



# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

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# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
Genesis.....	3
Digging Deeper: The Abrahamic Covenant.....	5
Exodus.....	7
Digging Deeper: The Mosaic Covenant.....	9
Numbers.....	10
Joshua .....	11
Digging Deeper: Is God a Genocidal Murderer?.....	13
Judges.....	14
1 Samuel.....	15
2 Samuel.....	16
1 Kings.....	17
The Kings of Northern and Southern Israel .....	18
2 Kings.....	19
Ezra.....	20
Nehemiah.....	21
The Old Testament Timeline.....	22
Resources for Additional Study.....	23

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Introduction

A scroll with text on a rocky background. The scroll is unrolled and held by two black rings. The text is written in a serif font. The background is a close-up of a rocky, desert-like terrain.

**Fast Fact:**

In some Hebrew Bibles, books are often combined, resulting in as few as only 22 in their Table of Contents instead of 39.

The Old Testament is a fascinating collection of 39 individual writings. Some of these are narrative books, some are collections of poetry or wisdom, others are prophecies.

Of these 39 “books,” only eleven actually advance the story’s narrative timeline. These are the books we will survey.

The other 28 books can be divided into two main groups. Six provide “color commentary,” i.e., they give additional detail about the story. These are mentioned as “Complementary Books” throughout our survey as they occur. The other 22 books give incidental information that fits within the overall story. Six of these are poetic (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations); the rest are prophetic.


Most of the Old Testament was written in Ancient (or “Biblical”) Hebrew. However, two major sections were composed in Aramaic. During the 7th and 8th centuries B.C., Aramaic was used extensively in Babylon and Persia, so it is not surprising that we would find Aramaic in two books written during that time. Sometimes called “Chaldean” in the Old Testament, Aramaic was used to write Daniel 2:4b–7:28 and Ezra 4:8–6:18 and 7:12–26.

Most of the Old Testament was written within the borders of ancient Israel, but other locations include the Arabian desert and modern-day Iraq (ancient Babylonia).

Although we don’t know exactly how many people God used to write down the Old Testament, we can name over 30 different men who contributed to these Scriptures.

The Old Testament is primarily the story of God and people – not just any or all people, but a special people: Israel, the people of God.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A person wearing a white robe and sandals is walking on a rocky, dirt path. The person's legs and feet are visible, and they are casting a shadow on the ground. The path is composed of small rocks and dirt.

*The Old Testament is primarily  
the story of God and people – not just  
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# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Genesis (written by Moses)

People are often surprised to find out that many Old Testament books actually have two titles: one in Hebrew and one in Greek. Jewish Bibles, naturally, use the Hebrew names, but English Bibles often reflect the Greek names given later.

“Genesis” comes from the Greek name of the first book and means “beginning.” Genesis is indeed the book of beginnings. Covering a span of nearly 2,500 years, Genesis recounts the beginning of many things. For example, in just the first eleven chapters we see the beginning of our world (ch. 1), humanity (ch. 2), sin and salvation (ch. 3), God’s judgment (ch. 6-8), and the various human languages and ethnicities (ch. 11).

At the end of chapter eleven, Moses introduced the man who would become a lead character, not only in Genesis or even just the rest of the Bible, but for eternity. It was to Abram (later changed by God to “Abraham”) that God offered everything that a man could want – worldwide recognition, land and wealth to pass down to his descendants forever, and a large, expanding family. Here is what God promised him:

*"Go out from your country, your relatives, and your father's household to the land that I will show you. Then I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you, and I will make your name great, so that you will exemplify divine blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but the one who treats you lightly I must curse, and all the families of the earth will bless one another by your name."*

**Genesis 12:1-3**

*Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are from the NET Bible® Copyright © 2005 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. [www.bible.org](http://www.bible.org).*

### **Fast Fact:**

God reinforced his promises to Abraham at least three more times with added detail. See Genesis chapters 15, 17, and 22.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



But there was a catch: God did not want to work fast. In fact, he worked very slowly. At the time of Abraham's death, not a single one of God's promises had been fulfilled.

