

'From Dan to Beersheba'

The Story and World of the Old Testament



Brad Anderson
Holy Land 2019

TRAVELLING THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

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*The order of the prophets is approximate, as some of the books are not dated.



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PRE-TRIP SESSION

The Old Testament is many things:

- A collection of texts that originated in ancient Israel
- An authoritative collection of books for Jews and Christians
- A diverse collection of various genres or forms of literature
- We'll be thinking about all of these issues on our trip to the Holy Land

Four interrelated concepts:

- The biblical **story**
- The **history** of Israel
- The development of the **text**
- The contribution of the **land** to our understanding

Story, History, Text, and Land:

Need to be careful in distinguishing between:

- The story that the Bible tells/history it reports
- The actual (or reconstructed) history of Israel (including archaeology)
- The development of the texts and traditions within the Bible
- We can't assume all of these match up - in fact, all three are quite distinct

The biblical story

- The Old Testament can be read as a story - the people of Israel and their special relationship with YHWH
- Historical elements and interests within this larger story
- The Torah and Historical Books give us the broad shape of this story
- The poetic, wisdom, and prophetic literature give us other voices and perspectives on that story
- A significant part of what we'll be exploring is the broad story of the Old Testament
- Focusing on the *Torah, Historical Books, and the Prophets* - and how together these take us from stories of origins down to the end of the OT story

Bible and history

- Relation of Bible and history is complex
- Bible not a history textbook in the modern sense - not 'pure history'

- Gives accounts that are interested in telling history, but also told theologically
- Some events told more than once and in different ways!
- Num and Deut
- Kings and Chron
- Many events written down at a much later time than the purported setting

The History of Israel

- The (reconstructed) history of Israel
- Drawing on the Bible, archaeological evidence, writings found outside the Bible, etc.
- Did 2 million Israelites really emerge from Egypt?
- What was the 'conquest' of Canaan like?
- How united was the united monarchy under David?
- Were all the northern kings really 'bad'? Or is this simply a later Judean retelling?

Bible and history

- Different perspectives on how much of the Bible can be used for reconstructing the history of Israel
- A spectrum that includes:
- Minimalists – who think very little from the Bible can be used to reconstruct history
- and Maximalists – who think most of the Bible is reliable for constructing the history of Israel
- Much comes down to how we interpret the Bible and extra-biblical data (such as archaeological evidence)
- As we explore the **biblical story**, we'll also be looking at the relationship of the **Bible and history**
- Archaeological evidence we encounter will be a significant part of this...

The history of the biblical text

- Bible did not develop in a linear manner from Genesis – Revelation
- Many of these traditions took shape over a very long period of time, including oral traditions
- Even 'dialogue' between different parts of the OT that demonstrate that it was a dynamic process
- Exod / Num / Deut
- Kings / Chronicles

- Kings / Isaiah
- Daniel / Jeremiah

Exodus 20:24-26 ²⁴ You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.

Deuteronomy 12:13-14 ¹³ Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place you happen to see. ¹⁴ But only at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes—there you shall offer your burnt offerings and there you shall do everything I command you.

As we explore the **biblical story** and the **history** of Israel, we'll also touch on the development of the **biblical texts** and traditions

The Land: Geography and archaeology

- During our trip we'll be exploring the story of the Old Testament, the history of Israel, and the formation of these texts and traditions...
- And thinking about how **the land** helps our understanding of all of these issues

Where does the Bible take place?

- Fertile crescent
- Home to earliest civilizations and cultures
- Based around water supplies and fertile land
- Tigris, Euphrates, Nile
- Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf
- Empires of the ancient world
- The Levant
- Area east of the Mediterranean that served as a bridge between the north, east, and south
- Israel an important part of this area

Natural borders:

- Water, river valley
- Mountains
- Desert

Water

- Jordan River
- Dead Sea
- Sea of Galilee
- Mediterranean

Topography

- Desert (south; Negev)
- Hills (north -Galilee)
- Fertile land (northern Judea/Samaria)

Archaeology

- Archaeology: the study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains (material culture)
- Archaeology is another tool to help us understand the biblical story, the history of Israel, and the history of the biblical text

What is a tel?

- Archaeological mound created by human occupation and abandonment of a geographical site over many centuries
- Generations of people living and building on the same spot
- Archaeologists excavate these sites and recover buildings, walls, pottery, texts, jewellery, weapons, etc.
- Often many layers or strata that speak to different eras
- Tels we'll be visiting: Tel Dan, Tel Beersheba (picture), Tel Megiddo

Story, history, text, and land:

- Four interrelated concepts:
- The biblical **story**
- The **history** of Israel
- The development of the **text**
- The contribution of the **land** to our understanding (geography and archaeology)

Notes

Session 1: Whose Bible Is It? Judaism, Christianity, and the Old Testament

The Bible: unique sacred text

- The Christian Bible contains the sacred texts of two religious traditions, Judaism and Christianity
- Early Christians were, like Jesus, primarily Jews
- The Bible witnesses to the special relationship between Jews and Christians

The Old Testament in different traditions

- The Old Testament is itself unique because it is considered Scripture in both Judaism and Christianity
- And yet, the traditions understand and use this collection in different ways
- Perspective
- Names
- Ordering

Perspectives...

Judaism: Book of the Covenant

- The 'Old Testament' is essentially a Jewish collection - written by and for the Jewish people
- Before Christianity existed
- First five books considered especially sacred - Torah or Pentateuch: rules, regulations, stories
- Represent the terms of the covenant relationship with God - contract or agreement
- Judaism would develop other important texts (oral Torah, rabbinic texts), but the Hebrew scriptures are the foundation of Judaism
- Safe to say there would be no Judaism without the Hebrew Scriptures
- Shapes Jewish understanding and practice - from Passover, to kosher foods

The Christian Old Testament: Witness to the Gospel

- Christianity began as a sect of Judaism - so early followers of Jesus accepted Jewish Scriptures as words of God
- The story of God and his people

- But these came to be seen as a prelude to a 'new covenant' found in Jesus - thus a 'New Testament'
- Jesus seen as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant
- And yet, OT still viewed as relevant, inspired and authoritative - so a bit of a paradox for Christians
- Example: laws of the Old Testament - 10 Commandments are considered binding, but others such as dietary laws are not
- These traditions trace their origins to this collection of books
- But they have their own views about which parts are important, and how they should be read and understood

Names...

- The Old Testament is the first part of the Christian Bible
- What Christians refer to as the 'Old Testament' is for Jews their entire Bible - and they don't necessarily like the name 'Old'!
- Referred to by Jews as the Bible, Jewish Scriptures, TaNaK
- **T**orah, **N**eviim, **K**etuvim = Law, prophets, writings
- All of these refer to essentially the same collection of materials
- Old Testament, Tanak, Jewish Scriptures, Hebrew Bible...
- But the names given to the collection are significant, as they point to larger issues

Ordering...

- For a number of reasons, Jews and Christians have ended up with canons that present the order of these books differently
- One major issue was based on language
- Books originally written in Hebrew; over time translated into other languages, including Greek (LXX) and Aramaic
- These different translations ended up putting the books in different orders
- Jewish tradition follows Hebrew ordering, Christian tradition follows the Greek ordering of the books

The Jewish Bible/Tanak / Hebrew order

- Torah - teaching/instruction/law
- First five books of Bible
- Foundational stories of people Israel

- Prophets (Nevi'im) - Prophet = someone who speaks for God
- Writings (Ketuvim) - Other writings that came later or didn't fit these categories (poetry, wisdom, narratives)

The Christian Old Testament / Greek order

- Organised the books based on content and type
- Pentateuch = five scrolls; First five books - often referred to as the law
- Historical books - Books that tell the story of Israel after the Pentateuch finishes
- Poetic/wisdom books - Books of poetry and wisdom
- Prophets - Books related to actual prophetic figures (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc)
- Note: some Christian Bibles have a few extra books
- Tobit, Judith, Maccabees
- Sometimes referred to as apocrypha or deuterocanonical books
- Never part of the Jewish Bible
- Catholics and Orthodox include some of them, while Protestants do not

[See next page for chart]

The Canons of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible[†]

Hebrew Bible/Tanakh (24 Books)	Protestant Bible (39 Books)	Catholic Bible (46 Books + 2 Additions)	Greek Orthodox (48 Books + 3 Additions)
<i>Torah</i> (5) Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<i>Pentateuch</i> (5) Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<i>Pentateuch</i> (5) Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<i>Pentateuch</i> (5) Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy
<i>Prophets – Nevi'im</i> <i>(Former) (4)</i> Joshua Judges Samuel (1&2) Kings (1&2) <i>(Latter) (4/ 15)</i> Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel <i>The Twelve</i> Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	<i>Historical Books</i> (12) Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Esther <i>Poetry</i> (5) Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon	<i>Historical Books</i> (16) Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Kings (1 Sam) 2 Kings (2 Sam) 3 Kings (1 Kgs) 4 Kings (2 Kgs) 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Tobit* Judith* Esther + Additions 1 Maccabees* 2 Maccabees*	<i>Historical Books</i> (17) Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Kings (1 Sam) 2 Kings (2 Sam) 3 Kings (1 Kgs) 4 Kings (2 Kgs) 1 Paraleipomena (Chr) 2 Paraleipomena (Chr) 1 Esdras* 2 Esdras* (Ezra-Nehemiah) Tobit* Judith* Esther + Additions 1 Maccabees* 2 Maccabees* 3 Maccabees*
		<i>Poetry</i> (7) Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Canticles (S of S) Wisdom of Solomon* Ecclesiasticus*	<i>Poetry</i> (8) Job Psalms + Ps 151 Prayer of Manasseh* Proverbs Ecclesiastes Canticles (S of S) Wisdom of Solomon* Ecclesiasticus*
<i>Writings – Ketuvim</i> (11) <i>Emeth (Truth)</i> (3) Psalms Proverbs Job <i>Megilloth (Scrolls)</i> (5) Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Esther Daniel Ezra-Nehemiah Chronicles (1-2)	<i>Major Prophets</i> (5) Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel <i>Minor Prophets</i> (12) Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	<i>Prophetical Books</i> (18) Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch/Letter of Jeremiah* Ezekiel Daniel + Additions Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	<i>Prophetical Books</i> (18) Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Baruch/Letter of Jeremiah* Ezekiel Daniel + Additions Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi

[†] Prepared by Tyler F. Williams (1998; rev. 2004).

Whose Bible Is It?

