

EXPLORATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Why are we using the Hebrew Bible Layout?

You may notice that the order of the books in this course differs from the standard "Old Testament" layout found in most modern Christian Bibles. This is a remarkably intentional choice designed to transport you back to the world of the 1st Century.

Here is why we are adopting the layout of the Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh) rather than the traditional Christian Old Testament order.



1. It Was the Bible of Jesus and the Apostles

When the authors of the New Testament wrote their letters and gospels, the "Old Testament" as we know it today—specifically the order ending with Malachi—had not yet been codified by the Christian church.

Instead, the Scriptures that Jesus read, preached from, and fulfilled were the Hebrew Scriptures. When Jesus speaks of the Scriptures in Luke 24:44, He explicitly refers to the 3 part structure of the Hebrew Bible: "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses (metonymy for the Torah), the Prophets, and the Psalms (metonymy for the Writings) must be fulfilled."

(***Metonymy uses a related word or attribute to stand for something else, like "The White House" for the U.S. Presidency, "the Crown" for the monarchy, "suits" for businesspeople, or "the pen" for writing.)

By using this layout, we are reading the text exactly as Jesus, Paul, Peter, and the earliest disciples would have encountered it.

2. The Narrative Arc: Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim (TaNaKh)

The Hebrew Bible is organized into three distinct sections. This acronym, TaNaKh, gives us a specific narrative shape:

Torah (The Law “Instruction”): The foundation of the covenant.

Nevi'im (The Prophets): This section includes both the "Former Prophets" (historical books like Joshua-Kings) and "Latter Prophets" (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.). It interprets Israel's history through the lens of the covenant.

Ketuvim (The Writings): Beginning with the Psalms (as Jesus noted) and including wisdom literature, Daniel, and Ezra-Nehemiah.

3. A Different Ending: Chronicles vs. Malachi

The most profound difference is the final word of the text, which changes how the reader enters the New Testament.

The Christian Order (Ending in Malachi): This arrangement is chronological and thematic. It ends with the prophecy of Elijah coming to prepare the way. It is designed to lead the reader directly into the Gospel of Matthew and John the Baptist. It is a structure that looks forward to the New Testament.

The Hebrew Order (Ending in 2 Chronicles): The Hebrew Bible ends with 2 Chronicles. The final verses are the Decree of Cyrus, commanding the exiles to return to Jerusalem to build the Temple: "Whoever is among you of all his people... let him go up."

Why this matters for us: Ending with Chronicles leaves the history of Israel as an "incomplete sentence." It ends with a call to return and rebuild, but without a finalized King or a perfect Temple. It leaves the reader in a state of deep, unresolved longing for the Messiah.

4. Reading as a 1st-Century Christian

Our goal in this course is historical immersion. To understand the New Testament fully, we must understand the from which it grew. By reading the books in this order, we are not looking back at the Old Testament from the safety of the 21st century; we are placing ourselves in the shoes of a 1st-century believer. We are learning to feel the weight of the Exile, the hope of the Psalms, and the anticipation of the Prophets exactly as they did.

We are reading the Bible Jesus read, in the order He knew it, to better understand the Savior He is.



Hebrew/Protestant Bible Comparison

Hebrew Bible (<i>tanakh</i>)	Protestant Bible
Books of Moses (<i>torah</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy 	Law (Pentateuch) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
Prophets (<i>nevi'im</i>) <p>Former</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua Judges Samuel Kings <p>Latter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi) 	Historical Books <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joshua Judges Ruth Samuel (books 1 and 2) Kings (books 1 and 2) Chronicles (books 1 and 2) Ezra Nehemiah Esther
Writings (<i>khetuvim</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles 	Wisdom Books <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon Prophets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel The Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habbakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

PART I

THE TORAH

Narrative and Structure

I. The Name and Nature

While often translated as "Law" in English bibles, the Hebrew word Torah is far richer. It comes from the root *yarah*, meaning "to shoot" (like an arrow) or "to _____."

