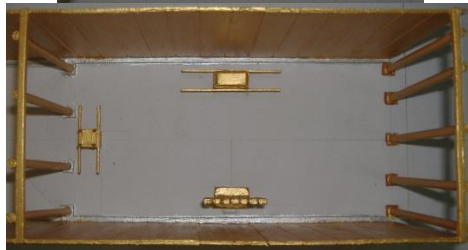


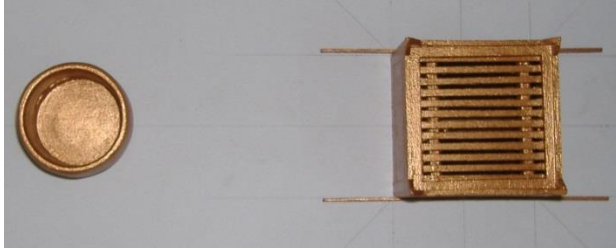
Tabernacle Cross-Section (top view)





Tabernacle Cross-Section (front views)





Three Compartments (top view: Holy of Holies; Holy Place; Courtyard)

LEVITICUS

The book of Leviticus is the liturgical (worship) manual of the Torah.

- We could also think of it as a compendium of laws pertaining to the day-to-day life of Israel. In this book we find laws ranging from liturgy for sacrifice to sexual conduct.
- The laws of Leviticus cover the entire spectrum of life.

The concentric arrangement of the book (see below) offers a clear view of the materials in the book.

Concentric Structure

The book of Leviticus displays a concentric with a clear centre. Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement is not only the centre of the book but the apex of the religious calendar.

Sacrifice Rituals (1-7)

 Priestly History (8-10)

 Clean & Unclean (11-15)

 Day of Atonement (16)

 Clean & Unclean (17-20)

 Priestly Legislation (21-22)

 Festival Rituals (23-25)

Promises (26-27)

The principle idea of the book is that God is holy and his people should also be holy. The sacrifices, the laws and the worship of Israel are tools in the process of creating a holy people. The Day of Atonement, with all its

ramifications, is central to this process. However, a sneak peek into Leviticus reveals that the concept of 'holy' pervades even the most mundane of life's experiences.

Sacrifices and Festivals

Leviticus describes Israel's worship as comprising two main types of activities, sacrifices and festivals.

The five sacrifices are

- *'Olah*. This is the offering known as Burnt Offering and is the most common sacrifice offered twice daily on behalf of the nation. It was an animal sacrifice which serves as worship and sin offering (Lev 1; 6:8-13).
- *Minkhah*. The Grain Offering is a sacrifice from products of the land whose uses are entirely about worship. It is the first offering mentioned in the Torah, in Gen 4 (Lev 2; 6:14-23).
- *Shalem*. This is called Peace Offering because the Hebrew word comes from the same root as *shalom*. This is primarily a worship offering used for thanksgiving and making vows (Lev 3; 7:11-36; 22:17-30; 27).
- *Khattat*. This Sin Offering is the main sacrifice connected to sin. The size of the offering was proportional to a person's societal position (Lev 4:1-5:13; 6:24-30; 12:6-8).
- *'Ashem*. This offering has several names, Guilt Offering and Trespass Offering among others. Its main use makes this a Reparation Offering because it repairs broken relationship; it is a relational offering (Lev 5:14-6:7; 7:1-6; 14:12-18).

The seven festivals are divided into two groups, spring and autumn festivals.

- *Pesakh*. The feast called Passover falls in March/April and commemorates the Exodus (Exod 12:2-20; Lev 23:5).
- Unleavened Bread. This feast is celebrated in conjunction with *Pesakh* (Lev 23:6-8).
- Pentecost. This is a Harvest festival, also referred to as Feast of Weeks. It is celebrated 6 weeks after *Pesakh* in May/June and commemorates the giving of the law at Mt Sinai (Exod 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15-21).
- *Rosh Hashanah*. The feast of Trumpets is essentially a New Year's festival celebrated in September/October signified by the blowing of trumpets (Lev 23:23-25; Num 29:1-6).

- *Yom Kippur*. Christians know this as the Day of Atonement. This festival is celebrated in September/October and is the apex of the religious calendar. On this day the Tabernacle (Temple) is cleansed to signify the total removal of sin (Lev 16; 23:26-33).
- *Sukkot*. The feast of Booths commemorates the 40 years of life in the wilderness after the Exodus and is celebrated in September/October (Lev 23:33-43; Num 29:12-39).

Food laws

On the one hand, Leviticus' food laws are often dismissed by those who see no Christian application for them and, on the other hand, they are applied as still relevant to Christian lifestyle. Nevertheless, even those who still subscribe to these food laws do not take the time to fully understand them. Some explanation of the laws may be helpful.

- Creation Mandate (God's Plan A). If we track the food laws back to their origin, we discover they were part of God's original mandate for Adam and Eve.
 - Gen 1:26. Adam and Eve were designated as planet manager; their job was to look after the earth.
 - Gen 1:29. As part of the mandate, they were given a planet diet which consisted entirely of plant material. In biblical thought, plant is not considered 'living thing' [Gen 1:30] as it is non-moving object.
- Flood Mandate (God's Plan B). The failure of Adam and Eve to fulfil their mandate precipitates a second plan.
 - Gen 9:2. As in Plan A, humanity is still designated as planet manager.
 - Gen 9:3. However a major change occurred in the planet diet which now consists of living and non-living things. Animal meat becomes part of the diet.
 - Gen 9:4. Yet, there is restriction to this new planet diet. No blood is permitted for food because blood equals life.
 - Gen 9:5. Sometimes unnoticed is a caveat about the new planet diet. God will hold people accountable for every animal or person killed.
- 'Manna' Model (God's Plan C). With the passage of time and dilution of knowledge, God revises his strategy yet again. To Israel he gives a different model, the Manna Model.
 - The daily diet of Israel was manna (Exod 16), food from heaven itself.

- Cultic diet included flesh food which was part of a sacrifice (see Leviticus).
- Animals could only be killed for sacrifice and in the Tabernacle precinct. This prevented wanton slaughtering of animals.
- Only sacrificial meat could be eaten.
- Leviticus 11 lists the so-called 'Forbidden Foods' or animals that could not be part of Israel's diet.
 - Clean and unclean living things. Living creatures are divided into two categories and those designated clean could be eaten.
 - God establishes the parameters. Only God can determine what is clean and unclean. This has less to do with science or biology.
 - Categories of unclean. The crescendo of laws from land to water to sky paints a threefold categorization of what is actually clean and unclean based on the nature of the creature.
 - An animal which takes life, a hunter or predator, is unclean and could not be eaten.
 - An animal which eats the dead, a scavenger, is unclean and could not be eaten.
 - An animal which lives in two worlds, omnivorous, is unclean and could not be eaten.
 - The operative principles. Taking life is against every instinct of God. Dead things contaminate. Mixture is the very essence of sin.
- Leviticus 17 lists 'Forbidden food' within the clean and edible category.
 - Verses 1-9: Slaughtering animals
 - Slaughtering animals may only occur in the Tent of meeting, the Tabernacle.
 - Slaughtering animals in the camp or outside the camp equals 'murder.' Lev 17:4 says 'blood is counted against that man . . . blood he has spilt.'
 - Slaughtering equals sacrifice only animals fit for sacrifice are fit for food.
 - Verses 10-16: Blood and carcass
 - Eating blood or carcass Incurs God's anger.
 - Blood symbolises life and is used for making atonement and therefore cannot be eaten.

- Carcass contaminates and serves as symbol of the contagion of sin. Eating carcass would create a false symbol.

NUMBERS

The book of Numbers records the up-and-down experiences of Israel during the forty years of desert sojourn.

- The book has correctly been dubbed ‘murmuring theology.’
- The pendulum arrangement uncovers the alternating movement from blessing to rebellion.

This happens time and time again as illustrated in the arrangement below.

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------|
| • March (1-10) | ↔ | Rebel (11-12) |
| • Canaan (13) | ↔ | Rebel (14) |
| • Offerings (15) | ↔ | Rebel (16) |
| • Priests (17-19) | ↔ | Rebel (20-21) |
| • Blessed (22-24) | ↔ | Rebel (25) |
| • Canaan (26-36) | | |

DEUTERONOMY

The final Torah book is called Deuteronomy, a term derived from its Greek name which means ‘second law.’

- The book reads like the memoirs of an aged leader and takes on the form of sermons.
- Essentially, these are the last sermons Moses preached to the Israelites.

Arrangement of Materials

The arrangement of the book bears the imprint of a sermonic series. Embedded in the sermons are reminders of the covenant with its promises and stipulations. There is a fair amount of replication of data from Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

- Speech 1: Historical Prologue (1-4A)
- Speech 2: Laws for Israel to Live by (4B-26)
- Speech 3: Warning and Prediction (27-31)

- Speech 4: Song of Moses (32A)
- Speech 5: Final Charge and Farewell (32B-33)
- *Historical Epilogue (34)*

The Shema': Deut 6:4-9

The *Shema'* is a short passage in Deuteronomy which has had a disproportionate impact upon Jewish and Christian thought. For Judaism, it serves as the virtual creed and drives the worship, education and family life of the faith. A short exposition of the *Shema'* yields some fascinating insights.

- The *Shema'* begins with a command, 'Israel, listen!' The tone is intended to draw attention to something important.
- 'Yahweh our God, Yahweh one' (v4). The Hebrew clause contains no verbs but stresses God's uniqueness.
- 'Love Yahweh your God with all your heart (*leb*), with all your soul (*nepesh*), and with all your very (*m'od*)' (v5). The Hebrew *leb* is the seat of rationality and is equivalent to the English 'mind'. *Nepesh* is equivalent to 'person' or 'being' and refers to the whole person. The last word, *m'od*, is an adverb with the sense of 'very' or 'exceedingly'. The verbal progression is mind, being, and exceedingly or increasingly. The emphasis is relational totality.
- 'These words should be in your heart (*leb*)' (v6b). This calls for the internalisation of God's words.
- 'Imprint them on your children' (v7a). The educational underpinning here is built on a verb used for sealing or stamping a document. The idea is to embed God's word into the fabric of family life.
- 'Talk about them in your house or on the road' (v7b). There should be a consistency of life which impacts internal and external realities. God's word should permeate the spaces of life.
- 'Talk about them when you lie down and get up' (7c). The totality of consciousness is also involved in this process. God's word should permeate time itself.
- 'Bind them as signs on your hand and forehead' (v8). Hand and forehead are metaphor for our actions and thoughts. God's word should become the totality of being (see Eccl 12:13-14).
- 'Write them on your doors and gates' (v9). The life of God's people has a communal ring to it because it is not possible to live faith without

affecting the social environment. Our faith should be visible to those around us.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is Torah? Who wrote the Torah?
- What are some arguments for maintaining Moses as author of the Torah?
- Explain the two narrative cycles of Genesis.
- Genesis reveals that Judah was chosen by God and not Joseph as most reader think. How would you explain this reversal?
- Why did God choose Judah? What qualities did he possess to fit him to be the chosen one?
- Explain the structures of each Torah book.
- Discuss the Ten Commandments.
- Draw a simple diagram of the Tabernacle and explain its furniture.
- What were the sacrifices given to Israel in Leviticus? Briefly explain each one.
- Identify the following: Pesakh, Yom Kippur and Sukkot.
- What creatures did God allow Israel to eat? What criteria make them 'clean' or eatable?
- What is the Shema'? What does it teach?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Why should we believe that Moses authored the Torah? Does it matter if Moses did not write it, as some critical scholars have suggested? Does it have any impact upon your faith in the Word of God?
- Should a proper understanding of the food laws in Leviticus change the way we treat creatures with blood? Why?
- Does reversal happen today as in the Joseph-Judah narrative cycle? Why? What examples can you provide?
- Should we be protecting the 10 Commandments at all cost? Or should the 10 Commandments protect us instead?

Chapter 3

HISTORY BOOKS

The history of Israel is captured in several narratives which trace the history of God's people from Exodus to Exile. These two events are the cornerstones of any historical exploration of Israel. The history is neither pretty nor desirable. Like any other nation, Israel experiences the ups and downs of life even though they are covered by a special covenant with God. The history books reveal that covenant without loyalty is insufficient grounds for continued blessing. They also speak of a God so committed to his people that he remains faithful in the face of obstinate disregard for his will.

JOSHUA

The book of Joshua records the events in the Israelite conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan.

- Under the leadership of Joshua, who had served for 40 years as Moses' assistant, Israel crosses the River Jordan.
- Israel begins the task of fulfilling the promise made to Abraham centuries earlier.

The book itself comprises two halves.

- Invasion (chs 1-12)
- Settlement (chs 13-24)

JUDGES

The darkest period in Israel's history occurred during an approximately 300 year period we refer to as the Period of Judges.

- The term 'judges' is a bit of a misnomer because most of these leaders were actually warriors. Their calling was to deliver Israel from oppressive enemies.
- The book reveals the tragic history of a nation without central leadership and with a connection to God that was tenuous at best.

- They were invaded by powerful nations, subjugated from time to time and each time God responds by raising a warrior to take the fight to the enemies.
- The men (there was one female judge, Deborah) were as flawed as the period they lived in. To borrow from a book title, they had ‘hearts of iron’ but ‘feet of clay.’
- The undeniable fact of the book of Judges is the undying commitment of God to his people even in the face of so much spiritual darkness.

The arrangement of the book is as follows.

- Partial Conquest (1:1-3:6)
- The Judges: Oppression and deliverance (3:7-16:31)
- Two Narratives: Spiritual Sinkhole (17-21)
 - Danite Story (17-18)
 - Levite Story (19-21)

The following chart offers a broad view of the Period of Judges.

Table 3: Israel’s Judges

Text	Judge	Origin	Length of Rule	Oppressor	Length of Oppression	Length of Peace
3:7-11	Othniel	Caleb	--	Cushan-Rishathaim	8	40
3:12-20	Ehud	Benjamin	--	Eglon of Moab	18	80
3:31	Shamgar	--	--	Philistines	--	--
4-5	Deborah	Ephraim	--	Jabin of Hazor	20	40
6-8	Gideon	Manasseh	--	Midianites and Amalekite	7	40
10:1-2	Tola	Issachar	23	--	--	--
10:3-5	Jair	Gilead	22	--	--	--
10:6-12:7	Jephthah	Gilead	6	Ammonites	18	--
12:8-	Ibzan	Bethlehem	7	--	--	--

10						
12:11-	Elon	Zebulun	10	--	--	--
12						
12:13-	Abdon	Ephraim	8	--	--	--
15						
13-16	Samson	Dan	20	Philistines	40	--

RUTH

The story of Ruth is set against the backdrop of the Period of Judges.

