

The Prophets

The Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and Jeremiah are likely all written by Baruch, the Deuteronomist, around 622 BCE. The rest of the prophets come from the original speakers and the scribes who wrote down their speeches over time. Likely added to the canon around 200 BCE:

- *Amos*: 750 BCE in Israel (N)
- *Isaiah*: 740 BCE in Judah (S), with chapters 40-55 written during the Exile and 56-66 after the Return.
- *Jeremiah*: 622 BCE in Judah by Northern refugees.
- *Ezekiel*: written over 593-571 BCE in Exile.
- The rest range from 900 to 450 BCE.

The Writings

The “Writings” are the most eclectic group of texts, and the latest considered canon. In Jesus’s day they were used but not as “scripture” in the same way as the “Law and the Prophets.” Likely canonized around 100 CE. Some examples of dates include:

- *Chronicles* is a re-telling of the history of Israel from Genesis through Kings, re-interpreting for new context around 350 BCE.
- *Daniel* is set during the Exile (585-539 BCE), but by language (includes some Aramaic) and contents (Greek invasion) it’s a 2nd century BCE work.
- *Job* is set in pre-Abrahamic times and traditionally attributed to Moses, but likely written during Exile.
- *Psalms* were written over five centuries, from an adaptation of a Canaanite hymn to Baal (Psalm 29) to second temple references.

Resources:

- *Who Wrote the Bible?* by Richard Friedman

The BIBLE

Origins of a Human Library

Session 2: The Hebrew Bible

John Elliott Lein — December 9, 2018

The Hebrew Canon

Tanakh

The Bible is known as the *Tanakh* within Judaism. This acronym spells out the three major sections of the text:

Torah (Instruction, Teaching, or Law)

The *Torah* (from “to guide/teach”) is also known as the Pentateuch, the first five (*penta*) books of the Jewish and Christian Bibles. The same word can be used to refer to the entire Tanakh or even the entirety of Jewish teaching, culture, and practice. It includes:

- Genesis (“origins”); *Bereshit*
- Exodus (“going out”); *Shemot* (“Names”)
- Leviticus (“priests”); *Vayikra* (“And He called”)
- Numbers; *Bemidbar* (“In the desert”)
- Deuteronomy (“second law”); *Devarim* (“Words”)

Nevi'im (Prophets)

- Former Prophets: *Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings*
- Latter Prophets (major): *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel*
- Latter Prophets (Twelve minor): *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*

Ketuvim (Writings)

- Poetry: *Psalms, Proverbs, Job*
- The Five Scrolls: *Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther*
- Other books: *Daniel, Ezra–Nehemiah, Chronicles*

Evolution of Study

Traditional Understanding

There are two ways to understand the authorship and placement of these texts. Up until the 1700's, Jews and Christians nearly universally taught that Moses personally wrote the entire Pentateuch, and in 1650 the scholar Archbishop Ussher carefully calculated the beginning of the universe as October 23, 4004 BC based on a literalist understanding of the text.

Biblical Criticism

The 12th century Spanish Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra first alluded to doubts about Moses' authorship, but through the 17th century any scholar who openly questioned authorship was burned at the stake. Philosophers Hobbes and Spinoza were the first to get away with it, and by the 18th century in Germany the Bible was undergoing reason-based examination that had never happened before.

The primary techniques are textual, source, form, and literary criticism. *Textual* examines the physical manuscripts we have access to today. *Source* looks for original sources underlying the final text we have. *Form* breaks texts down into segments which are examined for genre and setting (*redaction* criticism is a subset, looking at editing). *Literary* employs tools of literary analysis to the complete text, and is the newest form.

Authorship and Canonization

Authors and Dates of the Pentateuch

There were four authors who set down the writings that became the Pentateuch between 722 and 687 BCE, and a little bit about them. There were two major schools of priests involved—the Northern school of Shiloh (Dan and Bethel) and the Southern school of Aaron (Jerusalem).

- *E (Eloist)*: Likely a male author from Israel (Northern kingdom) written between 922-722 BCE.
- *J (Yahwist)*: Possibly a woman, *J* reflects interests of the Judean court (Southern) around 848-722 BCE.
- *P (Priestly)*: Written by Aaronid priests as a polemical response to the Northern *JE* text between the invasions of Assyria and Babylon (722-609 BCE), the Southern *P* asserts the value of Aaron and diminishes Moses (not to *D*'s liking).
- *D (Deuteronomist)*: A product of the priests of Shiloh (Northern kingdom) associated with the prophet Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch, first completed around 622 BCE. Likely edited/expanded by same after the Exile forced a change of theology a generation later.
- The Torah was created out of a later scribe's careful editing and compiling of these different sources into one narrative in five books. The priest Ezra may have been the one who created and then brought it to Jerusalem as the first Hebrew canon in 458 BCE.

Then the high priest Hilkiyah said to the scribe Shaphan, "I have found a scroll of the Teaching in the House of the LORD." And Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, who read it...and Shaphan read it to the king.

When the king heard the words of the scroll of the Teaching, he rent his clothes. (II Kings 22:8-11)