Not just Rules: While it contains laws, the Torah is primarily a narrative. The laws are embedded within the story of God's relationship with Israel.

The Greek Term: The Septuagint used the word *Nomos* (law) and later the term *Pentateuch* (five scrolls).

The Unified Whole: Although divided into five scrolls for practical handling, the Torah acts as a singular literary unit—the "_____ of ancient Israel.

A. The Big Idea: The Narrative Trajectory

The Torah is not a random collection of myths; it is a unified argument about God and the world.

The Torah's Core Conflict: "Out of _____ and darkness, God creates order, beauty, and goodness. From Genesis 3 onward, humans continue choosing autonomy and acting selfishly. Yet, despite this cycle of rebellion, God remains _____ and refuses to abandon His world."

This trajectory moves from Creation (God dwelling with man) to Exile (man cast out) to Redemption (God returning to dwell in the Tabernacle).

B. Torah Theology

In the Ancient Near East (ANE), pagan gods were often chaotic, territorial, and manipulative. The Torah presents Yahweh as distinct: He is the sole Creator who stands outside of creation, not part of it. He is _____ (distinct/set apart) and ethical, requiring His people to reflect His character.

II. Covenant: The Mechanism of Relationship God relates to His people through covenants (binding agreements).

Abrahamic Covenant: Unconditional promises of Land, Seed, and Blessing.

Mosaic (Sinai) Covenant: A conditional relationship. If Israel obeys, they become a "kingdom of _____" (Exodus 19:6).

The Tension: The Torah highlights the tension between God's unconditional promises to Abraham and Israel's repeated failure to keep the conditional laws of Sinai.

III. Presence of Yahweh with His People

The Goal of the Exodus and the climax of the Torah is not Israel entering the land (which doesn't happen until Joshua), but God entering the Tabernacle. The goal of salvation is habitation. The elaborate laws of Leviticus are provided so that a Holy God can _____ in the midst of a sinful people without consuming them.

IV. Literary Structure: The Chiasm of the Torah

Many scholars view the Torah as a symmetrical structure (chiasm) focusing on the center.

- A. Genesis: Narrative history; Covenant promised (The prologue)
- B. Exodus: Leaving Egypt; Traveling to Sinai (The construction of the Dwelling)
- C. Leviticus: _____ & Worship (The Center: Access to God)
- B'. Numbers: Leaving Sinai; Traveling to Moab (The testing of the people)
- A'. Deuteronomy: Narrative sermon; Covenant renewed (The epilogue)

The Torah ends on the edge of the Jordan River. It leaves the reader with a sense of anticipation. The Law has been given, but the human heart remains hard (Deut 30:6). The Torah forces us to ask: Who will finally fix the human heart so we can keep the covenant?

Answer Key

1. Instruct (or Teach/Point)
2. Constitution
3. Chaos (or Disorder/Void)
4. Faithful
5. Holy
6. Priests
7. Dwell (or Live/Reside)
8. Holiness (or Atonement)

GENESIS

Title and Organization

A. The Name, Author, Date

Name

Hebrew: בראשית (be-reh-sheet), meaning "In the _____."

Greek (LXX): Γενεσίς (Genesis), meaning "Origins" or "Source."

Significance: This book provides the material for every major theological theme in the rest of the Bible (sin, redemption, covenant, election, etc.).