- It tells the tale of a family, driven by famine, migrating to a foreign land, Moab, to make a new life for themselves.
- The story turns sour in Moab with all the men in the family dying one by one.
- The mother in the story, Naomi, is bitter and resentful and decides to return home.
- One of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, decides to stick with her mother-in-law no matter what.
- Upon their return to Bethlehem, fortunes change in the form of a new husband (Boaz) for Ruth.
- Boaz and Ruth became the ancestors of King David and eventually of Jesus.
- The book introduces a redemption concept built on the word *go'el* (relative-redeemer). Such a redeemer should meet three criteria (these qualities are seen in the NT in Jesus): he should be genetically related (cf. John 1:14; 2:14); he should have the ability and resources to redeem (cf. John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-20); and he should be willing to redeem (John 3:16).

The book exhibits an inclusio pattern.

Prologue (1:1-5)

- A An uncertain future (1:6-22)
- B Possible Kinsman-Redeemer meets prospective bride (2:1-18)
- C Kinsman-Redeemer is recognised (2:19-23)
- D Plan to claim redemption (3:1-8)
- C Kinsman-Redeemer recognises his duty (3:9-15)
- B Kinsman-Redeemer marries his bride (3:16-4:12)
- A A certain future (4:13-17)

Epilogue (4:18-22)

1 AND 2 SAMUEL

These two books account for the history of Israel from the last judge up to the early stages of monarchy.

- They relate the events in the life of Samuel, King Saul and King David.
- The history records the change of Israel from a theocracy (a nation under God) to a monarchy (a nation ruled by a man).
- The stories are sometimes finely nuanced and often highlight the humanness of even the most admired characters (cf. Johnston, 2006, 84).
- The central figure in these books is David who is the very embodiment of messianic kingship yet was a mixture of grandeur and flaws (cf. Johnston, 2006, 84). For all that is desirable and undesirable about David, he is still the one who is given the accolade of 'a man after God's own heart' (1 Sam 13:14).

The structure of the book (see below) clearly delineates these paradigm shifts.

- Samuel as Judge (1 Sam 1-7)
- Samuel and Saul (1 Sam 8-15)
- Saul and David (1 Sam 16-31)
- David (2 Sam 1-24)
 - David's lament and civil war (1-4)
 - David as king in Jerusalem (5-10)
 - David's great sin (11-12)
 - David's children and rebellions (13-20)
 - Epilogue (21-24)

1 AND 2 KINGS

The monarchy period is the story recorded in 1 and 2 Kings.

- These are historical narratives which weave together the events in the life of Israel's kings before and after the great schism.

- The bulk of the material concerns the divided monarchy period and traces the history of the nation, its dual entity after the breakup and the demise of both kingdoms.
- The books are primarily interested in the political development of Israel. The structure of the books defines this history more clearly.

- United Kingdom (1 Kgs 1-11)
- Divided Kingdom (1 Kgs 12-2 Kgs 17)
 - Division and early kings (1 Kgs 12-16)
 - Two Prophets: Elijah and Elisha (1Kgs 17:1-2 Kgs 8:15)
 - Later kings and Israel's Exile (2Kgs 8:16-17:41)
- Remaining Kingdom (2 Kgs 18-25)

The split of Israel was driven by political and social forces but essentially boiled down to a rebellion against the house of David and the excesses of the Solomonic era. The chart below lists the kings of Israel from both united and divided periods. The dates supplied are approximations due to the difficulty of dating accurately all the events (see Thiele, 1983).

Table 4: Israel's Kings

United Monarchy					
King	Date	Scripture			
Saul	1045-1011	1 Sam			
David	1011-971	2 Sam			
Solomon	971-931	1 Kgs 1-11			
Divided Monarchy					
	Judah		Israel		
Rehoboam	931-913		Jeroboam	931-910	
Abijah	913-911		Nadab	910-909	
Asa	911-870		Baasha	909-886	
Jehoshaphat	872-848		Elah	886-885	
Jehoram	848-841	1 Kgs 12	Omri	885-874	1 Kgs 12
Ahaziah	841	To	Ahab	874-853	to
Athaliah	841-835	2 Kgs 25	Ahaziah	853-852	2 Kgs 20
Joash	835-796		Joram	852-841	
Amaziah	796-767		Jehu	841-814	
Uzziah	790-740		Jehoahaz	814-798	

(Azariah)

Jotham 750-731
Ahaz 735-715
Hezekiah 729-686
Manasseh 696-641
Amon 641-639
Josiah 639-608
Jehoahaz 608
Jehoiakim 608-597
Jehoiakin 597
Zedekiah 597-586

Jehoash 798-782
Jeroboam II 782-753
Zechariah 753
Shallum 752
Menahem 752-742
Pekahiah 742-740
Pekah 740-732
Hoshea 732-722

Exile to Assyria

Exile to Babylon

1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

First and Second Chronicles are largely replication of the same history as in Kings.

- There is a major difference between Kings and Chronicles, whereas Kings focused on the political development of Israel, Chronicles delved into the spiritual development as well.
- Kings were assessed not only for their political strategies but their relationship with God.
- Chronicles also provide a great deal of material regarding the cultic aspects of Israel's history.

The following shows the arrangement of materials.

- Genealogies (1 Chron 1-9)
- David's Reign (1 Chron 10-29)
- Solomon's Reign (2 Chron 1-9)
- Kings of Judah (2 Chron 10-36)

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

The historical information of the era we know as return from exile is recorded in the two books which carry the names of the leaders of the period, Ezra and Nehemiah.

- The books tell the story of Israel's fledgling fortunes after they returned from Babylonian Exile.
- By this stage they are known as Jews and comprise people from only three tribes, Judah, Benjamin and Levi.
- The other tribes had virtually disappeared in history.
- With Persian patronage behind them, the Jews are able to rebuild the Temple and the city of Jerusalem which the Babylonian emperor, Nebuchadnezzar, had destroyed in 586 BC.

The arrangement of the books traces these events.

- First Return (Ezra 1:1-4:5) – Cyrus – 539
- Temple Completed (Ezra 4:24-6:22) – Darius I – 520-516
- Second Return (Ezra 7-10) – Artaxerxes I – 458
- Nehemiah's First Term (Neh 1-12) – Artaxerxes I – 445
- Nehemiah's Second Term (Neh 13) – after 433

ESTHER

Set during the Persian period, the story of Esther is one of the best loved-narratives of the Bible.

- This is the tale of a young Jewish orphan girl who rises to become Queen of Persia.
- The Persian king in the story is Xerxes (known in the OT as Ahasuerus).
- The nemesis of the Jews is Haman, the Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag who had been killed by Samuel during the time of King Saul (cf. 1 Sam 15).
- Haman launches a form of ethnic cleansing and attempts to exterminate the Jews (tribal revenge at its best).
- His intentions are thwarted by Queen Esther and the Jews celebrate a new festival named Purim to commemorate the deliverance.

The structure of the book is rather complex as seen below.

Opening story (1)

- a celebration – Persians
- a vain ruler – Xerxes
- an adamant queen – Vashti

A King's first decree (2-3)

- a new queen – Esther
- a conspiracy uncovered – Mordecai
- a life-threatening decree – Jews

B Clash between Mordecai and Haman (4-5)

- a queen sought for help – Esther
- a clever queen honoured – Xerxes
- a hateful officer – Haman

B Triumph of Mordecai over Haman (6-7)

- a sleepless monarch – Xerxes
- a dutiful officer honoured – Mordecai
- a hateful officer hanged – Haman

A King's second decree (8:1-9:17)

- a queen rewarded – Esther
- a dutiful officer rewarded – Mordecai
- a life-saving decree – Jews

Epilogue (9:18-10:3)

- a celebration – Jews
- a mighty monarch – Xerxes
- an esteemed officer – Mordecai

The story of Esther gives birth to one of Judaism's best loved festivals, Purim, which commemorates this marvellous deliverance.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- Who led Israel after Moses? What were some of his accomplishments?
- Why is the Period of Judges sometimes referred to as the 'dark ages' of Israel's history?
- Briefly describe the work of these judges: Gideon, Jephthah and Samson.
- Tell the story of Ruth in your own words? What important lesson does it teach?
- When did the kingdom of Israel begin? When and why did it split up? When did the two kingdoms end?
- What are the chief differences between Kings and Chronicles?

- What reason could Haman possibly have for wanting to exterminate the Jews?
- How did Esther save her people? What festival commemorates this event?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What is the darkest period of your life? Did God show his faithful love to you during that period? How can we stay faithful to God even in the lowest period of our lives?
- How should our knowledge of God's faithfulness change the way we relate to each other?
- Do you think the history of Israel will repeat itself today in the church? Why? How should we avoid negative events to be repeated in the life of the church?

Chapter 4

WISDOM BOOKS

The wisdom books are so designated because they examine the difficult questions of life dispassionately and without religious jargon. They offer concrete answers to life's questions and compel readers to reason through issues. These books are at the very heart of the biblical canon. Each book approaches life from a unique perspective.

JOB

The book of Job tackles the most difficult question of theodicy, 'How can a good God allow good people to suffer?'

- This is the most perplexing question ever raised by people of faith and one that even those who claim no faith ask.
- The story revolves around a godly man, Job, who loses everything and everyone he had as a result of some behind-the-scene cosmic contest.
- Most of the book is an attempt to answer the question posed by the story.

Date and Authorship

It is difficult to determine the date and authorship of the book. A few observations may be made but the choice is a personal decision.

- Predominant scholarly view is that the book is a result of a long process of telling, retelling and recording.
- Some conservative scholars date the book to the Solomonic period but do not conjecture on authorship.
- Many conservative scholars hold that the book was written or re-written by Moses. This is based on an early Jewish tradition but there is no internal evidence to support the view.

Historical period

Equally intriguing is the absence of a definite historical setting for the book. We can consider the following ideas.

- The dating of the book is a mystery.

- There are very few clues about the historical setting.
- The plot is definitely set in the patriarchal period and reflects certain elements of the Genesis patriarchal narratives.
 - His wealth is measured by the number of cattle and servants in a way similar to Abraham.
 - He is head of a large clan and served as its priest much the same way Abraham did.
 - His age is similar to the patriarchs' ages; longevity is the watchword.
- What we can say for certain is Job is a non-Israelite patriarch but the story does not belong to Israelite narrative milieu.

Structure of the Book

The book takes on the form of dialogue for most of the chapters as the structure below shows.

Prologue (1-2)

- A Job is introduced (1:1-5)
- B Job's first test (1:6-22)
- B Job's second test (2:1-10)
- A Job's friends are introduced (2:11-13)

Dialogue (3:1-42:6)

- A Job encounters his friends (3-26)
 - 1. First Cycle (3-14)
 - a1 Job speaks (3)
 - b1 Eliphaz speaks (4-5)
 - a2 Job replies (6-7)
 - b2 Bildad speaks (8)
 - a3 Job replies (9-10)
 - b3 Zophar speaks (11)
 - a4 Job replies (12-14)
 - 2. Second Cycle (15-21)
 - b4 Eliphaz speaks (15)
 - a5 Job replies (16-17)
 - b5 Bildad speaks (18)
 - a6 Job replies (19)
 - b6 Zophar speaks (20)

- a7 Job replies (21)
- 3. Third Cycle (22-26)
 - b7 Eliphaz speaks (22)
 - a8 Job replies (23-24)
 - b8 Bildad speaks (25)
 - a9 Job replies (26)
- B Job's speeches (27-31)
 - First speech (27-28)
 - Second speech (29-31)
- B Elihu's speeches (32-27)
 - First speech (32-33)
 - Second speech (34)
 - Third speech (35)
 - Fourth speech (36-37)
- A Job encounters God (38:1-42:6)
 - X God questions Job (38:1-40:2)
 - Y Job answers (40:3-50)
 - X God questions Job (40:6-41:34)
 - Y Job answers (42;1-6)
- Epilogue (42:7-17)
 - A Job's friends are judged (42:7-11)
 - B Job is blessed (42:12-17)

PSALMS

At the centre of the Bible is the book of Psalms which serves as hymn book and liturgical manual for the worship of Israel. The book is a collection of songs, prayers and poems intended for personal and public worship.

Description

Most of the psalms carry titles which placed at the beginning of a psalm either a v1 in HB or superscript in OT.

- These titles provide information about author, historical background, melody and cultic (worship) use.
- When we read and study the psalms we should pay attention to this information because it helps us to properly interpret the psalm.

Authors of Psalms

Many people think that David is the author of the book. While many psalms may be traced to David, there are several authors named in individual psalms and there are also psalms with no author mentioned. The names we do have and the psalms they may have written are listed below.

- David – 73
- Asaph – 12
- Sons of Korah – 11
- Jeduthun – 4
- Solomon – 2
- Heman, Ethan, and Moses – 1

There is considerable debate as to whether these names are actual names of authors. Some of the main arguments are these

- Most modern scholars do not think these were authors' names but say the psalms were attributed to these names.
- Some of the psalms are more about content grouping, in two ways.
 - By name of authors (42-49 as psalms of the 'sons of Korah').
 - By cultic function (120-134 as 'Songs of ascents'; 93-99 as 'Enthronement psalms').
- The book's Hebrew name is *Tehillim*, which means 'songs of joy', and the book moves from laments and complaints to praise and joy (compare Pss 2-7 and 145-150). This seems to indicate a theological or liturgical intent.

Types of Psalms

Those who read the psalms today tend to think of them as belonging to one big collection of poems. The reality is far more complex. What we have in this book are poems belonging to many types or genres. The most common ones are described below.

- Hymn (*Tehillim* or *Hallel*). This is the characteristic genre (type) and is praise oriented (e.g., Pss 100; 118; 147-150).
- Laments. These are songs of disorientation, abandonment, distress, pain, and suffering. They tend to follow a sevenfold structure of invocation, pleas to God for help, complaints, confession of sin/ assertion of innocence, imprecation, confidence in God and blessing or praise (e.g., Ps 28)

- Imprecation. This is a type of prayer where the worshipper calls upon God to carry out vengeance on his or her behalf (e.g., Ps 67).
- Thanksgiving (*Todah*). Such psalms are expression of gratitude to something God has done (e.g., Pss 106; 136).
- Confidence. This type of psalm is an expression of trust in God's power and providence (e.g., Ps 11).
- Confession. The psalmic response to sin is confession (e.g., Ps 51).
- Petition. God's people often turn to God to ask for help or something else. This type of psalm deals with petition (e.g., Ps 20).
- Remembrance. A psalm can also be a call to remember the works of God (e.g., Ps 78).
- Wisdom. One factor in placing Psalms among the wisdom books has to do with the presence of wisdom psalms in the book (e.g., Pss 1; 119).
- Royal or Kingship. This type of psalm celebrates God as king (e.g., Ps 24).
- Enthronement. Such psalms speak of God on his throne (Pss 93-99).
- Pilgrim Psalms. This is a collection of relatively short songs apparently intended for use by pilgrim on their way to Jerusalem for the great feasts (Pss 120-134).
- Special liturgical use. A psalm is sometimes intended for one particular worship occasion such as Sabbath worship (Ps 92).

Types of Parallelisms

Since the psalms were written in poetry, it is helpful to understand how such poetry works.

- Hebrew poetry is based largely on parallelism. This distinguishes it from other forms of poetry.
- Parallelism is the structure where two or more line run concurrently, adversely or some other way.