- ◆ There were only four surviving family members (through Isaac's line).
- ◆ He owned only a relatively small tract of land (just a burial plot).
- ◆ And no one really knew about him (and of the few who did, several did not like him at all!).

And God didn't speed up the plan after Abraham's death, either. Only one of Abraham's sons, Isaac, was to carry on the promises (17:19-21). Only one of Isaac's – Jacob – would likewise be God's choice (28:13-15).

By the time we near the end of Genesis, 215 years after God had first made his promises to Abraham, there were only a few more than seventy people in the family, and they had left the land promised to them and had moved to Egypt. They would not see the land of Canaan again for almost 500 years.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



## Digging Deeper: The Abrahamic Covenant

It is impossible to understand the story of the Old Testament without a grasp of the great promises that God made to Abraham.

If the Old Testament were a puzzle (which is how many people think of it!), God's covenant with Abraham, or the "Abrahamic Covenant," would serve as the corner and edge pieces within which all the other stories and teachings fit perfectly.

God's covenant with Abraham is unique in two ways. *First, it is unconditional.* In most covenants, both parties have obligations to uphold. If one party does not fulfill its part (condition), the covenant is breached, and all the pay-outs are no longer owed. In God's unconditional covenant, only God is obligated to act, and Abraham is guaranteed to receive the full pay-out because of God's faithfulness.


*Second, this covenant is eternal.* Over and over, God used words like *eternal*, *everlasting*, and *forever* to remind Abraham and his descendants that they never had to worry about losing out on the promises.

And what is this expected pay-out that they are still so interested in receiving? Only everything a person could wish for. First, **Abraham's family would become a great nation**. Now a nation not only needs a lot of people, but also **land** to live in (Deuteronomy 30) and a **government** to rule and lead it (2 Samuel 7:8-16).

Not only that, but God promised great **spiritual blessing to both Abraham's nation (Israel) and to the whole world** (Jeremiah 31).

While the numerous descendants part has already been accomplished, the rest of these promises will be fulfilled personally by Jesus himself in the future (see Luke 1:31-33 and 22:20).

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

A person wearing a white robe and sandals is walking on a rocky, dirt path. The person's legs and feet are visible, and they are casting a shadow on the ground. The path is composed of small rocks and dirt.

*God's promises to Abraham make up the Abrahamic Covenant. These provide the corner and border pieces to the "puzzle" of the Old Testament.*



# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Exodus (written by Moses)

Complementary book: [Leviticus](#)

Tucked inside God's covenant to Abraham was a strange promise, one that seems out of place among the blessings God graciously guaranteed the undeserving man:

### **Fast Fact:**

Hundreds of years went by between Genesis and Exodus. Moses was just one of over 2 million Israelites born during that time.

*Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a foreign country. They will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will execute judgment on the nation that they will serve. Afterward they will come out with many possessions.*

Genesis 15:13-14

The timeline of Exodus is fascinating. While chapter one covers Israel's 400 years of slavery in Egypt, and chapters two through four tell of Moses' first 80 years (including his supernatural protection and selection), the last 36 chapters span only about one year – from God's awesome rescue of Israel (12:2) to the construction of the Tent of Meeting (40:17) where the Israelites would meet with God for nearly 500 years until King Solomon built a permanent Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6).

It is in Exodus that we are introduced to the most famous of all laws, the Ten Commandments. These were not given to make Israel God's people if they obeyed them, but as a confirmation that they were already God's people.

*I, the LORD, am your God, who brought you from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.*

Exodus 20:2-3

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



Exodus includes the introduction of God’s personal name, “I AM” (usually written in English as *Jehovah* or *LORD*). This was how he introduced himself to Moses at the burning bush in the desert (3:14-15). Moses was to lead God’s people out of Egypt to come to know the great “I AM” and worship him in the desert.

