

## **An OT Overview: A Look Back at the Tanakh**

For quite a few folks, the Old Testament (OT) seems like a foreign place! Strange people and stories, strange places and practices. But the OT is God's Word and even though some might direct a focus only to the New Testament, the wise disciple of Jesus should pay equal attention to both the OT and the NT.

Indeed, before encountering any part of the NT, it is always good to remind ourselves of the Old Testament. What follows is my summary of the whole book (the OT as a whole is itself a book). Perhaps you can write a summary too! Maybe a better one – give it a go – because any time you try to summarize you will have to grasp key elements and in doing so YOU WILL ABSORB MUCH and in that journey of curiosity know Him and love Him!

In discovering and exploring the OT there are three major sections. These are the Torah, the Nevi'im and the Ketuvim; what some call the Tanakh (a collection of the beginning letters of T, N, and K).

### **Torah**

The Jews call the first five books of the bible, The Torah. Following Creation and after the fall of man, a promise is given in Gen. 3:15 of redemption. Despite the subsequent Flood, God creates a nation, Israel. Initially, Israel has good relations with Egypt but this turns sour. In the midst of the affliction, God provides redemption so that His firstborn son could worship and serve Him. God gives clear instructions on how to live worshipful, holy, civic lives as individuals and in community. God's desire is for his sons to love Him and worship Him and to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. This takes us up to 1400 BC.

### **Nevi'im and Ketuvim**

After the Torah, the Jews have what they call the Nevi'im and the Ketuvim. The former relates to all the prophets, and the latter, what they otherwise call, the writings. It encompasses the time period from 1400 to 400 B.C.

From 1400 to 400 BC the Covenant of Genesis 12<sup>1</sup> begins to come to pass.

In the English Sequence, we find that 12 books from Joshua to Esther cover this timeframe of 1,000 years. In the Masoretic text, we find Joshua to Ezekiel, then the Twelve, followed by Ruth through Esther, and then Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles concluding the history. Either way we encounter:

- the campaign to conquer the Promised Land,
- the time of the judges,
- the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon,
- the divided kingdoms of the North (Israel) and the South (Judea),
- the defeats by the Assyrians and Babylonians,
- the exile and ultimate return to Judea/Jerusalem.

The poetic books take us through various episodes of history. Job, for example is often seen as the earliest and parts of the Psalms depict much later history.

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<sup>1</sup> The Covenant was given in Genesis 12:1-3, promised again in 13:14-17, ratified in 15:1-21, renewed in 17:1-27 with the sign of circumcision and confirmed through Abraham's obedience in 22:15-18.