- The OT is unique because it is considered Scripture in both Judaism and Christianity
- The traditions share these books, but they have their own ways of reading and understanding this collection
- There are real differences in how Jews and Christians read the Hebrew Scriptures...
- And yet, recognition in recent years that the shared Scriptures are something to build on in terms of Jewish-Christian relations
- Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2001: *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible*
- Christians need to understand the Jewish roots of Christianity, and to respect Judaism in its own right
- Respect the differences in the traditions, while building on possible points of contact, a big part of which are the Hebrew Scriptures

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 -- The Servant Song

- The 'suffering servant' of Isaiah is one of the most cited references in the Old Testament when Christians speak of Jesus
- Also an important text for Jews and Judaism
- How the two traditions read this passage points to differences in the traditions, but also possibility of dialogue
-
- How has Christianity traditionally interpreted this passage and why?
- How do you think the Jewish tradition might interpret this text?

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (NRSV)

- ¹³ See, my servant shall prosper;
he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.
- ¹⁴ Just as there were many who were astonished at him
—so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance,
and his form beyond that of mortals—
- ¹⁵ so he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
for that which had not been told them they shall see,
and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

53 Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

3 He was despised and rejected by others;

a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised,
and we held him of no account.

4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases;
yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;

upon him was the punishment that made us whole,
and by his bruises we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he did not open his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away.

Who could have imagined his future?

For he was cut off from the land of the living,
stricken for the transgression of my people.

9 They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich,

although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain.

When you make his life an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days;
through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

11 Out of his anguish he shall see light;

he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.

The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great,

and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
 because he poured out himself to death,
 and was numbered with the transgressors;
 yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the
 transgressors.

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 -- The Servant Song

- The Christian church has interpreted this poem as pointing (in some way) to Jesus, or Jesus as the fulfilment of this prophecy
- Humiliation equals crucifixion, and exaltation equals resurrection and ascension, especially with the many points of contact between the suffering described by Isaiah and the portrayal of Jesus in the gospels
- In Jewish interpretation the servant is often identified with the people of Israel, collectively
- The Israelites are God's servant who has been humiliated (exile) and will be exalted (return to Zion).
- These two interpretations have often been held in tension as highlighting the real differences between Judaism and Christianity

Walter Brueggemann identifies points of contact where the two traditions have something in common, but can still hold their distinctive views:

Brueggemann on Isaiah's servant: 'The truth is that in understanding the *servant as Israel* ... or using the servant imagery to understand *Jesus as servant* point to the definitional mark of both faiths, a claim both faiths have in common, in their trust in a common God to do something new. The claim is that both Jews and Christians have seen in their own history, in quite particular ways, **the capacity and willingness of this God to do something new through suffering.** ... This claim, verified for Jews in the restoration of Zion and for Christians in the life of Jesus, is a deeply inscrutable claim that speaks powerfully against common worldly insitencies that *suffering is a dead end with no future* This suffering servant attests to the *power of God at work through human weakness* to bring to fruition God's intention for the world.' (Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 144)

Brueggemann: even when Judaism and Christianity have interpretations that seem difficult to reconcile, there may be underlying themes and issues that point to common concerns. In this case, it's a God who brings about newness and salvation in unexpected ways, even through suffering.

Notes

Session 2: The Torah/Pentateuch: Stories of origins

The Pentateuch: Names

This collection goes by a variety of different names

- Torah (teaching, instruction, law)
- Chumash (from 'five')
- Pentateuch (five scrolls)
- The law
- The five books of Moses

The Pentateuch: Content

The first five books of the Old Testament

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Same order and content in all traditions: Judaism, Catholic, Protestant

Genesis

Two sections:

- Primeval history – chs. 1-11
- Stories of the ancestors – chs. 12-50

Genesis 1-11: Primeval history

Bible begins with a series of stories narrating the creation of the world and its inhabitants

- Genesis 1-11
- Referred to as primeval because the stories are much more 'mythic' in nature than later historical narratives, and deal with all humanity and not only Israel
- Creation
- Adam and Eve and temptation in the garden
- Noah and the flood
- The tower of Babel
- Pentateuch: Primeval history
- God's good world gone bad...

Genesis 12-50: Israel's ancestors

The story then focuses in on one family who will be the ancestors of the chosen people, Israel

- Genesis 12-50
- Abraham and his family
- Abraham and Sarah
- Story moves from Mesopotamia to Canaan (Israel)

Abraham

- Abraham is a vitally important character for Jews, Christians, and Muslims
- For Jews, he is the patriarch, the first ancestor from whom Israel would come
- For Christians, he is the 'father of faith', who models obedience and trust
- For Islam, he is the 'friend of God', and their ancestor through his other son, Ishmael
- All three religions trace their origins back to Abraham, and so are sometimes called the Abrahamic faiths or traditions

Genesis 12-50

- Stories of Abraham and his family
- Sarah and Isaac
- Hagar and Ishmael
- Isaac and Rebekah
- Jacob and Esau
- Isaac and Rachel and Leah
- Joseph and his brothers
- Ends with Abraham's descendants, now a large extended family, living in Egypt

Pentateuch: exodus, law and wilderness

- The rest of the Pentateuch outlines how the descendants of Abraham become a people
- Important shift from family/clan to nation
- Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

Exodus

- Exodus continues the Genesis story
- Genesis ends with Joseph, his brothers and their families in Egypt
- Over time the 'family' becomes a 'people', the Israelites
- The Egyptians fear the Israelites and enslave them
- Israelites cry out to God for help

Moses

- At this point **Moses** arrives on the scene
- His story will extend from Exodus through Deuteronomy – the rest of the Pentateuch...
- The 'main character' for much of the Pentateuch
- Leads the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt
- Receives the law from God at Sinai
- The laws of Torah often referred to the laws or words of Moses
- Leads the people during their time in the wilderness
- Perhaps most important leader in Jewish tradition
- Moses: born to Hebrew parents, hidden in a basket in the Nile River to escape Pharaoh's policy of killing male Hebrew children
- Found and raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the royal court
- God calls Moses to lead his people out of Egypt

The Exodus

- After series of plagues, Moses leads the people miraculously through the Red Sea, out of slavery
- One of the foundational events in Jewish tradition
- The basis of Passover, celebrating God's deliverance
- God delivers his people, against all odds, and sometimes miraculously
- Still celebrated annually in Judaism
- Celebrate as if you are leaving Egypt 'this very night'

After Egypt...

- Now that they have escaped from Egypt, Israel will begin their long journey back to the Promised Land, Canaan
- But their first stop is at a place called **Mount Sinai**
- Exodus relates that God spoke to Moses on top of Mount Sinai, delivering God's message to the people
- This is the giving of the law, or Torah
- 'Law' material extends through Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Laws of Exodus-Deuteronomy

- These books are filled with rules, laws and ritual instructions
- Social, ethical, and ritual laws
- Helpful to think of these as instruction manual for ancient Israel

- How to live in relation to God, and with one another
- 10 Commandments

The wilderness:

- Numbers and Deuteronomy tell the story of Israel spending 40 years journeying in the wilderness between Sinai and Canaan
- 'Wilderness wanderings' becomes a theme in Jewish and Christian tradition to refer to a time of transition, reflection, or seeking
- Pentateuch ends with the death of Moses and the people just outside the promised land...
- ... and sets the stage for the next part of Israel's story, in Canaan

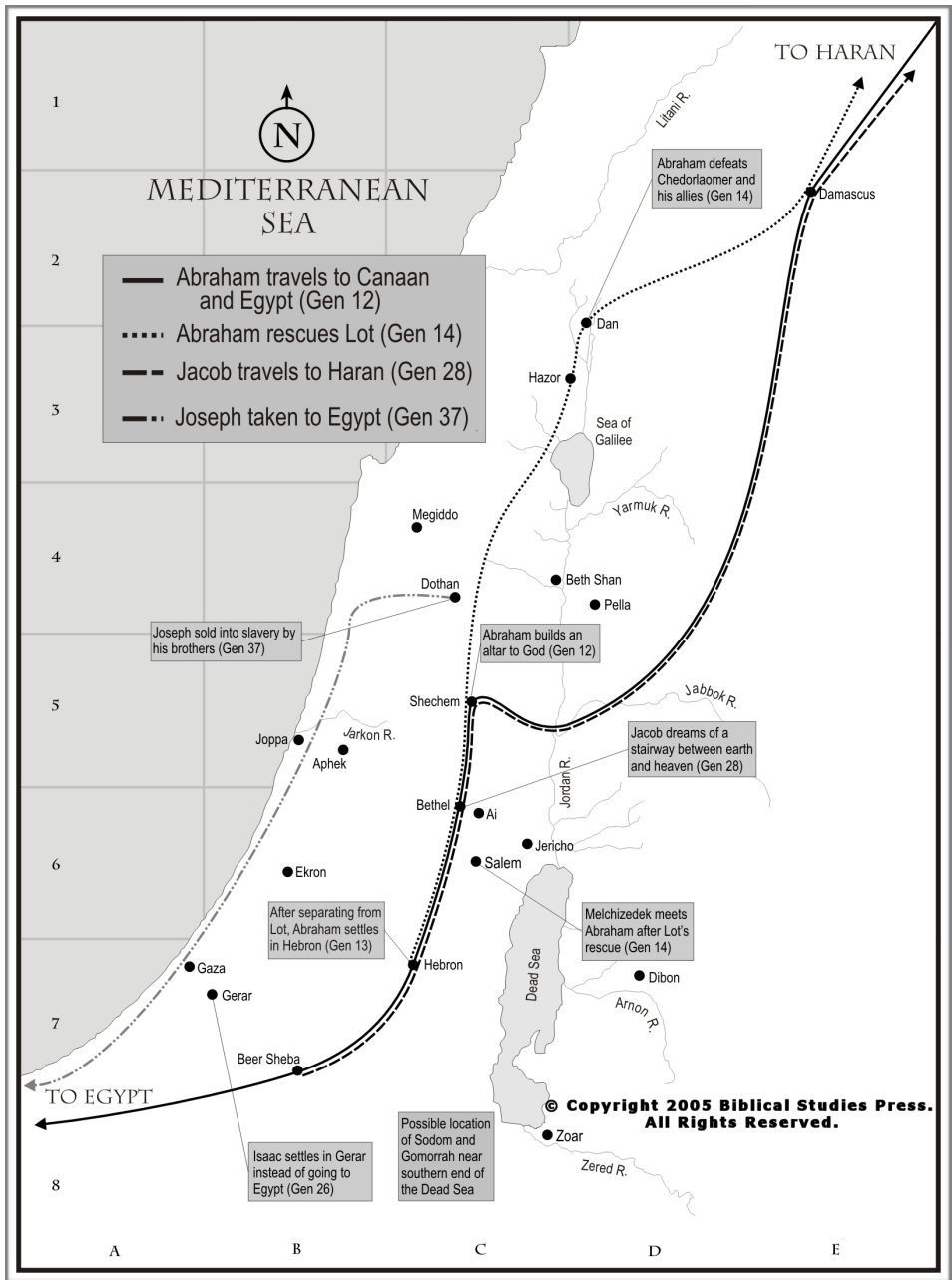
The Torah: Key places and Geographical markers

In the Torah, we see...