Author: Traditionally Prescribed to Moses

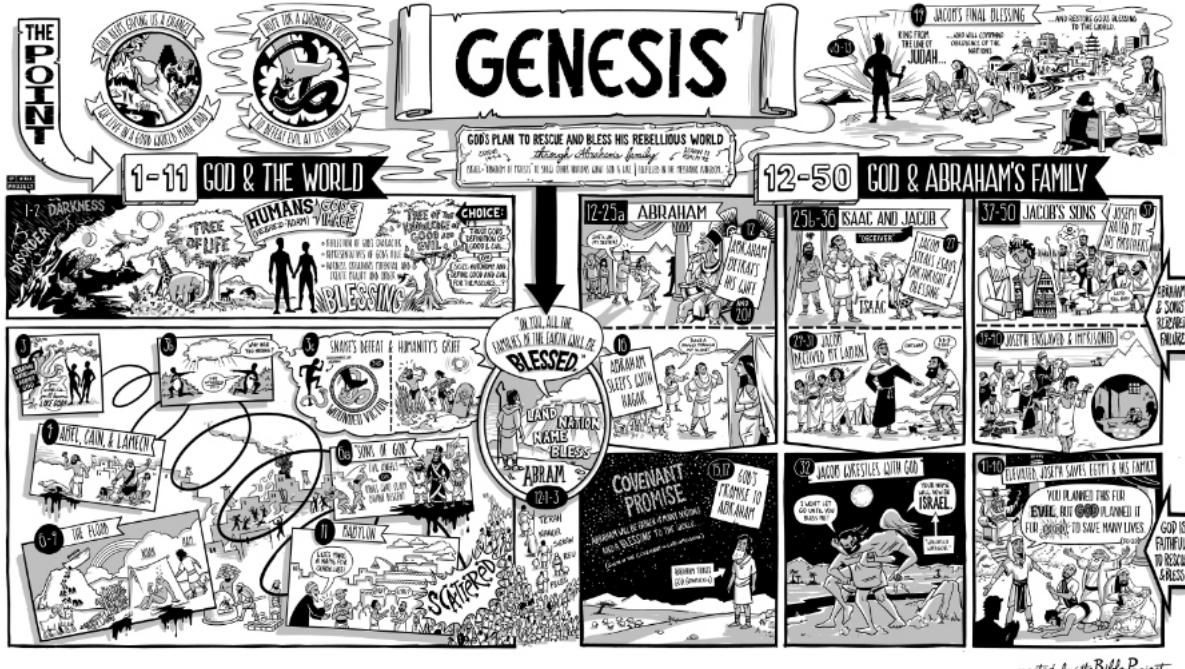
- Internal biblical references (e.g., Exod 24:4; Deut 31:9)
- Jewish tradition (Talmud, rabbinic literature)
- New Testament references (e.g., John 5:46; Luke 24:44)

Date: 13th century BCE (c. 1400–1200 BCE)

- Aligned with an Exodus during the reign of Ramesses II (late date) or earlier.
- Some traditions allow for:
 - Minor later editorial additions (e.g., Moses' death in Deut 34, attributed to Joshua).



II. Structure



B. Literary Organization

Toledot: The book is not organized by random stories, but by a specific Hebrew phrase: Eleh toledot ("These are the generations of...").

This phrase occurs 10 times and acts as a _____ to transition the narrative from one family line to the next. It narrows the focus from the whole cosmos down to the sons of Jacob.

1. <u>Toledot</u> of heavens & earth	2:4–4:26
2. <u>Toledot</u> of Adam	5:1–6:8
3. <u>Toledot</u> of Noah	6:8–9:29
4. <u>Toledot</u> of Shem, Ham, Japheth	10:1–11:9
5. <u>Toledot</u> of Shem	11:10–11:26
6. <u>Toledot</u> of Terah	11:27–25:11
7. <u>Toledot</u> of Ishmael	25:12–25:18
8. <u>Toledot</u> of Isaac	25:19–35:29
9. <u>Toledot</u> of Esau	36:1–8; 36:9–37:1
10. <u>Toledot</u> of Jacob	37:2–50:26

A. Primeval History: The Downward Spiral

Genesis 1–11 answers the question: "Why is the world the way it is?"

1. Creation (1–2): Functional Order God creates the cosmos as a Temple. He takes tohu va-vohu (chaos/void) and forms it into a functional habitation for His creation and image-bearers.

a. Functional vs Material: In Ancient Near East thought and worldview, something "EXISTED" when it had orderly and functional, not just when it had material, physical mass.

