

# The Bible: What it is and How we got it

RCF Academy

Lesson 4: Old Testament Canon pt. 1

# Old Testament Canon List

- Christian order
  - Pentateuch
    - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers
  - Historical books
    - Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
  - Poetic and Wisdom literature
    - Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
  - Prophets
    - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
    - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

# Old Testament Canon list

- Jewish order TNK
  - T = Torah ( Law of Moses, the first five books)
    - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Numbers
  - N = Nevi'im (Hebrew for “The Prophets”)
    - Former prophets
      - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
    - Latter prophets
      - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Twelve
  - K = Ketubim ( “The Writings”)
    - Psalms, Proverbs, Job
    - Megillot (Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Lamentations)
    - Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles

# Old Testament Canon list

- Testimony of Ecclesiasticus (non-canonical)
  - “Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by the Law and the Prophets and the others that have followed in their steps...my grandfather Jesus [Ben Sirach], having much given himself to the reading of the Law and the Prophets and the other Books of the fathers and having gained great familiarity therein, was drawn on also himself to write somewhat pertaining to instruction and wisdom; in order that those who love learning, and are addicted to these things, might make progress much more by living according to the Law.”

# Torah (Law)

- Four evidences
  - Its self authenticating authority
  - Laying up in the temple
  - Its controlling function in the temple
  - Universal acceptance

# Torah (Law)

- Self-authenticating authority

- First record of writing

- “Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."Exodus 17:14 ESV

- Evidence of Jewish acceptance upon hearing

- “Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." Exodus 24:7
    - "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord , the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you.” (Deut 4:1-2)

# Torah (Law)

- Laying up in the tabernacle
  - “He took the testimony and put it into the ark, and put the poles on the ark and set the mercy seat above on the ark.” Exodus 40:20 ESV
  - “When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord , "Take this Book of the Law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.” Deuteronomy 31:24-26 ESV

# Torah (Law)

- **Controlling function in the temple**
  - The very foundations for their worship, i.e atoning sacrifices, are not things they could do properly without God given instructions for them to do so. So it is impossible to separate the worship from the documents and thus to acknowledge the divine authority of Yahweh is to acknowledge the divine authority of the books that instruct how to worship him.
- **Universal acceptance**
  - Out of the other groupings (Prophets and Writings) the Torah was never questioned in its authority and canonicity.



# Nevi'im (Prophets)

1. Former prophets
  - a. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
2. Latter prophets
  - a. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Twelve
- We see four evidences of the canonicity of the Prophets:
  1. Laying up in the temple
  2. Its self authenticating authority
  3. Use in the temple
  4. Acceptance

# Nevi'im (Prophets)

- Laying up in the temple

- “So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the Lord.” Joshua 24:25-26 ESV
- Roger Beckwith,
  - “The writings laid up in the Temple and in the earlier Israelite sanctuaries were sacred either by reason of their origin or by reason of their subject-matter, or both.”
- “Then Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the kingship, and he wrote them in a book and laid it up before the Lord . Then Samuel sent all the people away, each one to his home.” 1 Samuel 10:25 ESV

# Nevi'im (Prophets)

- Self-authenticating authority
  - Recognition of the authority of the prophets who spoke
    - “From the day that your fathers came out of the land of Egypt to this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day.” (Jer 7:25)
    - “in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.” (Daniel 9:2)
- Use in the temple
  - Haphtarah = selections of the prophets read alongside of the Torah for purpose of emphasis or affirmation of interpretation
  - Beth Ha-Midrash = evening Sabbath service focused on teaching more than doxology

# Ketuvim (The Writings)

- Esteemed lower than the Torah and Neviim by rabbis because of its “secular characteristics”

This can be seen in three points.

1. Laying up in the temple
2. Its self authenticating authority
3. Use in the temple

# Ketuvim (The Writings/Hagiographa)

- Laying up in the temple
  - Evidence for laying up in temple is in Josephus, Tosephta (rabbinical oral tradition), and the Mishna (rabbinical tradition)
  - “The Book of Ezra, if it comes out (of the temple) makes the hands unclean; and not the Book of Ezra alone, but the Prophets and the Fifts (Psalms). But another book makes the hands unclean if it is brought in there.”
- Self-authenticating authority
  - Scriptures contain certain qualities that bear divine influence.

# Ketuvim (The Writings)

- Use in the temple
  - Used in the Beth Ha-Midraash
  - Psalms used in liturgy
  - “Secular characteristics” are referring to the style of the literature and not the content.
  - Megillot use during festivals
    - The Megillot or “scrolls” contain 5 books (Esther, Ecclesiastes, Ruth, Lamentations, and Song of Songs) which are read during specific festivals every year in temple services, thus displaying the Jews regard for this section of scripture.
      - Esther read during the feast of Purim
      - Ecclesiastes read during the feast of Booths
      - Ruth read during Pentecost
      - Lamentations read during Tish B’Av which marks the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonians
      - Song of Songs read during Passover