- Mesopotamia (Ur of the Chaldees)
- Canaan
- Beersheba
- Egypt
- Sinai

The Ancestors at Beersheba

- In the desert region
- the Negev (south)
- Both Abraham and Isaac dig wells there
- Abraham - Gen 21:22-34
- Isaac - Gen 26:23-33
- 'Well of the oath' Or 'well of the seven'
- Scenes that take place at Beersheba
- Hagar and Ishmael are sent into the wilderness: Genesis 21:8-21
- Abraham makes a covenant with the Philistines: Genesis 21:25-33
- Abraham and Isaac travel from Beersheba to Mt Moriah: Genesis 22:1-19
- Isaac makes a covenant with the Philistines: Genesis 26:18-31
- Jacob steals Esau's blessing: Genesis 27:1-40



The Torah in Judaism

- Both Jews and Christians value the Pentateuch, but Judaism in particular
- See Kaminsky and Lohr, *The Torah: A Beginner's Guide*
- In Jewish tradition, the Pentateuch or Torah is considered the most important part of the Bible
- A 'canon within the canon'
- It has a special place in theological discourse, liturgical use, and education and formation
- Much more than 'law': Torah = teaching, instruction, way of life that illuminates Jewish life and thought
- In this sense 'Torah' (the Pentateuch) stands at the heart of Judaism
- Deut 6:4-9 - the Shema - Repeated every morning and evening by observant Jews
- Use of *tefillin* (prayer boxes and straps) come from *Shema*
- When Jesus is asked what the most important commandment is, he quotes the *Shema* (Mark 12:28-31)
- Dietary laws such as kosher foods are drawn from the books of the Pentateuch
- Annual celebrations such as the Passover are drawn from Exodus and Deuteronomy
- Torah Ark in Synagogue - Houses Torah scroll - complete copy of all 5 books
- Handwritten by a scribe in Hebrew; Each community's scroll is valuable; Clothed in ornate fabrics

Notes

Session 3: Digging deeper: a complex text

Story, History, Text:

- We're focusing on the larger story of the OT
- Need to be careful in distinguishing between:
- the story that the Bible tells/history it reports
- The actual (or reconstructed) history of Israel (including archaeology)
- The development of the texts and traditions within the Bible
- We can't assume all of these match up - in fact, all three are quite distinct

The history of the biblical text

- Bible did not develop in a linear manner from Genesis - Revelation
- Many of these traditions took shape over a very long period of time, including oral traditions
- Even 'dialogue' between different parts of the OT that demonstrate that it was a dynamic process
- Exod / Num / Deut
- Kings / Chronicles
- Kings / Isaiah
- Daniel / Jeremiah

The OT: A Complex Text

- Exploring some of these issues - starting with the beginning!
- Gen 1:1-2:3 and Gen 2:4-25
- How do the two accounts portray and refer to God?
- How is the creation of humanity described?
- How would you compare the genre of the two accounts?
And the tone or perspectives of the two accounts?

Genesis 1-2

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, **2** the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. **3** Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. **4** And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. **5** God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, 'Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.' **7** So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. **8** God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, 'Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.' And it was so. **10** God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. **11** Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. **12** The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. **13** And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, 'Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, **15** and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.' And it was so. **16** God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. **17** God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, **18** to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. **19** And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.' **21** So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. **22** God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.' **23** And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.' And it was so. **25** God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind,

and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.'

27 So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' **29** God said, 'See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. **30** And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.' And it was so. **31** God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. **2** And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, **5** when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; **6** but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground— **7** then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. **8** And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. **9** Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the

sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

10 A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. **11** The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; **12** and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. **13** The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one that flows around the whole land of Cush. **14** The name of the third river is Tigris, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. **16** And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; **17** but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.'

18 Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.' **19** So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. **20** The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. **21** So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. **22** And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **23** Then the man said,

'This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.'

24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. **25** And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Genesis 1: perspective

- Very theo-centric (God-centred)
- Israel's God as transcendent creator, above and beyond the world
- Referred to as 'elohim' throughout ch. 1
- Very elevated, poetic, hymn-like language

Genesis 1: content

- Genesis 1 details the creation of the world in a very ordered manner
- Repetitive structure
- 'And God said...'
- 'saw that it was good...'
- Humanity is the culmination, pinnacle of creation
- Made in the likeness and image of God

Genesis 2: perspective

- Gen 2 is more earthy and human-centred than ch. 1
- Takes place in the garden
- More story-like than Gen 1; less elevated language
- God is less transcendent, more intimately involved with humanity
- Uses God's personal name, 'YHWH'

Genesis 2: content

- Fuller account of creation of man and woman - clearly the focus of the chapter
- Humanity created first
- Also takes place 'on the ground' rather than from above - in a garden (Eden)

Genesis 1-2

- How do we make sense of the differences between the two chapters?
- Most scholars are convinced that Gen 1 and 2 come from different sources or traditions, and that these are clearly discernible
- Gen 1: from the 'priestly' source: God referred to as Elohim; More poetic than story-like; God is majestic and transcendent
- Gen 2: from a 'lay' source: Refers to God as YHWH; More narrative in style; God is more imminent, involved in the world
- Genesis 1 and 2 tell of the creation of the world and of humanity, in distinct ways
- Probably two distinct stories with different perspectives that were brought together to complement one another
- Gen 1:1-2:4 ('Priestly' source)
- Gen 2:4b-25 ('lay' source)

- These are the types of issues explored in academic study of the Bible

The origins of the Pentateuch/Torah: Historical overview

Traditional View

- Like much of the Bible, Pentateuch is anonymous
- Early on came to be associated with Moses
- Early rabbinic view: God revealed Torah verbally to Moses at Mt Sinai, and Moses transcribed it
- This was then copied exactly by scribes through the centuries
- Often referred to as a whole as 'the law of Moses'
- Jesus associates Torah with Moses (Matt 8:4)

A complex text:

- Death of Moses: ancient Jewish rabbis debated how Moses could have written last chapter of Deuteronomy; Some posited Joshua finished it
- Some medieval Jewish rabbis, such as Abraham Ibn Ezra (12th c.), began to note that Moses could not have written certain passages:
- Edomite king list (Gen. 36) - list of kings from Edom long after Moses' time
- Repetition of stories and events throughout Pentateuch (doublets)
- Growing agreement that a few passages must not have come from the hand of Moses

Reformation

- Around the time of Luther and Calvin, both Protestant and Catholic scholars began to take things further
- Vernacular Bibles
- Printing press and questioning of Church's authority opens up freedom to study Bible more closely
- Return to original languages also leads to further critical questions

Early modernity

- Enlightenment opens up the Bible to further critical (and 'scientific') enquiry

- Spinoza (17th c, Holland): argued based on many problematic texts that Moses was not writer of the Torah; rather, Ezra was the author/editor
- One of the first to completely do away with Mosaic authorship entirely

Modern Period

- Jean Astruc, French professor of medicine:
- Notes differing uses for the names of God in Pentateuch – Elohim and YHWH
- Astruc marks a major breakthrough in isolating different sources; the first real 'source critic'

Modern period

- Julius Wellhausen (1844-1914) is often credited with the development of the documentary hypothesis
- He actually inherited the idea of sources and gave them fuller and exact expression

Process developed over several centuries

- According to Wellhausen the sources JEDP were completed written sources from distinct time periods that were brought together at a later date
- Documentary Hypothesis
- Four independent sources:
 - J = Yahwist (Jahwist)
 - E = Elohist
 - D = Deuteronomist
 - P = priestly source
- J and E were joined first, making a JE source (10-8th c.)
- Later Deuteronomy was added to JE, and still later the P material was brought in (6-4 c.)
- All written much later than time of Moses

Contemporary approaches

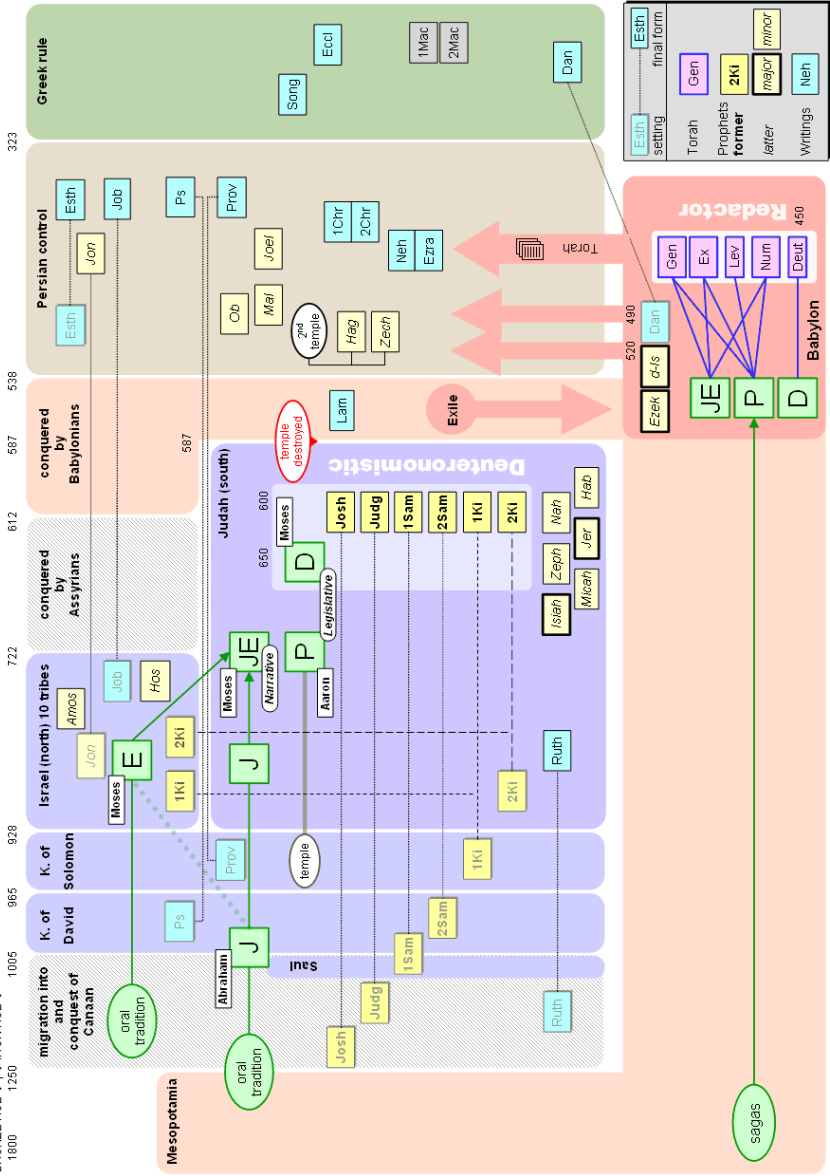
- Contemporary scholars: Pentateuch is made up of 'traditions' or smaller units (perhaps oral) that were brought together gradually (like folklore)
- Materials were supplemented and then edited together over time, but long after the time of Moses
- Abraham traditions, Moses traditions, priestly legal traditions, etc.