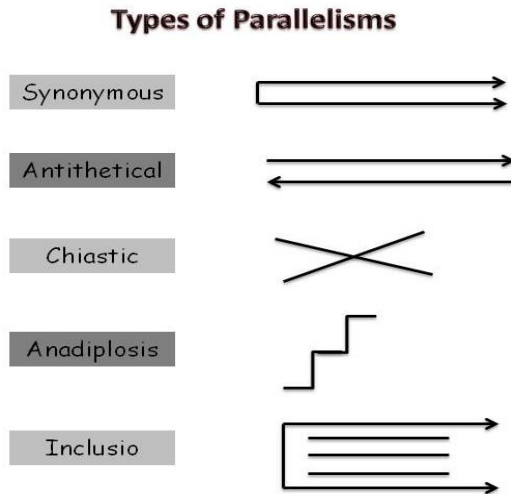
There are several types of parallelisms and the following is a list of the more common ones.

- Synonymous. This is where two line run concurrently and the two line complement each other and should be understood as one thought. Example, 'may Yahweh answer you in a day of trouble // may the name of Jacob's God protect you' (Ps 20:1)
- Antithetical. Sometimes two lines run against each other but still form a pair. This type is employed freely in Proverbs and is the simplest to

identify because it has the conjunction ‘but’ between the lines. Example, ‘they collapse and fall but we rise and stand firm’ (Ps 20:8).

- Chiasmic. This is a form unique to Semitic literature and comprises two lines that crisscross each other while forming a complementary pair, forming an a-b-b-a pattern. Example, ‘(a) he will send you help (b) from the Sanctuary (b) from Zion (a) he will support you’ (Ps 20:2).
- Anadiplosis (Staircase). When several lines repeat but also build up on each other’s thought in a crescendo manner, we are looking at a staircase parallelism. Example, ‘give Yahweh, you heavenly beings, // give Yahweh glory and strength // give Yahweh the glory due his name’ (Ps 29:1-2). Notice the common and different elements.
- Inclusio (Envelope). Sometimes a thought at the beginning of a poem is repeated at the very end with several lines in between. This is an inclusio and a very good example is Ps 150, ‘Hallelu Yah . . . Hallelu Yah’.

Figure 7: Parallelism Types

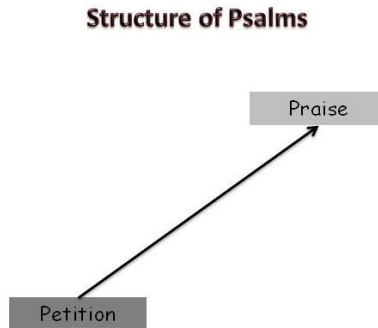


Arrangement of Materials

The materials in the Psalms may be viewed in two ways, either in terms of discrete collections or as thought progression in the book. The two figures below illustrate the two possibilities.

- Book I 3:2-41:14 complaint – Amen, Amen
- Book II 42:2-72:19 petition – Amen, Amen
- Book III 73:2-89:53 petition – Amen, Amen
- Book IV 90:1-106:48 assurance/petition – Amen, Hallelujah
- Book V 107:1-150:6 praise – Hallelujah

Figure 8: Psalms Structure



Pilgrim Psalms

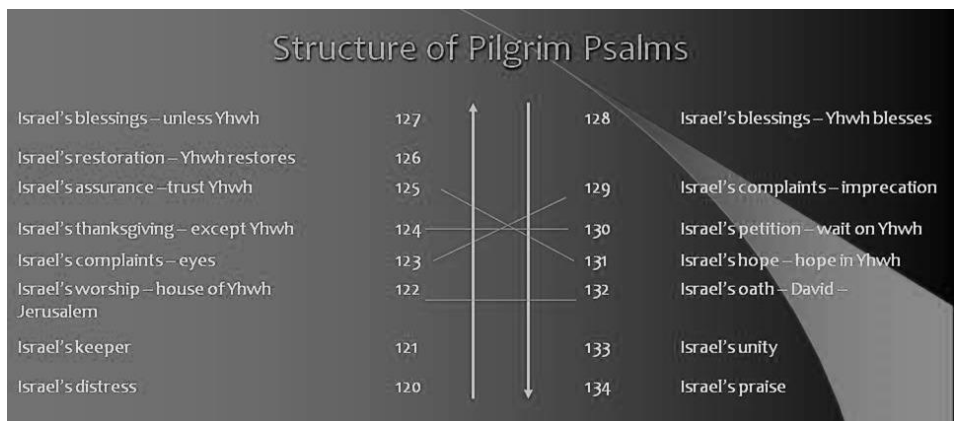
Psalms 120-134 comprise a set of psalms commonly called Pilgrim Psalms.

- They are songs that apparently were sung by Israel’s pilgrim on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate a great feast such as the Passover.
- They distinguish themselves from the rest of the book in two ways.
- First, the Pilgrim psalms have a unique superscript, *shir hamma’alot* in Hebrew.
- *Shir hamma’alot* is a problematic expression even though it is usually translated as ‘song of ascents’. Its precise meaning is elusive but various suggestions have been made.
 - According to Philo, Jewish philosopher at about the time of Jesus, the expression refers to the individual’s ascent to God.
 - Origen, the great 2nd-3rd cent Christian bishop of Alexandria, says this refers to the soul’s pilgrimage back to God.
 - For Augustine of Hippo (4th-5th cent) the expression addresses a Christian’s spiritual pilgrimage.

- The Jewish Midrash claims that these were songs sung by the Jewish exiles returning to Jerusalem.
- The renown 11th-12th cent Jewish rabbi, Ibn Ezra, suggested that the expression provides a metrical or poetic structure to the collection and is sung in increasing pitch.
- It has been suggested that the 15 songs equal the 15 steps of the Temple on which Levites sang during the festivals.
- These are songs of pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the festivals. This is the most likely scenario.

The Pilgrim Psalms exhibit a unique structure illustrated in the diagram below. The central point of the songs is the thanksgiving-petition nexus of Pss 124 and 130.

Figure 9: Pilgrim Psalms



PROVERBS

Like the book of Psalms, the book of Proverbs is also mistakenly believed to have been written by one person, King Solomon. While many proverbs are attributed to Solomon, he is not the only writer as evidenced below.

Authorship

The listing below shows that several persons are attributed with materials in the book.

- A group called ‘the wise’ (22:17; 24:23).
- Agur (30:1).
- King Lemuel (31:1).
- King Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1).
- Some sections list no author (1:8-9:18; 31:10-31).

Date

It is virtually impossible to date the book of Proverbs.

- Solomon’s proverbs may be dated to the 10th cent BC but the other proverbs cannot be dated with any certainty.
- This is made even more difficult the complete lack of information about some of the other individuals who are named in the book.

Outline of the book

The structure of Proverbs can also be viewed in two ways, either by subject heading or as a concentric pattern (see below).

- Preamble (1:1-7)
- Discourses on Wisdom (1:8-9:18)
- Solomon’s proverbs (10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27)
- Sayings of ‘the wise’ (22:17-24:34)
- Sayings of Agur (30)
- Sayings of King Lemuel (31:1-9)
- Poem to the Perfect Woman (31:10-31)

A	1-9	Proverbs of Solomon, son of David
B	10:1-22:16	Proverbs of Solomon
C	22:17-24:22	Sayings of wisemen
D	24:23-34	More sayings
B	25-29	Proverbs of Solomon
C	30:1-9	Sayings of Agur
D	30:10-33	Sayings of unnamed authors
C	31:1-9	Sayings of Lemuel
D	31:10-31)	Sayings of unnamed authors

ECCLESIASTES

In Hebrew, the book is called Qohelet, but is known to Christians by its Greek name, Ecclesiastes. This is the most philosophical book of the OT and makes for rather challenging reading.

Name

The Hebrew name Qohelet may mean either 'teacher' or 'preacher'. Its precise meaning is difficult to ascertain.

Date and Authorship

There are three views concerning the date and authorship of Qohelet.

- Traditional. This view holds Solomon as the author and dates the book to the 10th cent BC. This is based on the book's internal claim (1:1-2).
- Critical. For critical scholarship, Solomon is not the author. In fact the author is unknown. The book is dated to the 3rd cent BC, based largely on the style and language of the book.
- Alternative. A third view has been proposed which acknowledges that the author is unknown. This view maintains there are many things in the book which do not fit Solomon. Furthermore, there are two voices in the book, Qohelet and an unnamed voice. It is been suggested that the unnamed voice is perhaps the author of the book. Whatever the case may be, the date of the book is elusive.

Structure of the Book

Qohelet's structure is a basic three part arrangement as indicated below in an A-B-A pattern.

A Prologue (1:1-11): refers to Qohelet in the 3rd person; introduces the main ideas of the book

B Qohelet's Monologue (1:12-12:8): primarily an autobiographical reflection on the meaning of life

A Epilogue (12:8-14): refers to Qohelet in the 3rd person

Qohelet's enigma

The author's self-identification is arguably the most perplexing question about the book. Who and what is Qohelet?

- The name is derived from the Hebrew noun *qahal* which means assembly.
- Qohelet is someone who serves, convenes or speaks in *qahal*, perhaps as leader or member of *qahal*.
- Qohelet however is feminine and not the expected masculine *qohel*.
- The best conclusion appears to be that Qohelet is the convener of *qahal*.

'Hebel Habelim'

The book's primary conceptual framework revolves around the phrase *hebel habelim*. The precise meaning of the phrase is difficult to ascertain as the various translations suggest.

- Fox suggests 'absurd'.
- Murphy says it is some sort of code.
- Davidson suggests 'futile'.
- Others translate it as 'meaningless'.
- HCSB renders the phrase as 'absolute futility'

The phrase *hebel habelim* comes from the word *hebel* whose literal meaning is 'vapour'. The phrase carries various metaphoric meanings and *hebel habelim* is in superlative construction. It has several functions in the book.

- It forms an inclusio for the entire book appearing in 1:2 and 12:8.
- It expresses Qohelet's pessimism.
- It serves as Qohelet's code against secular thought.
- It is employed by Qohelet who plays the devil's advocate in the book.
 - *Hebel habelim* reflects a spectrum of thought ranging from total pessimism to absolute joy.

Futility! Futility!

The message of the book, embodied in the phrase *hebel habelim*, is that life without God is futile, empty and meaningless. Everything in life is futile (1:1-11).

- Wisdom is futile (1:12-18)
- Pleasure is futile (2:1-3)
- Possessions are futile (2:4-11)
- Work is futile (2:18-26)

- Wealth is futile (4:4-16)

How does one live with this futility? Qohelet suggests four things.

- Time Travel! Eccl 3:1-15 teaches us about the significance of time.
 - Time's dual nature (3:1-8).
 - God controls time (3:10-11).
 - Cycle of time (3:14-15).

Therefore, we should maximise the time we have (3:12) .

- The Danger of Polarities. Eccl 7:15-22 warns us of the polarities of life and how these will affect life.
 - Life's commonality (7:15).
 - Avoid extremes (7:16-17).
 - Live in the middle (7:18).

Therefore, we should live wisely (7:19).

- Confronting Finality. Eccl 9:1-10 calls on us to confront the most inevitable fact of life, death itself.
 - Common destiny (9:2)
 - Live happily (9:7-9)
 - Live powerfully (9:10)

In the face of such finality we are urged to enjoy life as much as we can (11:8).

- Carpe diem (Seize the Day)! Eccl 11:1-12:14 tells us that we must learn to live life to the hilt, to avail ourselves of every opportunity that comes our way.
 - Live enterprisingly (11:1)
 - Live generously (11:2) – Luke 6:38
 - Live diligently (11:6)
 - Live joyfully (11:7-10)
 - Live godly lives (12:1)

Therefore, the best way is to live in the presence of God (12:13-14).

SONG OF SONGS

Popularly known as Song of Solomon, the book's proper name is Song of Songs.

- The Hebrew name, *shir hashirim*, connotes that this is the best song of all.

- This is the only book in the Bible which addresses the relationship between a man and a woman, especially within the bond of marriage.
- The explicitly romantic (even sexual) language of the book led the ancient rabbis to rule that only those over 30 years of age should be allowed to read the book.
- Through most of Christian history, the book was simply treated as an allegory of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the church.

What Type of Book?

Those who read Song, immediately face a dilemma about genre. The question is, 'What type of book is this?' there are certain possibilities.

- Drama. Song may be considered a dramatic narrative or love story whose primary characters are somewhat fuzzy.
 - It is a love story between Shlomo (Solomon) and a shepherd girl named Shulamit (Shulamite). This is the love story of a king and a commoner.
 - It is a story regarding a love triangle between Solomon, Shulamit and an unnamed shepherd. While we encounter mostly two voices, there is a third one in the background.
- Love song. The book is clearly a collection of love songs (poems) extolling the love that a man and a woman have for each other.
- Hybrid view. This is a collection of love songs but the songs reveal a story/plot line from courtship to wedding to post-wedding events. The wedding scene in the middle of the book lends credence to this possibility.

Authorship and Date

It has been traditionally maintained that Solomon is the author of the Song.

- While Solomon is a good candidate, there is no clear internal or external evidence for that.
- If Solomon wrote the book, then it may be dated to the 10th cent BC.

Interpretation of the Song

As earlier stated, the interpretation of the Song is a highly vexing issue, driven by the nature of the material we find in the book. We can summarise the interpretational approaches into two types.

- For centuries the Song was read as an ‘allegory’ by both Jews and Christians. It was viewed as a song about the love between Yahweh and Israel (Jewish view) or between Christ and Church (Christian view).
- Today it is read more naturally as love song about man-woman relationship.

Structure of the Book

The Song exhibits a concentric arrangement whose centre pertains to the invitation to and response of love. The book reaches its climax with a profound definition of love (SoS 8:6-7). Below is a concentric pattern of the Song.

A Song (1:2-2:2)	Beloved’s desire for her Lover
B Song (2:3-17)	Beloved describes her Lover and belongingness
C Song (3:1-4:15)	Dream I – Lover describes his Beloved
D Song (4:16)	Beloved’s invitation
D Song (5:1)	Lover’s response
C Song (5:2-7:9)	Dream II – Lover describes his Beloved
B Song (7:10-8:5)	Beloved describes her Lover and belongingness
A Song (8:6-14)	Beloved’s desire for her Lover

Conceptual Framework

The chief conceptual strand of the book is the journey of love depicted in the words of Shulamit.

- The first stage of love is about possession and Shulamit depicts her lover as someone who belongs to her. She says, ‘My love is mine and I am his’ (2:16).
- After the wedding scene, her understanding undergoes a subtle transformation. At this point she says, ‘I am my loves’ and my love is mine’ (6:3). She has moved from possessiveness to belongingness.
- The final stage reveals a truly elevated understanding about love as Shulamit asserts that ‘love is as strong as death, ardent love as unrelenting as *Sh’ol*. Love is a fiery flame, a flame of Yah’ (8:6).
- The last phrase uses the shortened poetic form of the divine name Yahweh.
- The verse tells us that love is from God.

