

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY
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Course overview

- Book-by-book introduction to the Old Testament, spanning 2 terms (6 months)
 - following loosely chronological order
- Introduction to the content and major themes of each book, in the context of the larger storyline of the Bible (Old and New Testaments), and especially in light of Jesus Christ and the New Testament
- Homework - optional, but **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**
 - One of two options (see Attached Reading Plans):
 1. Read the entire Old Testament during the 6 months of the course - approximately 4 chapters/day on weekdays, and 8 chapters/day on weekends
 - or
 2. Read the Old Testament narrative passages (stories), to get a basic grasp of the storyline of the Old Testament - 1 chapter/weekday, 2-3 chapters/day on weekends
- Schedule (Term 1)

Date	Topic
October 7	Introduction to the OT, part 1
October 14	Introduction to the OT, part 2
October 21	Genesis 1-11
October 28	Genesis 12-50
November 4	Exodus
November 11	Leviticus
November 18	Numbers
November 25	Deuteronomy
December 2	Joshua, Judges, Ruth
December 9	1 & 2 Samuel
December 16	Psalms
December 23	Job
December 30	TBD

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Introduction Part 1 - Overview

Overview of the Old Testament

- written over a span of ~1000 years (~1400s-400s B.C.), by up to 40 writers
- 24 books in the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*); 39 books in the Protestant Bible
 - In the Hebrew Bible,
 - Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are single books
 - the 'Minor Prophets' form a single book ("The Twelve")
 - Ezra-Nehemiah is a single book
 - Order of the books differs somewhat than in the Protestant Bible (Table 1)
 - 3 major divisions in the Hebrew Bible:
 - the Law (*Torah*)
 - the Prophets (*Nebi'im*)
 - the Writings (*Kethubim*)
- canonicity of the OT books
 - "Canon" - from Hebrew work *qaneh* ("reed" - often used as a measuring stick); Greek word: *kanon* ("rule", "model")
 - signifies a standard against which other things are measured/evaluated
 - Refers to the books that are recognized to be Scriptures (as opposed to others that are not)
 - Criteria for recognition as part of the Jewish canon included
 - inspiration
 - 'God-breathed'
 - written under the supernatural direction of the Spirit of God, so that while the books had human authors, the ultimate author is God
 - the process by which Divine inspiration was recognized is uncertain, but presumably of the Holy Spirit inspired the writing, He would also lead God's people to recognize that as Scripture
 - written by a prophet or someone with the prophetic gift - goes with inspiration
 - written before ~400 B.C. - Jewish tradition that no prophets arose after Malachi
 - could not have been lost and recovered after the close of the canon
 - idea that God would not inspire writing of Scripture, then not be able or not care to preserve it
 - if a writing only met the needs of the generation in which it was written, it lacked the timelessness of Scripture, which is intended for every generation
 - Books likely canonized as soon as, or soon after they were written
 - e.g. Joshua 1:7-8; 22:5,9 - the Law written by Moses recognized as Scripture by the time Joshua took up leadership of Israel
 - All books in the present OT included in the canon by 2nd-3rd century B.C. at the latest
 - The OT books were accepted by Jesus and the NT writers as Scripture
 - e.g. Matthew 5:17-19; Luke 24:25-27,44-45; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21
 - OT Scriptures are quoted ~300 times in the NT

• **Table 1: Books of the Old Testament:**

Hebrew Bible

Torah

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Nebi'im

Joshua
Judges
Samuel
Kings
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
The Twelve

Kethubim

Psalms
Job
Proverbs
Ruth
Song of Songs
Ecclesiastes
Lamentations
Esther
Daniel
Ezra-Nehemiah
Chronicles

Protestant Bible

Pentateuch

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

History

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

Poetry

Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Song of Songs
Ecclesiastes

Major Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel

Minor Prophets

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

A Quick Walk through the Old Testament

The storyline of the Old Testament - A 50,000 foot view

The Old Testament tells the story of how God created all things, and in particular, of how He created Mankind in His image, to have fellowship with Him. Having been created perfect and having been placed in a perfect environment (the Garden of Eden), Man nevertheless fell into sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, even though God had specifically commanded them not to, and had warned them that they would surely die if they ate from that tree. Thus, sin entered the world, and death through sin, as God cursed His creation as a result of Adam's sin. Yet, God in His mercy provided a sacrifice to cover over their sins, and promised that He would one day provide a Savior who would deal decisively with mankind's sin, thus saving God's people from death and reconciling them to Himself.

