

A Chronology of Old Testament Books

Date (approximate)	Time Span	History Book	Poetry	Prophetic Books
6-8000 BC – 1805 BC	2000 + years	Genesis	Job (1520 BC)?	
(1876 ^{BC} -1:1) (1526 ^{BC} -2:1) (1446 ^{BC} -3:1) 1446 BC – 1445 BC	13 months ^(40:17)	Exodus	Psalm 90	
	No Chronology	Leviticus		
1445 BC – 1406 BC		Numbers		
– 1406 BC	2 nd year ^(Ex. 12:2 cf. 1:1) 39 years ^(34:7)	Deuteronomy		
1406 BC – 1385 BC	21 years	Joshua		
1385 BC – 1050 BC	335 years	Judges (Ruth)		
1100 BC – 1010 BC <small>(about 50 years of overlap with Judges)</small>	40 years	I Samuel	Psalms	
1010 BC – 970 BC	40 years	II Samuel	Proverbs Song of Solomon Ecclesiastes	
970 BC – 853 BC <small>(ends with the death of Ahab)</small>	117 years	I Kings		
853 BC – 586 BC <small>(ends with Babylonian Captivity)</small>	267 years	II Kings		(9th Cent.) Obadiah, Joel
				(8th Cent.) Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah,
				(7th Cent.) Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah.
				(6th Cent.) Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Haggai, Zechariah.
Recaps from Adam		I Chronicles		
– 539 BC	47 more years <small>(added to II Kings)</small>	II Chronicles		
539 BC – 457 BC	82 years (Judah)	Ezra		
12 years missing 445 BC – 444 BC	1 year more	Nehemiah (Esther)	Psalm 126 & 137	(5th Cent.) Malachi <small>(the last piece of history – 400^{BC})</small>

The first seventeen books of the Old Testament are the historical books. This chart lays out the chronology of the history books, giving the time-span of the book. The shaded area shows where the remainder of the Old Testament books fit into the chronology. The dating is a conservative, but approximate. The exodus is dated at 1446BC. Moses was born in 1526^{BC}, began his ministry at eighty years old (Exodus 3:2 cf. Acts 7:23, 30) and died at 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7). The Conquest of Joshua dated at 1406 BC.

The Books of the Old Testament

BOOK	DATE (of writing)	EXPLANATION	NAME	THEME
Genesis 15th C.	1446-1406	In the wilderness wanderings	In the beginning (LXX 2:4)	Divine Sovereignty over creation and providence
Exodus 15th C.	1446-1406	17:14 Immediately upon leaving Egypt. At the end of the book 40:36-38, there is a looking backward over the wondering.	And these (are) the name (Ex. LXX)	Redemption and Responsibility
Leviticus 15th C.	1445	40:17. The wondering period is over. The Tabernacle is erected in Lev. 1:1 assumes the building of the Tabernacle, 27:34 they are still at Sinai and cf. Num. 1:1 they are leaving Sinai.	And He called (LXX - that which pertains to Levites - Levitikon)	Holiness essential to fellowship
Numbers 15th C.	1445-46	1:1 - 2 nd month of the 2 nd Year in 35:1, 36:13 they are opposite Jericho.	And he said or In the wilderness (LXX - Arithmoi; Liber Numeri-V)	Divine discipline direction and provision
Deuteronomy 15th C.	1406	1:3, 31:22 ref. to the 40 th Year & 11 th month and the Song of Moses written in the same day. This is the last word that Moses gave them. Historically this was a one-day event (not necessarily written in one day).	These (are) the words	Total Devotion
Joshua 14th C.	1406-1389	Based on the assumption that Joshua is the author - from the beginning of the conquest to his death.	Yahweh saves or Yahweh is salvation	Conquest and inheritance
Judges 11th C.	1090-1003	18:30; Manasseh (Gershom the son of Moses - the Sopherim put in the " <i>Suspended Nun</i> ". There is a ref. to "the captivity of the land" ref. to the Philistines (I Sam. 4:10). However in Judges 1:21. the Jebusites and the Benjamites co-habited (much of the book is thematic and not sequential).	Judges	Repeated Failures through disobedience
Ruth 11th C.	1000	1:21 David is mentioned in the closing verse.	Friendship or friend	Loyalty
Samuel 10th C	1050-970	I Samuel 10:25 Samuel begins to write when Saul begins to reign, down until David's death (<i>ca.</i> 970).	His name is God (?) (LXX I & II Kingdoms)	Transition to the Monarchy: I Sam. God humiliates and exalts leaders according to their heart; II Sam. Leaders are responsible to God.
Proverbs 10th C	970-930 <i>ca.</i> 720-698	The dates of the reign of Solomon. Ch. 25:1	Proverbs of Solomon	Practical Wisdom
Ecclesiastes 10th C	970-930	25:1 proverbs that were collected by Hezekiah (the dates of Hezekiah's reign)	Qoheleth (one who addresses an assembly)	Vanity of life without God
S. of S. 10th C	970-930		Song of Songs (Canticles (V) songs Song of Solomon (AV))	The beauty of love

Obadiah 9th C	848-841	II Kings 8:20; II Chronicles 21:16-17. Obadiah was the first of the writing prophets – a contemporary with Elijah and overlap of Elisha – these are the dates of Jeroram. There was a revolt of Edom during Jehoram’s time. Edom allied themselves in a coalition against Israel. (those that argue for a later date say that this speaks of Edom and Babylon – but Babylon did not need Edom) Note that all of this is speculation because Obadiah does not mention any of the kings.	Servant of Yahweh	Poetic Justice - doom of Edom
Joel 9th C	ca. 830	This is during the ‘minority of Joash’ (7 yrs old) he was under the tutelage of Jehoiaada. Athaliah usurped the throne by killing all Joash’s kin. Jehoiaada bring him to the throne. During the leadership of Jehoiaada there was a time of religious reform and revival. This may explain Joel does not mention the king, he did not want to give credence to the wicked queen Athaliah. In 2:18 (past tense) there was past judgement and now there is to a restoration.	Yahweh is God.	DOL; Destruction and restoration