- Because of this understanding, Shulamit tells her friends (three times), 'do not stir up or awaken love until the appropriate time/until it is ready' (2:7; 3:5; 8:4).
- She understands that if love is from God, he is the one who decides the schedule of love and attempting to hasten that process may bring nothing but pain.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is the primary question of Job?
- Who wrote the book of Job?
- Explain the structure of Job.
- List the authors of the psalms and provide an example of each author's work.
- List and explain the different types of psalms.
- Explain what parallelism is. What are the different types of parallelism in the HB?
- What *does shir hamma'alot* in Pss 120-34 refer to?
- Discuss the authorship and structure of the book of Proverbs.
- Who wrote Qohelet?
- What does the phrase *hebel habelim* as used by Qohelet mean?
- According to Qohelet, how should we deal with the futility of life?
- What type of book is Song of Songs?
- How would you explain the message of the Song?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- What perspective will you embrace should you face a situation like Job? Do we need to understand the reason behind every suffering we face? Why?
- As the structure of the book of Psalms indicates, a petition should end in praise of God? What should we do in order to move from petition to praise? Is praise meaningful if we do not go through suffering and petition?
- How should wisdom guide us in our pursuance of daily activities and dreams?

- If God decides the schedule of love, do you not think that a person requires faith and patience in order to follow the counsel in Song of Songs about love?

Chapter 5

THE PROPHETS

The prophets of Israel consist of two groups, writing and non-writing prophets. The chart below provides a listing of all the prophets listed in HB. The dating of the prophets is not an exact science and there are some dates we cannot confirm. However, we can be somewhat certain of the centuries in which they lived and worked.

Table 5: Israel's Prophets

Prophet	Date (BC)	Location	Biblical Reference
Elijah	875-850	Tishbe	1 Kgs 17- 2Kgs 2
Micaiah	856	Samaria	1 Kgs 22; 2 Chron 18
Elisha	855-800	Abel Meholah	1 Kgs 19; 2 Kgs 2-9; 13
Joel	c.800	Jerusalem	Joel
Jonah	786-746	Gath Heper	2 Kgs 14; Jonah
Hosea	786-746	Israel	Hosea
Amos	760-750	Tekoa	Amos
Isaiah	740-698	Jerusalem	2 Kgs 19-20; Isaiah
Micah	735-710	Moreshath Gath	Jer 26; Micah
Obed	733	Samaria	2 Chron 28
Nahum	686-612	Elkosh	Nahum
Zephaniah	640-621	?	Zephaniah
Jeremiah	626-584	Anathoth	2 Cron 38; Jeremiah
Huldah	621	Jerusalem	2 Kgs 22; 2 Chron 34
Habakkuk	608-598	?	Habakkuk
Daniel	604-536	Babylon	Daniel
Ezekiel	593-571	Babylon	Ezekiel
Obadiah	580	Jerusalem	Obadiah
Haggai	520	Jerusalem	Ezra 5; 6; Haggai
Zechariah	520-514	Jerusalem	Ezra 5; 6; Zechariah
Malachi	500-450	Jerusalem	Malachi

DESIGNATIONS FOR PROPHETS

In our world today, the term 'prophet' has a very definite ring. For us, prophets are some sort of clairvoyants who can predict the future. This view stands in sharp contrast to the biblical concept of prophet. By examining the various designations for prophets we may be able to better comprehend the biblical concept.

Minor Designations for Prophets

There are certain designations which are significant to this discussion but play only a minor role.

- *Ro'eh* and *khozeh*. These labels are used 12 times and 18 times respectively. Both terms are participles (e.g., 'seeing is believing') from verbs which are virtually synonymous. They are often translated as 'seer' and enjoyed popular standing during different periods, *ro'eh* in Samuel's time, *khozeh* in David's time. The nominal form of *khozeh* is *khazon* which means 'vision'. The term simply means that they were discerners of God's will.
- *'Ish 'Elohim*. The phrase literally means 'man of God' (1 Kgs 13:1). It is applied to various prophets, in Deut 33:1 to Moses, in 1 Sam 9:6 to Samuel and in 2 Kgs 4:9 to Elisha.
- *'Ebed Yahweh*. This designation means 'servant of Yahweh/the Lord' and may be seen in two examples: (1) 1 Kgs 8:56 'his servant Moses'; (2) 2 Kgs 9:7 'my servants the prophets . . . the lord's servants'; and Dan 9:6 'your servants the prophets.'

Chief Designation for Prophets

The chief designation for prophet is *nabi'*, which outranks all other labels.

- Etymology. The word is used 300 times as noun throughout the BH. The verb *naba'* is also used 300 times. The root idea is 'to bubble up' and is related to the Akkadian word *nabu* meaning 'to speak' or 'one spoken to'. The Aramaic equivalence *naba'a* means to announce.'
- OT usages. In Exod 7:1, it means one who spoke for another. In Deut 18:15-22, the task of a prophet is to speak God's words. In Amos 7:12-16, a prophet speak God's message. A *nabi'* is a person who speaks for God.

- Relation to *ro'eh* and *khozeh*. The basic difference between the three designations has to do with receiving of revelation and proclamation. Whereas *ro'eh* and *khozeh* emphasise 'reception of message', *nabi'* stresses 'proclamation of message.' There is no distinction of office. 'The pith of Hebrew prophecy is not prediction or social reform but the declaration of divine will' (Gottwald, 2009, 277).

THE PROPHETIC CALL

Prophets see themselves as people whom God has called or chosen. This concept may involve one or all of the following factors.

- The prophets have a special call. The office is not by inheritance because each prophet is called by God, is called for a specific mission and has a divinely appointed task.
- The prophetic call is often given in connection with an outstanding experience. Moses meets God at a burning bush (Exod 3). Isaiah has a life-threatening vision of God (Isa 6). Ezekiel sees an incredible flying throne on which God sits (Ezek 3).
- The prophetic call frequently involves some preparatory experience. Moses receives miraculous credentials. Isaiah is purified by burning coal. Ezekiel has to eat a scroll.

FUNCTION OF PROPHETS

A major part of learning about the prophets concerns the manner in which they carry out their tasks. This has to do with both their methodology and sense of mission.

Methodology

The methodology of the prophets involves one or more of the following.

- Preaching. Prophetic preaching addresses emotion and will and stirs reaction and response (see Hos 4:1; Jer 2:2). The main task in preaching is to urge people to live in harmony with God.
- Contact with Key Individuals. Prophets urge leaders to follow God and work with key persons such as kings. For instance, Samuel to Saul, Nathan to David, Ahijah to Jeroboam, Elijah to Ahab, Isaiah to Ahaz and

Hezekiah, Jeremiah to Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar.

- Symbolic Actions. Prophets also perform certain symbolic acts or instruct others to do so. Examples of these symbolic actions are: Elisha asking King Jehoash to shoot arrows to claim victory from God (2 Kgs 13:14ff.); Isaiah employing clothes and sandals to signify the fate of Egypt (Isa 20:2ff.); Jeremiah and the clay pot to address the fate of Judah (Jer 19:1ff.); Ezekiel's strange actions to picture the siege of Jerusalem (Ezek 4:1ff.); and Hosea's marriage to Gomer to teach about Israel's unfaithfulness.
- Object lessons. Prophets also use real life analogies, objects or items that illustrated truth. For instance, Jeremiah (1:11-12) uses 'a rod of an almond tree.' Almond in Hebrew means 'vigilant' and Jeremiah uses this analogy to remind Israel of God's vigilance.

Mission

The mission of the prophets is not so much to tell the future but to do one of three things.

- Reformation. Prophets are reformers rather than innovators. They are not inventors of ethical monotheism but are sent primarily to turn people back to God's law, the basis of their reformation work.
- Re-defining Implications of Law. Prophets do not teach the law per se; they never state it in precept. Their mission is to urge conformity to the law both on social and religious levels. They seldom refer to the law by name but proclaim the message contained in the law, the spirit of the law.

'Everything in their outlook was grounded in Israel's relationship to Yahweh, in the persistent preaching of religious meaning into every facet of life' (Gottwald, 2009, 276).

- Testers, Watchmen, and Intercessors.
 - An unusual part of the prophetic mission is to test the conduct and activity of the people, to serve as the nation's spiritual barometer (Jer 6:27).
 - They serve as watchmen to point out wrong conduct and warn of impending judgement (Ezek 3:17).

- They serve as intercessors for people as in the cases of Elijah for widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 13:6; 1 Kgs 17), Elisha for the Shunammite woman (2 Kgs 4) and Daniel for Judah (Dan 9:17ff.).

PROPHETIC LANGUAGE

The prophets have a unique way of conveying their messages. Their communication techniques are rather intriguing.

Symbolic Language

Prophets often use highly symbolic language and we should carefully examine the manner in which they play with words and metaphors to convey their thoughts. The sample below pictures the rich use of literary techniques employed by the prophets.

- Hyperbole. This is when more is said than is literally meant to drive home a point as in Isa 34:2-4.
- Gradual ascent. This technique involves an increase in sense in successive sentences as in Isa 1:4.
- Change of noun. Sometimes a noun is replaced with a related noun for effect. For example, in Isa 33:17, 'a people deeper of lip' refers to speech and in Isa 23:1, 'ships of Tarshish' refers to the people and not ships.
- Transfer. This happens when an exchange of one idea for a related idea occurs. For instance, Isa 40:5 uses 'flesh' instead of people and Isa 43:22 uses 'call upon' for worship.
- Two-for-one. This is a technique called *hendiadys* where two words are used but one thing meant. Isa 1:13 literally reads 'iniquity and assembly which means evil assembly.
- Allegory. This is an extended metaphor as in Isa 5:1-7 'vineyard', Ezek 17 'two eagles and a vine' and Ezek 23 'two sisters'. In all three cases it is the nation of Judah which is spoken of.
- Parable. A parable is a comparison in the form of a continued simile (see Ezek 20:49).
- Irony. When a thought is expressed in a form that convey its opposite, a literary type of sarcasm, we have irony (see Isa 2:10 and 57:13).

- Anthropomorphism. Prophets often ascribe human attributes to God. For example, Isa 30:27 speaks of God's 'lips' (using human body parts) and Isa 1:14 refers to God's 'hate' (a very human emotion).
- Rhetorical questions. These questions have an inbuilt answer. The question contains its own answer and does not wait for an answer (see Isa 1:12; 5:4; 50:2).
- Types. This technique involves a person, thing or event to depict some future counterpart or fulfilment. Isaiah employs the types of Servant and Immanuel to predict the coming saviour or messiah. Likewise, Jeremiah uses Branch as a type of the messiah. Daniel refers to the little horn as a type of the coming evil one or anti-Christ.

'The Word of the Lord'

Prophetic receives its certainty in the conviction that the message is from God.

- Expressions like "this is what the Lord says," 'the mouth of the Lord has spoken,' and 'declares the Lord' are used again and again as validation of authenticity (see Jer 1:4; 2:1; Mal 1:1).
- Prophets also believe in the efficacy of their message as the word of God (see Isa 55:11; Ezek 12:25).

Prophetic Perfect

The certainty of prophetic preaching even affects grammar.

- The so-called prophetic perfect describes future events as if already taken place to emphasise the certainty of the events.
- Prophets employ the perfect state of the verb (the verb of completed action) to underline the certainty of the prophecy. For instance, Isa 9:6 literally reads 'a child has been born' even though the prophecy is centuries away from fulfilment.

CRITICAL ISSUES

In recent decades, studies of prophets and prophetic material have unearthed several critical issues and different approaches have been developed.

Recent Approaches: Who were the prophets?

Many scholars have proposed different approaches to the study of prophetic material. While a comprehensive survey is not essential, a summary one is helpful.

- Sociological perspective. This view asserts that prophets derived their authority from society as the audience. The concept of divine call is not taken into account and prophets are defined by society's recognition. Their function affects the life and behaviour of and their authority may alter over time but continue a particular social function.
- Historical context. This approach looks at Israelite prophecy as part of an international movement. Other ancient Near East societies show prophetic phenomena, especially Semitic societies.
 - Old Babylonian texts from Mari report revelations received and provide insight into divine intermediaries.
 - Neo-Assyrian texts include collections of prophetic revelations.
 - Etymological cognates of *nabi* occur at Mari and Emar (Syria).
 - Aramaic Balaam document (Jordan) is an early Canaanite prophetic text.
 - The Egyptian story of Wen-Amun describes the hero's encounter with ecstatic activity among the Phoenicians.
 - Evidence exists of 'divine speaking' from Asia Minor (Turkey) in a list of messages from the gods compiled by Hittite king Mursilis II.
- Cultural anthropology. Another approach compares Israelite prophets with parallels in modern societies, such as African societies and North American Indian 'prophets'.
- Linguistic studies. Studies of the verb *n-b-*' reveal that it occurs in two verbal stems, Niphal (passive) and Hithpael (reflexive). In Niphal, it designates prophetic speech, whereas in Hithpael, it designates societal characteristic prophetic behaviour (e.g. Saul in 1 Sam 10:11-12).
- Archaeology. Archaeology has made contributions to understanding Amos, Hosea, Micah and Jeremiah. Assyrian urban archaeology has impacted Isa 5:8-10. The Kuntillet 'Arjud inscriptions uncover religious views in the same period as Hos 1:2. The *m-r-z-h* mentioned in Jer 16:5 and Amos 6:7 appears to be a funeral service. Seals and bullae carry names from the book of Jeremiah.

- Composition issues. Most of the prophetic texts are poetic. As preachers, the messages were first delivered in oral form. The question raised is, 'Is any material actually written by the prophet?' Some deny that prophets wrote anything, while others attribute the document completely to the prophet. What is original and what is secondary? Is anything supplemented or altered? What happens over a period of transmission? This approach is referred to as tradition history.
- Redaction criticism. The study of the process of compilation, editing and composition from existing sources is called redaction criticism. This approach seeks to recover the reuse of earlier texts and impacts certain books in particular.
 - Isaiah. Christians believe that the entire book was written by the 8th century prophet. Most scholars see multiple authors from several centuries. Isaiah of Jerusalem, 8th century, is responsible for chs 1-39. Deutero (Second)-Isaiah, chs 40-55, is an unknown author from the exile period. Trito (Third)-Isaiah, chs 56-66, is also an unknown author from the exilic or post-exilic period.
 - Similar work has been carried out on Jeremiah and the minor prophets.

Application

A more organic approach has taken prophetic studies in a different direction.

- Following the lead of Walter Brueggemann prophetic texts are now applied to the full spectrum of theological disciplines such as evangelism, pastoral theology and preaching.
- Liberation theologians apply the messages of the prophets to the socio-economic and political spheres, while mainline evangelicals have also joined this endeavour.
- Feminists have provided insights into the important role played by women and the disadvantages that they face in everyday life. This has added a feminine dimension to the Bible.

Christian surveys of the writing prophets have always separated the major prophets (four of them) from the minor ones (12 in total). This is a somewhat artificial division and has little to do with the lengths of the books. However, it is a useful way to categorise the prophets.

ISAIAH

Isaiah is the first book in the prophets list. He has been variously called 'Prince of Prophets' and 'Gospel Prophet.' He is the first of the major prophets.