After meeting them at a mountain in Sinai and introducing his law, God gave the people strict instructions for a place to worship him – a Tent of Meeting. These instructions are laid out in detail in chapters 25-31, and the actual work is recorded in chapters 36-40, making over one-third of Exodus about the physical aspects of Israel’s corporate worship.

Another major event in Exodus is the giving of what we call the Mosaic Covenant. Unlike the covenant God made with Abraham, the Mosaic Covenant was made with the whole nation of Israel (not just one man) and was based on their obedience of God’s commands (not unconditional).

Under this covenant, the people promised to obey God’s law as given to Moses (the Ten Commandments plus another 600 in Leviticus), and in return God would bless them with unprecedented health, peace, and prosperity in the land he promised to them.

However, should they disobey God’s laws, he would discipline them severely with disease, national oppression, and natural disasters such as famine and drought. Leviticus 26 provides a clear and graphic description of the results of breaking God’s law.

The people agreed to these terms, saying, “*We are willing to do and obey all that the LORD has spoken*” (24:7).

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Digging Deeper: The Mosaic Covenant

One of the biggest areas of confusion regarding the Old Testament has to do with the laws given to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant. There seems to be no end to the debate over whether or not people today (particularly Christians) are required to follow the 600+ commandments given by Moses.

While many Bible-believers honestly want to do what is right, they are often frustrated due to the mockery of unbelieving skeptics who love to point out their favorite (apparently) ridiculous laws about shaving techniques and tattoos (Leviticus 19:27-28) or wearing clothing of mixed fabrics (19:19).

The truth is simply this: **Christians are not required to follow the Old Testament law.** In fact, *no one is*. This is true for four reasons:

1. *God gave that law to the nation of Israel only.* God told Moses, “With these words I have made a covenant with you and Israel” (Exodus 34:27).
2. *God gave that law to show our need for a true Savior.* The law was only to be a “guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith” (Galatians 3:24).
3. *When Jesus came, he fulfilled the law completely.* Jesus said, “I have not come to abolish these things but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).
4. *Once fulfilled, the law ended with Jesus.* “Christ is the end of the law” (Romans 10:4)

Though the Old Testament Law is no longer in effect, Christians are commanded to obey a new law, sometimes called “the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2) or “the law of liberty” (James 1:25).

While this law does include most of the 10 Commandments (because God’s perfect standard can never change), Jesus summed it up like this in Matthew 28:19-20:

*“Make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”*

So, we do have a law to obey. But you won’t find it in the Mosaic Covenant of the Old Testament.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



## Numbers (written by Moses)

Complementary book: Deuteronomy

“Numbers” is from the Greek title (*Arithmoi*) that refers to the two “numberings” or censuses that God had Moses administer for the nation of Israel – the first after their rescue from Egypt, the second after an entire generation died wandering through the desert.

After the first census, God offered to conquer the land of Canaan for them, but they refused, scared of the giant warriors they saw in the land during a reconnaissance mission (ch. 13-14). So God had them wander the Arabian wilderness desert for almost 40 years, until the unbelieving generation was gone, before he offered Canaan to them again.

In reality, the book of Numbers should have recorded the third piece of the Abrahamic Covenant. The family multiplied from 70 people to over 2 million between Genesis and Exodus. God’s law was given, and the nation agreed to obey it in Exodus. In Numbers, they were supposed to take the land.

Instead, over 603,000 adult men died needlessly (compare Numbers 1:46 with 14:28-30). On top of that, there were almost 2,000 fewer men available to conquer the land at the end of their wandering years (26:51). Simply put, Numbers recounts one sad story after another of Israel’s unbelief and the consequences of rebellion against God and his plan.

Appropriately, the name of the book in the Hebrew Bible is “In the Wilderness”.



