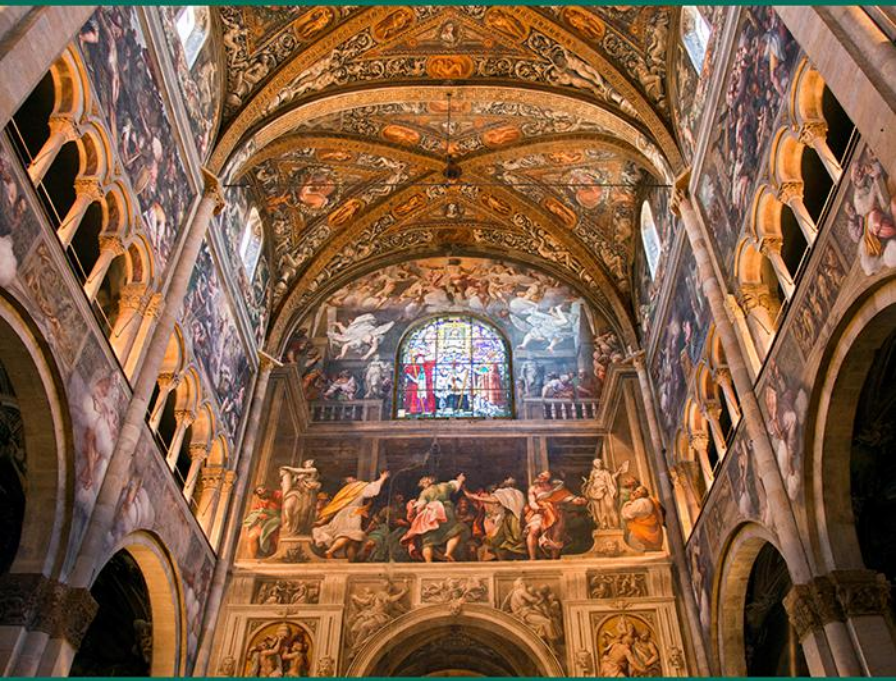
The Old Testament Story

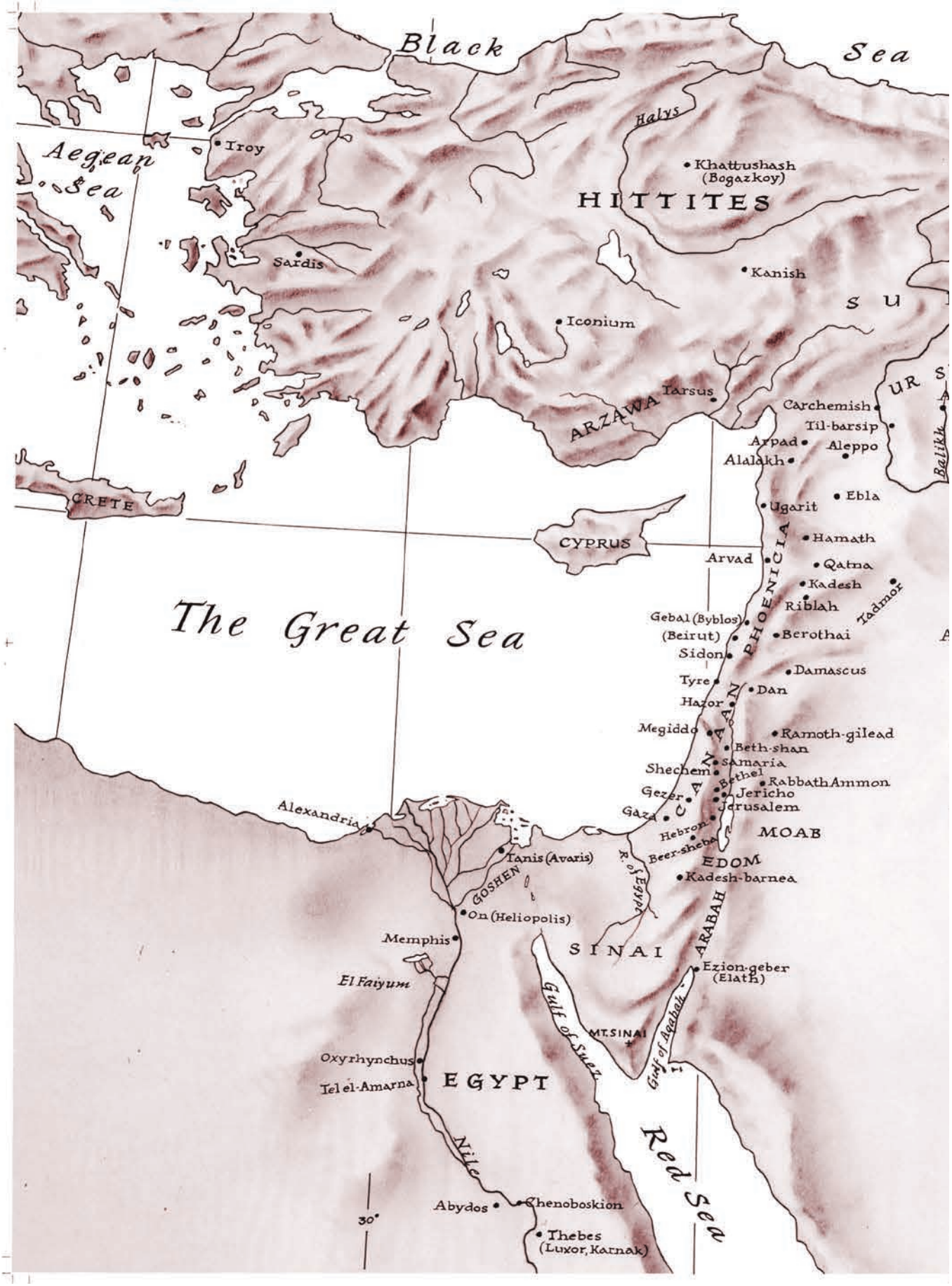
TENTH EDITION

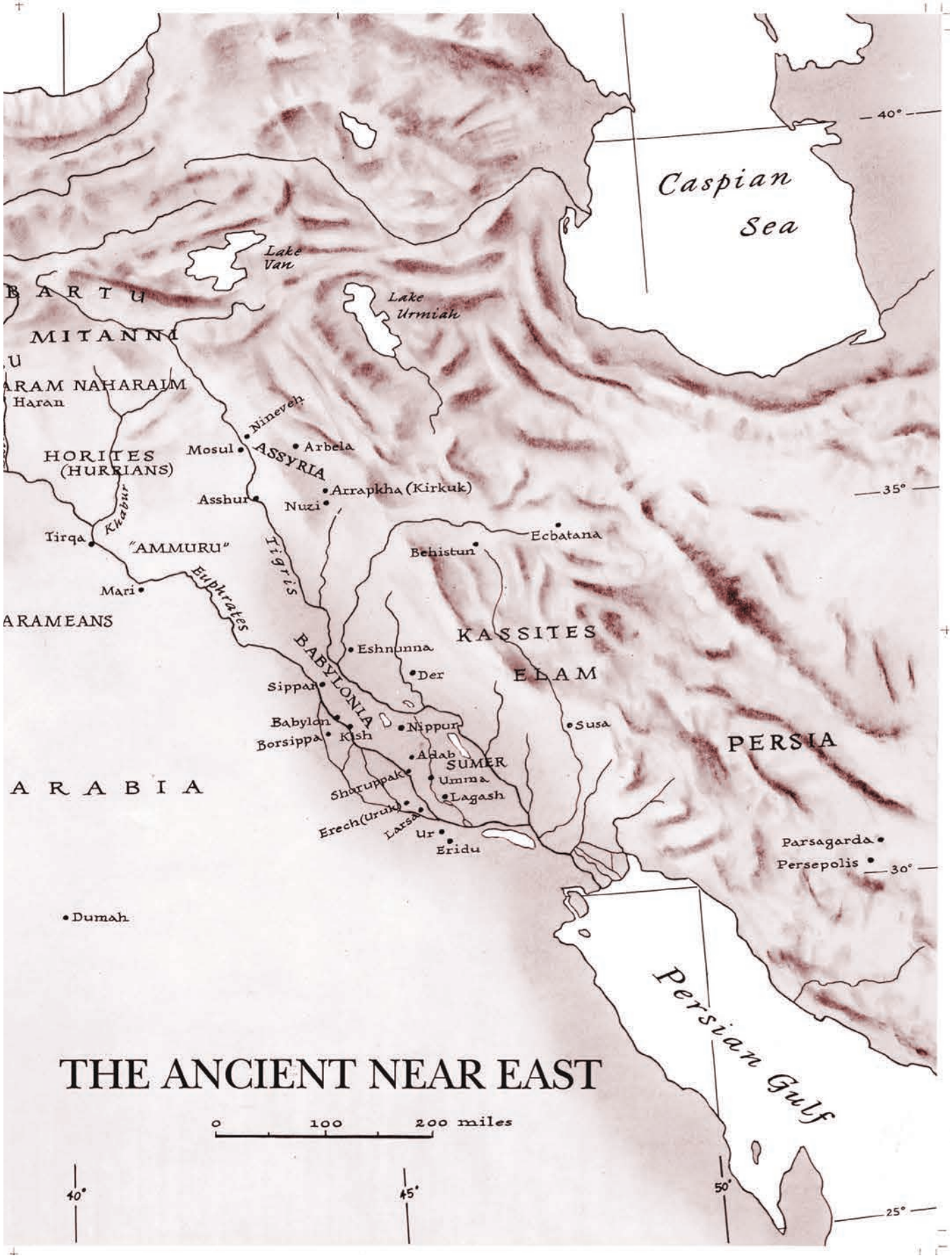


Pearson

John H. Tullock • Mark McEntire

The Old Testament Story


Black Sea
Halys
Aegean Sea
Troy
Khattushash (Bogazkoy)
HITTITES
Sardis
Kanish
Iconium
Tarsus
ARZAWA
Carchemish
Til-barsip
Arpad
Aleppo
Alalakh
Balikh
CRETE
CYPRUS
Ugarit
Ebla
Hamath
Arvad
Qatna
Kadesh
Riblah
Tadmor
The Great Sea
PHOENICIA
Gebal (Byblos)
(Beirut)
Berothai
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Dan
Hazor
CANAAN
Megiddo
Ramoth-gilead
Beth-shan
Samaria
Shechem
Bethel
Rabbath Ammon
Gezer
Jericho
Jerusalem
Alexandria
Gaza
Hebron
MOAB
Tanis (Avaris)
Beer-sheba
EDOM
R. of Egypt
Kadesh-barnea
GOSHEN
On (Heliopolis)
ARABAH
Memphis
SINAI
Ezion-geber (Elath)
El Faiyum
Gulf of Suez
Gulf of Aqabah
MT. SINAI
Oxyrhynchus
Tel el-Amarna
EGYPT
Nile
Red Sea
Abydos
Chenoboskion
30°
Thebes (Luxor, Karnak)



THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

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The Old Testament Story