- Chaos = Nothing
- Order = _____

Days 1 through 3

Something exists when it has a function, role, and a purpose in an ordered system, not when it takes up space or is a substance characterized by material properties. This applies to everything in the cosmos, where various elements come into being when they are given a role and a function within the cosmos.

Walton, John, H (2006), *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, Baker Academic, 134.

- Days 1 through 6 have been organized into 2 groups of 3, each addressing the problem in the first verses of the bible—chaos and emptiness.
- Days 1 through 3 address the problem of creation being unordered and uninhabited. God orders the cosmos into distinct spaces: the heavens above, the middle space with (raqia) between heaven and earth (waters above/waters below), and the land (earth).

Days 4 through 6

- Days 4 through 6 fill the spaces with their respective inhabitants: heavens/lights; middle space/birds and fish; land/creatures and humans

Every part of this 3 tiered system of images will develop throughout the entire biblical story!

- WATERS—darkness // death // struggle // enemies
- DRY LAND—light // life // refuge
- God splitting water to create life // God's victory of chaos and evil

Mountains, _____, and trees will be key repetitive themes from Genesis to Revelation.

In the Beginning: Darkness and Chaos Waters Fill the Land

Now, the land was **wild/unordered** (tohu / תֹהוּ) and **waste/uninhabited** (bohu / בֹהוּ)

COSMOS ORDERED

AND

FILLED WITH INHABITANTS

Day 1:

"And God said ..."
light and dark / day and night
Evening and Morning: Day 1

Day 4:

"And God said ..."
lights separate and rule day and night
Evening and Morning: Day 4

HEAVEN
(THE SKIES)

Day 2:

"And God said ..."
The dome separates ...
... the waters above
- - - - -
... the waters below
Evening and Morning: Day 2

Day 5:

"And God said ..."
Creatures in the waters ...
... birds by the waters above
- - - - -
... fish in the waters below
Evening and Morning: Day 5

AND

Day 3:

"And God said ..."
the waters below gather
the dry land emerges

Day 6:

"And God said ..."
land creatures emerge
from the dry land
humans appointed to rule

EARTH
(THE LAND)

+1 Bonus!

plants and seed emerge from the ground
Evening and Morning: Day 3

+1 Bonus!

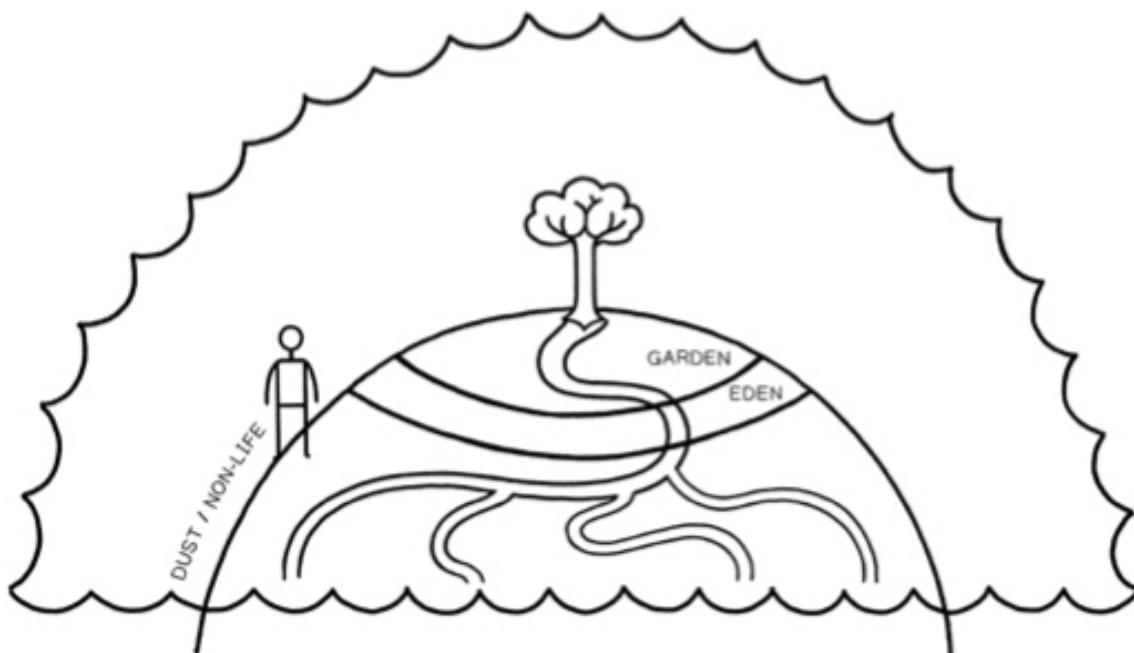
and provided with trees, plants and seeds
Evening and Morning: Day 6

