

# Outline and Key Themes for Each Book of the Tanakh

(listed in their original order; dates are approximate and based on the time period covered by the book NOT necessarily when it was written or compiled)

## TORAH (or “Instructions” or “Books of Moses”)

### **Genesis (in Hebrew “Beresheet” or “in the beginning”): -1800BC**

Key Theme: Blessing for the Nations

Key Verse: Genesis 12:1-3 (and 15:5-6)

Outline: intro + 2 sets of 5 clear sub-sections (denoted by “these are the generations of...”)

Gen 1-2: Introduction – creation

Gen 1-11:26: Primeval History (Adam to Noah to Abraham, spanning thousand of years)

5 subsections: 3-4, 5-6:8, 6:9-9, 10-11:9, 11:9-11:26

Gen 11:27-50: Patriarchal History (Abraham to Israel’s sons, spanning hundreds of years)

5 subsections: 11:27-25:11, 25:12-18, 25:19-35:29, 36, 37-50

### **Exodus (in Hebrew “these are the names”): 1400BC**

Key Theme: Rescue and Relationship for Abundant Life in God’s Presence

Key Verse: Exodus 6:5-8

Outline: divided up based on content into 2 major sections each with 2 sub-sections

Ex 1-18: Rescue

2 subsections: 1-12 Egypt, 13-18 Egypt to Sinai

Ex 19-40: Relationship

2 subsections: 19-24 principles of the relationship, 25-40: God’s presence (25-40 can be subdivided again and forms a chiasm:

25-31:11 Tabernacle Blueprint

31:12-18 Holy Time/Shabbat

32-33 Relationship Broken

34 Relationship Restored

35:1-3 Holy Time

35:4-40:28 Tabernacle Building

### **Leviticus (in Hebrew “And he called”): 1400BC**

Key Theme: God’s Call to an Abundant Life of Holiness

Key Verse: Leviticus 11:44-45

Outline: 2 main sections which deal with “How” to live a Holy Life

Lev 1-16: Maintaining Holiness/Justification

1-7: through sacrifices

8-10: through priests

11-15: through external purity (which pts to internal purity)  
16: Yom Kippur  
Lev 17-27: Experiencing Holiness in daily living/Sanctification  
17- 25: in day-to-day life  
26: consequences  
27: gifts

## **Numbers (in Hebrew “in the wilderness”): 1400BC**

Key Theme: Divine Faithfulness & Fresh Starts (**because God is committed to blessing the nations**)

Key Verse:

Outline: structured by geography and chronology

Num 1-10:10: Preparing to enter the Land (instructions at Sinai)

Num 10:11-12:16: Sinai to Paran

Num 13-20:21: Preparing to enter the Land

-This section contains 3 rebellions each followed by instructions for future life in land – highlighting God’s faithfulness in spite of Israel’s failures.

(Note: Numbers is basically silent on events occurring during the 37yrs of wandering.)

Num 20:22-22:1: Kadesh to Moab

Num 22:2-36:13: Preparing to enter the Land

-Balaam’s blessings; another example of sin, followed by more instructions

## **Deuteronomy (in Hebrew “These are the words”): 1400BC**

**Special Note:** Deuteronomy serves as the HINGE between the Torah and rest of the Tanakh – the previous four books build to this covenant (and preparation to enter the Promised Land) and all the other books -- their consequences, quotations, theology -- flow from this book. It is the fullest expression of theology in the Tanakh and is quoted by Jesus more than any other book.

Key Theme: Renewing Our Loyalty and Love (or our covenantal vows)

Key Verse: Deuteronomy 6:4,5 (the “Shema”)

→ this is also the most important verse in the entire Tanakh!

