

HISTORICAL BIBLE READING PLAN

March 2023

Have you ever wondered what it would have been like to read the Old Testament in ancient Israel or the New Testament as the books were written? This year's Bible reading plan follows the way the Jewish people organized their Bible, what we often call the "Old Testament." Even though debated, this plan also arranges the New Testament readings in a way that follows the consensus about their composition dates.

Introduction

The Hebrew Bible (the **Tanak**) organizes its books differently than our English Old Testament arranges its books. The Tanak favors an organization built around the Jewish people's history and commentary on that history. That organization highlights a key difference between the Tanak and our English Old Testaments – ***the Jews organized their Bible to emphasize narrative and thematic connections while we organize our Old Testament by the style of writing.*** The organizing approach used by our Bibles can result in readers today missing meaningful connections the Jewish writers embedded in their works. We should remember that the Hebrew Bible was composed over a thousand years and offered its writers and editors the opportunity to develop deep, Spirit-guided reflections on Israel, its relationship to God, and His purposes in the world.

Consider the following comparison of the way the Jewish people organized their Bible ([left column](#)) and the way we compose our English Old Testament ([right column](#)):

TORAH	PENTATEUCH
Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
NEVI'IM – THE PROPHETS	HISTORY
Former prophets Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings	Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1, 2 Samuel, 1, 2 Kings 1, 2 Chronicles Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
Latter Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	POETRY Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon



KETHUVIM – THE WRITINGS	PROPHETS
Psalms, Job, Proverbs Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles	Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

This month's readings conclude the **Torah** (*Genesis - Deuteronomy*) and move into the next section of the Hebrew Bible, the **Prophets**.

March reading schedule

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 1, Deuteronomy 5-7 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 17, Joshua 22-24 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 2, Deuteronomy 8-10 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 18, Judges 1-2 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 3, Deuteronomy 11-13 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 19, Judges 3-5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 4, Deuteronomy 14-16 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 20, Judges 6-7 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 5, Deuteronomy 17-20 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 21, Judges 8-9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 6, Deuteronomy 21-23 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 22, Judges 10-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 7, Deuteronomy 24-27 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 23, Judges 13-15 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 8, Deuteronomy 28-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 24, Judges 16-18 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 9, Deuteronomy 30-31 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 25, Judges 19-21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 10, Deuteronomy 32-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 26, 1 Samuel 1-3 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 11, Joshua 1-4 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 27, 1 Samuel 4-8 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 12, Joshua 5-8 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 28, 1 Samuel 9-12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 13, Joshua 9-11 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 29, 1 Samuel 13-14 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 14, Joshua 12-15 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 30, 1 Samuel 15-17 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 15, Joshua 16-18 | <input type="checkbox"/> March 31, 1 Samuel 18-20 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> March 16, Joshua 19-21 | |

Deuteronomy transitions from Israel's time wandering in the wilderness to their movement into the land of Canaan, the land God promised to give them (*cf. Genesis 13:12, 14-17*).

- Deuteronomy records a speech Moses gave to Israel on the eve of his death. His address reminded the nation of their failures to obey their covenant relationship with God (*cf. Deuteronomy 1-4*) before retelling the people the terms of the covenant, reinterpreted in light of their imminent entrance into the land of Canaan (*cf. Deuteronomy 5:1-29:1*).
- A transition in leadership – Moses to Joshua – accompanied the transition from wilderness to Canaan, setting the stage for the book of Joshua, which records Joshua's leadership of the Jewish people during their conquest of Canaan.
- Despite the covenant renewal initiated by Moses and the people's faithfulness under Joshua's leadership, the book of Joshua narrates small concessions that reveal the



nation's heart struggles and that prepare readers for the spiritually dark period of the judges.

- Judges concludes with a pair of narratives (*Judges 17-21*) that showcase the nation's depravity, underscoring the need for godly leaders (*Judges 17:6; 21:25*). The recognition of that need moves the reader into the books Samuel, which will introduce Israel's kings.

Meditation

Moses' speech in the book of Deuteronomy restates God's laws for Israel. As you read through Deuteronomy, note how Moses' retelling of the law differs from their original presentation. What insights do you think those differences offer us into God's expectations, and how can we faithfully apply them today?

Moses attributed the nation's struggles to their hardheartedness, which would require God's intervention to resolve (*Deuteronomy 31:27; 30:6*). How does that problem resurface in Joshua and Judges? What do you notice God doing in those books to soften the peoples' hearts?

In what ways do you see God's faithfulness to His promise to Abraham in Deuteronomy through Judges (*cf. Genesis 12:1-3*)? How does God maintain His faithfulness in the presence of the nation's struggles?

What additional applications can we make from this month's readings?

