

# Canons of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

## JEWISH TANAKH\*

### Torah (Law or Instruction)

Bereshit (In the Beginning)  
Shemot (Names)  
VaYiqra (He summoned)  
BeMidbar (In the wilderness)  
Devarim (Words)

### Nevi'im (Prophets)

Yehoshua (Joshua)  
Shofetim (Judges)  
Shemuel (Samuel)  
Melachim (Kings)

Yeshayahu (Isaiah)  
Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah)  
Yechezkel (Ezekiel)

### Tere Asar (The Twelve)

Hoshea (Hosea)  
Yoel (Joel)  
Amos (Amos)  
Ovadyah (Obadiah)  
Yonah (Jonah)  
Michah (Micah)  
Nachum (Nahum)  
Chavakuk (Habakkuk)  
Tzefanyah (Zephaniah)  
Chaggai (Haggai)  
Zecharyah (Zechariah)  
Malachi (Malachi)

### Ketuvim (Writings)

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

### Megillot ([Five] Scrolls)

Shir haShirim (Song of Songs)  
Rut (Ruth)  
Eicha (Lamentations)  
Qohelet (Ecclesiastes)  
Ester (Esther)

Daniel (Daniel)  
Ezra Nechemyah (Ezra Nehemiah)  
Divrei haYamim (1-2 Chronicles)

\* The common order. For the order in Codex Aleppo and the order presented in

## PROTESTANT OLD TESTAMENT\*

### The Five Books of Moses

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

### Historical Books

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

### Poetic and Wisdom Books

Job  
Psalms  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
The Song of Solomon

### Prophetic Books

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel  
Daniel  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

\* The order of the Protestant canon is identical to that of the Vulgate on which it is based, with the books referred to collectively as the Apocrypha removed

## CATHOLIC OLD TESTAMENT\*

### Pentateuch

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy

### Historical Books

Josue  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Kings (1 Samuel)  
2 Kings (2 Samuel)  
3 Kings (1 Kings)  
4 Kings (2 Kings)  
1 Paralipomenon  
2 Paralipomenon  
1 Esdras (Ezra)  
2 Esdras (Nehemiah)  
Tobias  
Judith  
Esther (long version)  
1 Maccabees  
2 Maccabees

### Poetic and Wisdom Books

Job  
Psalms  
Sentences  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Songs  
Wisdom of Solomon  
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)

### Prophetic Books

Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Baruch (including the Letter of Ieremias [chap. 6])  
Ezekiel  
Daniel (long version, including the Prayers of Azariah and the Three [3:24-90], Susanna [chap. 13], and Bel and the Dragon [chap. 14])  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah

## ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT\*

### Pentateuch

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leuitikon  
Arithmoi  
Deuteronomion

### Histories

Iesous Naue  
Kritai (Judges)  
Routh  
1 Basileion (1 Reigns)  
2 Basileion (2 Reigns)  
3 Basileion (3 Reigns)  
4 Basileion (4 Reigns)  
1 Paralipomenon (1 Supplements)  
2 Paralipomenon (2 Supplements)  
1 Esdras (= 3 Esdras in the Vulgate; parallels the conclusion of 2 Paralipomenon and 2 Esdras)  
2 Esdras (Ezra+Nehemiah)  
Esther (long version)  
Ioudith  
Tobit  
1 Makkabaion  
2 Makkabaion  
3 Makkabaion  
4 Makkabaion

### Poetic Books

Psalms (including Psalm 151)  
Odes (excerpted songs from the rest of the canon, Old and New Testaments, plus the Prayer of Manasses)  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiast  
Song of Songs  
Iob  
Wisdom of Solomon  
Wisdom of Iesous son of Sirach  
Psalms of Solomon

### Prophecies

Osée  
Amos  
Michaias  
Ioel  
Obdias  
Ionas  
Naum  
Ambakoum  
Sophonias  
Aggaïos

the Babylonian Talmud,  
see the chart below.

Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

In an appendix following  
the New Testament:

Prayer of Manasses  
3 Esdras (LXX 1 Esdras)  
4 Esdras (NRSV 2 Esdras)  
Psalm 151

\*The order found in  
Weber's edition of the  
Vulgate. English names of  
the books taken from the  
Douay Rheims Bible

Zacharias  
Malachias  
Esaías  
Ieremias  
Barouch  
Threni or Lamentations  
Letter of Ieremias

Iezekiel  
Sousanna  
Daniel (long version including the  
Prayers of Azariah and the Three  
[3:24-90])  
Bel and the Dragon

\*The order found in the Rahlfs-  
Hanhart edition of the Septuagint.  
English names of the books  
adapted from the NETS translation  
of the Septuagint. Some Orthodox  
canons are more extensive. The  
Ethiopian Orthodox canon  
includes Jubilees and 1 Enoch; 4  
Ezra, 2 Baruch, Psalm 151, and  
Pss 152-155 appear in Syriac  
Bible manuscripts.

The Tanakh of Jewish tradition and the Old Testament of the Protestant Reformation are identical; the choice of the Reformers was deliberate. At the same time, it is not too much to say that the inner core of the Old Testament canon of the eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches corresponds to the Tanakh in most particulars.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings form a continuous narrative of admonition, what has been called the Primary History. At the same time, the emphasis on blessings to be received by those who leave what they know in a foreign land and go to a land they know not in Genesis (12:1-3) and the inclusion of a promise of national restoration in Leviticus (26:39-45) and Deuteronomy (30:1-10) make the first five books of the History a fit source of hope for a people dispersed in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and beyond, from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE on. In their current form the first five books are designed to be read apart from the continuation found in Joshua-2 Kings. This fact is enshrined in the canonical division of the History into two halves. Joshua-2 Kings continue to offer object lessons in what does and does not constitute adherence to the calling and promises the God of Israel offers to a nation and its leaders. Warning and hope and the basis for a common life are conveyed by narrative, prayer, song, law, ritual instruction, diatribe, and oracle in the national history just noted.

The foundational corpus of prophetic literature consists of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). The Twelve is placed before or after Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel and in Old Testament canons, the Prophets and the promises contained in them conclude the entire corpus rather than sit next to the History as was, probably, originally the case. Predictions of unmitigated disaster and hope of surpassing renewal stand side by side in the Prophets such that readers are compelled to temper realism with hope and hope with realism.

A book of prayer and praise; a collection of aphorisms and lessons in wisdom; a poetic justification of an innocent man before God; a collection of laments upon the destruction of Zion; and a short story celebrating friendship and generosity add depth and breadth to the whole: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Lamentations, and Ruth.

Further strands of literature came to be woven into the corpus of “the Law, the Prophets, and the rest of the books of our ancestors” of which the grandson of Ben Sira speaks, in the last quarter of the second century BCE, in his preface to his translation of Ben Sira into Greek: 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel, Qohelet, and Song of Songs. The specific contents of these Ben Sira does not celebrate, whether or not he considered them among “the prophets” or “the rest of the books” of his ancestors, except for Nehemiah. Nonetheless, 1-2 Chronicles adds interesting detail to the picture presented by The Primary History. The other five compositions exploit genres of discourse of great power—autobiography, parody, philosophical reflection, and love poetry. All six compositions came to occupy an important place in Jewish faith and practice with the passage of time.

The outer core of the Old Testament canon of Roman Catholic church largely overlaps with the outer core of the Old Testament canons of eastern Orthodox churches: Tobias, Judith, Esther (long version), 1 Esdras (= 3 Esdras in the Vulgate), and 1-2 Maccabees among the historical books; Baruch (including the Letter of Ieremias [chap. 6]) and Daniel (long version, including the Prayers of Azariah and the Three [3:24-90]), Susanna [chap. 13], and Bel and the Dragon [chap. 14] among the prophetic books; and Wisdom of Solomon and Wisdom of Iesous son of Sirach, Ben Sira for short, among the books of wisdom; moreover, Psalm 151 and Prayer of Manasseh. These compositions witness to the faith and life of Jewish communities in the Land and the Diaspora during the

Hellenistic and Roman periods and constitute a bridge to the thought world of the New Testament on the one hand and rabbinic literature on the other.