- Different creation traditions (Gen 1, Gen 2) as a compromise?
- In this sense, the Pentateuch grew out of the life of a community over time, rather than from the hand of one 'author', and grew over time
- Many scholars believe these came together during and after the Babylonian exile (587 BCE-300 BCE)
- A broad consensus that the Pentateuch is not from one author, but has been brought together from a variety of sources or traditions
- Similar processes at work in other parts of the OT
- We have no extant versions other than the final form of the five books that we have today (no J, P, etc on their own) - these are scholarly reconstructions
- People who did bring the Pentateuch to its present shape were people of profound faith and literary masters, connecting the whole together into a coherent story

[See next page for chart]

Hebrew Bible sources timeline (Jewish Canon)

BRONZE AGE → I ← IRON AGE →



Notes

Session 4: The Historical Books (1): Conquest and early monarchy

Historical books

- These books continue the story of Israel once they are in the land of promise
- These are referred to as the 'historical books' in the Christian Old Testament
- Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther

The historical books: key developments

- The Promised Land
- The rise of the monarchy
- Divided kingdom
- Empires, exile and return

Settlement of the Promised Land

Where we find this:

- Book of Joshua
- Book of Judges

The Conquest and Settlement of Canaan

- Moses' successor Joshua leads the people into the Promised Land, Canaan
- Book of Joshua reports on a series of military encounters, some successful, some less so
- Israel gains a strong presence in the land of Canaan
- The Conquest and Settlement of Canaan
- At the end of Joshua, the land of Canaan is divided between the 12 tribes of Israel
- These tribes are based on the 12 sons of Jacob
- Israel is finally back in the land promised to Abraham
- They renew their covenant relationship with God as Joshua's time comes to an end

Judges

- After Joshua, there is no centralised ruler for all Israel
- Local leaders, called 'judges', are raised up when needed to lead the people
- Samson, Deborah, Gideon
- Book of Judges

- Period of approx. 200 years
- The story between settling in Canaan and the rise of the monarchy

The rise of the monarchy

Where we find this:

- 1-2 Samuel (Samuel, Saul, David)
- 1 Kings 1-11 (Solomon)
- Leadership of the judges: Local leaders raised up in times of need - no centralised leaders or government in Israel
- The book of 1 Samuel tells us of the transition from the judges to the kings
- Reasons for the rise:
 - People demand a king, desire to be like the other nations (1 Sam 8:4)
 - Possible breakdown in society (Judg. 17:6; 21:25)
 - Tribal divisions (Judg. 19-21)
 - Perhaps pressure from neighbouring nations, need for centralisation
- Rise of monarchy usually placed around 1000 BCE
- Saul: ca. 1046 BCE
- Samuel - last judge, who anoints new kings
- Saul: first king
- David follows Saul
- Solomon follows David

David

- Considered the greatest king in Israel's history
- Kills Goliath the Philistine as a young man
- Unites the nation and centralises leadership in Jerusalem
- Complex figure - far from perfect...
- David and Bathsheba

Golden Age of Monarchy

- Relative peace in near east allows smaller nations to grow and develop - no major superpowers at this time
- This was the 'golden age' of a united Israel
- Economy was growing, military was strong, borders were being expanded

- Political leadership centralised to Jerusalem under David - 2 Sam 5-6
- Solomon later constructs the Temple in Jerusalem - 1 Kings 6
- But not too long into this 'golden era' there were cracks beginning to show in the façade
- Kings don't always lead the people well
- False security in religion
- Marginalization of poor
- Prophets come on the scene to address the issues that are arising

How united was the monarchy?

- NB: some debate among scholars as to how 'united' the kingdom really was during this period...
- Later traditions may have idealized this era
- After just three kings, the kingdom will divide into north and south along (tribal) fault lines that already seem to have existed

Significant sites and geographical markers

Jericho - Lachish - Acre - Jerusalem

Jericho

- One of the oldest towns/cities in the world
- Earliest settlement 9000 BCE
- Mentioned over 70 times in the OT
- Israelites capture Jericho: Joshua 6:1-21
- Excavations at Jericho have found collapsed structures and walls that are very old
- Kathleen Kenyon
- Major destruction in 15th century - several centuries earlier than the date of Joshua's conquest (that is, the end of the Late Bronze Age, around the thirteenth century BCE).
- Archaeology suggests the site was unoccupied from the late 15th century to around the 10th/9th century BCE, when it was rebuilt
- Important city in later Israel, and into NT times

Interpretive approaches:

- Incorrect dates, but true story - biblical story basically factually accurate

- 'Conquest' was more of a peaceful settlement
- Basic details of biblical story are taken **seriously** as preserving memory, but not **literally**
- Later literary invention

Lachish

- Southwest of Jerusalem - Canaanite city mentioned in ANE texts (Amarna letters)
- Taken by Israelites under Joshua (Josh 10:31-33), assigned to tribe of Judah
- Reinforced by Rehoboam (2 Chron 10:9)
- May have been destroyed by Sennacherib and Assyrians
- Rebuilt and remained important city (Jer 34)
- Texts discovered ('Lachish letters') speak of coming Babylonian destruction

Acco / Acre

- Harbour city on the northwest coast, near Haifa
- Assigned to the tribe of Asher, but was not successfully taken due to strong fortifications (Joshua 19:24; Judges 1:31)
- Judges 1 ³¹ *Asher did not drive out the inhabitants of Acco, ... ³² but the Asherites lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land; for they did not drive them out.*
- Became part of Israelite territory; eventually overtaken by Sennacherib and Assyrians
- Known as Ptolemais in NT (Acts 21:7)

Jerusalem

- Its history pre-dates the Israelites - Jebus; Judges 19:10
- Comes to prominence under David - political and religious centre
- Unclear how developed Jerusalem was in early monarchical era
- Boundaries have shifted over time
- Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem*
- Murphy O'Connor, *The Holy Land*
- Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography*

Session 5: Digging deeper: Bible, History, and Archaeology

Story, History, Text:

- We're focusing on the larger story of the OT
- Need to be careful in distinguishing between:
- the story that the Bible tells/history it reports
- The actual (or reconstructed) history of Israel (including archaeology)
- The development of the texts and traditions within the Bible
- We can't assume all of these match up - in fact, all three are quite distinct

Bible and history

- Relation of Bible and history is complex
- Bible not a history textbook in the modern sense - not 'pure history'
- Gives accounts that are interested in telling history, but also told theologically
- Some events told more than once and in different ways!
- Num and Deut
- Kings and Chron
- Many events written down at a much later time than the purported setting

The History of Israel

- The (reconstructed) history of Israel
- Drawing on the Bible, archaeological evidence, writings found outside the Bible, etc.
- Did 2 million Israelites really emerge from Egypt?
- What was the 'conquest' of Canaan like?
- How united was the united monarchy under David?
- Were all the northern kings really 'bad'? Or is this simply a later Judean retelling?

Bible and history

- Different perspectives on how much of the Bible can be used for reconstructing the history of Israel
- A spectrum that includes:
- Minimalists - who think very little from the Bible can be used to reconstruct history
- and Maximalists - who think most of the Bible is reliable for constructing the history of Israel

- Much comes down to how we interpret the Bible and extra-biblical data (such as archaeological evidence)

Archaeology

- Archaeology: the study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains (material culture)
- 18th and 19th centuries saw the beginning of archaeology proper
- Several major discoveries moved the field along quickly
- Rosetta stone - discovered 1799 in Egypt -- Dated to 2nd c BCE
- Three different texts: hieroglyphics, Demotic, and Greek - virtually same text
- In 1822 Jean-François Champollion announced he had translated all three
- Made comparison possible and allowed for translation of other ancient Egyptian texts
- A similar discovery in Mesopotamia: the Behistun Inscription (1835, modern Iran)
- Three cuneiform scripts: Old Persian, Elamite, and Old Babylonian/Akkadian
- Ca. 5th c. BCE, Darius the Great
- Translation of the first led to understanding of the other two
- Led to 'Assyriology', the study of ancient Mesopotamian culture and cuneiform writing
- Archaeologists began to notice layers as they dug - one building upon another, etc.
- Stratigraphy - Vertical trench - relationship between layers explored
- Flinders Petrie (1853-1942), father of archaeology: careful collection, labelling, and classifying of digs
- Artefacts are of great value: dating sites, spread of culture, trade links, etc.
- 1918-1940 - Golden age of 'biblical archaeology'
- British Mandate in Palestine gave easy access to sites in the holy land
- Notable names: Albright, Glueck, Kenyon
- Notable excavations: Nuzi, Mari, Ugarit

Tels

- Archaeological mound created by human occupation and abandonment of a geographical site over many centuries
- Generations of people living and building on the same spot
- Archaeologists excavate these sites and recover buildings, walls, pottery, texts, jewellery, weapons, etc.
- Often many layers or strata that speak to different eras

Texts and Epigraphic evidence

- Beyond artefacts (pottery, buildings, coins) the major discoveries were texts and inscriptions
- Epigraphy = study of inscriptions
- Tens of thousands of ancient writings have been discovered
- Most are inscriptions on stone or clay as writing as such was not yet in use
- Egypt = hieroglyphics and other inscriptions on temples, statues
- Ugarit (Ras Shamra; modern Syria) - major city in 2nd mill. BCE; discovered in 1928
- Texts from before 1200 BCE
- Number of languages: Sumerian, Akkadian, Hurrian, Ugaritic
- Cuneiform languages
- Local versions of Mesopotamian myths (e.g. Gilgamesh = flood narrative)

Texts and Epigraphic evidence

- Mari (Syria) - 18th c BCE; 25,000 texts/tablets, in Akkadian
- Nuzi (Iraq) - more clay tablets (~5000) in Akkadian from 15th c BCE
- Amarna (Egypt) - letters written to Egyptian kings from vassals rulers in Canaan
- Some of these finds offer extra-biblical references to Israel
- Stele of Merneptah (~1220 BCE) - ancient Egyptian text that makes (possible) reference to Israel
- The line mentioning Israel is grouped together with three other defeated states in Canaan:
- 'Canaan is captive with all woe. Ashkelon is conquered, Gezer seized, Yanoam made nonexistent; Israel is wasted, bare of seed'.
- Cf. Mesha Stele (Moabite stone), 9th c BCE

Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) parallels

- Several of the OT stories were well known elsewhere in the ancient world, with several parallels known from the wider ANE known as Mesopotamia
- ANE parallels
- Mesopotamian flood story known as the 'Epic of Gilgamesh'
- Very old - ca. 2000 BCE
- Agrees at numerous points with Genesis flood story
- A flood story with a hero, Utnapishtim
- Builds a boat for himself and animals when a worldwide storm floods the earth

Gilgamesh and the Bible

- Too many similarities for there not to be some connection:
- One man chosen to save self, family, and living creatures
- Instructions for building boat
- Rains come, destroy world
- Boat comes to rest on a mountain
- Birds are sent out when rain stops

ANE parallels

- Several of the OT stories have much in common with stories and materials from the wider ANE
- How the traditions are related is unclear, though many of these stories pre-date the Bible

A reminder that the OT was written in a particular time and place

- Shares the same worldview and even some of the same stories with other cultures from the ANE
- Important to keep this context in mind: Bible does not emerge out of a vacuum, but was influenced by Israel's neighbours
- Share stories, ideas, worldviews, even if shaped in distinct ways

Archaeology: Potential and limitations

Much of value has been discovered in the past 250-300 years
Using this data to illuminate the Bible can be useful, but caution also needed...

