



TANACH

תנ"ך

The Hebrew Bible an abbreviation

(the Law), Neviim (the Ketuvim (the Writings). There are a total of 24 books in Tanach, although at first glance it may look like more (Samuel, Kings and Chronicles are each divided into two volumes, but they are in fact each a single book; Ezra and Nehemiah form a single book and the twelve "minor" prophets collectively constitute a single book).

The Books of the Prophets are generally divided into two sections: the Early Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) and the Later Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and The Twelve). The Writings are divided into the philosophical "Books of Truth" (Psalms, Proverbs and Job, whose Hebrew initials spell out "emet," truth), the "Five Scrolls" (megillot) that are read on various holidays (Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther), and the historical books of Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

The Books of the Torah were dictated word-for-word, directly by God to Moses. The Books of the Prophets were revealed by God prophetically. The Books of the Writings were written with Divine inspiration, rather than through prophecy.

KEY:

Hebrew Name – English Name

(# of chapters)

Author, approximate year written

Contents of the book

Years covered by the text

**Other notes and comments*

Please note: *The years the books were written are sometimes "best guesses." For example, the period of the Anshei K'nesset HaGedola, the Men of the Great Assembly, lasted approximately 130 years. We have chosen to list books compiled by the Great Assembly as "circa 3450 (311 BCE)," in the midpoint of their era. While this estimate may be off by as much as fifty years, it is provided primarily to give readers a context as to whether a book was written contemporary with events described within it or hundreds of years later.*

Torah (THE LAW)

BEREISHIT – GENESIS

(50 chapters)

Dictated to Moses by God, 2448 (1313 BCE)

Creation, the flood, the Forefathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), Joseph's dreams, descent to Egypt.

Covers events from Year 1-2238 (3760-1523 BCE)

SHEMOT – EXODUS

(40 chapters)

Dictated to Moses by God, 2448 (1313 BCE)

The birth of Moses, Ten Plagues, redemption from Egypt, revelation at Sinai, the Golden Calf, the Tabernacle.

Covers events from 2309-2449 (1452-1312 BCE)

VAYIKRA – LEVITICUS

(27 chapters)

Dictated to Moses by God between 2448-2488 (1313-1273 BCE)

Laws of sacrifices, kosher food, ritual purity, forbidden relationships, the Sabbatical year, and more.

Covers events during the wandering in the desert, 2448-2488 (1313-1273 BCE)

BEMIDBAR – NUMBERS

(36 chapters)

Dictated to Moses by God between 2448-2488 (1313-1273 BCE)

Census of the Jewish people, the twelve spies, Korach's rebellion, Amalek attacks, Balaam, the deaths of Miriam and Aaron.

Covers events during the wandering in the desert, 2448-2488 (1313-1273 BCE)

DEVARIM – DEUTERONOMY

(34 chapters)

Dictated to Moses by God, 2488 (1273 BCE)*

The final address of Moses, a review of laws, blessings and curses, a song of praise, the death of Moses.

Moses' speech, delivered 2488 (1273 BCE), reviewing events of the past 40 years.

**The last eight verses, describing the death of Moses, may have been transcribed by Joshua. (See Talmud Baba Batra 15a, Makkot 11a, et al)*

Neviim (THE PROPHETS)

Neviim Rishonim (EARLY PROPHETS)

YEHOSHUA — JOSHUA

(24 chapters)

Written by Joshua circa 2516 (1245 BCE)*

The conquest of Canaan and the division of the land.

Covers events from 2488-2516 (1273-1245 BCE)

* Completed by Elazar and Pinchas

SHOFTIM — JUDGES

(21 chapters)

Written by Samuel circa 2881 (880 BCE)

Conclusion of the conquest, life and wars under the Judges (including Deborah and Samson), civil war against Benjamin.

Covers events from 2533-2870 (1228-891 BCE)

SHMUEL — SAMUEL

(I – 31 chapters; II – 24 chapters)

Written by Samuel circa 2884 (877 BCE)*

Samuel the last Judge, anointment of King Saul, Saul forfeits the Kingdom and is replaced by David, David's reign.

Covers events from 2830-2921 (931-840 BCE)

* Completed later by Nathan and Gad

MELACHIM — KINGS

(I – 22 chapters; II – 25 chapters)

Written by Jeremiah, 3352 (410 BCE)

Death of David, Solomon's reign, building the Temple, Israel divided into two nations, rule of the kings, exile of Ten Tribes (by Assyria), exile of Judah (by Babylonia).

Covers events from 2924-3339 (837-423 BCE)

Neviim Achronim (LATER PROPHETS)

YESHAYA — ISAIAH

(66 chapters)

Prophecies of Isaiah, transcribed by Hezekiah and his court circa 3228 (533 BCE)

The people are rebuked and consoled, the fates of nations are foretold and the Messiah is described.

Covers events from 3142-3228 (619-533 BCE)

YIRMIYA — JEREMIAH

(52 chapters)

Written by Jeremiah, 3352 (410 BCE)

Prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the fates of the nations; the immediate aftermath of the Babylonian exile.

Covers events from 3298-3346 (463-415 BCE)

YECHEZKEL — EZEKIEL

(48 chapters)

Prophecies of Ezekiel, transcribed by the Men of the Great Assembly circa 3450 (311 BCE)

Visions of God's glory, the fall of Jerusalem, the Valley of the Dry Bones, visions of the Third Temple.

Covers events from 3332-3352 (429-410 BCE)

TREI ASAR - THE TWELVE "MINOR" PROPHETS

Prophecies transcribed by the Men of the Great Assembly circa 3450 (311 BCE)*

HOSHEA — HOSEA (14 chapters)

Hoshea's call to prophecy, reproof, God's love for Israel.

