

At a glance...

# The Books of the Hebrew Bible: *TANAKH*

## THE TORAH

'Teaching, Instruction'

### GENESIS

Bereshit: In the beginning  
The creation of the world. The first sin. The call of Abraham. The family stories of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs.

### EXODUS

Sh'mot: Names  
God raises up Moses, a great leader/prophet, and liberates the Hebrew people from Egypt. The Ten Commandments given at Mt Sinai.

### LEVITICUS

Vayikra: And God called  
A book of cultic practices as the Israelites establish a system of worship.

### NUMBERS

Bamidbar:  
In the wilderness  
Census of the people. Rebellion and lessons in the wilderness as they complete their desert sojourn.

### DEUTERONOMY

Devarim: Words  
Poised to enter the promised land, the covenant and the teachings of God are restated and emphasized. Moses dies.

## THE PROPHETS

*Nevi'im*

### JOSHUA

The story of Israel's conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.

### JUDGES

The continuing story of the Israelites under the leadership of Judges.

### 1 SAMUEL

The story of Israel continues under the rule of Samuel, the last of the Judges, to the reign of Saul, Israel's first king.

### 2 SAMUEL

The consolidation of the monarchy under King David.

### 1 & 2 KINGS

The transition from King David to King Solomon. Civil unrest as the Kingdom splits in two.

### ISAIAH

A prophetic voice concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Strong messages of redemption and the hope for a Messiah.

### JEREMIAH

The prophet predicts the devastation of Judah, the people's sufferings, but also deliverance from their enemies.

### EZEKIEL

A prophetic voice from the experience of Babylonian captivity. Messages of divine judgment on God's people, but also comfort and hope.

*Twelve minor prophets:*

### HOSEA

The love story of a man and his unfaithful wife provides a powerful image of God's love for Israel.

### JOEL

A prophetic voice declaring God's judgment of Judah, the call to repentance and the blessings that will ensue.

### AMOS

A prophetic voice critical of idolatry, corruption, oppression of the poor.

### OBADIAH

Predicts the destruction of Edom as a sign of divine retribution.

### JONAH

Possibly an allegorical depiction of Israel's struggle to live up to its vocation as God's chosen people.

### MICAH

Expresses God's judgment on Israel and Judah; hope of restoration and a messianic age.

### NAHUM

A prophetic voice at the time of the disintegration of Assyria. A critique of militarism: To live by the sword is to die by it.

### HABAKKUK

Grapples with the dilemma of how divine justice can allow a wicked nation to punish a people more righteous than itself.

### ZEPHANIAH

Predicts the overthrow of Judah. A critic of idolatry, pride, materialism. But also holds out hope for deliverance and restoration.

### HAGGAI

As the people return from exile, the prophet focuses on the rebuilding of the Temple.

### ZECHARIAH

A cultic prophet during the return from exile. Exalts over Jerusalem as the nation rebuilds itself; emphasizes the necessity for repentance and purification.

### MALACHI

Pronounces judgments for sins and blessings for repentance.

## THE WRITINGS

*Kethuvim*

### PSALMS

A stunning collection of poems, prayers and praises.

### PROVERBS

A collection of wise sayings to support a life lived well and in fidelity to God.

### JOB

The insightful story of an ordinary man who grapples with faith in God amidst pain and suffering.

### SONG OF SONGS

Erotic love poetry that is expressive of both the love between man and woman, and between God and Israel.

### RUTH

The story of sadness and joy, love and faith, in the lives of those who will become ancestors of King David, and of Jesus.

### LAMENTATIONS

A lament as the people grieve the fall of Jerusalem at the hand of Babylon and the loss of their Temple.

### ECCLESIASTES

Poses powerful life questions which divine revelation must face and answer.

### ESTHER

The story of how a Jewish woman becomes Queen of Persia and thwarts an evil plan for the destruction of the Jewish people.

### DANIEL

A book of apocalyptic prophecy.

### EZRA

The story of the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon, and the rebuilding of the Temple.

### NEHEMIAH

More about the rebuilding of the Temple. The covenant is renewed.

### 1 & 2 CHRONICLES

Stories of the two Kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south, up to captivity and exile. The importance of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Additional books found in Catholic Bibles:

TOBIT

JUDITH

MACCABEES (1&2)

WISDOM

SIRACH

BARUCH with the Letter of Jeremiah

Additions to ESTHER

Additional material in DANIEL