Value of archaeology

- Places: background on 'Ur', Abraham's home
- Texts: flood narratives, law codes
- Language: languages related to Hebrew, loan words
- People: references to Israel, house of David, etc. as well as others (Hittites)

Limitations of archaeology

- Archaeology is not exhaustive - it gives us a small glimpse of the ancient world
- Many things have not survived the thousands of years that have passed
- Only small parts of sites can be excavated
- Some sites are inaccessible
- Huge amount still to be excavated, and much that will remain unknown about ANE
- Archaeology is not an exact science - it is **an interpretation** data that is discovered
- Dating is not always precise and is often revised or challenged
- Translations of texts are often imprecise and challenged
- The 'abiru' of Amarna
- Tempting to put great emphasis on a particular finding (e.g. 'abiru'); if this is challenged or disproved, then what?
- This is particularly true of popularised attempts to prove the Bible
- Noah's ark, etc
- Lots of excitement, but little credibility; often hoaxes
- Sometimes does more harm than good to the faith communities
- Alternatively, how do we respond when there is counter-evidence that seems to contradict biblical account (e.g. Jericho)?
- Do we take only the evidence that we feel supports the biblical account?
- Integrity demands we take it all seriously...

The Bible, history, and archaeology:

Archaeology can be very helpful...

- If we understand it as exploration of biblical sites and artefacts to gain a clearer understanding of the world of the Bible
- If we remember it will not necessarily 'prove' the Bible, but may help us understand it
- If we are willing to take all the evidence into consideration, and to think critically and carefully about

Notes

Session 6: The Historical Books (2): Division of the kingdom to the post-exilic period

Rise of the monarchy

- Golden age of the united kingdom under David and Solomon
- But not too long into this 'golden era' there were cracks beginning to show in the façade
- Taxation becomes a burden to the people
- Fissure begins to emerge between north and south

Divided Kingdom

- Where do we find this:
- 1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 25 (1-2 Chron)
- After reign of Solomon, the kingdom divides into Israel and Judah - ca. 930 BCE
- Just 3 kings!
- Rehoboam, Solomon's son, will not move on the issue of heavy taxation (1 Kings 12)
- Israel's golden age is over, and the country is divided in two
- The kingdoms will coexist, sometimes in peace, other times at odds, for several centuries

Judah

- The southern kingdom is known as Judah
- Jerusalem remains the capital of Judah
- 19 kings / 1 queen will rule in Judah between 930-587 BCE (Babylonian destruction)
- Queen Athaliah

Israel - northern kingdom

- The northern kingdom is known as Israel
- Its main city is Samaria
- Also Shechem
- Several centres of worship - Bethel, Dan (1 Kings 12)
- 19 kings will rule in Israel between 930-722 BCE (Assyrian conquest of Israel)
- First king: Jeroboam I
- Early pre-classical prophets (Elijah, Elisha) come on the scene during this era

Good and bad kings...

- Several formulas used regarding whether kings were considered righteous or not:
- **Josiah** - 2 Kings 22:2 - He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.
- **Amaziah** - 2 Kings 14:3 -- He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his ancestor David...
- **Ahab** - 1 Kings 16:30 -- Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him.

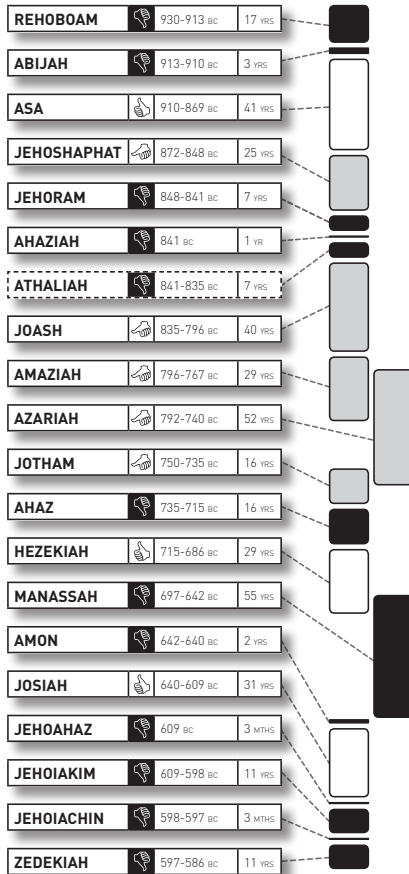
[See next page for chart]

THE KINGS OF JUDAH & ISRAEL

FROM 1 & 2 KINGS

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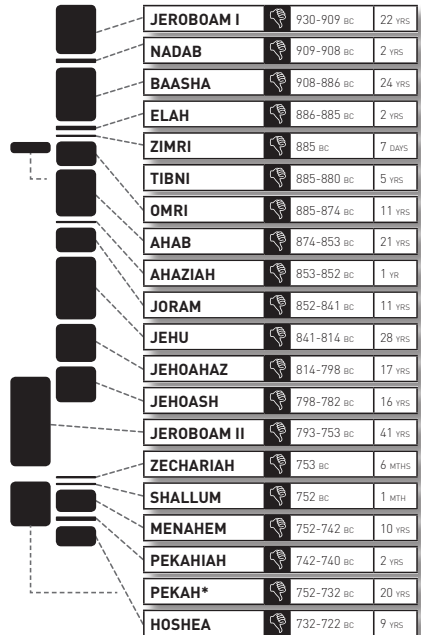
KINGS OF JUDAH



JUDAH EXILED BY BABYLON (586 BC)

KINGDOM DIVIDES (922 BC)

KINGS OF ISRAEL



ISRAEL ASSIMILATED BY ASSYRIA (722 BC)

KEY

- "Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done."
- "Did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father David had done." (i.e. completely rid the land of idolatry)
- "Did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord."

* Pekah's 20-year reign presumably includes a period of rule as rival to Menahem.

A Judahite perspective

- NB: the stories in the historical books are told from a southern, Judahite perspective - they reflect the concerns and ideals of the south
- After the Assyrians conquer the northern kingdom, the story of the OT will be a Judean story - following the story of those from the south into exile and back again
- Those from the northern kingdom disappear from the story - they are the 'ten lost tribes' of Israel

Empires, exile and return:

Where we find this:

- 2 Kings 15-25
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther

Empires in the ANE

- Relative lack of 'superpower' empires in ANE between 1200-900
- Beginning in the 9th century, there will be a string of empires that control the ANE
- Significant implications for Israel and Judah
- Assyria
- Babylonia
- Persia

Assyrian Empire

- Assyria begins to reassert its dominance, will rule the ANE ca. 900-612 BCE
- Northern kingdom Israel falls to Assyria ~723/722 BCE
- Samaria destroyed, people in north deported under Shalmaneser
- Northern kingdom ceases to exist
- Lost tribes of Israel...
- Judah remains relatively autonomous
- Biblical story from here on out will be 'Judean' - it will follow those of the southern kingdom

Babylonian Empire

- The Babylonian Empire: 610-539 BCE
- Overtake the Assyrians for control of the ANE

- Babylonian Empire
- Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylonia, begins attacking Judah (southern kingdom) around 600 BCE
- Jerusalem finally falls in 587/6
- Jerusalem and Temple destroyed
- Some of population deported as exiles to Babylon

Persian Empire

- The Persians overtake Babylonia
- Take a different approach to 'empire'
- Edict of toleration: Allowed the Jews (and others) to return to their land, rebuild cities and Temple, and to practise their own religion (530-480 BCE)
- Description given in the books of 2 Chron, Ezra, and Nehemiah

Post-exile

- Exciting time for returning people
- We refer to 'Jews' or Judaism after exile
- Returning to promised land, rebuilding lives and society there
- Key figures: Ezra and Nehemiah – religious and political leaders
- No kings after exile
- Difficult time as well
- A generation has passed
- Difficult time socially and culturally
- Language (half of Ezra in Aramaic)
- Knowledge of Torah/tradition (Ezra 8:1-3; 8)
- Inter-marriage and identity (Ezra 9)
- Walls and temple destroyed
- Long, slow project of rebuilding
- NB: not everyone goes back to the land of Judea
- Some stayed in Babylonia, and spread out from there
- Beginning of diaspora
- seen in biblical books like Daniel and Esther
- Judaism will now be a diverse movement, beyond just those in the land of promise

Post-exilic period

This is where the **story** of the OT ends:

- Some of the Judeans are back in the land of promise, where they are reestablishing themselves
- Others begin to move beyond Israel, the beginning of the diaspora
- From this point forward, Judaism will be a more diverse movement

Significant sites and geographical markers

Mt Carmel - Dan - Hezekiah's Tunnel

Mt Carmel

- Coastal mountain range in northern Israel near Mediterranean Sea
- The western boundary of the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:24)
- Elijah confronts Ahab and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)
- Today home to both the University of Haifa and the Bahá'í Shrine of the Bab

1 Kings 18:

17 When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, 'Is it you, you troubler of Israel?' **18** He answered, 'I have not troubled Israel; but you have, and your father's house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. **19** Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at **Mount Carmel**, with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.'

20 So Ahab sent to all the Israelites, and assembled the prophets at **Mount Carmel**. **21** Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, 'How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.' The people did not answer him a word.