## Joshua (written by Joshua)

In the book of Joshua, we find Israel's attempt to take over the land promised them by God. God had already given them very specific instructions as to how this was to happen:

*When the LORD your God brings you to the land that you are going to occupy and forces out many nations before you — Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you — and he delivers them over to you and you attack them, you must utterly annihilate them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy! You must not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods. Then the anger of the LORD will erupt against you and he will quickly destroy you. ... You must burn the images of their gods, but do not covet the silver and gold that covers them so much that you take it for yourself and thus become ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the LORD your God.*

Deuteronomy 7:1-4, 25

Unfortunately, a couple of the stories in the first half of Joshua's book are included precisely because Israel did not follow God's plan for conquest. Consider:

- Chapter 7 – The Israelites were beaten back at the Battle of Ai because Achan coveted and took “the silver and gold” from Jericho.
- Chapter 9 – Joshua made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites and so he did not destroy them as God had commanded.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



After destroying the seven great nation in Canaan, Joshua had one more big job to do — divide up the whole land between the tribal families of Israel.

According to chapter 13, Moses had already allotted some land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh. It was up to Joshua to do the rest.

The second half of the book is a description of how Israel divided up the conquered territory between their family tribes and what they put in place to function as a nation. The book ends with Joshua warning the people to continue conquering the land, because God had fulfilled his promises to them (chapter 23) and a commitment by the people to continue to worship and obey God (chapter 24). Tragically, the book of Judges shows their commitment to have been short-lived.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Digging Deeper: Is God a Genocidal Murderer?

One of the common accusations made against God and the Bible goes something like this:

*“God in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are completely different. The Old Testament God is full of anger and murder, while Jesus is full of love and grace. I could never believe in a God that would kill so many innocent people like he did in the Old Testament.”*

Let’s admit it: God killed or had Israel kill a lot of people during the story of the Old Testament. How does that line up with his own command to Israel: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

There are two very important points that are almost never considered during this debate:

1. *God authorized Israel to eradicate only certain nations, in a certain place, for a certain reason.* Unlike some try to characterize it, Israel did not have a blank check to do whatever they wanted to whomever they didn’t like.

In fact, God was very clear about his reason for destroying certain nations: *“You must utterly annihilate them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy...for they will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods.”* (Deuteronomy 7:2-4)

In order to make sure that his people would not turn away from him, God told them to cleanse the pagan nations and their pagan religion from the land. (Of course, Israel did not obey, and they did indeed turn away from God, just as he had warned.)

2. *Death was not their only option.* The land of Canaan is only about 60 miles at its widest point, yet Joshua and the Israelites took over five years to work their way through the land. Everyone knew they were coming, yet most chose to stay and fight a losing battle instead of either evacuating the land or turning from their wicked paganism to the true God (see Joshua chapter 2).

***Is God a genocidal murderer?*** No, he is a God of holy justice who will not allow his people to be led away from himself. And he always offers a chance for people to repent rather than face judgment.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Judges (probably written by Samuel)

Complementary book: Ruth

Judges describes what has to have been the darkest time in Old Testament Israel's story. Some would argue that distinction goes to the years ruled by one godless king after another. While that has merit, I think Judges wins (or loses) because of one simple statement:

*Everyone did what was right in his own eyes. (21:25, NASB)*

It's appropriate that this is the last verse of the book because it sums up over 300 years of the judges. This attitude caused a pattern of 1) national rebellion, 2) God's discipline, 3) national repentance, and 4) God's deliverance via the judges. Unfortunately, this destructive pattern was not only cyclical, but also a downward spiral. Judges 2:19 solemnly states that each succeeding generation of Israelites during this time *"would again act more wickedly than the previous one."*

One of the main causes for this sad story is found in 1:27-36. God had given Israel strict instructions to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan so they would not be led away from God into pagan idolatry (Deuteronomy 20:16-18). From the beginning they did not obey, allowing many Canaanite nations to remain, and Israel suffered for it – not only during the centuries in Judges, but even to this day.