→ God is a jealous god and wants all of you

Outline: this book follows a typical covenantal agreement structure

Deut 1-4: Motivated by God’s grace in the past

Deut 5-26: Guided by God’s instructions for life

Deut 27-30: Inspired by God’s consequences for choices

Deut 31-34: Motivated by God’s grace in the future

## Former PROPHETS (“Nevi-eem”)

### **Joshua: 1400-1380BC**

Key Theme: Inheriting the Promise

Key Verse: Joshua 23:14

Outline: the book has 3 major sub-divisions based on chronology

Josh 1-12: Conquering the Land

1-5: preparing to conquer

1: receiving the commission (v1-9 God commissions Joshua; then the people)

2: spying out the land (note: symmetry in Rahab story)

3-4: crossing the Jordan (note: also symmetric; God is exalting Joshua)

5:1-12: keeping circumcision and Passover

5:13-15: getting perspective (back to just God and Joshua like in ch.1)

6-11:15: dividing and conquering

11:16-12:24: recording and celebrating the conquest

Josh 13-22: Distributing the Land (by tribe)

Josh 23-24: Living in the Land/Covenant Renewal

### **Judges: 1380-1050BC**

Key Theme: Our Need for a (national) Leader after God’s Own Heart

Key Verse: repetition of “Israel had no king . . . everyone did as he saw fit”

Outline: chronological order, repeated pattern set up before and after each judge

Judges 1-3:6: From conquest to co-existence to apostasy

Judges 3:7-16: Downward spiral of the Judges

(Note the difference between the first judge Othniel and the last judge

Samson; and between the holy war in 3:28 and the civil war in 12:5)

Judges 17-21: Religious and moral chaos

### **Samuel: 1100-971BC**

Key Theme: Rise of the Kingdom

Key Verse:

Outline: prolog + 3 narratives + epilog

1 Sam 1-2:11: Prolog; God is the Great Deliverer and Reverser

1:1-19a trouble/barren,

1:19a-28 deliverance

2:1-11 praise

2:12-12:45: Samuel – God sets up the monarchy

13-15: Saul – God rejects the first monarch

16- 2 Sam 20: David – God establishes the monarchy

21-24: Epilog; God is the Great Deliverer and Reverser

21:1-14 trouble/famine  
21:15-22 deliverance/mighty men  
22:1-51 praise  
23:1-7 praise  
23:8-39 deliverance/mighty men  
24 trouble/plague

## **Kings: 971-560BC**

*Audience: Israelites living during the Babylonian captivity*

Key Theme: Demise of the Kingdom (To explain to those in exile, why they are there)

Key Verse: 2 Kings 23:26

Outline: follows the kings of each kingdom, always introducing them the same way & then evaluating them based on their purity of worship (= worship God alone, in Jerusalem, & tear down high places to other gods)

1 Kings 1-11: Kingdom United under Solomon

1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17: Kingdom Divided

2 Kings 18-25: Southern Kingdom (Judah) Alone

## **Latter PROPHETS (“Nevi-eem”)**

### **Isaiah: 739-530BC**

Key Theme: God’s Sovereign Judgment & Future Restoration of the Remnant (through Messiah)

Key Verse: Isaiah 53

Outline:

Is 1: Opening Words

Is 2-5: God’s Judgment Revealed

Is 6: Isaiah’s Call

Is 7:1-17: Sign of Immanuel

Is 7:18-8: Coming Assyrian Invasion

Is 9:1-7: Description of the Messianic Age

Is 9:8-10:4: Judgment against Israel

Is 10:5-34: Judgment against Assyria

Is 11-12: Further Description of Messianic Age

Is 13-23: Oracles against the Nations

Is 24-27: “Little Apocalypse”

Is 28-33: Oracle of Woes

Is 34-35: Eschatological Summation

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Is 36-39: Historical Interlude – Hezekiah’s Reign  
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Is 40: Comfort, Comfort My People

Is 41: Coming Deliverance

Is 42: Role of the Lord's Servant  
Is 43-45: Israel's Redemption from Babylon  
Is 46-47: Judgment against Babylon  
Is 48-52:12: Israel's Release and Exaltation  
Is 52:13-53: Suffering Servant  
Is 54-59: Celebrating the Return  
Is 60-66: Climax of God's Restoration

### **Jeremiah: 627-580BC**

Key Theme: Wrestling with God's Call and Plan

Key Verse:

Outline:

Jer 1: God Calls Jeremiah  
Jer 2-10: Jeremiah Describes Judah's Sad Condition  
Jer 11-20: Jeremiah Wrestles with People and with God  
Jer 21-29: Jeremiah Challenges Rulers and Prophets  
Jer 30-33: Book of Comfort  
Jer 34-39: Failure of Jerusalem's Leadership  
Jer 40-45: Jerusalem after Its Fall  
Jer 46-51: Oracles about the Nations  
Jer 52: Jerusalem's Fall Revisited