Still other compositions stand at the edges of canonical collections and sub-collections, in the received Greek but not in the received Latin canon, or vice versa: NRSV 2 Esdras, the nucleus of which is a Jewish apocalypse, **4 Ezra** (attested also in Syriac biblical manuscripts); **3 Maccabees** and **4 Maccabees**; and **Psalms of Solomon**. Each of these works contribute to our understanding of the Jewish hope of national restoration, a surpassing renewal of all things, and a resurrection of the just to everlasting life.

All of the books found in the Tanakh and most of the books found in the Old Testaments bequeathed to us by antiquity are available in translation of a number of New Revised Standard Version study Bibles—for example, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: A New Annotated Edition by the Society of Biblical Literature*.

A more comprehensive study Bible, one that contained and annotated **Psalms 152-155** and **Psalms of Solomon**; **Jubilees**, **1 Enoch**, and **2 Baruch**, not just **4 Ezra**; one that recorded the most important examples of textual variation to which ancient witnesses attest, for example the short (found in the Septuagint) and not just the long (found in the MT) versions of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and the Greek and **Hebrew versions of Ben Sira**, would be welcomed by students and scholars alike.

The scriptures begin, in the diction of Luke 24:27, with “Moses and all the prophets”—with Daniel numbered among the prophets in at least some strands of 1<sup>st</sup> century CE Judaism. Where the scriptures end was a matter of dispute. There are also large and small differences in wording and content among the ancient witnesses to Jewish scripture however delimited. That said, a deep unity of perspective is palpable across the diverse components of the canon however defined. If the question of the outer limits of the canon is left to one side, and the entire corpus of Jewish literature that found its way into one or more canon lists in antiquity is taken into consideration, a literary system of the following configuration presents itself:

Inner Core: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings

Outer Core: **Esther** (long version), **Daniel** (long version), **Psalms 151**, **Prayer of Manasseh**; **1 Esdras**, **1 Maccabees**, **2 Maccabees**; **Tobit**, **Judith**; **Wisdom of Solomon**, **Ben Sira**.

Periphery: **Psalms 152-155**, **Psalms of Solomon**; **3 Maccabees**, **4 Maccabees**; **Jubilees**, **1 Enoch**, **4 Ezra**, **2 Baruch**, etc.

In Jewish tradition, the canon or Tanakh has three parts: Law, Prophets, and Writings. **TaNaKh** is an acronym: **T**orah, **N**evi'im, and **K**etuvim. The following subdivisions are also traditional.

Prophets: **Former Prophets** + **Latter Prophets**.

Former Prophets: **Joshua**, **Judges**, **Samuel**, **Kings**.

Latter Prophets: **Isaiah**, **Jeremiah**, **Ezekiel**, **the Twelve**.

**The Twelve**: **Hosea**, **Joel**, **Amos**, **Obadiah**, **Jonah**, **Micah**; **Nahum**, **Habakkuk**, **Zephaniah**, **Haggai**, **Zechariah**, **Malachi**

Writings: **Truth** + **Five Scrolls** + **Books of Remembrance**.

**’eMeT**: Truth. **’eMeT** is an acronym: **’**iyov, **M**ishlei, and **T**ehillim: **J**ob, **P**roverbs, **P**salms (not the usual order).

Five Scrolls: **S**ong of Songs, **R**uth, **L**amentations, **Q**ohelet, **E**sther (in the order of the holidays on which they are read).

Books of Remembrance: **D**aniel, **E**zra Nehemiah, **C**hronicles.

The Aleppo Codex	The Babylonian Tradition	The Common Order
The Latter Prophets		
Isaiah	Jeremiah	Isaiah
Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Jeremiah
Ezekiel	Isaiah	Ezekiel
The Twelve	The Twelve	The Twelve
The Writings		
Chronicles	Ruth	
Psalms	Psalms	Psalms
Job	Job	Proverbs
Proverbs	Proverbs	Job
Ruth		Song of Songs (Pesach)
Song of Songs	Qohelet	Ruth (Shavuot)
Qohelet	Song of Songs	Lamentations (Tisha b'Av)
Lamentations	Lamentations	Qohelet (Sukkot)
Esther		Esther (Purim)
Daniel	Daniel	Daniel
	Esther	
	Ezra Nehemiah	Ezra Nehemiah
Ezra Nehemiah	Chronicles	Chronicles