Circa 3130-3200 (631-561 BCE)

YOEL — JOEL (4 chapters)

A plague of locusts, Israel urged to repent.

Circa 3250 (511 BCE)

AMOS — AMOS (9 chapters)

God will punish the nations, repentance urged.

3140-circa 3200 (621-561 BCE)

OVADYA — OBADIAH (1 chapter)

The fate of Edom.

Circa 3030 (731 BCE)

YONAH — JONAH (4 chapters)

Jonah disobeys God and is swallowed by the fish.

Circa 3055 (706 BCE)

MICHA — MICAH (7 chapters)

Moral decline of the nation, Jerusalem spared.

3167-circa 3200 (594-561 BCE)

NACHUM — NAHUM (3 chapters)

Nineveh is destroyed, Judah is saved.

Circa 3250 (511 BCE)

CHAVAKUK — HABAKKUK (3 chapters)

A discussion of the nature of evil, a prayer to God.

Circa 3250 (511 BCE)

TZEFANYA — ZEPHANIAH (3 chapters)

Evildoers will be destroyed, Israel is to enlighten the world.

Circa 3300 (461 BCE)

CHAGAI — HAGGAI (2 chapters)

Longing to return from exile and rebuild the Temple.

3408-circa 3448 (353-273 BCE)

ZECHARYA — ZECHARIAH (14 chapters)

Obstacles faced in rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple.

3408-circa 3448 (353-273 BCE)

MALACHI — MALACHI (3 chapters)

Israel rebuked for their sins.

3408-circa 3448 (353-273 BCE)

* Collected into a single volume due to their small size.

Ketuvim (THE WRITINGS)

TEHILLIM — PSALMS

(150 chapters)

Composed by David, incorporating the work of ten “elders” (Adam, Malki Tzedek, Abraham, Moses, Heyman, Yedusun, Asaf and the three sons of Korach), **circa 2883-2924 (878-837 BCE)**.

Songs of praise to God, many of which are now among our most common prayers.

MISHLEI — PROVERBS

(31 chapters)

Composed by Solomon, transcribed by Hezekiah and his court circa 3220 (541 BCE)*

Words of wisdom, the importance of Torah and trust in God, Eishet Chayil (“A Woman of Valor”).

*Solomon would have originally composed Proverbs during his reign, 2924-2964 (837-797 BCE)

IYOV — JOB

(42 chapters)

Written by Moses sometime between 2448-2488 (1313-1273 BCE)*

The story of Job’s trials and his debates with his friends on suffering and the nature of God.

*The Talmud in Baba Batra 15a-b debates when Job lived – or whether he ever actually lived at all! We have chosen to go with the commonly-accepted opinion that the Book of Job is a parable written by Moses; see there for other opinions.

Chameish Megillot (THE FIVE SCROLLS)

SHIR HASHIRIM — SONG OF SONGS

(8 chapters)

Composed by Solomon, transcribed by Hezekiah and his court circa 3220 (541 BCE)*

The relationship between God and Israel presented in the form of a love song. According to the Mishna (Yadayim 3:5), Shir HaShirim is the “holiest of the holy” among the Writings. Read on Passover.

*Solomon would have originally composed Song of Songs during his reign, 2924-2964 (837-797 BCE)

RUT — RUTH

(4 chapters)

Written by Samuel circa 2884 (877 BCE)

The story a Ruth, a righteous Moabite convert and the ancestor of King David. Read on Shavuot.

Covers events circa 2792 (969 BCE)

EICHA — LAMENTATIONS

(5 chapters)

Written by Jeremiah, 3321 (440 BCE)

Mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple.

Covers events in 3338 (423 BCE)*

*Eicha was written before the actual destruction of Jerusalem, in an effort to inspire repentance; see Jeremiah chapter 36.

KOHELET — ECCLESIASTES

(12 chapters)

Composed by Solomon, transcribed by Hezekiah and his court circa 3220 (541 BCE)*

Philosophic reflection on the nature of man and the meaning of life. Read on Succot.

*Solomon would have originally composed Ecclesiastes during his reign, 2924-2964 (837-797 BCE)

ESTHER — ESTHER

(10 chapters)

Written by the Men of the Great Assembly circa 3450 (311 BCE)*

Through Mordechai and Esther, God saves the Jews of Persia from Haman’s plot. Read on Purim.

Covers events from 3395-3406 (366-355 BCE)

*From the letter distributed in 3406 (355 BCE) by Mordechai, a member of the Great Assembly.

DANIEL — DANIEL

(12 chapters)

Written by the Men of the Great Assembly circa 3450 (311 BCE)*

Prophecies of Daniel in exile, the fiery furnace, the writing on the wall, the lion’s den, the Messianic era.

Covers events from 3319-3392 (442-369 BCE)

*Daniel was a member of the Great Assembly.

EZRA-NECHEMYA— EZRA-NEHEMIAH

(Ezra – 10 chapters; Nehemiah – 13 chapters)

Written by Ezra circa 3448 (313 BCE)

Return from exile and rebuilding of the Temple, rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, revitalization.

Covers events from 3390-3438 (371-323 BCE)

DIVREI HAYAMIM — CHRONICLES

(I – 29 chapters; II – 36 chapters)

Written by Ezra circa 3448 (313 BCE)*

A review of Jewish history, from creation through Cyrus, king of Persia, focusing heavily on the Davidic dynasty.

Covers events from Year 1-3390 (3760-371 BCE)

*Completed by Nehemiah