The fact that Judges spans about 300 years in only 21 chapters is enlightening. Whereas God wanted to preserve the record of this period in Israel's history, at the same time he did not intend to rub it in. The stories God chose to have written down provide only a sample of three centuries of rebellion.



# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT



## 1 Samuel (probably written by Samuel)

Complementary book: 1 Chronicles

Originally intended to be just one book, 1 & 2 Samuel are, surprisingly, not really about Samuel. Though he is a main player in the first several chapters of Volume One (1 Samuel), these two books actually focus their attention highlighting two other men: Saul and David, the first two kings of Israel.

First Samuel begins with the story of Samuel's miraculous birth and his rise to become the last of Israel's Judges. The era of the Judges ended when Israel demanded to have a human king, "just like all the other nations have" (8:4-7), instead of being ruled by God.

God allowed this, having Samuel install Saul, a man from Benjamin's tribe, as the first king. Unfortunately, Saul was certainly "just like all the other nations," many of whom Israel should have taken care of immediately after Joshua's death.

Saul quickly showed that he would not follow God's plan for leading Israel, so God had Samuel find David, a young man from the tribe of Judah, setting the stage for Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:10 to commence.

First Samuel is full of many of the favorite stories of Sunday School children, such as: God called the young boy, Samuel; the Ark of the Covenant was stolen and returned; David and Goliath; David's and Saul's conflicts; Saul visited the witch at Endor.

After much animosity projected from Saul upon David, the book ends with a wounded King Saul committing suicide on a battlefield, rather than be captured by the Philistine army.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 2 Samuel (probably written by Nathan and Gad)

Complementary book: 1 Chronicles



**Fast Fact:**

David's sin with Bathsheba led him to write one of the most famous confessions of all time: Psalm 51.

The story continues in 2 Samuel as David took the reins of war-torn Israel and led her back to God. This volume has some wonderful highs and very low lows. Through his military prowess and God's direction, David was able to beat back the Philistines—Israel's archenemy at the time—and retrieve the Ark of the Covenant, the visible symbol of God's presence.

But the victories fed David's pride, causing him to forget his vows of obedience to God and God's people. Taking another man's wife and murdering her husband resulted in David's family splintering and hurting each other to the point that one son, Absalom, led a military coup to overthrow his own dad. Ultimately, David ended up mourning the deaths of several of his children and many Israelites because of his personal sins.

The greatest highlight of the book is found in chapter seven. As an extension of God's unconditional covenant with Abraham to bless his descendants from Isaac and Jacob, in an outpouring of extraordinary grace God promised David that he would not only have a son continue on his throne (Solomon), but that there would never be an end to the Davidic dynasty; it would continue forever (7:8-16). This promise will finally be fulfilled when Jesus returns one day to establish his kingdom in Jerusalem (Luke 1:31-33).

Unfortunately, 2 Samuel ends with one last story of failure. David—whom God had originally described as “a man after my own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22)—against the counsel of his closest advisor, filled his heart with pride over his royal achievements, not acknowledging God's blessing upon him. His last royal decree we have on record (other than naming his successor) cost the lives of 70,000 people.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 1 Kings (probably written by Jeremiah)

Complementary book: 2 Chronicles

**Fast Fact:**

All eight of the good kings ruled in the Southern Kingdom (also known as Judah). The Northern Kingdom (Israel) had 20 kings, all evil, for its entire 200-year existence.

Like the books of Samuel, the books of the Kings were originally one volume containing the story of – what else? – the kings of Israel. First Kings opens with David’s death and Solomon’s succession to the throne. In fact, Solomon’s story receives a full half of the book, spanning 11 of the 22 chapters.

Under Solomon’s reign Israel enjoyed her Golden Age, the only period of extended peace and prosperity over the unified nation. David’s military offense had beaten back all of their enemies and paved the way for an unprecedented time of peace. It was during this time that Solomon built the magnificent Temple of God.