### **Ezekiel: 593-570BC**

Key Theme: Judgment against Jerusalem, but Israel will be Restored

Key Verse:

Outline:

Ez 1-5: Ezekiel's Call  
Ez 6-7: The Day of the Lord  
Ez 8-11: God's Glory Departs  
Ez 12-24: Judgment against Jerusalem  
Ez 25-32: Oracles against the Nations  
Ez 33-39: Israel's Restoration  
Ez 40-48: Israel's Future Temple / the New Jerusalem

### **Hosea: 760-730BC**

Key Theme: Sharing God's Heartache & His Passionate Love for His People

Key Verse: 3:1, 6:6, 11:8

Outline:

Hosea 1-3: Hosea's Family/God's Family  
Hosea 4-5: God Takes Israel to Court  
Hosea 6-11:11: Hosea's Invitation Tarnished by Reality  
Hosea 11:12-13: God's Final Arguments against Israel  
Hosea 14: Possibility of Restoration

## **Joel: 500 BC**

Key Theme: The Day of the Lord

Key Verse:

Outline:

Joel 1: Locust Plague

Joel 2:1-17: Day of the Lord

Joel 2:18-3: The Lord's Answer

## **Amos: 760BC**

Key Theme: Shepherd for Social Justice

Key Verse:

Outline:

Amos 1:1-2: Superscription and Introduction

Amos 1:3-2: Israel is No Better than the Other Nations

Amos 3-6: Various Prophecies against Israel

Amos 7-9:10: Five Visions of Judgment

Amos 9:11-15: Promises of Restoration and Blessing

## **Obadiah: 586BC**

Key Theme: Edom Will Fall

Key Verse: Obad 15

Outline:

Obad 1a: Heading

Obad 1b-14: Lord's Message Against Edom

Obad 15-21: Day of the Lord

## **Jonah: 770BC**

Key Theme: God's Faithful Love towards Us and Others, despite our silly and senseless behavior

(see title of the book --"Jonah Ben Amity" or "Senseless Bird/Son of My Faithful Love")

Key Verse: Jonah 4:10-11

Outline: Jonah has a parallel structure (ABC-ABC-D) which highlights the theme and key verse

Jonah 1:1-3: Jonah's Commission and Flight

Jonah 1:4-16: Jonah and the Repentant Pagan Sailors

Jonah 1:17-2: Jonah's Grateful Prayer (or in reality, his Self-centered Prayer)

Jonah 3:1-3a: Jonah's Recommissioning and Compliance

Jonah 3:3b-10: Jonah and the Repentant Pagan Ninevites

Jonah 4:1-4: Jonah's Angry Prayer (again Self-centered)

Jonah 4:5-11: God gives Jonah a Lesson on Compassion

### **Micah: 740-700BC**

Key Theme: Zealous for True Covenant Living (social justice, true worship, Godly security)

Key Verse:

Outline:

Micah 1-5: First Round of Judgment (against Samaria & Judah) & Salvation for His People

Micah 6-7: Second Round of Judgment and Salvation

### **Nahum: 650BC**

Key Theme: Ninevah will Fall

Key Verse:

Outline:

Nahum 1-2:2: Zeal and Power of God

Nahum 2:3-13: Siege and Destruction of Ninevah

Nahum 3: Cause and Certainty of Ninevah's Downfall

### **Habakkuk: 605BC**

Key Theme: Lord, What's Going On?

Key Verse: Hab 3:17-19 (and 2:4)

Outline:

Hab 1:1-11: Habakkuk's First Struggle with God's Purpose

Hab 1:12-2: Habakkuk's Second Struggle with God's Purpose

Hab 3: Habakkuk Yields to God's Purposes

### **Zephaniah: 627BC**

Key Theme: God will Judge all the Earth and will Bring Restoration

Key Verse:

Outline:

Zeph 1:1-2:3: Judgment against Judah

Zeph 2:4-15: Judgment against the Nations

Zeph 3:1-8: Judgment against Judah and the Nations

Zeph 3:9-20: Restoration of Israel and the Nations

### **Haggai: 520BC**

Key Theme: Dealing with People who just Don't Care

Key Verse: Hag 2:9, 14

Outline:

Hag 1: A Call to Action

Hag 2:1-9: A Word of Encouragement

Hag 2:10-19: Confirmation of Blessing

Hag 2:20-23: Restoration of the Davidic Kingdom

## **Zechariah: 520-518BC**

Key Theme: Get Ready for God's Kingdom

Key Verse:

Outline:

Zech 1:1-6: Call for a Return to the Lord

Zech 1:7-6:8: Eight Night Visions

Zech 6:9-15: Crowning of Joshua

Zech 7-8: Observance of Fasts

## **Malachi: 470-460BC**

Key Theme: Give God Your Best

Key Verse: Mal 3:1-4

Outline:

Mal 1:1: Introduction

Mal 1:2-5: God's Love for His People

Mal 1:6-2:9: God's Honor among His People

Mal 2:10-16: God's Concern about Intermarriage and Divorce

Mal 2:17-3:6: God's Justice and Patience

Mal 3:7-12: God's Concern for Tithes and Offering

Mal 3:13-4:3: God's Love for the Remnant

Mal 4:4-6: Conclusion

## **WRITINGS ("Cutooveem")**

### **Psalms (in Hebrew "Praises"): collected over hundreds of yrs until 400BC**

Key Theme: From Lamentations & Suffering to Praise & Glory

Key Verse:

Outline: like the Torah, Psalms is also organized into 5 books (denoted with a doxology and double "Amen" at the end of each book) and contains more lamentations in the earlier books and more praises in the latter books. Some Old Testament scholars suggest that the order is a picture of the Messiah.

Psalm 1-41: "David's" Psalms

Psalm 1-2: acts as the introduction to the entire book of Psalms

1: God gave us the Psalms as a Manual for abundant & godly living

v.1-2: wicked, sinners, counsel

v.3a: righteous like a tree

v.3b: . . . prosper

v.4a: Not so . . .

v.4b: wicked like chaff

v.5: wicked, sinners, assembly

2: The Psalms teach us that God reigns

Psalm 42-72: "Solomon's" Psalms

Psalm 73-89:

Psalm 90-106:

Psalm 107-150:

Psalm 146-150: a grand doxology to close the Psalms – “Praise the Lord!”

## **Job: 800 BC?**

Key Theme: God is able to work all things – even evil things – together for good.

Key Verse: Job 19:25

Outline:

Job 1:1-2:13: Prologue

Job 2:13-27: Dialogue (Job’s speech, then Three Cycles of Speeches)

Job 28: Hymn of Wisdom

Job 29-31: Job’s Oration

Job 32-37: Elihu’s 4 Speeches

Job 38-42:6: The Lord’s Speeches

Job 42:7-17: Epilogue

## **Proverbs**

Key Theme: The Fear of the Lord leads to Wisdom (= the skill to survive and thrive)

Key Verse:

Outline: (this is an arrangement of various proverbs from throughout Israel’s history)

Prov 1:1-7: Prolog for the entire book of Proverbs

v.1: title of the book

v.2-6: purpose of the book (note: these verses follow a synopsis resumption expansion pattern)

v.7: theme of the book

Prov 1:8-9: Wisdom and Some Opponents

Prov 10-22:16: 375 short proverbs

Prov 22:17-24: 30 sayings of the wise (similar to Egyptian group of proverbs)

Prov 25-29: Proverbs from Hezekiah’s Collection

Prov 30: Sayings of Agur

Prov 31:1-9: Sayings of Lemuel

Prov 31:10-31: The Excellent Wife

## **Ruth: 1200-1150BC**

Key Theme: God’s Faithfulness and Redemption

Key Verse:

Outline: Ruth follows a linear structure which serves to highlight the main character Naomi

Ruth 1:1-5: Introduction

Ruth 1:6-22: Return to Bethlehem

Ruth 2: Ruth Encounters Boaz

Ruth 3: Ruth Visits the Threshing Floor

Ruth 4:1-17: Boaz Redeems and Marries Ruth

Ruth 4:18-22: Concluding Genealogy

## **Song of Songs**

Key Theme: Celebration of Sexual Love

Key Verse:

Outline: (most likely a compilation by one author of originally independent poems)

SS 1:1-2:7: Love's Strong Desire

SS 2:8-3:5: Love Lost and Found

SS 3:6-5:1: Celebration and Consummation

SS 5:2-8:4: Love's Anxiety and Consummation

SS 8:5-14: Love's Affirmation and Consummation

## **Ecclesiastes (in Hebrew "The Preacher")**

Key Theme: Everything in life is utterly meaningless, except a relationship with God.