Authorship Theories

Very few issues in OT studies have received as much attention as the authorship of Isaiah. The two opposing views are briefly discussed below.

- Multiple (Two/Three) authorship. This is the modern view which appeared in the 18th cent and is held by critical or liberal scholars. The arguments used by these scholars involve the following.
 - Change of theological perspective after ch 40, salvation rather than judgement, the Servant of the Lord instead of a Messianic King and the remnant in exile rather than in Jerusalem. From ch 40 there are missing themes such as Davidic kingship, prophetic rebukes, Assyria, judgement threats and oppression of the poor.
 - Change in literary style after ch 40 which is mostly poetry. There is also different poetic style and vocabulary.
 - Reference to Cyrus, centuries before his appearance, has led to the rejection of predictive prophecy.
- Single author. This is the traditional Jewish and Christian view and is still maintained by conservative scholars. The author is the 8th cent BC prophet, Isaiah. The principal arguments to support this view are as follows.
 - Internal evidence. Isa 1:1; 2:1; 13:1 assign the book to the prophet.
 - NT witness. All parts of Isaiah are quoted in the NT and only one author is named.
 - Long held tradition. This view can be seen in Ben Sirach (2nd cent BC), the Septuagint (2nd cent BC) and the Dead Sea Scrolls (time of Jesus). There is no manuscript authority for a break at ch 40.
 - Literary similarities. The Servant Poems complement the Messianic concept of the early chapters. The streaming of nations is spoken of in chs 2, 55 and 66. The epithet, Holy One of Israel, occurs throughout the book. Important word pairs (heaven-earth, righteousness-justice) also occur through the whole book.

Explaining Differences

How do we account for the evident differences?

- Change of subject matter can drive an author to deliberately change style and language.
- Author's literary and theological development may also account for the changes.
- Isaiah's long and complex ministry would have given rise to development in writing style.
- Authorship intentionality probably accounts for a large proportion of the differences. Every author knows the necessity of adapting style to content. (The writing style in this textbook differs from my earlier textbooks but the differences are intentional.)

Historical Background

Isaiah tells us about the period in which he lived and he does this through the lens of various kings.

- Uzziah. Isaiah began his ministry in the year of Uzziah's death (740 BC) who was Judah's most successful king. Judah reached its zenith during his reign.
- Jotham. He continued the prosperous reign of his father and is the fourth successive godly king. He also won a major victory against the Ammonites.
- Ahaz. This king did not follow God. Instead he made images to Baal, practised infant sacrifices, built and worshipped in high places, intentionally damaged sacred vessels in the Temple and closed the Temple doors. He followed a pro-Assyrian policy and was involved in the Syro-Ephraimite War. He had to contend with revolt by Edom which led to the loss of southern trade routes. Invasion by the Philistines led to the loss of several cities.
- Hezekiah. He was a God-fearing man who practised an anti-Assyrian policy. He carried out reform and revival, had the Temple repaired and re-opened the Temple doors. Because Hezekiah joined the anti-Assyrian coalition, he was invaded by Sennacherib. During the siege of Jerusalem, God promised help through Isaiah. Egypt came to Judah's help but Hezekiah's rule ended with the Babylon debacle (see Isa 36-39).

- Manasseh. This king returned to Ahaz's evil ways and killed all who opposed him. Jewish tradition maintains that he ordered Isaiah sawed in half.

Life and ministry

Isaiah is one of the longest lasting prophets.

- Isaiah's ministry runs from 740 BC (see ch 6) to at least 680 BC, about 60 years. It is the longest continuous prophetic ministry.
- Family. His father is Amoz and his wife is called 'prophetess'(8:3). His two sons are Shearjashub and Mahershalalhashbaz (the longest name in the Bible).
- Royal connections. Jewish traditions say Amoz was a brother of King Amaziah, making Isaiah a cousin of King Uzziah.
- Prince of prophets. Isaiah's unusual abilities as a writer have earned him the title 'Prince of Prophets.' The high number of messianic prophecies has led to another title, 'Gospel Prophet.' Isaiah displays a broad knowledge of the world, his literary ability stands unsurpassed in the OT, his book contains the most developed vocabulary in the OT and he excels in figures of speech. All this point to the fact that he had the best possible education. More importantly, he displays outstanding courage despite preaching unpopular messages.

The Book

The book of Isaiah is a mini Bible with 66 chapters sectioned off into 39 and 27. It possesses an exceptionally rich vocabulary, is mostly poetic in form and is quoted 21 times in the NT. Its usage in the NT is surveyed below.

- Prophet of the NT. Isaiah is frequently mentioned by name in the NT.
- Isaiah is quoted two times more than the other major prophets, and more than all minor prophets put together.
- Isaiah is quoted, paraphrased, alluded to and echoed throughout the NT.
- About 56 of Isaiah's 66 chapters are represented, 150 times from chs 1-39, 168 times from chs 40-55 and 89 times from chs 56-66.

Structure of the Book

There are many suggestions for the structure of the book ranging from envelope to bifid to pendulum to symphonic structures (Fanwar, 2008, 79-83). The latter seems to fit the book best.

- Chapters 1-35. This is the first movement, a complex work containing several interweaving themes and sub-themes. The movement oscillates between judgement and salvation, contains few closure formulas and climaxes in a hymn of the redeemed (35).
- Chapters 36-39. This is a historical interlude. It is mostly narrative prose and functions as a bridge to the rest of the book. It contains both judgement and salvation but no closure formulas.
- Chapter 40-55. This is the second movement, a crescendo and the longest coherent block of prophecies. The movement only tackles one subject matter, salvation, uses more closure formulas and sustained poetry and climaxes with another hymn of the redeemed (55).
- Chapters 56-66. This is Isaiah's final movement. The finale comprises miscellaneous topics and climaxes with vision of new heavens and new earth. The movement oscillates between and juxtapose judgement and salvation. It also has highest incidence of closure formulas.

JEREMIAH

Jeremiah is the second of the major prophets and the only one credited with two books.

Personal story

The book of Jeremiah is arguably the most autobiographical of the prophet works.

- Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, a priest, from the tribe of Levi and a native of Anathoth.
- He was groomed to become a priest and was called by God at about 20 years of age.
- In ch 11, his hometown plots to kill him.
- In ch 20, he is beaten and put in stockade at the order of Passhur, chief temple officer.
- In ch 26, he is the target of a lynch mob.

- In ch 32, he is confined to house arrest.
- In ch 36, his first manuscript is burnt by King Jehoiakim.
- In 37, he is accused of collaborating with the Babylonians, arrested, beaten and placed in lengthy solitary confinement.
- In ch 38, he is accused of treason and thrown into a mud-filled cistern.
- In ch 43, he is forcefully abducted by his own people and forced into exile in Egypt.

Date of ministry

- Jer 1:2-3 and 25:3 date his ministry to the 13th year of Josiah and 11th year of Zedekiah (627-586 BC).
- Jer 40-44 records his service after exile under Gedeliah (about 580 BC) making about 47 years of ministry.

Background History

- In 605, during the first attack by Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel was taken captive and exported to Babylon.
- In 597, during the second Babylonian attack, King Jehoiachin and Ezekiel were taken captive. Zedekiah was put as king of Judah but rebels.
- In 586, Judah was invaded, the Temple was destroyed, Judah became a Babylonian province and most of the people were taken into exile.

The Book

The book of Jeremiah raises some intriguing and difficult questions as outlined below.

- The LXX (Septuagint) is 2700 words shorter than MT (Hebrew).
- Cave 4 of Qumran contains MSS which agree with LXX.
- MT and LXX have different arrangements of materials.
- Dan 9:12 refers to the 'books' (lit. 'scrolls') of Jeremiah. A probable conclusion is that there are 2 rescensions (collections) of the book.

Structure of the Book

There are two possibilities for the structure of the book based on content and literary styling.

- Content

- Chapter 1 is Jeremiah's call.
- Chapters 2-45 comprise prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem.
- Chapters 46-51 are prophecies against other nations.
- Chapter 52 is a historical appendix.
- Literary Styling. This varies between poetry and prose.
 - Chapters 1-31 combine prose and poetry.
 - Chapters 32-45 are entirely prose.
 - Chapters 46-51 are entirely poetry.
 - Chapter 52 is prose.

LAMENTATIONS

This is Jeremiah's second book but differs markedly from the first one.

- It is extremely short with only 5 chapters.
- It is entirely in poetry and contains some of the most sublime Hebrew poetry.
- It is made up of four acrostic poems plus one non-acrostic poem.
- The acrostic poems follow the Hebrew alphabet where each stanza begins with a separate Hebrew alphabet; all alphabets are in sequence.
- The songs are laments over the fate of Judah and Jerusalem. However, the whole book concludes with a prayer about restoration (Lam 5).

EZEKIEL

Ezekiel is the third of the major prophet books and is one of the least understood books of the OT.

Date

- Ezekiel was taken into exile during Nebuchadnezzar's second invasion of Jerusalem in 597 BC.
- He began his ministry in the 5th year of his exile around 592 BC (1:1).
- His ministry continued until 571 BC (29:17), the 27th year of his exile for a total of about 22 years of ministry.

Background History

- The historical background is similar to that of Jeremiah's.

- This is the period of Babylon's invasion of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- Ezekiel lived during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

Life and Ministry

- Ezekiel's father was Buzi, a priest.
- He arrived in Babylon at about 25 years of age.
- He was married but his wife died 9 years into the exile.
- For most of his life he lived near the city of Tel Abib by the River Kebar.
- He was about 2 years older than Daniel.
- He was about 30 years old when called to be prophet and his primary prophetic tasks pertained to the Jewish exiles.

Ezekiel and Daniel

Ezekiel and Daniel live in Babylon at more or less the same time and their ministries coincided. However, they clearly had different but perhaps complementary missions.

- Ezekiel served Jewish exiles, while Daniel served in the palace court.
- Ezekiel was more of a shepherd, while Daniel was more of an administrator.
- Ezekiel ministered to God's people, while Daniel ministered to non-believers.
- Ezekiel had a preaching ministry, while Daniel did not.
- Ezekiel's ministry occurred during time of Nebuchadnezzar, while Daniel was a prophet until the Persian period.

The Book

The book of Ezekiel is often considered a fairly secure book.

- It is recognised as genuine even by critical scholars.
- It has many unusual elements (vision of God).
- It contains numerous allegories.
- It records large numbers of strange acts (10) by the prophet.
- It is written mostly in prose with little poetry (mostly between chs 15-32).
- The Hebrew of the book is obscure and difficult.
- Ezekiel uses more symbols than other prophets.

- The book tells more about the manner of inspiration than other prophets.
- It has clear chronological sequence.
- Ezekiel is written autobiographically throughout.

Structure of the Book

The book's structure is a simple three-part arrangement.

- A Prophecies about fall of Jerusalem (chs 1-24)
- B Prophecies against foreign nations (chs 25-32)
- C Prophecies about Israel's restoration (chs 33-48)

Problem

The principal difficulty in the book concerns the interpretation of chs 40-48. This lengthy segment is variously viewed as a figurative analogy for the Church or a partly literal meaning for the millennial kingdom or simply a conditional prophecy.

DANIEL

The book of Daniel belongs to a literary genre called apocalyptic. A quick detour into this type of literature is helpful.

Apocalyptic Literature (see Collins, 1998)

- This refers to a genre of revelatory literature which has a narrative framework and whose revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human.
- Such literature discloses transcendent reality that is both temporal and spatial.
- It provides a view of the world that is a source of consolation in the face of distress and invests this worldview with the status of supernatural revelation.
- The genre is attested in Jewish, Christian, Persian and Greco-Roman literature.
- There are two subgenres: (1) Historical apocalypses (e.g., Daniel, Book of Dreams and Apocalypse of Weeks in 1 Enoch, Jubilees, 4 Ezra and 2

Baruch); and (2) Otherworldly journeys (e.g., Book of Watchers, Astronomical Book, Similitudes in 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, 3 Baruch, Testament of Abraham, Apocalypse of Abraham, Apocalypse of Zephaniah and Testament of Levi 2-5).

Date

- Daniel began his ministry around 604 BC.
- He was still ministering as late as 536 BC.
- His ministry lasted for some 69 years but not continuously.

Background history

- Daniel lived through all three exile movements (605, 597 and 586).
- He saw the glory of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar.
- He also witnessed its decline under Belshazzar.
- He saw the fall of Babylon to Cyrus and the first return of the Jews from exile.

Life and Ministry

- Daniel's parents are not named but it is clear he comes from Judah's aristocracy (1:3).
- He was brought to Babylon in 605 BC by Nebuchadnezzar and would have been about 17 years old.
- He received 3 years of education in Babylon after which he was appointed as an advisor to Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel seemed to have gone into retirement from politics during the reign of Belshazzar.
- He was reinstated to high office by the Persians.

The Book

The book of Daniel is one of the most contested books of the OT. The book is written in two languages, Hebrew (chs 1, 8-12) and Aramaic (chs 2-7). The issues to consider are explored below.

- Canonicity. MT assigns it to the Writings, whereas LXX places it among the prophets. Josephus (1st cent AD) follows LXX in assigning Daniel to the prophets.

- Special problems. There are alleged historical inaccuracies in the book, especially concerning the date for Nebuchadnezzar's invasion which is different from Jeremiah's date (1:1 cf Jer 46:2) and the reference to Belshazzar as king of Babylon.
- Composite authorship. Daniel is sometimes given a 2nd cent BC date due to the presence of Greek and Persian loan words which seem to suggest a late date.
- Linguistics. LXX mistranslates words and Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1 shows Daniel's Aramaic is centuries old. Daniel's Hebrew is also old.
- NT Usage. There are five direct quotations from Daniel in the NT which are attributed to Daniel. There are also allusions to the book in the Gospels, Epistles and Revelation.

Despite scholarly attempts to use a late date for Daniel, there are equally compelling reasons to accept the traditional view about author and dating.

Structure of the Book

The structure of Daniel is a double concentric pattern as illustrated below.

- | | |
|---|--|
| A | Daniel in Babylon (ch 1) |
| B | Prophecy about Nations (ch 2) |
| | C Fiery-furnace Persecution (ch 3) |
| | D Nebuchadnezzar's Insanity (ch 4) |
| | D Belshazzar's Downfall (ch 5) |
| | C Lions'-den Persecution (ch 6) |
| B | Prophecy of Nations (ch 7A) |
| X | One Like Son of Man (ch 7B) |
| | Y Horn that Exalts Himself (ch 8) |
| | Z Daniel Prays to God (ch 9) |
| | Z Daniel Meets Man from God (ch 10) |
| | Y King that Exalts Himself (ch 11) |
| X | Michael (ch 12) |

The book may also be viewed in three other ways.

