

Welcome to 10 Minute Topics

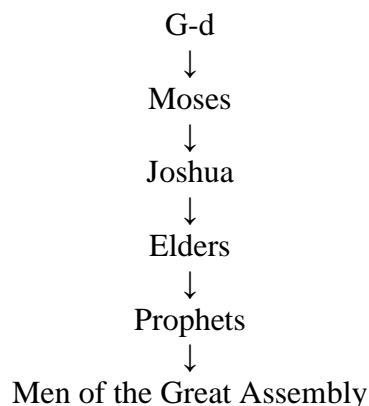
This week's topic is: What is the Tanach

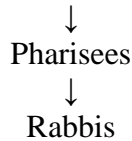
The Tanach – from the Hebrew acronym for the three sections (Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim) – is the Hebrew Scriptures. The Tanach was canonized in approximately 500 BCE by the Men of the Great Assembly. The Tanach was not originally broken into chapters and verses. The idea of chapters and verses - as well as the breaking apart of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles - is a leftover from Christians in the 13th century. Before the study of Torah a bracha (blessing) is said in which the person thanks G-d for giving the Jews Torah. There have been many rabbis who have written commentaries on the Tanach. Any complete study of the Tanach needs to include some commentary from these sages.

The purpose of Tanach is as manifold as its parts: the Torah is G-d's ideas on how to live life in book form. The Torah is the Jew's Life Manual. Nevi'im represents the blood and sweat and tears of the Prophets' leadership over a period of 920 years, beginning with Joshua and ending with Ezra. Though the last of these recorded Prophets died long ago, their prophecies still apply today. While many of their prophecies were immediately applicable, many are about Moshiach, the most fundamental Jewish belief. And Ketuvim are the collected writings of Moses (the Book of Job), Kings David (Psalms) and Solomon (Proverbs, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes), the prophets Samuel (the Scroll of Ruth) Jeremiah (the Scroll of Lamentations) and Daniel (the Book of Daniel), the Men of the Great Assembly (the Scroll of Esther),¹ Ezra and Nehemiah (the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles).

The Torah (the Books of Moses) (תורה) is made up of five books that were given to Moshe Rabbenu (Moses our Teacher) directly from G-d shortly after the Exodus from Mitzraim (Egypt) around 1230BCE. The Written and Oral Torahs (Mishnah) were handed down through the successive generations from the time of Moses.

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and conveyed to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly ... Shimon HaTzaddik was one of the remnants of the Great Assembly. He used to say, "The world stands on three things: on the Torah; on the service of God, and upon acts of loving-kindness..." (Ethics of the Fathers, 1:1)²





The Torah includes the time from the creation of the earth and the first humans, the Great Flood and the covenant with the gentiles, the enslavement and Exodus of the Hebrews from Mitzraim, giving of the Torah (Written and Oral), renewal of Covenant given to Avraham, establishment of the festivals, wandering through the desert, the Tabernacle Ark and Priestly duties, and the death of Moshe Rabbenu. The Torah is broken down into parts (parsha). Each Parsha is usually named after one of the first words of that section of the Torah. The Parsha is divided into 7 sections. Each section is called an aliyah since one person "goes up" to make a bracha (blessing) on the Torah Reading. There is also an additional eighth section called the Maftir. The Maftir is either a repetition of the last few verses from the seventh aliyah or a special reading on special Shabbats. The Torah is read every year according to a Torah reading schedule. The Babylonian Jewish community divided the Torah into 54 portions which allowed for the complete reading of the Torah in one year. The Egyptian and Palestinian Jewish communities divided the Torah into 154 divisions allowing for the complete reading of the Torah in three-year cycles (triennial cycle).

Secular Name	Hebrew Name	Meaning	Author
Genesis	Bereishit	In the Beginning	Moses
Exodus	Shemot	Names	Moses
Leviticus	Vayikra	And He called	Moses
Numbers	Bamidbar	In the Wilderness	Moses
Deuteronomy	Devarim	Words	Moses

The Nevi'im (נביאים) includes the time period from the death of Moshe Rabbenu through the Babylonian exile (ca.1200BCE-587BCE) and contains 19 books. The Nevi'im includes the Hebrews entering Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel), conquest of Jericho, conquest of Eretz Yisrael and division among the tribes, judicial system, Era of Saul and David, Solomon's wisdom and the construction of the First Temple, kings of Eretz Yisrael, prophecy, messianic prophecies, and the Babylonian exile.

Secular Name	Hebrew Name	Meaning	Author
Joshua	Yehoshua	G-d is Salvation	Joshua; Phineas (last verses)
Judges	Shoftim	Judges	Samuel
Samuel I and II	Shmuel I and II	His Name is G-d	Samuel, Gad, Nathan
Kings I and II	Melachim I and II	Kings	Jeremiah
Isaiah	Yeshayahu	G-d is Salvation	School of King Hezekiah
Jeremiah	Yirmiyahu	G-d will Uplift	Jeremiah, Men of the Great Assembly
Ezekiel	Yechezkiel	G-d will Strengthen	Men of the Great Assembly

Secular Name	Hebrew Name	Meaning	Author
<u>The 12 Prophets</u>			
Hosea	Hoshea	Salvation	Men of the Great Assembly
Joel	Yoel	G-d is Willing	Men of the Great Assembly
Amos	Amos	To be Burdened/Troubled	Men of the Great Assembly
Obadiah	Ovadiah	Servant of G-d	Men of the Great Assembly
Jonah	Yonah	Dove	Men of the Great Assembly
Micah	Michah	Who is Like G-d	Men of the Great Assembly
Nahum	Nachum	Comfort	Men of the Great Assembly
Habakkuk	Chavakuk	To Wrestle	Men of the Great Assembly
Zephaniah	Tzefaniah	Hidden by G-d	Men of the Great Assembly
Haggai	Chaggai	Festive	Men of the Great Assembly
Zechariah	Zechariah	Memory	Men of the Great Assembly
Malachi	Malachi	My Servant	Men of the Great Assembly

The Ketuvim (כתובים) includes the period after the return from the Babylonian exile (6th century BCE) and contains 12 books. The Ketuvim is made up of various writings that do not have an overall theme. This section of the Tanach includes poems and songs, the stories of Job, Ruth, and Esther, the writings and prophecies of Daniel, and the history of the kings of Eretz Yisrael.

Secular Name	Hebrew Name	Meaning	Author
Psalms	Tehillim	Praises	David, Adam, Abraham, & Moses
Proverbs	Mishlei	Proverbs/Wisdom	Solomon
Job	Iyov	Hated/Oppressed	Moses
Song of Songs	Shir HaShirim	Song of Songs	Solomon
Ruth	Rut	Friendship	Samuel
Lamentations	Eichah	Alas	Jeremiah
Ecclesiastes	Kohelet	Assembly of People	Solomon
Esther	Ester	Star	Men of the Great Assembly

Secular Name	Hebrew Name	Meaning	Author
Daniel	Daniel	G-d is My Judge	Men of the Great Assembly
Ezra	Ezra	Help	Ezra
Nehemiah	Nechemiah	Comforted of the L-rd	Ezra
Chronicles I and II	Divrei Hayamim I and II	Words of the Days	Ezra (through II Chronicles 21:1), Nehemiah

¹Ask Moses (<http://www.askmoses.com/en/article/543,108/What-is-Tanach.html>)

²Aish HaTorah

(http://www.aish.com/literacy/jewishhistory/Crash_Course_in_Jewish_History_26_-_The_Great_Assembly.asp)

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