Day 7: Cosmos Ordered and Filled

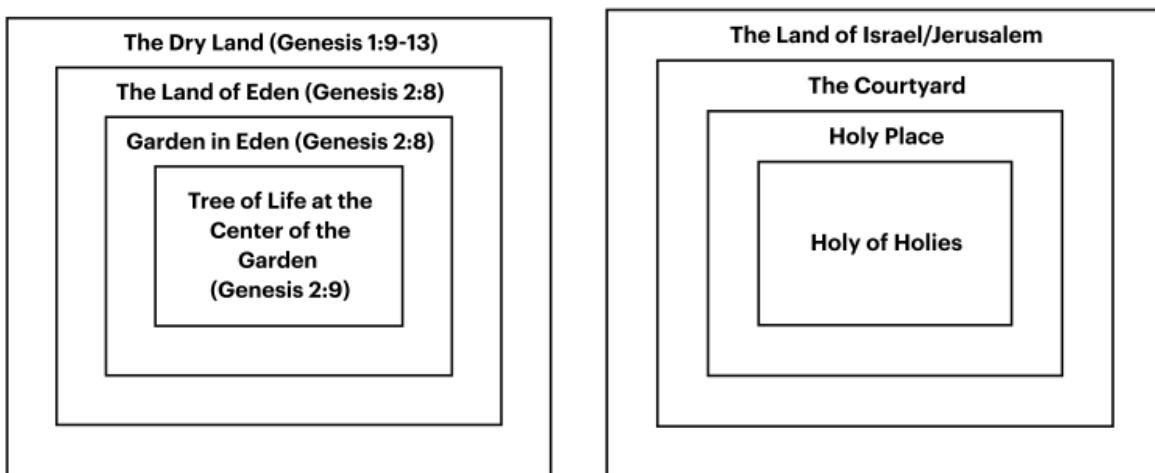
Thus were finished the **skies and land and all their host**

b. Eden

- Eden is structured geographically into three distinct parts.
 - Outer – Region (Land) of Eden
 - Inner – Garden of Eden
 - Center – The Trees in the middle of the Garden



- The concept of the Eden is a symbolic template for Israel's tabernacle/temple
 - Ezek 40-48 (e.g., restored temple)



c. Humanity

- Imago Dei: To be made in God's image is not just about having a soul; it is a functional status. Humans are God's _____ on earth, tasked with ruling and stewarding His creation fulfilling 3 ancient roles:
 - Prophet: Speaking divine truth.
 - Priest: Mediating worship, sacrifices, and sanctifying creation.
 - King: Exercising dominion (stewardship) on the earth (land/ground).

Adam, the *Imago Dei*, was intended to function as Prophet, Priest, King but failed. Jesus the “_____” perfectly fulfilled these offices, restoring them for believers, who now participate in these roles with Him.