1. Thematic: ch 1 History ➡ ch 6 Prophecy ➡ ch 12
2. Language: ch 1 Hebrew ➡ 2:4 Aramaic ➡ 7:28 Hebrew ➡ ch 12

3. Person Reporting: ch 1 3rd person ↻ ch 6 1st person ↻ ch 12

Daniel's Place in the Canon

- In HB, Daniel is not among the prophets. Why is this so? Possible answers are:
 - The Jews did not accept Daniel as part of the canon until after the contents of the Torah and the Prophets had been fixed.
 - Though called a prophet, Daniel is more a statesman than a prophet; he has prophetic gift but not prophetic office.
- The traditional view of Jews and Christians, including Josephus and Jesus, is that Daniel is canonical.
- The first attack against the authenticity and canonicity of the book was by the philosopher Porphyry (AD 300). This challenge remained dormant until about 200 years ago and is fully revived by the proponents of the higher critical methodology.

HOSEA

Hosea is the first in the list of minor prophets who are also called 'The Twelve' since all 12 books are written in one scroll.

Date

- Hosea dates himself to kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah as well as Jereboam II of Israel.
- Uzziah's reign stretched from about 790 to 740 BC.
- Jereboam II died in 753 BC.
- Hezekiah sole reign began around 715 BC.
- The best possible dates for Hosea would be 760-715 BC.
- Alternative views. Some have proposed composite authorship as a later Judean redaction.

Background history:

- Jereboam II made Israel the most influential regional power of the period.
- On the one hand, there was increased economic prosperity, flourishing building activity and much national pride.

- On the other hand, sin ran rampant, accompanied by degrading social and moral conditions and increased poverty.
- There was drastic decline after Jereboam's death.
- The Syro-Ephraimite war against Judah weakened the nation.
- The resurgence of Assyria eventually led to Israel becoming a vassal state.
- Damascus fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC.
- Samaria also fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC and Israel was driven to exile.

Life and Ministry

- Hosea was the son of Beerai.
- His wife Gomer turned out to be an unfaithful woman and he experienced a really bad marriage.
- He had three children, Jezreel, Lo-Ruhamah and Lo-Ammi (the last two may not have been his).
- His ministry was to Israel rather than Judah.

Hosea's marriage

Several proposals have been made to explain Hosea's unusual marriage situation.

- **Hypothetical View.** This approach contends that the marriage did not happen, it is only a vision with symbolic and allegorical value. The difficulty is that the story is told as straightforward history.
- **Literal Marriage.** This view maintains that Hosea married a prostitute. The problem is this, Would God direct Hosea, a prophet, to do something intrinsically wrong?
- **Spiritual Infidelity.** Another approach contends that Gomer becomes unchaste in a spiritual sense. If this is true, how could Hosea then speak about religious infidelity?
- **Proleptic View.** This concept asserts that Hosea's marriage is real and Gomer becomes adulterous later. The view fits the facts of story better, does not harm his ministry and parallels Israel's relationship to God more precisely. However, we still have to explain 1:2.

The Book

- The book of Hosea is one of the love books of the Bible; its main theme is about God's love.
- The book employs poignant and touching language.
- The book also contains some of the most difficult texts among prophetic writings.
- There is a high proportion of textual problems including the use of mixed forms, many rare words and no clear cut unit breaks.

Structure of the Book

The book displays a two-part structure.

- A Chapters 1-3: Hosea and Gomer
 - Unfaithful
 - consequences
 - restoration
- B Chapters 4-14: God and Israel
 - Unfaithful
 - Consequences
 - restoration

JOEL

This is a short prophetic work with some significant eschatological materials.

Date

Two different dates have been assigned to the book of Joel.

- Early Date. This places Joel in the 9th cent during the time of King Joash of Judah.
- Late Date. This places Joel in the 4th/3rd cent, during the post-exilic era.

Arguments for early date

There are some compelling reasons for an early date for the book.

- The enemies of Israel listed are Tyre, Sidon, Philistia, Egypt and Edom rather than Assyria, Babylon or Persia which would fit the late date.
- The placement in the canon places Joel among the six early minor prophets.

- There is clear dependence by later prophets such as Amos and Isaiah on the book.
- Since no king is mentioned in the book, it fits the time of Joash who was still a boy.
- The sin of idolatry, so prominent in later prophets, is not mentioned.

Background history

- A coup put Queen Athaliah as a usurper on the throne. This led to the massacre of all royal princes but one.
- Joash was saved by Jehosheba and came under the tutelage of Jehoiada the high priest.
- Joash was crowned king at the age of 7 and remained a good king while the priest lives.
- Joash carried out religious reforms but made drastic changes after Jehoiada's death. He ordered the stoning of a prophet, Zechariah, and a stormy period followed his reign.

Life and Ministry

- Little is known about Joel other than the name of his father, Pethuel.
- He possesses an unusual gift of writing, indicating a very good education.
- Joel makes numerous predictions despite the brevity of the book.

The Book

- The book has a clear and powerful style.
- It is full of figures of speech and dramatic expressions.
- It is considered a master piece of Hebrew poetry.

AMOS

The book of Amos is a prophetic work with several distinctive features.

Date

- Amos dates his ministry to the period of kings Jereboam II of Israel and Uzziah of Judah.

- He also speaks of his ministry starting 2 years before the earthquake (1:1 cf Zec 14:5-7).
- The dating makes him a contemporary of Hosea.
- His ministry is clearly a short one.

Background history

- Both nations, Israel and Judah, were at the zenith of their powers during Amos' ministry.
- The period of material prosperity camouflaged the steep spiritual decline of both nations.

Life and Ministry

- Amos came from Tekoa, a small town southeast of Bethlehem.
- His stated professions paint him as herdsman and gatherer of figs (7:14). The two terms imply someone who is the owner of flocks of animals and fruit farms.
- The information provided makes Amos an owner of flocks of cattle and sheep as well as a plantation owner.
- Amos was an affluent layman, perhaps the classic layman (7:14, 15) who became a prophet.
- The book indicates he is well acquainted with Torah.

The Book

- The book of Amos has a unique style; it contains 8 oracles, 3 sermons and 5 visions.
- The book is also fashioned in the form of covenant-lawsuit and uses litigation language.
- The book utilises a distinctive 3+1 formula not found in any other HB book.

Structure of the Book

The outline of the book is shown below.

- A. Declaration of sin and judgement against nations in the form of 8 oracles (1-2)
 - Syria

- Philistia
 - Lebanon
 - Edom
 - Amnon
 - Moab
 - Judah
 - Israel
- B. Exhortations about sin and judgement in 3 sermons (3-6)
- Sermon 1: reasons for judgement
 - Sermon 2: result of judgement
 - Sermon 3: call for repentance
- C. Visions about judgement via 5 visions (7:1-9:10)
- Vision 1: swarm of locusts
 - Vision 2: fire
 - Vision 3: plumbline
 - Vision 4: basket of ripe fruit
 - Vision 5: altar
- D. Promise of restoration (9:11-15)

OBADIAH

This is the HB's shortest book with a singular message.

Date and Author

- The book may be dated to about 590 BC, just before the final Babylonian invasion
- The author is Obadiah about whom no personal information is possible.

The Book

- It is the shortest book in the HB (OT)
- It is a concise piece of Hebrew poetry.

JONAH

The book of Jonah is one of the most popular books in the OT. Its popularity is partly driven by its incredible story line.

Date

- The dating of Jonah has generated much debate.
- The mention of Assyria puts Jonah in the 8th century at the latest.

Background History

- The book shares the same background as Hosea and Isaiah.
- Jonah's ministry fell during the days of Jereboam II.

Life and Ministry

- Jonah was the son of Amittai.
- His ministry was completely outside of Israel.
- Jonah is a good example of a one-task ministry.

The Book

- The book contains one of the most incredible stories in the Bible.
- It is used in synagogues during Yom Kippur.

Interpreting Jonah:

- There are certain historical problems related to the book such as, the 'large fish', the 3 day survival without oxygen and Jonah's composing a psalm inside a fish.
- Jonah 3:3 says Nineveh is about 90 kms in diameter but excavations show that the city was not that large.
- The language of Jonah's preaching is also somewhat unusual, perhaps reflecting a different Hebrew dialect.
- There is no extra-biblical evidence of Nineveh's conversion.
- The nameless king of Nineveh is unusual and does not fit what is common in other prophet books.
- Certain interpretational possibilities may be suggested for the book.
 - Myth. The story is created to present truth about human experience or origins with no historical veracity. The view has fallen out of favour.
 - Allegory. This is an extended metaphor and all details in the story contribute to the whole; the story is metaphor. This view was in favour in the past.

- Parable. This is a lifelike story which embodies a truth, an extended simile whose parts do not have meaning but there is one principal meaning. This is the favoured view among scholars today.
- Historical story. The story is real and really happened. Christian who subscribe to this view may consider how Jesus treats the story as historical.

Structure of the Book

The book exhibits a 2 panel structure as follows.

- Panel 1: A Hebrew sinner is saved. This panel deals with Jonah's disobedience, punishment and rescue by Yahweh.
- Panel 2: Non-Hebrews are saved. This panel deals with Jonah's obedience, Nineveh's repentance and Jonah's rebuke of Yahweh.

MICAH

The book of Micah is the closest parallel to Isaiah and hints at the possibility of concurrent ministries between the two.

Date

- Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah but most likely younger.
- He dates himself to kings Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.
- He does not mention king Uzziah or the invasion of Sennacherib which is dated about 735-710 BC.

Background History

- Micah shares the same historical background as Isaiah.
- Like Isaiah, he too would have witnessed the fall of Samaria.

Life and Ministry

- There are few clues about Micah the person.
- He is not mentioned in the OT historical books.
- He came from the town of Moresheth/Moresheth Gath (1:1, 14), a rural town about 40 kms southwest of Jerusalem. Tekoa, Amos' home, is about 35 kms east.

- The town was well known and is mentioned by Jeremiah (Jer 26:18).
- Micah may have been a country man or peasant or landowner.

The Book

- The book has a powerful but jerky style and utilises rather difficult Hebrew.
- It has or shares similar passages as Isaiah, for instance, Mic 4:1-3 parallels Isa 2:2-4.

Structure of the Book

There are three cycles of oracles in the book and each cycle begins with 'hear' or 'listen' and moves from doom to hope.

- First Cycle: Chapters 1-2
- Second Cycle: Chapters 3-5
- Third Cycle: Chapters 6-7

NAHUM

The book of Nahum does not receive a great deal of attention but has generated some interesting folk tales.

Date

- Nahum does not date his ministry but there are 2 clues.
- He refers to the destruction of the city of No in Egypt (3:8). This is probably Thebes which was destroyed in 663 BC by Ashurbanipal, the Assyrian emperor.
- He also refers to the fall of Nineveh which occurred in 612 BC.
- His ministry would have to be dated between 663 and 612 BC, during the time of King Josiah.

Background History

- Nahum's work occurred during the reign of good king Josiah.
- Josiah's reign was preceded by the evil reigns of Mannaseh and Amon. These two kings had made Judah more sinful than its neighbours.

- Josiah became king at the age of 8 and ushered in three decades of Judah's happiest times with peace, prosperity and religious reforms the order of the day.
- Assyria fell to Babylon in 612 BC. With Israel, Syria and Assyria gone, Judah enjoyed its most peaceful years with no external threats.

Life and Ministry

- Nahum prophesied the destruction of Nineveh.
- He calls himself an Elkoshite (1:1), probably a reference to the town of Elkosh. Several suggestions have been made in attempting to identify this town.
 - It was a town in Mesopotamia north of Mosul (Iraq). Today there is a town called Elqush with allegedly a 'tomb of Nahum.'
 - It may be the town of Elkesi or El Kauze in Galilee.
 - It may also be Capernaum in Galilee because in Hebrew the name means 'village of Nahum.'
 - The most likely identification is Bir el-Kaus near Beit-jibrim in Judah. This is the most likely home of Nahum.

The Book

The book begins with a psalm of triumph and uses vivid language.

Structure of the Book

The book follows a three-part structure.

- God's anger (ch 1)
- Nineveh's imminent ruin (ch 2)
- God's indictment of Nineveh (ch 3)

HABAKKUK

One of the prophets who dared to challenge God was Habakkuk. His book is a fascinating revelation of this fact.

Date

- No information is provided to help us date the book. No kings are mentioned, making it rather difficult to date.
- Habakkuk predicted the Babylonian invasion but makes no mention of Assyria. This implies that Assyria was no longer a threat.
- He tells of severe sin in Judah.
- The most likely time would be King Jehoiakim's reign (609-598 BC).

Background History

- Josiah was killed in battle against Pharaoh Neco in 609.
- His son, Jehoahaz, became king but was taken prisoner by the Pharaoh and replaced with Jehoiakim.
- Jehoahaz was an evil king and an inept ruler; he squandered state funds and burned Jeremiah's book.
- During this period, Babylon defeated Egypt at Carchemish and became the world's only superpower.
- Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah for the first time in 605 BC when Daniel was taken as an exile to Babylon.

Life and Ministry

- There is no biographical information about Habakkuk.
- Hab 3:19 suggests he was a Temple singer. This means he was a Levite.

Legends and the Book

For whatever reason, the book has generated some intriguing tales, supposedly to help us identify Habakkuk.

- One story claims that he was the son of the Shunammite's son whom Elisha raised from the dead (2 Kgs 4).
- Another story says he was the watchman placed by Isaiah (Isa 21:6).
- The Apocryphal *Bel and the Dragon* asserts he carried pottage and bread to Daniel in the lion's den.

Structure of the Book

The book exhibits an a-b-a-b pattern.

A Habakkuk complains (1:1-4)

B God Answers (1:5-11)

- A Habakkuk complains again (1:12-2:1)
- B God answers again (2:2-20)
- C Habakkuk praises God (3:1-19)

ZEPHANIAH

Like Habakkuk, Zephaniah is another of the minor prophets who is barely known to most readers of the Bible.

Date

- Zephaniah dates himself to the time of King Josiah.
- He was a contemporary of Nahum.

Background History

- Zephaniah was part of last hour flurry of prophetic activity.
- The nation of Judah is approaching its end.
- He would have witnessed the brief respite under Josiah.
- A cloud of doom hung over the horizon of Judah's future.

Life and Ministry

- Zephaniah traced his lineage over four generation to King Hezekiah, making him a descendant of royal line.
- He was the only prophet to do this.
- He would have begun his ministry around 630 BC.

Structure of the Book

The book has two panels concerning the 'day of Yahweh' which are structured differently.

Panel 1: Day of Yahweh: Judgement (1:1-3:8)

- A Against Judah
 - B Awesome day
- A Against Judah's neighbours
 - B Great corruption

Panel 2: Day of Yahweh: Joy (3:9-20)

- Return

- Restoration
- Rejoicing

HAGGAI

The prophet who was part of the restoration project for the Jews was a returning exile named Haggai. He was a contemporary of Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the Persian appointed governor.

Date

- Haggai dates his prophecies precisely.
- Hag 1:1 says he started his ministry on the 6th month of the 2nd year of Darius (520 BC).
- He dates all his messages within the space of 4 months.