Dan

- A city in the area allotted to the tribe of Dan
- Ancient Canaanite city - was known by the name Leshem (Joshua 19:47) or Laish (Judges 18:29)
- The northern edge of Israel, near Mount Hermon
- Dan spring provides the Jordan River with water

- Jeroboam erected High Places for worship in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12:29-33)
- Remains include ancient city gates
- Tel Dan Stele - possible reference by Aramean king to the 'house of David'

Hezekiah's tunnel

- Also known as the Siloam Tunnel, a water channel carved beneath the City of David in Jerusalem
- The tunnel leads from the Gihon Spring to the Pool of Siloam
- Connected to king Hezekiah (late 8th/early 7th c), corresponds to the "water works" mentioned in 2 Kings 20:20
- 2 Kings 20:20 "As for the other events of Hezekiah's reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city..."

King Hezekiah prepared Jerusalem for an impending siege by the Assyrians, by diverting water from the Gihon Spring

2 Chr 32:2-4 "When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him. They gathered a large group of people who blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. 'Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?' they said."

2 Chr 32:30 "It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channelled the water down to the west side of the City of David."

Notes

Session 7: Digging deeper: Prophecy and Prophetic Literature

Prophecy in the OT:

- The designation 'prophet' is found throughout the OT:
- Abraham first to be called prophet: Gen. 20:7, 'Now return the man's wife, for he is a (*nabi*) prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live'.
- Moses referred to as 'prophet' - Deuteronomy 34:10: 'Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.'
- Neither Abraham nor Moses are 'classical' prophets - they are more than likely referred to as prophets in the general sense that they were considered people who had a particularly close relationship with God.
- The prophet as a distinct role becomes more prominent, and more important, with the rise of the monarchy and onward

Sources for learning about prophets in the Bible:

- 'pre-classical' prophets
- Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha
- Stories from their lives recounted in historical books
- And the 'classical' prophets
- Books associated with prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and so on
- Messages from these prophets rather than stories

Prophetic Literature

- The prophetic books ('classical prophets') are divided into two categories in the Christian Bible
- the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets (or Book of the Twelve)
- Minor: size rather than importance...

Prophetic activity surrounds three key periods and empires:

- Assyrian - Pre-exilic
- Babylonian - Exilic
- Persian - Post-exilic/second Temple period

Chronology Of The Prophets

	To Israel	To Judah	To Foreign Nations
Assyrian Age	Amos (c. 763-750 B.C.) Hosea (c. 755-715 B.C.)	Isaiah (c. 740-770 B.C.) Micah (c. 737-690 B.C.)	Jonah (c. 770-750 B.C.)
Babylonian Age		Habakkuk (c. 630-605 B.C.) Zephaniah (c. 640-609 B.C.) Jeremiah (c. 627-580 B.C.) Daniel (c. 605-530 B.C.) Ezekiel (c. 593-570 B.C.)	Nahum (c. 663-615 B.C.)
Persian Age		Haggai (520 B.C.) Zechariah (c. 520-518 B.C.) Joel (c. 800-500 B.C.) Malachi (c. 433 B.C.)	Obadiah (c. 586-553 B.C.)

(c) *Archeological Study Bible*, p. 1483

Views on Prophets and Prophecy

- Predicting the future
- Religious figures
- Voices for social and political activism
- How do biblical prophets fit in this? Need to situate them in their ancient context

Intermediaries:

- In many ancient cultures (and some contemporary ones) people with special gifts or training were understood to be able to communicate with this other dimension
- These religious leaders became intermediaries between the people and the gods - they mediate or go between the gods and the people
- These intermediaries 'penetrate the veil' that hangs between the natural and supernatural world

Prophecy in the Bible and the ancient world:

- Prophets in the Bible play a similar role - they are intermediaries between the people and Israel's God - they speak to the people on behalf of God
- The biblical prophets stand in a long line of intermediaries who 'penetrate the veil' between the natural and supernatural worlds

Biblical prophets

- Biblical prophets are concerned mainly with current situation of the people
- Addressed religious, social, and cultural issues of the day
- In this sense, prophets in the Bible are not just 'predictors', predicting the future, which is often assumed
- They are primarily 'preachers' - they are critiquing and speaking about their present situations
- Because of this, understanding the context and world of the prophets becomes very important...

The rise of prophecy: von Rad's four factors

- Why did prophecy occur at this particular time in Israel's history?
- Israel already had at this time an established religion, with priests and others who could serve as 'intermediaries'.
- Gerhard von Rad outlines four issues that accompanied the rise of prophecy in Israel.
- Religion
- National politics
- Economic/social issues
- Ancient Near East politics
- Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1967), 9-11.

The 'religious' factor

- Religion: established religious tradition with priests and Temple
- The degeneration of Israel's religion because of syncretism (blending with other traditions)
- False security in religion, religion without ethics

Isaiah 1:13-15

13 Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations— I cannot bear your worthless assemblies.

14 Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!

Jeremiah 7:1-7

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: **2** Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. **3** Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. **4** Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, **6** if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, **7** then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever.

The 'national political' factor

- National Politics: established as Israel (and then Israel and Judah) for some time
- Formation of the state and rise of kingship
- Reliance on monarchy
- Priests and other religious leaders often blindly supporting kings

Micah 3:9-11

⁹ Hear this, you leaders of Jacob,
 you rulers of Israel,
 who despise justice
 and distort all that is right;
¹⁰ who build Zion with bloodshed,
 and Jerusalem with wickedness.
¹¹ Her leaders judge for a bribe,
 her priests teach for a price,
 and her prophets tell fortunes for money.
 Yet they look for the LORD's support and say,
 "Is not the LORD among us?
 No disaster will come upon us."

The 'economic and social' factor

- Economic and social 'development': economic and social developments related to the rise of the monarchy and centralisation in Jerusalem
- Taxation, developed with monarchy
- Power of landowners, peasants unable to remain free
- Urbanisation: population moves to urban areas, farmers and others in rural areas marginalised

Amos 5:11

¹¹ You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them

The 'ancient near east' factor

Ancient near east politics: A period of time in the ancient near east with no strong superpowers was coming to an end - allowed Judah/Israel to grow and develop
 The rise of Assyria to heights of power and threat to Israel/Judah, followed by Babylonia and Persia

Isaiah 36 - 37

^{36:1} In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, King Sennacherib of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.

^{37:5} When the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah, ⁶ Isaiah said to them, 'Say to your master, "Thus says the LORD: Do not

be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me.'

Jeremiah 6:22-23

22 This is what the LORD says:

"Look, an army is coming
from the land of the north;
a great nation is being stirred up
from the ends of the earth.

23 They are armed with bow and spear;
they are cruel and show no mercy.

They sound like the roaring sea
as they ride on their horses;
they come like men in battle formation
to attack you, Daughter Zion."

Prophets and prophecy:

- Prophecy in the Bible: much more preaching than predicting
- Three key periods of prophecy - Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian
- Factors accompanying the rise of prophecy: Religious, political, socio-economic, and international

Notes

Session 8: Pre-exilic prophets (Assyrian Empire)

Prophets and prophecy:

- Prophecy in the Bible: much more preaching than predicting
- Three key periods of prophecy - Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian
- Factors accompanying the rise of prophecy: Religious, political, socio-economic, and international

Amos

- Amos is one of the earliest of the prophets
- Mid 8th C BCE
- He's from the southern kingdom Judah, but his prophecy takes place in the northern kingdom of Israel before its destruction
- 1:1: 'The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa...' -- Judah (near Bethlehem)
- Prophet to northern kingdom
- Amos 7:14 Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore trees, ¹⁵and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Amos' origins

- Livestock breeder, cattle, sheep
- Dresser of Sycamore figs
- Widely travelled
- Towns & markets
- Tending sycamores
- well-informed!
- Imagery of his preaching reflects his background and interests - very rural and agricultural imagery

Amos' message

A critique of the economic, social and religious life of the northern kingdom of Israel at a time of prosperity

Economic and social critique:

- Israel controlled important trade routes
- Great Prosperity, wealthy merchant class

- Land-owning class wealthy
- Samaria's economic elite, luxury living
- Taxation, developed with monarchy, crippling parts of society
- Power of landowners -- peasants unable to remain free or retain ownership of their lands
- Elite landowners and wealthy taking advantage of marginalised
- Divide growing between classes, rich & poor
- Corruption -poor exploited, injustice
- people forced into debt & slavery (cf. 2:6; 8:6)
- Rich enriched by unjust means

Amos 2:6-7

They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals – they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way...

Religious Critique

- False security in religious rituals (sacrifices, offerings, etc)
- Sabbath - hypocritical
- Religious observance no impact on living
- exploitation, dishonesty, oppression, injustice

Amos 2:8

⁸ they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
wine bought with fines they imposed.

Exploiting others, and this has no impact on their religious life or their worship, which carries on

Amos 8:4-5

⁴ Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵ saying, 'When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?

Wanting to 'get on with' Sabbath etc to get back to exploitative ways

Reading from Amos 5:1-24

- What indications do we have in this passage that Amos is speaking to the northern kingdom of Israel (especially vs. 1-7)?
- What social and economic issues does Amos call out and admonish the people for in vs. 10-13?
- What religious issues does Amos highlight in vs. 21-24? What seems to be the underlying issue here?
- According to vs. 14-15, what does God want from the people?

Amos 5:1

Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:

² Fallen, no more to rise, is maiden Israel; forsaken on her land, with no one to raise her up.

³ For thus says the LORD GOD: The city that marched out a thousand shall have a hundred left, and that which marched out a hundred shall have ten left.

⁴ For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: Seek me and live;

⁵ but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.

⁶ Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

⁷ Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!

⁸ The one who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea,

and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name,

⁹ who makes destruction flash out against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

10 They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.

11 Therefore, because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain,
you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them;
you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

12 For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins—
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.

13 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time.

14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live;
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.

15 Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

16 Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord:
In all the squares there shall be wailing; and in all the streets they shall say, 'Alas! alas!' They shall call the farmers to mourning, and those skilled in lamentation, to wailing;

17 in all the vineyards there shall be wailing, for I will pass through the midst of you, says the LORD.

18 Alas for you who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light;

19 as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear;
or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake.

20 Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light, and gloom with no brightness in it?

21 I hate, I despise your festivals, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

22 Even though you offer me your burnt-offerings and grain-offerings,

I will not accept them; and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals I will not look upon.

