

# HISTORICAL BIBLE READING PLAN

June 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
<b>Former prophets</b> Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings	Joshua, Judges, Ruth 1, 2 Samuel, 1, 2 Kings 1, 2 Chronicles Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
<b>Latter Prophets</b> Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	<b>POETRY</b> 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 Prophets** (*the former and latter prophets*) and move into the next section of the Hebrew Bible, **The Writings**.

## June reading schedule

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| <input type="checkbox"/> June 1, Ezekiel 9-12   | <input type="checkbox"/> June 16, Hosea 8-14        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 2, Ezekiel 13-15  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 17, Joel              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 3, Ezekiel 16-17  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 18, Amos 1-5          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 4, Ezekiel 18-20  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 19, Amos 6-9          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 5, Ezekiel 21-22  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 20, Obadiah, Jonah    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 6, Ezekiel 23-24  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 21, Micah             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 7, Ezekiel 25-27  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 22, Nahum, Habakkuk   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 8, Ezekiel 28-30  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 23, Zephaniah, Haggai |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 9, Ezekiel 31-33  | <input type="checkbox"/> June 24, Zechariah 1-7     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 10, Ezekiel 34-36 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 25, Zechariah 8-14    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 11, Ezekiel 37-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 26, Malachi           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 12, Ezekiel 40-42 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 27, Psalms 1-8        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 13, Ezekiel 43-45 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 28, Psalms 9-16       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 14, Ezekiel 46-38 | <input type="checkbox"/> June 29, Psalms 17-20      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> June 15, Hosea 1-7     | <input type="checkbox"/> June 30, Psalms 21-25      |

Commissioned by God to address Judah's rebellion, the latter prophets delivered messages of escalating hostilities from the Assyrians and the Babylonians, God-authored hostilities that offer a commentary on the Jewish people's story recorded in the former prophets Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The latter prophets provide a diagnosis of Judah's condition that clarifies the reason for God's severe response. However, the punishments announced by the prophets would not resolve the nation's problem. That tension gives weight to the prophets' messages about God's solution – He would anoint a future ruler, a royal priest who would bear God's authority, reconcile the relationship between God and His people, and reign over an unending, Edenic kingdom.

Not all the latter prophets worked before or during the Assyrian and Babylonian hostilities; some prophets had ministries after those events. Those post-exilic prophets – Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi – reveal that the Jewish people who survived did not experience the fulfillment of God's



promises. Instead, they remained plagued by problems and waited for God's promised Davidic king to come and accomplish His promises to them (cf. *Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6*).

## Meditation

The latter prophets' condemnation of the Jewish people builds on God's covenant expectations for them. The prophets consequently offer a kind of commentary on the covenant God issued at Mt Sinai. What insight do the latter prophets offer into God's law? How might those insights help us understand God's expectations today?

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What problems do the prophets who worked after the end of the Babylonian exile (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) address? How do those problems compare to the ones addressed by the prophets who worked before and during the captivity?

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Why do you think the Jewish people who survived the Assyrian and Babylonian hostilities did not experience the fulfillment of God's promises? What insight might Nehemiah 9 offer into their situation (especially Nehemiah 9:32-37)?

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

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