Background history

- There were three returns from exile.
 - In 538/537 BC (Ezra 1:1) led by Sheshbazzar.
 - In 458/457 BC, during the time of Artaxerxes, led by Ezra (Ezra 7:7).
 - In 445 BC, also during the time of Artaxerxes, led by Nehemiah (Neh 2:1).
- The construction of the Temple began soon after the first arrival.
- Opposition from Samaritans (Ezra 4:1-5) and the distraction of building their own homes (Hag 1:3-11) brought the building project to a halt.
- Haggai and Zechariah were sent to urge the Jews to restart their building activity.

Life and Ministry

- There is no personal information about Haggai and he is considered older than Zechariah.
- Hag 2:3 suggests he may have seen Solomon's Temple before its destruction.
- He was a very effective preacher since the people instantly rallied to resume the rebuilding of the Temple in response to his preaching.

The Book

- There are 4 revelations all dated in 520 BC.
- The book is second only to Obadiah in brevity.
- The book comprises 2 chapters and only 38 verses.

Structure of the Book

The book follows a simple two-part structure.

- The house of the Lord unbuilt (1)
 - unacceptable attitudinal stance
 - change of attitudinal stance
- The house of the Lord rebuilt (2)
 - glory of the new house
 - blessings that accompany the new house
 - Servant of the Lord

ZECHARIAH

This is the second last book of the OT and one filled with apocalyptic symbolisms, many of which reappear later in the NT book of Revelation.

Date

- Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai.
- He dates precisely 3 occasions for his revelations.
 - The 1st revelation received in Darius' 2nd year (1:1).
 - The 2nd revelation received about 3 months later (1:7).
 - The 3rd revelation received about 2 years later (7:1), around 520-518 BC.
 - The 4th revelation is undated but perhaps occurred after 480 BC.

Background History

- The history is the same as Haggai's. The Temple was completed in the 6th year of Darius.
- Darius ruled until 496 BC and was followed by Xerxes who ruled until 465 BC (see Esther's story).
- Judah was part of the Persian satrapy called Abanahara.
- Judah was a province with a governor named Tirshatha.

Life and Ministry

- Zechariah's father was Bereshith. His grandfather was Iddo. This was a family of priests.
- Zec 2:4 refers to a 'young man', implying that he was not yet a practising priest.
- He was given the same task as Haggai.

The Book

The book is divided in 2 segments, chs 1-8 & 9-14.

- Part I contains a double chiasm (1:7-6:15 & 7:1-8:19) enveloped by an 'introduction' (1:1-6) and a 'conclusion' (8:20-23).
- Part II comprises a complex structure of parallels (chs 9-14).

Structure of the Book

The complex structure of the book is outlined below.

Prologue (1:1-6)

A Visions of divine judgement (1:7-2:13 & 5:1-6:8)

- Vision 1: man on red horse among myrtle trees (1:7-17)
- Vision 2: four horns & four craftsmen (1:18-21)
- Vision 3: man with measuring line (2:1-13)

B Revelations of divine redemption (3:1-4:14)

- Vision 4: Joshua the high priest (3:1-10)
- Vision 5: gold lampstand & two olive trees (4:1-14)
- Vision 6: flying scroll (5:1-4)
- Vision 7: woman in basket (5:5-11)
- Vision 8: four chariots (6:1-8)

B The Word of the Lord (6:9-8:23)

- the Branch (6:9-15)
- true religion (7:1-14)
- promises of blessings (8:1-23)

A Oracles of divine judgement (9:1-14:21)

- First oracle (9:1-11:17)
 - a judgement against Zion's enemies (9:1-8)
 - b coming deliverance of Zion (9:9-13)
 - c coming deliverer (9:14-17)

- b coming restoration of Zion (10:1-11:3)
 - a judgement against unfaithful shepherds (11:4-17)
- Second oracle (12:1-14:21)
 - a judgement against Jerusalem's enemies (12:1-9)
 - b One who is pierced (12:10-14)
 - a judgement to cleanse Jerusalem (13:1-6)
 - b a shepherd struck down (13:7-9)
 - a judgement against Jerusalem's enemies (14:1-21)

MALACHI

The book of Malachi is the last book in the OT. After this prophet a period of about 400 years of divine silence would follow until the NT era.

Date

- Malachi does not date himself.
- He tells us a Persian governor was in authority, placing the book in the Persian period.
- The book indicates that religious services were conducted at the Temple. This would mean that the book is to be dated after 515 BC.
- The sins mentioned in the book differ from Haggai and Zechariah but are similar to Ezra and Nehemiah. The period in view is probably mid 5th cent BC or about 420 BC.

Background History

- After returning from exile, many Jews intermarried with foreigners.
- The Temple was rebuilt as was the city of Jerusalem.
- Malachi would have experienced the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Life and Ministry

- There is no reference to personal life in the book.
- Malachi is not mentioned elsewhere in the OT.
- The name means 'my angel' or 'my messenger'.

The Book

- This is the last OT book but not the last one in HB.

- It is a relatively short book.

Structure of the Book

The book of Malachi takes on the form of a covenant lawsuit and may be divided into two principal parts.

A God's case against Israel (1:1-14 & 2:17-3:18))

- God's love spurned (1:1-5)
- God's name dishonoured (1:6)
- God's altar defiled (1:7-14)

B The warnings of God (2:1-16 & 4:1-6)

- warnings for the priests (2:1-9)
- warnings for the nation of Judah (2:10-16)
- God's justice questioned (2:17-3:5)
- God's provisions pillaged (3:6-12)
- God's word challenged (3:13-15)
- God's case produces results (3:16-18)
 - warning about the day of Yahweh (4:1-6)

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What Hebrew words are used to designate the prophets? Which is the most important designation?
- What is meant by the prophetic call?
- How did the prophets do their work?
- What was the mission of the prophets? How does this differ from the modern understanding?
- Identify with example the following: hyperbole, hendiadys, iron, rhetorical questions and type.
- How do contemporary scholars interpret the writings of the prophets?
- Explain the multiple authorship theory concerning Isaiah.
- Describe Israel's history in the 8th century BC.
- Tell the story of Jeremiah in your own words.
- What was the relationship between Ezekiel and Daniel?
- What is apocalyptic literature?
- Discuss the structures of either Isaiah or Daniel.

- How can we explain Hosea's marriage to Gomer? Was she a prostitute or did she become one? How can God place a prophet in such predicament?
- What are the unique features of the book of Amos?
- How can we interpret the book of Jonah? Is the fish story a myth, fiction or real history?
- Where did Nahum live? Briefly explain all possibilities.
- What legends surround the life of Habakkuk?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- Sending prophets to call Israel back to faithfulness and obedience is an evidence of God's faithfulness to his covenant with his people. Do you agree/disagree? Why?
- If someone comes around and is proclaimed as a prophet, will you believe? How can we distinguish between a false prophet and a genuine one?
- The story of Jonah being swallowed by a 'large fish' seems to be too fanciful to be true. What impact does it have if we believe this to be non-historical or historical?
- Prophets use names of people or places to signify something important. If you were to give yourself a name signifying the meaning of your life, what would it be? What name do you think God would give you? Why?

PROPHETIC THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

This chapter explores four prominent theological concepts permeating the prophetic books. A comprehensive survey of prophetic theology is not within the scope of this book. Nevertheless, certain concepts foster a broader understanding of the messages of the prophets.

THE 'DAY OF THE LORD' (*YOM YAHWEH*) IN THE PROPHETS

One of the most significant theological concepts from prophetic reflection concerns the 'day of Yahweh' (day of the Lord). The richness of the concept may be seen via a simplified breakdown of its elements.

- The concept is regarded as the very heart of prophetic eschatology.
- The phrase appears in 16 passages but its concepts cover many more passages.
- It denotes the time when God intervenes in human affairs to execute judgement upon evildoers, to deliver his people from the hands of their oppressors and also a day of judgement upon God's people for their sin.
- The phrase refers to the great and final day when God would subdue the nations and establish his people in their rightful dominion. This is the eschatological day of the Lord.
- This is the day when Yahweh comes in person to do battle. It is a day of battle, a day of war. This is the concept of the holy war of Yahweh and the prophets expect the day of Yahweh to bring war.
- It is also the day of Yahweh's furious wrath and his war against his foes will be bloody.
- Elements of the day of Yahweh include summons to war, dismay, earthquakes, darkness and the voice of Yahweh. It is portrayed as a day of distress, of darkness and gloom, a day of trumpet blasts and a day of fear.
- The following sample texts highlight the day of Yahweh in historical time and the nations affected by this judgement.
 - Jer 46; Ezek 30 Egypt
 - Isa 13 Babylon

- Isa 34 Edom
- Joel 2; Zeph 1 Israel/Judah
- Isa 14 restoration
- Isa 2; Zec 14 eschatological day
- The rationale for this day of Yahweh is spelled out in a variety of ways.
 - Exod 15 portrays Yahweh as a warrior.
 - Josh 5:13ff reveals the commander of Yahweh's army.
 - 2 Chron 20 teaches that battle belongs to Yahweh.
 - Israel is also depicted as Yahweh's army or host (1 Sam 17:45).
 - Yahweh Tsebaoth (Lord of hosts/armies) is a military title given to God. The title occurs 285 times in the OT. Of these, about 230 times appear in the prophets.

Essentially, the day of Yahweh is the day of judgement. This may be true in historical time and in eschatological time. Whenever God rises up to act for or the nations, especially Israel, it is the day of Yahweh.

THE COVENANT (*BERIT*) IN THE PROPHETS

The biblical concept of covenant offers one of the macro themes of not only prophetic works but of the OT itself. There are those who see covenant as the overarching theme of the OT and even the Bible. Some knowledge of the covenant concept is crucial to the study of the prophets and the OT.

- The covenant concept is based on the 2nd millennium BC suzerainty treaties (of King and vassal) of the ancient Near East, especially those of the Hittites.
- The components of such treaties are as follows
 - A preamble identifies the parties involved.
 - A historical prologue spells out the relationship of the two parties and the beneficence of the suzerain (King).
 - Stipulations or laws spell out the conduct of the vassal.
 - Curses and blessings are invoked as rewards and punishments.
- The book of Deuteronomy is frequently cited as a biblical example of this suzerainty treaty model and contains all the components of covenant.
- The OT presents major salvific covenants, namely the covenants with Abraham, David and Israel.

Covenant in Isaiah

As 'Gospel Prophet', Isaiah is a classic example of the covenant concept. A rudimentary glance of his material will suffice.

- Isa 42 and 49 portray the Servant of Yahweh as the covenant God makes with humanity.
- Isa 54, 55 and 61 speak about an eternal or everlasting covenant.
- Isa 56-58 list the new covenant participants, people who had earlier been excluded from covenant such as eunuchs and foreigners.
- Isa 59:21 refers to new covenant which is spirit-driven.

Covenant in Hosea 11:1-11

Hosea's covenant understanding is very much driven by his personal story.

- Hos 11:1-4 spells out the parties involved and the nature of the covenant relationship.
- Hos 11:5-11 lists the curses and blessings which accompany covenant.

Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-36 (New Covenant)

Jeremiah is credited as the prophet of the New Covenant. This is due largely to his being cited in the NT (Heb 8). It should be noted that the idea of a new covenant is first presented in Isaiah.

- Jer 31:31 identifies the parties of the covenant.
- Jer 31:32 spells out the relationship between the two parties.
- Jer 31:33 talks about the law and its role in the covenant.
- Jer 31:34-36 relates the blessings

Covenant concepts

The concepts arising from these texts are listed below.

- God is the suzerain and Israel is vassal.
- God initiates the covenant and spells out the relationship.
- God makes the promises and sets out the law.
- God pronounces blessings and curses.
- God never breaks his covenant.

THE *RIB* (COVENANT LAWSUIT) MOTIF IN THE PROPHETS

The covenant lawsuit is a fairly common way through which the prophets communicate the judgement of God against his own people. The litigation language employed so freely by the prophets clues us to the reality that God never accuses his people without cause and is always prepared to grant them a proper legal hearing.

The most salient elements of the *rib* are these

- It is a unique literary type of prophetic communication.
- It is employed by several prophets.
- It utilises a courtroom setting.
- God is always the plaintiff while Israel is always the defendant.
- God also doubles up as judge.
- The prophet serves multiple roles, as narrator, prosecuting attorney or even defence attorney.
- Witnesses usually comprise things from nature such as heaven and earth.
- Most of the cases are 'libel' suits. God takes Israel to court for something they have said or done against him.
- Some passages involve full courtroom exchanges, while others use only partial exchanges.

Micah 6:1-8

An excellent example of such courtroom exchange is found in Micah 6.

- Mic 6:1-2. The court is called to attention and the witnesses (mountains and hills) are invoked.
- Mic 6:3-5. The plaintiff's (God) case is introduced and evidence is supplied by the prosecution. God states his case in poignant terms. He describes all he has done for Israel and challenges for a response.
- Mic 6:6-7. The defence (Israel) argues its case and also offers counter-accusation against the plaintiff. Israel accuses God of demanding too much.
- Mic 6:8. The divine verdict is stated. God does not ask much only for Israel to practise justice, act from love and walk humbly before God.

Isa 1:2-20

Isa 1 offers a rather lengthy exchange but a somewhat partial one.

- There is no give and take between plaintiff and defendant, unlike Mic 6.

- Only the case of the plaintiff is presented but the defendant's arguments are implied. This is more of an evidentiary hearing.
- Isa 1:2a. The witnesses (heaven and earth) are invoked.
- Isa 1:2b-4. The first piece of evidence against the defendants attempts to demonstrate that they are ingrate children.
- Isa 1:5-10. The second piece of evidence examines the defendants' track record, their lack of spiritual sensitivity.
- Isa 1:11-15. The third piece of evidence presents the defendants' abuse of religion.
- Isa 1:16-18. The divine verdict is presented in the form of an invitation to continue the dialogue with God.

Malachi

The book of Malachi is the only book which builds itself in the form of a *rib*.

- The entire book is presented as a courtroom transcript.
- The transcript involves full-blown exchanges without invoking witnesses or calling the court to attention. Such formalities are dispensed with.
- God challenges Israel, while Israel challenges God.
- Mal 1:2-5. In the first exchange between plaintiff and defendant, the issue of love is presented.
- Mal 1:6. The second exchange covers the matter of filial loyalty.
- Mal 1:7-9. The third exchange involves the use of defiled sacrifices.
- Mal 1:10-2:16. The prosecutor (God) then provides a litany of evidence—invalid offerings, blemished sacrifices, profane priests, broken covenant, insincere remorse, marital failure and violence.
- Mal 2:17. In the fourth exchange, the question of justice is argued.
- Mal 3:1-5. The preliminary verdict connects the courtroom proceeding to the day of Yahweh. This suggests the nature and content of the final verdict.
- Mal 3:6-12. The fifth exchange looks as the issue of loyalty.
- Mal 3:13-14. The final exchange delves into the nature of service.
- Mal 3:16. The pause here perhaps reveals a jury at work.
- Mal 3:17-4:5. The final divine verdict pertains to the day of Yahweh, God's final execution of the verdict, the sentencing of the guilty.

Christian interest in the prophets is partially driven by the conviction that they preached about the coming saviour, the messiah. This concept and its acknowledged fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian doctrine of salvation.