But this would not last, for Solomon chose to violate the three rules God said that the Israelite kings should always follow (Deuteronomy 17:16-18):

- Do not accumulate horses for himself (a sign of military power; 1 Kings 10:26-29)
- Do not marry many wives (1 Kings 11:1-4)
- Personally handwrite a copy of God’s law, keep it with him constantly, read it regularly and obey it (1 Kings 11:5-10)

Because of his failure in all three of these areas, Solomon did something that not even the apathetic Saul had done; he actually led the people of Israel in the worship of other gods.

The second half of 1 Kings tells the tragic tale of the kingdom divided into two separate, and sometimes warring, factions after Solomon’s death in 931 B.C. This national divide led to a series of 40 kings over approximately 350 years, only eight of whom were not wicked before God. Only one prophet, Elijah, is prominent in 1 Kings.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

ISRAEL		JUDAH	
Years (B.C.)	King	Years (B.C.)	King
931-910	Jeroboam I	931-913	Rehoboam
910-909	Nadab	913-911	Abijah
909-886	Baasha	911-870	Asa
886-885	Elah	870-848	Jehoshaphat
885	Zimri	848-841	Jehoram
885-880	Tibni	841	Ahaziah
885-874	Omri	841-835	Athaliah
874-853	Ahab	835-796	Joash
853-852	Ahaziah	796-767	Amaziah
852-841	Joram	767-740	Uzziah
841-814	Jehu	740-732	Jotham
814-798	Jehoahaz	732-716	Ahaz
798-782	Jehoash	716-687	Hezekiah
782-753	Jeroboam II	687-643	Manasseh
753	Zachariach	643-641	Amon
752	Shallum	641-609	Josiah
752-742	Menahem	609	Jehoahaz
742-740	Pekahiah	609-598	Jehoiakim
740-732	Pekah	598	Jehoiachin
732-722	Hoshea	597-586	Zedekiah

\*The dates given are the calculations of Edwin R. Thiele (1895–1986).

\*\*The kings highlighted were the only ones out of 40 who obeyed God.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 2 Kings (probably written by Jeremiah)

Complementary book: 2 Chronicles

Naturally, 2 Kings picks up where 1 Kings ends, finishing the story of the two Israelite kingdoms. Second Kings tells of the last 11 northern kings and most (all but three) of the southern kings.

In chapter two, Elijah literally hands off his ministry to Elisha, who boldly asked for “a double portion of the prophetic spirit” that Elijah had (2:9). His request was granted, and Elisha ministered to both kingdoms with a display of miracles unrivaled in the Old Testament, except by Moses. In his fantastic survey of the whole Bible, *Explore the Book*, J. Sidlow Baxter notes that God performed a total of 20 miracles through Elisha, including one using Elisha’s skeleton after his death (13:20-21).

It is 2 Kings that records the end of the monarchy period of Israel. In chapter 17 the writer sums up the failure of the Northern Kingdom to produce any godly kings or follow God in any way. God brought judgment to the Northern Kingdom through Assyria, and the writer of 2 Kings solemnly reported:

*Finally the Lord rejected Israel just as he had warned he would do through all his servants the prophets. Israel was deported from its land to Assyria and remains there to this very day.*

2 Kings 17:23

The rest of the book reveals the Southern Kingdom’s gradual decline (with a few bright spots along the way) over the next 140 years, until they, too, suffered judgment through captivity, this time to Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. For 20 years, Nebuchadnezzar harassed Judah and took groups of people captive in three sets. Some of the events surrounding these captivities are further described by the prophets Daniel (taken in the first captivity), Ezekiel (the second), and Jeremiah (the last).

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Ezra (written by Ezra)

Complementary book: Esther

Like the books of Samuel and Kings (and even Chronicles), Ezra and Nehemiah were originally one book recounting the story of Israel's three returns to the land God had given them. Ezra wrote about two of these in the book with his name.