- “To Work and To Keep” - Genesis 2:15: These verbs are significant and portray the ideal vocation for humanity.
 - Abad (אָבָד) – To Work, To Serve, To Worship (“tilling the soil”)
 - Exodus 20:8-10 (to work)
 - Genesis 27:29 (to serve)
 - Exodus 3:12 (to worship)
 - Shamar (שָׁמַר) – To Keep, To Guard (priestly service)
 - Numbers 8:26
 - Numbers 18:7

2. The Fall (3): De-Creation Begins. Sin enters not as a "mistake," but as a claim to autonomy (defining good and evil for oneself).

- The Result: The breakdown of relationships in three directions:
 - Between God and Man (Hiding).
 - Between Man and Woman (Blaming).
 - Between Man and _____ (The ground is cursed).
- What the woman saw fills out in 3 steps:
 - She saw that [it] is ... was good. Contrasted with God's "seeing that is was good" 7 times
 - Desirable to the eyes: What the woman wants generates desire. She now "wants the think that will now kill her because she has embraced the snake's alternative idea of the story.
 - Desirable for becoming wise: By embracing the snakes interpretation of the tree, she sees the knowing of good and bad as desirable and a path to true wisdom, but in reality, it is the path that will lead to death.

"Precisely at this point the author raises the issue of becoming "wise": 'And the woman saw that the tree was also desirable for gaining wisdom (3:6). Thus, the temptation is not presented as general rebellion from God's authority. Rather, it is portrayed as a quest for wisdom and 'the good' apart from God's provision."

Sailhamer, John H. (1995). The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-theological Commentary, Zondervan Academic.

- The phrase "good in their own eyes" will be a repetitive pattern in the Old Testament narratives.
 - The Sons of God – Genesis 6:2: "The sons of God saw (וְאָרַגְנָה) that the daughters of humans were good/beautiful (טְבַתָּה), and they took wives for themselves..."
 - Lot – Genesis 13:10–11: "Lot lifted up his eyes and saw (וְיָשַׁבְתָּה... אָרַגְנָה) that the Jordan Valley was well watered... So Lot chose for himself..."
 - Achan – Joshua 7:21: "When I saw (וְאָרַגְנָה) among the spoil a beautiful mantle... silver... gold... then I coveted... and took them."
 - More example - 2 Samuel 11:2–4 (David "saw/good" bathing woman); "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg 17:6; 21:25)

3. The Spread of Sin (4–11) The narrative tracks the acceleration of evil:

- Cain & Abel: Sin moves from the garden to the family (Fraticide).
- Lamech (Ch. 4): Sin moves to society (Polygamy and vengeance).
- The Flood: God responds to violent chaos with "de-creation" (returning the world to watery chaos) to wash it clean and "re-create"
- The Tower of Babel: Humanity unites against God to make a name for themselves.
- *The Crisis: By the end of Chapter 11, the world is broken, scattered, and under judgment. God needs a new strategy.*

B. Patriarchal History: The Covenant Solution

Genesis 12–50 answers the question: "What is God going to do about it?"

1. The Call of Abraham (Ch. 12) God chooses one man, Abram, from a pagan family in Ur. This is the doctrine of Election: God chooses one for the sake of the _____.

2. The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3) This is the backbone of the Old Testament.

- God makes three promises:
 - Land: A specific place (Canaan) for God's people to live.
 - Seed (Descendants): A nation that will come from a barren couple.
 - Blessing: "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Note: This reverses the curse of Babel. God scattered the nations (Gen 11), now He intends to bless the nations through Abraham (Gen 12).

3. The Covenant Confirmed (Gen 15 & 17)

- Gen 15: God walks between the torn animals alone. This signifies a Unilateral Covenant. God stakes His own existence on keeping the promise. "If I break this word, may I be torn apart like these _____."
- Gen 17: The sign of the covenant (Circumcision) is given.

4. The Sons: Isaac and Jacob The promise faces threats (barrenness, famine, conflict), but God preserves the line.