Jonah 8th C	ca. 760	II Kings 14:25 Jonah is mentioned by name as being a prophet from the north to the north during the administration of Jeroboam II. (760 is in the middle of Jeroboam II’s reign)	Dove	God’s Grace to Nineveh
Amos 8th C	760-755	The king is mentions (1:1). Amos was a southern prophet administering in the north.	Burden or Burden Bearer	Judgement for Israel’s social and religious sins
Hosea 8th C	753-725	1:1 mentions the King (Jereboam II until Hezekiah)	Salvation	God’s love spurned but constant.
Micah 8th C	ca. 750-700	1:1 mentions the King (Jotham until Hezekiah)	Who is like Yahweh	Judgement for Judah’s sin
Isaiah 8th C	740-680	6:1 In the year that Uzziah died. This does not mark the beginning of his ministry but during. 37:38 the death of Sennacherib in 680. (Sennacherib is assassinated by his son – the retreat mentioned and the death there is twenty years)	Yahweh is salvation	Salvation and Judgement

Nahum 7th C	661-612	3:8-10 Nineveh fell in 612 by a coalition by the Babylonians and the Medes. Nineveh in the book of Nahum has not fallen, so it is before 612. The destruction of No is a historic fact, No was Theieves (Egyptian capital) and it fell in 661 – so Nahum ministered between these two dates.	Consolation or Consoler	God’s justice and Judgement on Nineveh
Zephaniah 7th C	640-621	1:1 during the reign of Zephaniah and in 3:1-3,7 is appears that the revival of 621 under Josiah has not happened yet.	Yahweh has hidden or Yahweh protects	DOL; God’s glory and might in judgement and restoration
Habakkuk 7th C	607-606	1:6-10 the Babylonians are being raised up to effect the judgement on Jerusalem. Habakkuk seems to imply that this judgment is right on the verge of happening. (605 date the captivity)	Ardent embrace	Lessons for faith

Jeremiah 7th – 6th C	626-561	1:2 the 13 yr. of Josiah and 52:31 Jeremiah makes the last historical reference – Evilmerodach, (the man of Marduch – the Babylonian God.)	Yahweh establishes (?)	Judgement for breach of covenant
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Lamentations 6th C	586	The fall of Jerusalem	How ?	Mourning for Jerusalem
Kings 6th C	586-561	Kings records the destruction of the walls in 586 – the 561 marks the end of Jeremiah’s ministry, (Jeremiah was the author of Kings).	Kings (III & IV Kingdoms –LXX)	Division and Dispersion of the Kingdom
Ezekiel 6th C	592-570	1:2 the 5 th yr of Jehoiachin’s exile (Ezekiel is taken captive) in 29:17 he makes ref. to something that happened 22 years later.	God strengthens or God is strong	Destruction and restoration
Daniel 6th C	ca. 530	References to Cyrus (the 1 st of the Persian kings). (critics 2 nd cent)	God is judge	God’s sovereignty over Kingdoms and history
Haggai 6th C	520	1:1 the second year of Darius	Festal	Rebuilding the Temple

Zechariah 6th –5th C	520-518 (1-8) 480-470 (9-14)	1:1 the second year of Darius (in Ezra these two prophets are conjoined) in 7:1 the fourth yr. of Darius. 9:13 the mention of Greece that is already on the scene as a political force.	Yahweh remembers	Messiah as foundation of hope
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Ezra 5th C	458-424	7:8, the return of Ezra in the 7 th yr. Of Artaxerxes 458 – 424 based on Josephus statement – “ <i>after the time of Artaxerxes there was no more inspired writings</i> ”	Help	Restoration of Temple and separation of people
Nehemiah 5th C	445-424	12:22 mentions Darius the Persian.	The comfort of Yahweh	Resettlement of covenant Law
Esther 5th C	450	10:2 reference to Ahasuerus death (dies in 465) (Xerxes) between the historic events of Ezra and Nehemiah.	Star	Providential protection
Malachi 5th C	435	3:1 the temple is built and the sacrificial system is in place 1:8	My messenger	Against formalism
Chronicles 5th C	450-425	The internal evidence. Zerubbabel	The words of the days	Continuity of Judah’s covenant history

Psalms	1406 – 500	One Psalms attributed to Moses (90). The final collection was around 500 not the final Psalm.	Praises (Psalmoi (LXX)-songs to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument)	Patterns for worship
Job	? . ? . ? . ? . ?	See Archer for the five possible dates...		Problems in suffering

The Books of the Old Testament in their Literary Order (with dates and theme).

Book	Date	Theme
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Exodus	1446-1406	Redemption and Responsibility
Leviticus	1445	Holiness essential to fellowship
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Deuteronomy	1406	Total Devotion
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Job	??	Problems in suffering
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Ecclesiastes	970-930	Vanity of life without God
Song of Solomon	970-930	The beauty of love
Isaiah	740-680	Salvation and Judgement
Jeremiah	626-561	Judgement for breach of covenant
Lamentations	586	Mourning for Jerusalem
Ezekiel	592-570	Destruction and restoration
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Nahum	661-612	God's justice and Judgement on Nineveh
Habakkuk	607-606	Lessons for faith
Zephaniah	640-621	DOL; God's glory and might in judgement and restoration
Haggai	520	Rebuilding the Temple
Zechariah	520-518 (1-8) 480-470 (9-14)	Messiah as foundation of hope
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