Tenth Edition

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Dedication

To Helen the love of my life, faithful fan for over sixty years, whose loving support still makes telling the story a joy.
JT

To my colleagues on the faculty of the College of Theology and Christian Ministry at Belmont University.
MM

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Brief Contents

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Contents

Bibliographical Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ANE	The Ancient Near East
ANET	The Ancient Near East—An Anthology of Texts and Pictures
ARCH	Archaeology
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BBC	Broadman Bible Commentary
BR	Bible Review
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HER	Hermeneia
IB	Interpreter's Bible
IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
INT	Interpretation
ITC	International Theological Commentary
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JBQ	Jewish Bible Quarterly
JBR	Journal of Bible and Religion
LAI	Library of Ancient Israel
LBC	Layman's Bible Commentary
LXX	The Septuagint (the Greek Version of the Hebrew Bible)
KJV	King James Version of the Bible
MBA	Macmillan Bible Atlas
MCB	Mercer Commentary on the Bible
MDB	Mercer Dictionary of the Bible
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NEA	Near Eastern Archaeology
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NJBC	New Jerome Bible Commentary
NOAB	New Oxford Annotated Bible
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBA	Oxford Bible Atlas
OTL	The Old Testament Library
TEV	Today's English Version, or Good News for Modern Man
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

Maps

Preface

The purpose of this textbook is to introduce students to the collection of literature from ancient Israel that has, for Christian traditions, become the Old Testament. This task necessitates familiarity with the content of the literature itself, an awareness of the basic framework of the history and culture of the ancient Near East, and insight from the methods of reading ancient texts that have been developed in contemporary scholarship.