Interestingly, Ezra did not introduce himself until chapter seven and appears in only four chapters of the Bible: Ezra 7 and 10 and Nehemiah 8 and 12. And there is good reason for this: The first half of the book of Ezra took place approximately 80 years before Ezra was even born!

As a priest from the direct line of Aaron (7:1-5) and a scribe "skilled in the law of Moses", Ezra recorded the first two of Israel's returns from a spiritual perspective. The first six chapters tell how Zerubbabel returned from Persia to oversee the rebuilding of the Temple. He moved back to Israel with just shy of 50,000 people (2:64-65) to do the work.

Nearly eight decades later, Ezra returned with another 1,675 men – priests, leaders, skilled craftsmen – to finish the detail work of the Temple and to begin the daily worship and sacrifices in the Temple again (chapter 8).

The book ends with Ezra calling the Israelites to repent of their sins before God. Specifically, those men who had married wives from pagan, foreign nations were to divorce them and return to the proper worship and lifestyle God had given in the Mosaic law 1,000 years earlier.





## Nehemiah (written by Nehemiah)

The last of the Old Testament books that moves the story forward, Nehemiah picks up about five years after Ezra. Nehemiah was a political leader in Persia, a confidant of King Artaxerxes. Upon hearing that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down, even though the people were living and worshipping there, Nehemiah approached the Persian king and, by God's miraculous provision, secured not only permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its defenses, but also the clear passage there and the materials to complete it (2:7-8).

Naturally, due to his position and passion, Nehemiah records this third return (after Zerubbabel's and Ezra's) from more of a political viewpoint. He was concerned with Israel's national and political safety, as the nation was still trying to get back on her feet. We see this clearly in Nehemiah's record of the opposition against the new city wall. Although it took only 52 days to complete the project (6:15), Nehemiah dedicated chapters four through six to retelling of the enemies they faced during the work.

Once the wall was finally completed, Nehemiah used the last half of his account (chapters 7-13) to focus on matters of detail:

- a summary census of the returned exiles (chapters 7, 11, 12)
- another round of confession and repentance led by Ezra (chapters 8-10)
- a few other specific sins, not mentioned by Ezra, that needed to be corrected (chapter 13)

And so the main story of the Old Testament finishes with a purification of Israel, ready to once again hear from God.

And they did...but not for another 400 years until the angel, Gabriel, announced the soon arrival of two important men sent to offer Israel her long-awaited kingdom: John the Baptizer and Jesus.

# THE STORY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

## THE OLD TESTAMENT TIMELINE

<u>Book</u>	<u>Years (B.C.)</u>	<u>Key dates</u>	<u>Key thought</u>
Genesis	4180 - 1800 *	2090, Abrahamic Covenant	Beginnings
Exodus	1525 - 1445	1445, Israel's rescue from Egypt	Redemption
Numbers	1445 - 1405	1405, Moses' death	Wandering
Joshua	1405 - 1390	1390, Joshua's death	Victory
Judges	1390 - 1075 **	1375, Israel's first major apostasy	Defeat
1 Samuel	1100 - 1011 **	1011, Saul's death	King
2 Samuel	1011 - 971	971, David's death	David
1 Kings	971 - 845	931, Solomon's death	Division
2 Kings	845 - 586	722, Northern Israel exiled to Assyria 606/597/586 Judah exiled to Babylon	Captivity
Ezra	538 - 458	539, Cyrus authorized return to Israel	Spiritual restoration
Nehemiah	444 - 432	430, Malachi gave the last word from God in the Old Testament	Political restoration

This chart is adapted from Paul Benware, *Survey of the Old Testament*.

\* Except for the key date, the time frame for Genesis uses round numbers.

\*\* Since Samuel was born during the time of the judges and was the last of the judges, there is some overlap between the books of Judges and 1 Samuel.





## RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*, one volume. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960.

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Scroggie, W. Graham. *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption: An Inductive Study of Salvation in the Old and New Testaments* (Three volumes complete and unabridged in one). Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1994. Originally published: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976.