23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

24 But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Isaiah

- Born c. 760 BCE, Jerusalem
- Noble rank? Familiar with temple and ruling classes
- Political knowledge
- Married - Wife a prophetess
- 2 children:
- 'shear-jashub' -- the remnant will return
- 'Maher-shalal-hash-baz' -- the spoil speeds, the prey hastens (8:3)
- Divided kingdom -- Isaiah based in Jerusalem in southern kingdom

Isaiah's Ministry

- Judah - Jerusalem (742-701) ~40 years
- Reigns of Uzziah (c.785-741), Jotham, Ahaz & Hezekiah
- Saw Israel/Samaria fall (723-2)
- Slightly later than Amos

Isaiah on national and international (ANE) politics

- Assyrian Empire
- Assyria begins to reassert its dominance in the 9th c BCE
- Assyria will rule the ANE 900-612 BCE
- Start in northern Mesopotamia and expand

Assyrian Empire

- In 8th c., both Israel and Judah become stronger, but Assyria is looming
- Both nations divided into pro- and anti-Assyrian factions
- Finally, further invasions by Assyria in Israel (northern kingdom); Samaria destroyed, people in north deported under Shalmaneser (723-722)

Fall of northern kingdom

- Northern kingdom Israel falls to Assyria in 723-22 BCE
- Northern kingdom ceases to exist
- Judah remains somewhat autonomous
- Isaiah witnessed these developments

Reading: Isaiah 31

- Read Isaiah 31, and answer the following questions:
- What nations/empires does Isaiah mention in this text?
- What seems to be happening politically that Isaiah is concerned about?
- What does Isaiah think the people should do?

Isaiah 31

1 Alas for those who go down to Egypt for help and who rely on horses,

who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong,

but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!

2 Yet he too is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words,

but will rise against the house of the evildoers, and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.

3 The Egyptians are human, and not God; their horses are flesh, and not spirit.

When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and the one helped will fall,

and they will all perish together.

4 For thus the LORD said to me, As a lion or a young lion growls over its prey,

and—when a band of shepherds is called out against it—is not terrified by their shouting

or daunted at their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight upon Mount Zion and upon its hill.

5 Like birds hovering overhead, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem;

he will protect and deliver it, he will spare and rescue it.

6 Turn back to him whom you have deeply betrayed, O people of Israel. **7** For on that day all of you shall throw away your idols of silver and idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.

8 'Then the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of mortals; and a sword, not of humans, shall devour him; he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labour.

9 'His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,'

says the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

What happens after this?

- 2 Kgs 18-19 and Is. 36-37 – two accounts
- Northern kingdom Israel has fallen
- King Hezekiah of Judah
- anti-Assyrian
- Reforms Judah's worship
- Resists the growing power of Assyria
- Warned by Isaiah not to join rebellion
- Sennacherib, new king of Assyria, attacks Judah (701 BCE)
- Hezekiah's tunnel?
- Assyria destroys many cities (Lachish), lays siege to Jerusalem
- Records from Assyria recounting this: Annals of Sennacherib; cf. 2 Kgs 18:13
- Somehow, Judah survives as Assyrian advances as Isaiah said, and remains somewhat autonomous
- Tribute paid? Plague?
- Von Rad's factors that accompanied rise of prophecy
- Religion
- Economic/social issues
- National politics
- ANE politics
- These issues were very important to the 8th c prophets

Notes

Session 9: Exilic prophets (Babylonian Empire)

Babylonian Empire

- The Babylonian Empire: 610-539 BCE
- Overtake the Assyrians for control of the ANE
- King Nebuchadnezzar leads forces against Judah in 597 BCE and again in 587 BCE
- Judah and Jerusalem destroyed in 587 BCE
- Some taken into exile (at least two deportations)

Babylonian exile

- How many were deported? How many stayed in the land?
- Not entirely clear -- 'myth of the empty land'
- We do know that the exile was a very formative event for the future of Judaism

Significance of exile

- Disorienting for Judah on a number of levels:
- Geographical - holy land, Jerusalem lost, displaced to foreign country
- Social - families separated, different language
- Political - loss of political freedom, king taken as captive
- Religious - loss of Temple, rituals, religious leaders, living among 'unclean' people

Psalm 137:1-4

1 By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

2 There on the poplars we hung our harps,

3 for there our captors asked us for songs, our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"

4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

Prophets of exilic period

- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- Help the people accept their fate
- Encourage them that God has not forgotten them
- Promise of future salvation and deliverance

The Prophet Jeremiah

- Born mid-7th c. – A youth in 627 (1:6)
- Anathoth (north of Jerusalem) – In Judah
- Priest, priestly family (1:1)
- Given more insight into Jeremiah the prophet than most others

Jeremiah's Ministry

- Ministry spans long period: 627-582 BCE
- Dramatic period
- Decline of Assyria, rise of Babylonian empire
- Brief period of reform and hope under King Josiah
- Destruction of Judah and Jerusalem

Jeremiah's Message

- Mission: both judgment and salvation, doom and hope
- Build up & tear down...(1:10)
- Like pre-exilic prophets, Jeremiah's message begins with critique of social, economic, and religious issues

Jeremiah 7

7 The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: **2** Stand in the gate of the Lord's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. **3** Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. **4** Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

5 For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, **6** if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, **7** then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever.

Jeremiah's message after the destruction...

- Change of tone
- Accept your fate
- Don't give up hope – God has not abandoned you

Jeremiah's unique perspective:

- Jeremiah's ministry spans this important era in Judah
- Before Babylonian conquest (1:1)
- Destruction of Jerusalem and exile (ch. 39 and 52)
- Life during exile from perspective of Judah (ch. 41-44) and later Egypt
- This means that Jeremiah prophesied during one of the most difficult periods in Israel's history: the events leading up to and during the Babylonian conquest

Reading: Jeremiah 29:1-14

- To whom is Jeremiah writing this letter, and where are they?
- What does this tell us about the time period of this episode in Jeremiah's life?
- What is the message of verses 5-7? Why might those who received this letter from Jeremiah have found this difficult?

Jeremiah 29:1-14

¹ These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² This was after King Jeconiah, and the queen mother, the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem. ³ The letter was sent by the hand of Elasah son of Shaphan and Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom King Zedekiah of Judah sent to Babylon to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. It said: ⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷ But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. ⁸ For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, ⁹ for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, says the LORD.

10 For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. **11** For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. **12** Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. **13** When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, **14** I will let you find me, says the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

Jer 29 - context

- Chapter 29 contains a letter sent from Jeremiah to those who were taken as captives to Babylon in 597 BCE.
- The exile of 597 was not the final deportation and subjugation of Judah – that would happen 10 years later in 587 BCE.
- This was instead the first round of exiles who were deported under Nebuchadnezzar, many of whom were leaders -- Jehoiachin the king, the elders, priests, etc.
- Jeremiah was allowed to stay in the land of Judah because he had warned the leaders to give in to Babylon.

The relationship of those in exile to their captors (29:7)
 John Bracke: 'Concern for Babylon's welfare demands more than resigned acceptance of a long exile. Babylon is to be not merely a place of sojourn to be endured but a place of involvement and concern.' (223).

Chapter 28 highlights Jeremiah's struggle with the false prophet Hananiah, who had been telling those in exile that it would only last a short while, and they would then be restored to the land of Judah and the Babylonians would be destroyed. Jeremiah's message is that the exile will not be short, but that God has not forgotten them

- It's going to be a long time – get used to it, accept your fate
- Make the most of your new setting – flourish where you are
- God has not abandoned you – still has hopes and plans for you
- Including restoration to land of promise

- Brueggemann: 'The exile was a time of relinquishment and receiving'
- Famous vs 11: hopes and plans come after the 70 years of exile!

Exilic prophets

- Had the difficult job of telling people that the exile was their new reality, but that God had not abandoned them - which would seem to be a paradox to many
- We see the change to a message of hope for the people that God will restore them

The post-exilic prophets (Persian period)

Persian Empire

- The Persians overtake Babylonia
- Take a different approach to 'empire'
- Cyrus, Darius, Artaxerxes, Xerxes
- Persian administration: satraps in charge of regions; locals left to manage their own affairs
- Edict of toleration: Allowed the Jews (and others) to return to their land, rebuild cities and Temple, and to practise their own religion (530-480 BCE)
- Description given in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah

Ezra 1

1 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict declared:

2 "Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem in Judah. **3** Any of those among you who are of his people—may their God be with them!—are now permitted to go up to Jerusalem in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem.

Post-exile

- Exciting time for returning people

- Now referred to as 'Jews' or Jewish people after exile
- Returning to promised land, rebuilding lives and society there
- Key figures: Ezra and Nehemiah – religious and political leaders
- Prophets: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi
- Difficult time for Jews as well
- A different place than they left
- Others living there
- Those that remained in land? Or migrated in from elsewhere, perhaps northern kingdom?
- Face opposition from these in rebuilding process
- Walls and temple destroyed
- Long, slow project of rebuilding
- Difficult time socially and culturally
- Language (half of Ezra in Aramaic)
- Knowledge of Torah/tradition (read Nehemiah 8:1-3; 8)
- Inter-marriage (Ezra 9)
- Reestablishment of land and Temple

Post-exile – a diverse community

- Judah and Judaism at the end of the OT period: remember that not everyone is back in the land
- Some stayed in Babylonia and beyond others went to Egypt
- Jeremiah
- Beginning of diaspora, seen in biblical books like Daniel and Esther,
- Judaism will now be a diverse movement, beyond just those in the land of promise

The Prophet Zechariah

- Zechariah = YHWH is renowned or remembered
- Prophet of Judah
- Prophetic career began in the second year of Darius (520 BCE)
- Not long after the return from exile (538c.)
- From a priestly background

Zechariah's world...

- Post-exile, Persia dominant empire
- Some of the Jews have returned home
- Exciting time – back in the land of promise

- Difficult time – land in ruins, questions of identity, etc.

Reading: Zechariah 7

- Are we given any clues as to the historical context?
- Where is Zechariah located?
- Who are the people that come to him, and what seems to be their concern? How is this related to the historical context?
- What is Zechariah's response?
- Given the background and historical context, what do you think is the point of this episode? What is happening and why?

Zechariah 7-8

7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. **2** Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favour of the LORD, **3** and to ask the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, 'Should I mourn and practise abstinence in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?' **4** Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: **5** Say to all the people of the land and the priests: When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? **6** And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink only for yourselves? **7** Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around it, and when the Negeb and the Shephelah were inhabited? **8** The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying: **9** Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgements, show kindness and mercy to one another; **10** do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. **11** But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. **12** They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. **13** Just as, when I called, they would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the LORD of

hosts, **14** and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

8 The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: **2** Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. **3** Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. **4** Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. **5** And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. **6** Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the LORD of hosts? **7** Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; **8** and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness. **9** Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the LORD of hosts. **10** For before those days there were no wages for people or for animals, nor was there any safety from the foe for those who went out or came in, and I set them all against one another. **11** But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of hosts. **12** For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. **13** Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.

14 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon you, when your ancestors provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, **15** so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the

house of Judah; do not be afraid. **16** These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgements that are true and make for peace, **17** do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD.

18 The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: **19** Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah: therefore love truth and peace.