Meaning of Messiah

The word messiah is widely used today but still requires articulation.

- The Hebrew term *mashiakh* (from which we get the word 'messiah') means 'anointed one'. LXX translates this with *christos* from which the NT word Christ is derived.
- The title 'messiah' is applied to different individuals.
 - The kings of Israel (1 Sam 24:6).
 - Cyrus (Isa 45:1).
 - The High Priest (Lev 4:3, 5, etc.).
 - The expected deliverer of Israel (Dan 9:25-26). This is the root application for the messianic concept.

Images of Messiah

The prophets provide several images or metaphors for this messiah.

- Daniel (9:25-27). The messiah is a deliverer and ruler who confirms covenant and terminates sacrifice and sin.
- Isaiah (42:1-9; 52:13-53:12). The messiah is a Servant, chosen one, who is Spirit-filled. He will establish justice. He will be a suffering servant but his suffering is vicarious (on behalf of others) atoning (brings salvation). His suffering is also God's will.
- Jeremiah (23:1-8; 33:15 cf Zec 3:8; 6:12). The messiah is a Branch from the stock of David. He is a king who will usher in justice and security. He is also named The Lord our Righteousness. He is also called servant.

In these four themes we can obtain a taste of the breadth and depth of their preaching. Their messages were not limited to the audiences during their lifetimes. Their relevance is timeless and they have much to teach us today.

STUDY QUESTIONS

- Discuss the 'day of the Lord' concept.

- What is covenant? What can we learn about covenant from Isaiah and Jeremiah?
- What are the important features of covenant lawsuit? Discuss one prophetic example of such lawsuit.
- What does 'messiah' mean? To whom was the term applied in the OT?
- What images of Messiah do we find in the book of Isaiah?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- If you were to compare your life with God to a marriage, how would you describe the relationship as it is today? Courtship? Honeymoon? Unstable? Separated? On the verge of divorce? In counselling? Why? Have you ever left God or cheated on him? How can you get back together with God if you are unfaithful?
- If God were to take our contemporary society to court, what would his indictment be? Would it be like Israel's—lacking faithfulness, mercy, love and justice? Or would it be something else? What are the basic things we lack before God? What are the root causes of our religious problems? How do we deal with these problems?

Chapter 7

ANTICIPATING THE NT

This chapter explores two concerns: (1) how several main themes in the OT are followed into the NT and (2) how the OT helps in understanding the NT. This exploration helps us see the importance of understanding the OT in order to understand the NT. As Augustine once said, ‘The New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed; the Old Testament is in the New revealed.’

OT THEMES IN THE NT

The basis for approaching the NT through the lens of the OT is found in the Gospel of Luke.

- In his post-resurrection appearance to two unnamed disciples, Jesus remarks, ‘ “How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! Didn’t the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures’ (Luke 24:25-27 HCSB).
- Later to the broader circle of disciples Jesus said, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled’ (v44).
- In both cases, Christ was speaking of the entire OT. In other words, the OT points forward to Christ’s coming suffering and glory.

There are many OT theological themes in the NT. What follows are non-exhaustive description of representatives of themes from Torah, history books, wisdom books and the Prophets.

Torah (Pentateuch)

- Creation. The NT shows that Jesus is the Creator of both the new and old heaven and earth.

- The Gospel of John begins with the phrase 'In the beginning' (1:1; cf. Gen 1:1). John refers to Jesus as the Word (*Logos*) who created the world (v3). Similarly, Paul also presents him as the Creator (Col 1:16).
- The creation account is echoed in Revelation 21-22. The 'new heaven and the new earth' reflects many of the features of the Garden of Eden. The end is presented as involving a restoration of the beginning.
- Exodus. There are several striking parallels between the exodus experience and the life and ministry of Jesus.
 - Jesus began his ministry with his baptism. In analogy with the exodus experience, baptism was Jesus' Red Sea crossing (cf. 1 Cor. 10:1-6). Jesus then moved to the wilderness where he experienced 40 days (corresponding to the 40 years of wilderness wandering) of temptation (Matt 4:1-11). Strikingly, the three temptations all relate to the temptations that Israel confronted in the wilderness. Jesus' replies to Satan confirm the analogy since all are taken from Moses' speech recorded in Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:16; 6:13).
 - The giving of the law on Mount Sinai parallels Matthew's location of the sermon on a mountain (chapters 5-7). The mountain setting draws a close connection between Jesus' sermon with its focus on law and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. The good news about the law in the NT is that Jesus Christ has freed his followers from the curse of the law (Rom 7).
 - In another sense, Christians today experience life as a wilderness wandering, looking to the future for the rest that comes at the end of the exodus (Heb 3:7-4:13), the entering of the Promised Land (heaven).
- Israel cultic system. Everything in the system points forward and anticipates the coming of Jesus Christ.
 - The OT tabernacle and temple are symbols for God's dwelling on earth. They are temporary. In the NT, God, in Jesus, 'became flesh and tabernacled among us' (John 1:14). God is now dwelling among men through Christ.
 - Ultimately, the tabernacle and temple, which represents heaven on earth, looks forward to the merging of heaven and earth in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22)

- The book of Hebrews presents Christ as the perfect High Priest who has offered himself as the perfect sacrifice. The Aaronic priesthood and the OT sacrificial system all anticipated the greater reality in Christ (4:14-5:10; 7-10; cf. Rom 8:3; Eph 5:2).

History Books

- Models of Faith. The people of Israel at the battle of Jericho and Rahab the prostitute are presented as models of faith, examples of those who were looking for a country (Heb 11:30-31; 11:14-16) but who did not attain what was promised (11:39-40) because God had planned something better.
- The Conquest. There is a parallel between Joshua and the book of Acts.
 - After redemption from Egypt in the exodus, Israel began the conquest of her inheritance; after the redemptive work of Jesus at the cross, his people move forward to conquer the world in his name.
 - Israel enjoyed an earthly inheritance and an earthly kingdom, but the kingdom of which the church is a part is spiritual and heavenly.
- The historical reality of God's faithfulness to his promises to David.
 - The book of Kings ends with a note of hope, that even during the exile and under foreign domination, divine favour still attended David's descendants.
 - The NT shows that this same hope was alive in Israel during the days of Roman rule. The gospel writers are concerned to trace the Davidic ancestry of Jesus and his rightful claim to the title 'Son of David', heir to the kingdom that God would build as a consequence of his promises to David (Matt 1:1, 6, 17, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:31; 21:9, 15; Mark 10:47-48; 11:10; Luke 1:27, 32, 69; 2:4; 3:31; 18:39; John 7:42).
- Literary parallels between the lives of Elijah and Elisha and the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus.
 - Jesus described John as 'the Elijah who was to come' (Matt 11:14; 17:12; cf. Mal 4:5). Matthew demonstrates how this was so.
 - Elijah was known for his distinctive style of dress—garment of hair and a leather belt around his waist (cf. 2 Kings 1:7-8). Matthew introduces John by saying that his clothes were made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist (Matt 3:4).

- Both Elijah and John the Baptist anointed their successors at the Jordan River. The spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha at the Jordan; the Spirit of God descended upon Jesus after baptism at the River (cf. 2 Kings 2:9-14; Matt 3:13-17). Elijah was the forerunner of Elisha, just as John the Baptist was for Jesus.

Wisdom Books

- Sufferings. The relationship between God and human suffering did not end with the book of Job.
 - The NT brings us to a deeper understanding of God's dealing with suffering. In Jesus God reveals his love toward sinful creatures by sending his Son to die on the cross. He enters into the world of human suffering in order to redeem humanity.
- Wisdom. Jesus is associated with the figure of Wisdom.
 - In the NT, Jesus embodies the wisdom of God. He is the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:30) and one 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col 2:3).
 - During his youth, Jesus confounded the teachers of the law (Luke 2:41-50) and he 'increased in wisdom' (Luke 2:52). His wisdom is revealed through his teaching (Mark 1:22).
- Meaninglessness and its answer. Life's meaninglessness without God finds its solution in Jesus Christ.
 - Jesus redeems us from a meaningless world by subjecting himself to it so that he can free us from it. He experiences the frustration of the world under curse so that we can be redeemed (cf. Gal 3:13).
- Love. The NT places love as the foundation of relationships.
 - Without repressing the historicity of Song of Songs, Ephesians 5:22-33 teaches that the relationship between a man and his wife is an analogue to the relationship between Jesus and the church.

The Prophets

In Chapter 6, four prominent theological concepts have been explored. How does the NT follow these concepts?

- The Day of the Lord

- Equivalent expressions such as the ‘day of our Lord Jesus Christ’ are found in 1 Cor 1:8; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10 and 2 Pet 3:10, 12. ‘Day of the Lord’ appears in 2 Thess 2:2.
- In the NT the appearance of God is more distinctly the second coming of Christ. Paul’s mention of the ‘day of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor 1:8) is likely the day of ‘the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him’ (2 Thess 2:1). The day will be characterised by the unmistakable presence of Almighty God.
- The picture of God as the Divine Warrior in the OT anticipates the coming of Jesus Christ, who is also imaged as a warrior in the NT. Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension are seen as the culmination of his warfare against Satan and his cohorts (Col 2:14-15; Eph 4:7-10). The consummation of this theme is found in the book of Revelation (cf. 19:11-21), when evil comes to an end as Jesus leads his army in the final battle against the evil forces.
- The Covenant
 - The divine-human covenant is mirrored by human marriage. Ephesians 5:22-33 is the most explicit development of this theme from a Christian perspective.
 - The Gospels furthered the idea of the new covenant in Jeremiah. Jesus establishes the new covenant with his blood (cf. Luke 22:20).
 - Hebrews 8-10 takes up this theme and discusses it in the context of the superiority of Christ as the fulfilment of the covenant. Through Christ’s sacrifice and priesthood, a superior covenant—new covenant—is now established in Christ.
- The Lawsuit Motif. This theme is taken most clearly in John and Revelation.
 - In John, the lawsuit between God and the nations (as found in Isaiah) becomes a lawsuit between God and the world. Israel becomes the representative of the world. God is represented by Jesus, God’s authorised agent and chief witness (cf. Lincoln, 2000, 46).
 - Revelation contains pervasive portrayal of the theme. The following are just representatives.
 - Jesus is the ‘faithful witness’ (1:5).
 - A series of covenant-renewal messages directed against the 7 churches (2-3).

- The cry of the souls of the martyrs under the altar during the 5th seal: ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood. . .’ (6:10).
- A series of judgments announced by the 7 trumpets (8-9).
- The 7 bowl judgements of chapter 16 and the judgement of Babylon in chapter 17-18.
- The appearance of Christ on his white horse at the second coming (19:11).
- The judgement given to the saints during the millennium (20:4).
- The final cosmic divine lawsuit, the great white throne judgement (20:12).
- The Messiah
 - Isaiah speaks about the appearance of a child who will be deliverer, world ruler and righteous king.
 - The writers of the NT see in Jesus the embodiment of a righteous king for Israel.
 - Jesus’ descent is from David (Matt 1:1, 6, 17)
 - The crowds and even the demons recognise him as the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel (Matt 12:23; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15).
 - Paul uses the word ‘Christ’ (Greek *christos* word translating the Hebrew word *mashiakh*) to speak of Jesus.
 - He uses the word close to 400 times and often in combination with Jesus. For Paul, ‘Christ Jesus’ and ‘Christ’ are simply synonyms for the divine-human person in whom God brought his gracious saving will to pass.
 - Paul’s high view of Christ is encapsulated in Phil 2:6-11, Col 1:15-20 (cf. Eph 1:20-23) and 1 Tim 3:16.

UNDERSTANDING THE NT THROUGH THE OT

The NT does not simply express its dependence on the OT by quoting it. It also alludes to the OT.

- What do the terms ‘quotation’ and ‘allusion’ mean?
 - Quotation—a direct citation of an OT passage that is easily recognisable by its clear and unique verbal parallelism. Many of these quotations are introduced by certain formula: ‘that what was spoken

by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled' (Matt 2:15), 'it is written' (Rom 3:4) or another similar expression.

- Allusion—a brief expression consciously intended by an author to be dependent on an OT passages. Allusions are indirect references. The OT wording is not reproduced directly as in a quotation.
- The 4th edition of the UBS' Greek Testament lists 343 OT quotations in the NT as well as no fewer than 2,300 allusions and verbal parallels. The books most used are Psalms (79 quotations, 333 allusions) and Isaiah (66 quotations, 348 allusions).
- In the book Revelation, where there are no formal quotations, the tally of allusions goes no fewer than 600 allusions based on Nestle-Aland 27th edition.

Sample

The following sample demonstrates how the OT helps in understanding the NT.

- In Mark chapter 5 is found three stories that can be understood in the context of holiness in the book of Leviticus (cf. McIver, 2000, 100-104).
 - First story: a man with an unclean spirit
 - A man with an unclean spirit comes to meet Jesus. Verse 9 explains that this unclean spirit is in fact many spirits. They eventually end up taking control of a herd of pigs, which are considered unclean according to Leviticus 11.
 - Jesus rids the possessed man of the unclean spirits and the immediate neighbourhood of its unclean animals.
 - The story shows that the ministry of Jesus brings whole neighbourhoods release from unclean spirits and other matters of uncleanness.
 - God gives the holiness code in the book Leviticus. Jesus, who is God, is the only one that can eradicate uncleanness.
 - Second story: the woman with the flow of blood
 - After meeting the man with an unclean spirit, Jesus goes to the house of a dead girl. On the way, he is touched by a woman with a flow of blood.

- According to Leviticus 15:19-27, not only was she unclean, anything that she sat on, lay on, wore and cooked with was unclean too. So also anybody who touches her becomes unclean.
- She has tried many ways for treatment but meets only frustration and more frustration with her condition.
- She touches Jesus' garment and is healed. Jesus credits the healing to her belief (faith) that she will be healed. She has not only been *healed* (*sōzō*) by her faith, she has also been *saved* (*sōzō*) by her faith.
- Again, Jesus is able to save one from uncleanness. He makes the unclean clean.
- Third story: Jairus' daughter
 - According to Numbers 19:11, 16, a dead body is unclean and anything that touches it becomes unclean.
 - Jesus deliberately touches the dead body in order to show that he has the power to bring life (cleanness) from the dead (uncleanness).

STUDY QUESTIONS

- What is the basis for approaching the NT through the lens of the OT?
- Describe the parallel between the exodus motif and the life and ministry of Jesus.
- How does the spreading of the gospel in Acts parallel Joshua's conquest?
- Describe the parallel between the lives of Elijah and Elisha and the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus.
- How has Jesus been associated with wisdom?
- Explain how the four themes in the prophets are followed in the NT.
- Define 'quotation' and 'allusion'.
- How can we understand Mark 5 from the perspective of the OT?

DISCUSSION-APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- If someone comes to you and says that we do not need the OT and should focus only on the NT, how would you answer? Does it matter if we ignore the OT in order to emphasise the NT? Why?

- What should you do in order to get the most out of both the OT and the NT? How should we let them change the way we look at life?

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