Key Verse: Ecclesiastes 12:13

Outline:

Ecc 1:1-11: Title and Theme

Ecc 1:12-4: Wisdom Reflections (satisfaction, times, justice, oppression, work, fame)

Ecc 5-12:8: Admonitions and Observations

Ecc 12:9-14: Conclusion

## **Lamentations (in Hebrew "How!"): 586BC**

Key Theme: God's Relationship with His Exiled People

Key Verse:

Outline: (a series of acrostics with each verse beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet)

Lam 1: Jerusalem's Lament

Lam 2: Jerusalem's Angry God

Lam 3: Judah's Lament

Lam 4: Judah's Utter Ruin

Lam 5: Judah's Plea

## **Esther: 483-474BC**

Key Theme: God Working through His Servants to Rescue His People

Key Verse: Esther 4:14-16

Outline:

Es 1: Vashti's Refusal

Es 2:1-18: Esther's Accession

Es 2:19-23: Mordecai's Service

Es 3: Haman's Plot

Es 4: Mordecai's Request

Es 5: Esther's Request

Es 6: Mordecai's Reward

Es 7: Haman's Punishment  
Es 8: The Kings' Edict  
Es 9: Triumph and the first Purim

### **Daniel: 605-530BC**

Key Theme: The Kingdom of God – Now and Forever

Key Verse:

Outline:

Dan 1: Preparation of Daniel and His Friends  
Dan 2: Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Interpretation  
Dan 3: Fiery Furnace  
Dan 4: Another Dream and Interpretation  
Dan 5: Writing on the Wall  
Dan 6: Lion's Den  
Dan 7: Vision of the 4 Beasts  
Dan 8: Vision of the Kingdoms  
Dan 9: Daniel's Prayer and Vision of the 70 Weeks  
Dan 10-11: Message of Encouragement  
Dan 12: Troubles and Victory

### **Ezra-Nehemiah: 539-410BC**

*This book was written as a literary unit with Chronicles as the sequel. Written to the post-exilic community, it served to encourage the people of God and remind them that God works sovereignly through responsible human agents in order to accomplish His objectives.*

Key Theme: Rebuilding God's House (ie the people of God); and the Power of the Written Word

Key Verse:

Outline: These books (originally written as one unit) have an ABAB and ABBA structure

Ezra 1:1-6:22: Return of Exiles and Rebuilding of Temple  
Ezra 6:23-10: Return of Ezra and Rebuilding of the Community  
Neh 1:1-7:3: Return of Nehemiah and Rebuilding of Walls  
Neh 7:4-13: Return of Exiles and Rebuilding of the Community

### **Chronicles (in Hebrew "the words of the days"): 1010-450BC**

*This book served as the sequel to Ezra-Nehemiah and was written to encourage the post-exilic community who were struggling with whether God still cared for them and saw them as his covenant people, where the son of David was, and how they should now relate to God. The author, by presenting a commentary on the books of Samuel and Kings, seeks to encourage the people to trust and obey in the Lord – who is always ready to restore those who humbly repent and believe.*

Key Theme: Experiencing Restoration

Key Verse: 2 Chronicles 7:14

Outline: a review of history from Adam to the post-exilic community

- 1 Chron 1-9: Continuity with the Past
- 1 Chron 10- 2 Chron 9: Glorious Unity of the Monarchy  
(focuses on kingship & temple; and the faithfulness (not failures) of David & Solomon)
- 2 Chron 10-36: Immediate Retribution in Divided Monarchy
  - 33: Manasseh – a Sinner who Experiences God’s Restoration (opp of Kings)
    - v.1-10: his sin
    - v.11: his exile
    - v.12-13: his repentance
    - v.13b-17: his restoration (to God’s presence, work, and worship)
    - v.18-20: his reign