20 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; **21** the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Come, let us go to entreat the favour of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.' **22** Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favour of the LORD. **23** Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'

Notes

A GUIDE TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS

The following is a refined listing of Levantine archeological periods, expanded from the basic three-age system with finer subdivisions and extension into the modern historical period. The particular dates selected as the boundary between ages, as well as the period names for the historical era, are specific to Levantine archaeology and therefore are most accurate in that context. Beginning and ending dates of prehistoric ages are based on the introduction and prevalence of certain technologies, which varied from culture to culture (note: "BP" = "Before Present"); similarly, historical eras are named after cultures in whose sphere of influence the Levant was included. However, archaeologists studying other regions have sometimes found it useful to apply the same or similar eras to their fields of research (particularly prehistoric eras), and thus this list represents the most common interpretation of broad archaeological periods.

1. THE STONE AGE

Stone Age (2,000,000 BP – 3300 BCE)	Paleolithic (2,000,000 BP – 8300 BCE)	Lower Paleolithic	2,000,000 BP – 300,000 BP
		Middle Paleolithic	300,000 BP – 30,000 BP
		Upper Paleolithic	30,000 BP – 12,000 BP
		Epipaleolithic	12,000 BP – 8300 BCE
	Neolithic (8300 BCE – 4500 BCE)	Pre-pottery Neolithic	8300 BCE – 5500 BCE
		Pottery Neolithic	5500 BCE – 4500 BCE
	Chalcolithic (4500 BCE – 3300 BCE)	Early Chalcolithic	4500 BCE – 4000 BCE
		Late Chalcolithic (Ghassulian)	4000 BCE – 3300 BCE

2. THE BRONZE AGE

The **Bronze Age** is a historical period characterised by the use of bronze, and in some areas proto-writing, and other early features of urban civilization. The Bronze Age is the second principal period of the three-age Stone-Bronze-Iron system, as proposed in modern times by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, for classifying and studying ancient societies.

An ancient civilisation is defined to be in the Bronze Age either by producing bronze by smelting its own copper and alloying with tin, arsenic, or other metals, or by trading for bronze from production areas elsewhere. Bronze itself is harder and more durable than other metals available at the time, allowing Bronze Age civilisations to gain a technological advantage. Copper-tin ores are rare, as reflected in the fact that there were no tin bronzes in Western Asia before trading in bronze began in the BCE. Worldwide, the Bronze Age generally followed the Neolithic period, with the Chalcolithic serving as a transition. Although the Iron Age generally followed the Bronze Age, in some areas (such as Sub-Saharan Africa), the Iron Age intruded directly on the Neolithic.

Bronze Age cultures differed in their development of the first writing. According to archaeological evidence, cultures in Mesopotamia (cuneiform script) and Egypt (hieroglyphs) developed the earliest viable writing systems.

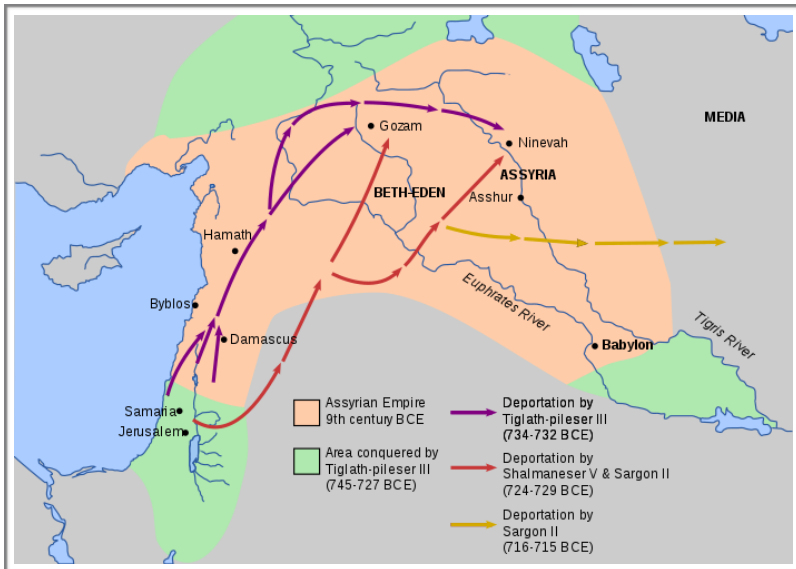
[See chart on next page]

Bronze Age (3300 BCE – 1200 BCE)	Early Bronze Age (3300 BCE – 2000 BCE)	Early Bronze Age I	3300 BCE – 3000 BCE
		Early Bronze Age II	3000 BCE – 2700 BCE
		Early Bronze Age III	2700 BCE – 2200 BCE
		Early Bronze Age IV	2200 BCE – 2000 BCE
	Middle Bronze Age (2000 BCE – 1550 BCE)	Middle Bronze Age I	2000 BCE – 1750 BCE
		Middle Bronze Age II	1750 BCE – 1650 BCE
		Middle Bronze Age III	1650 BCE – 1550 BCE
	Late Bronze Age (1550 BCE – 1200 BCE)	Late Bronze Age I	1550 BCE – 1400 BCE
		Late Bronze Age II A	1400 BCE – 1300 BCE
		Late Bronze Age II B	1300 BCE – 1200 BCE

3. THE IRON AGE

Iron Age (1200 BCE - 586 BCE)	Iron Age I (1200 BCE - 1000 BCE)	Iron Age I A	1200 BCE - 1150 BCE
		Iron Age I B	1150 BCE - 1000 BCE
	Iron Age II (1000 BCE - 586 BCE)	Iron Age II A	1000 BCE - 900 BCE
		Iron Age II B	900 BCE - 700 BCE
		Iron Age II C	700 BCE - 586 BCE

The **Neo-Assyrian Empire** was an Iron Age Mesopotamian empire, in existence between 911 and 609 BCE, and became the largest empire of the world up till that time. The Assyrians perfected early techniques of imperial rule, many of which became standard in later empires, and was, according to many historians, the first real empire in history. The Assyrians were the first to be armed with iron weapons, and their troops employed advanced, effective military tactics.



IMPORTANT ASSYRIAN RULERS

Tiglath-Pileser III	744–727 BCE
Sargon II	721–705 BCE
Sennacherib	705–681 BCE
Esarhaddon	681–669 BCE
Ashurbanipal	668–627 BCE

HISTORICAL PERIODS

Historical periods (586 BCE – present)	Babylonian and Persian periods		586 BCE – 332 BCE
	Hellenistic period (332 BCE – 37 BCE)	Early Hellenistic	332 BCE – 167 BCE
		Late Hellenistic	167 BCE – 37 BCE
	Roman period (37 BCE – 324 CE)	Early Roman	37 BCE – 132 CE
		Late Roman	132 CE – 324 CE
	Byzantine period		324 – 638
	Early Arab period (Umayyad and Abbasid)		638 – 1099
	Crusader and Ayyubid periods		1099 – 1291
	Late Arab period (Fatimid and Mamluk)		1291 – 1516
	Ottoman period		1516 – 1917
	Modern period		1917 – current

STRATIGRAPHY

A tel is an elevated area of land produced from inhabitants building at the same location over many generations, one on top of another. The tels were well-preserved in the climate of the Middle East, and each settlement produced its own separate layer on the tel. Archaeological excavation of tels have uncovered layers, each with their own culture.

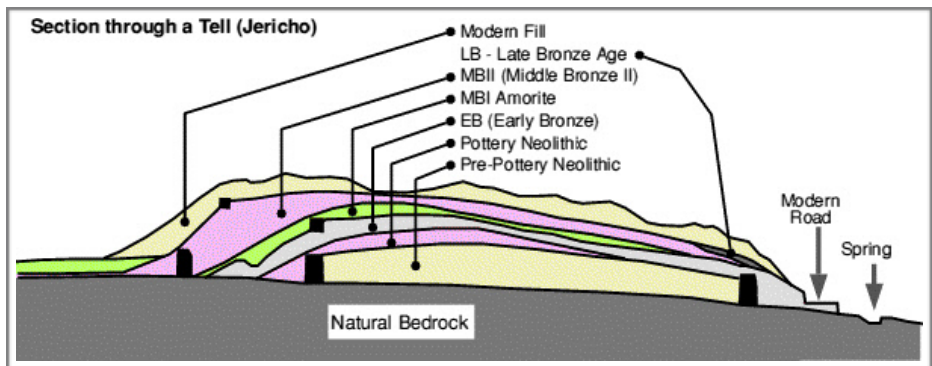
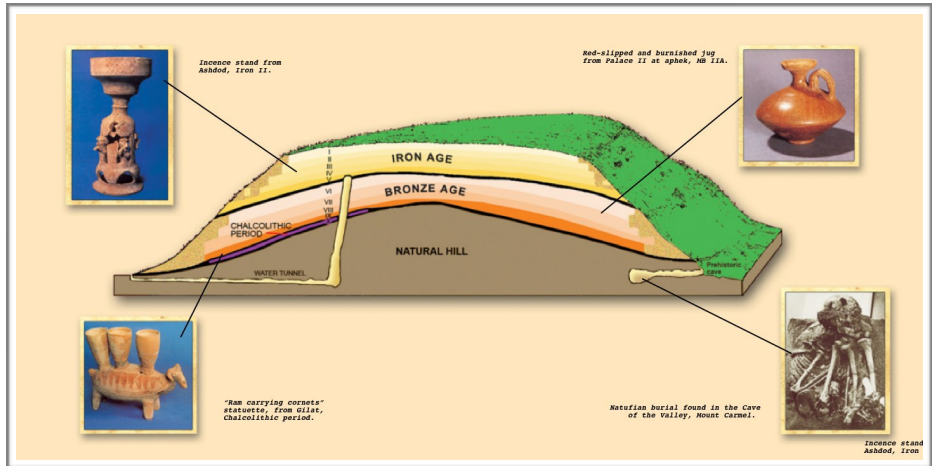




Photo: Jabok River (#16) and Gilead (#13)



1. Acco
2. Arnon River
3. Bashan
4. Beersheba
5. Caesarea
6. Carmel
7. Coastal Plain
8. Dead (Salt) Sea
9. Desert
10. Galilee (Lower)
11. Galilee (Upper)
12. Gaza
13. Gilead
14. Hebron
15. Hula Valley
16. Jabok River
17. Jericho
18. Jerusalem
19. Jezreel Valley
20. Jordan Rift Valley
21. Jordan River
22. Jordan River
23. Judea (Hill Country)
24. Judean Wilderness
25. Kir-heraseth
26. Lachish
27. Mani River
28. Medeba
29. Mt. Carmel
30. Mt. Hermon
31. Mt. Nebo
32. Nazareth
33. Negev
34. Plateau
35. Rabbath-Ammon
36. Samaria (Hill Country)
37. Sea of Galilee
38. Sharon Plain
39. Shechem
40. Shephelah
41. Tyre
42. Yarmuk River

Mediterranean Sea

ISRAEL WITH THE WEST BANK, GAZA STRIP, AND GOLAN HEIGHTS