The Old Testament is the account of God redeeming and calling out a people to Himself, from among humanity that was going its own way, in spite of their disobedience and sin. Starting with Adam & Eve's sons, Cain and Abel, there emerge 2 lineages within mankind - those who reject God and went their own way (Cain), and those whom God is calling out to follow Him (Abel). When Cain kills Abel (Genesis 4), God raises Seth in his place. From among Seth's descendants, down through the generations, God continues to work out His purpose to redeem and call out a people to Himself, calling and preserving men like Enoch and Noah. Then He calls Abraham, making a covenant with him, and promising to bless him and make him into a nation. This promise passes on to Abraham's son, Isaac, and to his son Jacob. After Jacob's family spends over 400 years in Egypt, during which time they grow into a nation (Israel), God calls them out of Egypt, rescuing them from slavery, ultimately settling them in the land He had promised to Abraham and his offspring. He makes a covenant with them at Mount Sinai, that they would be His people, and that He would be their God. As the terms of this covenant, he provides laws by which they must live, and establishes a system of animal sacrifices to atone for their sins.

Yet, almost from the start, His people Israel turn away from God, rebelling against His laws and commands, and following other gods. So God chastises His people by bringing calamities upon them. When they repent, he restores them, only for them to turn away from Him again - and so the cycle repeats itself over and over again throughout the Old Testament. They seem completely unable to live consistently in obedience to God's laws and commands. God sends men and women to call His people to repentance and to walk in obedience to Him - judges, leaders, priests, and prophets, yet by and large, His people refuse to listen. Some of the prophets they just ignore; some they mock and reject; others they kill. Finally, God exiles His people from the land, into Assyria and Babylon, but even then, He continues to send prophets who call His people to repentance and who look forward to the day when the Lord will Himself visit His people and establish a New Covenant - one that will come with a new heart and with the ability to keep His law. Even in their exile, God continues to watch over His people, to protect them and provide for them. Eventually, He brings a remnant of them back into the Promised Land to rebuild; yet, the struggle to remain obedient continues, until suddenly, the prophets stop coming, and God seems to fall silent for a period that will last until the coming of Jesus Christ, more than 400 years later.

A brief timeline of the Old Testament

>4000 to ~1800 B.C. **Genesis** - Beginnings - From Creation to the emergence of Israel

>4000 B.C. Creation (Genesis 1)
 Creation & Fall of Man (Genesis 2-3)
 Emergence of two lineages - Cain and Abel - and Seth (Genesis 4)
 Judgment and Re-Creation (and Re-Fall)
 - Noah & the Flood (Genesis 5-9) to the Tower of Babel (Genesis 10-11)

2166 to ~1800 B.C	<p>Age of the Patriarchs</p> <p>Abraham (2166-1991 B.C.) (Genesis 12-25)</p> <p>Isaac (2066-1886 B.C.) (Genesis 24-26)</p> <p>Jacob (Israel) & Esau (2006-1859B.C.) (Genesis 25-36)</p> <p>Joseph (1915-1805 B.C.) and the sons of Israel (Genesis 37-50)</p> <p>Jacob (Israel) and his family settle in Egypt ~1876 B.C.</p> <p>Job - Account of Job and his friends, as they struggle with the question of why Job, though righteous, is suffering calamities in his life (date uncertain; Job is thought to have lived in the times of the patriarchs, though the book may have been written later)</p>
1800-1406 B.C.	<p>Exodus - Israel's suffering in Egypt and deliverance by God from Egypt, led by Moses</p> <p>1526 B.C. Israel's suffering in Egypt, and Moses' birth (Exodus 1-2)</p> <p>1486-1446 B.C. Moses in exile in Midian (Exodus 2-4)</p> <p>1446 B.C. Moses returns to Egypt and leads Israel out (Exodus 5-18)</p> <p>God's covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-24)</p> <p>Building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-40)</p> <p>1446-1406 B.C. Leviticus - Summary of laws & sacrificial system for Israel, pointing to God's holiness</p> <p>Numbers - Account of Israel's journey to the land God had promised to Israel, including their rebellion against God by refusing to enter the Promised Land, and the resultant 40 years of wilderness wanderings</p> <p>Deuteronomy - Second giving of the Law to the new generation of Israelites by Moses, as they prepare to enter the Promised Land</p> <p>Moses dies (1406 B.C.) (Deuteronomy 34)</p>
1406 to ~1100 B.C.	<p>Joshua - Conquest of the Promised Land (Canaan) by Joshua & the Israelites</p> <p>Judges - Israel spirals downward through cycles of turning away from God, resulting in oppression by surrounding peoples, and deliverance by judges raised up by God to save His people</p> <p>Ruth - Account of Ruth and Boaz, ancestors of David, the coming king</p>
~1100 to ~970 B.C.	<p>(1 & 2) Samuel - Account of Samuel, the last judge, and establishment of the monarchy in Israel</p> <p>Samuel (born ~1100 B.C.) (1 Samuel 1-8)</p> <p>Saul (reigned ~1050-1010 B.C.) (1 Samuel 9-31)</p> <p>David (reigned 1010-970 B.C.) (1 Samuel 16-2 Samuel 24)</p> <p>Psalms - Collection of poetry, prayers, praise, and laments; approximately half written by David</p>
970 to 586 B.C.	<p>(1 & 2) Kings - Account of the Kings of Israel and Judah, from Solomon to the fall of Jerusalem and the Exile to Babylon</p>

(1 & 2 Chronicles) - Recapitulation of account of the Kings of Judah, likely written after the Exile to Babylon. Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible; it encapsulates the history of God's people from Adam to that time, and looks forward to God's ultimate salvation

970-930 B.C. United Kingdom under Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)

Proverbs - Collection of wise sayings (proverbs) and instruction of how to live wisely. Composed largely by Solomon

Ecclesiastes - Musings of an old man on the meaning of life; typically attributed to Solomon

Song of Songs - Collection of love songs celebrating the love of a man and his bride; typically attributed to Solomon

930 B.C. Israel divides into Southern (Judah; 2 tribes) and Northern (Israel, 10 tribes) Kingdoms, under Rehoboam and Jereboam, respectively

930-722 B.C. The Northern Kingdom almost immediately turns away from God and suffers an unbroken string of evil kings until the Kingdom is destroyed with the fall of Samaria at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

930-586 B.C. The Southern Kingdom is ruled by the House of David; has some good kings who lead the nation to follow God, but also evil kings who lead the nation away from God, but the overall trend was downward. The Southern Kingdom is destroyed with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Prophets of this period:

Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah (1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 8) and others

Obadiah (~840-830?) - Prophesied against Edom for siding with Judah's enemies in a time of trial

Joel (~830-820?) - Prophesied God's coming judgment on Judah in the form of a locust invasion

Jonah (~785-775 B.C.) - Account of Jonah, who called Nineveh to repentance

Amos (~765-755 B.C.) - Prophesied God's judgment on Israel (Northern Kingdom) and surrounding nations, but looked forward to a day of restoration

Hosea (~755-715 B.C.) - Prophesied of God's dealings with unfaithful Israel, using his own marriage to a prostitute as an illustration

Isaiah (~739-680 B.C.) - Lived in Judah, but prophesied against Israel, Judah, and the surrounding nations. Isaiah 1-39 speak primarily about God's judgment, while Isaiah 40-66 look forward to His coming redemption and restoration

Micah (~735-700 B.C.) - Prophesied against the social and moral evils of his day, in both Israel and Judah

Nahum (~650-620 B.C.) - Prophesied God's judgment on the Assyrians

Zephaniah (~635-625 B.C.) - Prophet in Judah during the reign of King Josiah; prophesied of a coming Day of the Lord in which God would judge Judah

Jeremiah (~627-575 B.C.) - Account and prophecies of Jeremiah, who lived in Judah before, during, and after the fall of Jerusalem

Lamentations - Jeremiah's lament regarding the fall of Jerusalem

Habakkuk (~620-610 B.C.) - Prophesied God's coming judgment through the Babylonians

586-516 B.C. Babylonian exile lasting 70 years, to the rebuilding of the Temple (2 Kings 24-25)
Several waves of captives were taken from Judah to Babylon beginning ~605 B.C. culminating with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

538 B.C. Cyrus permits exiles to return to Judah (2 Chronicles 36); a group returns, with Zerubbabel as governor

520-516 B.C. Temple rebuilt in Jerusalem (Ezra 1-6)

Prophets of this period:

Daniel (~605-536 B.C.) - Account of Daniel and his friends, who were among the first waves of exiles to Babylon (~605 B.C.)

Ezekiel (~597-560 B.C.) - Prophecies of Ezekiel, who was taken into exile near Babylon, ~597 B.C.; prophesied against Judah and the surrounding nations, but also looked forward to the future restoration of the kingdom

Haggai (520 B.C.) - Post-exile prophet who called on those who had returned from Babylon to rebuild the Temple

Zechariah (520-518 B.C.) - Post-exile prophet who rebuked the returned exiles and encouraged them to finish rebuilding the Temple

516 to ~430 B.C. Rebuilding and renewal

~483 B.C. **Esther** - Account of Queen Esther, who together with Mordecai, saved the Jews from destruction

458 B.C. **Ezra** - A second group of exiles returns to Jerusalem, led by Ezra, who implements significant reforms on the nation (Ezra 7-10)

~445-433 B.C. **Nehemiah** - Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and leads the people in further reforms

Prophets of this period:

Malachi (mid-5th century B.C.) - Final prophet in the OT canon; prophesied against the people's spiritual apathy and called them to repentance; looked forward to the day that the Lord would come, preceded by the prophet Elijah

References

Longman, Tremper III, and Raymond B. Dillard. *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.

Merrill, Eugene H. *An Historical Survey of the Old Testament*, second edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991.

ESV and NIV Study Bibles