What's New to This Edition?

- A completely re-written first chapter that brings the framework of the textbook up to date with modern approaches and in line with new developments in the rest of the book.
- A re-written section on archaeology that modernizes the discussion and moves it into Chapter 2 to connect it with the discussion of the geographical context of ancient Israel.
- Enhanced and streamlined study aids.
- Updated discussions of the settlement and the monarchy.
- Increased attention to the diverse cultural contexts that helped shape the Old Testament literature.
- Growing consideration of the influence of trauma on the production of the Old Testament literature.

Structure and Features of the Book

The ninth edition of *The Old Testament Story* included the first major rearrangement of the chapters in the book's history, bringing together the prophetic literature into its own section. This change reflects the shifts that have taken place. This development remains intact in the tenth edition with an effort to create smoother, more helpful transitions within the new organization.

Developing Connections and Context

Chapter 1 explains what the Old Testament is and where it came from. It also describes some of the ways that people have read these texts and how related areas of study contribute to our understanding. Chapter 2 describes the places, people, and cultures of the ancient Near East, from which the cultural context of the Israelites arose and the place that serves as the setting for the literature of the Old Testament.

Following the Essential Story

Chapters 3 through 9 follow the story of Israel from the primeval period through the work of Ezra and Nehemiah. The continuous story told by the books of Genesis through II Kings moves from creation to the Exile, with the development of Israelite monarchy as its high point. The content of these books, sometimes called the "Primary History," will be the focus of these chapters, with an examination of the contents of I and II Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah providing another biblical perspective of this story.

Prophetic Responses to Israel's Story

Chapters 10 through 12 treat the prophetic literature from a literary-canonical perspective. This reorganization reflects the changes in the ways that this material is most commonly studied today, a shift that has been taking place for more than twenty years and that has now reached a level of accomplishment that needs to be reflected in an introductory textbook. This means that those following the plan of the book will cover the entire narrative of the people of Israel as presented in the Old Testament before examining the final form of the prophetic literature, beginning with the book of Isaiah, as a response to that entire story.

Responses in Stories and Poems

Chapters 13 through 15 examine the parts of the Old Testament that do not fit precisely into one chronological place in Israel's story. Instead, they are artistic responses to the entirety of that story, which often struggle with how to be a faithful Israelite in many different contexts. The focus of Psalms is worship, while Proverbs is concerned with ordinary issues of daily life, and Job and Ecclesiastes struggle with the pain and futility that often result from that activity. Books like Ruth, Jonah, and Esther tell stories of foreigners in Israel and Israelites living in foreign places, as the Old Testament moves away from its geographical center in Jerusalem. There has been a growing recognition that "exile and return" characterized the experience of only a minority of Israelites during the sixth and fifth centuries. Numerically, far more Israelites either stayed in Judah or fled to Egypt than were taken into captivity in Babylon. Thus, we have tried to add emphasis on those other communities and their experience.

Acknowledgments

Ten editions and forty years of use reflect a stunning record of achievement for this textbook. This has only been possible because of the work and support of many people. I will always be grateful to John Tullock and his family for the opportunity they have given me to continue this project. John was able to hold the ninth edition in his hands just a few days before his death, so this marks the first edition of *The Old Testament Story* he did not live to see. John's initial vision for this book, his dedicated work with students in the classroom, and his careful attention to the manuscripts of the first seven editions of the book helped to provide it with an essential place within our academic discipline. It is my hope that in his memory this and any future editions will live up to that legacy and extend it.

I want to thank the staff at Pearson whose dedication and hard work keep this project alive and growing. We also wish to thank our colleagues past and present in the School of Religion at Belmont University, where the combined tenures of John and myself now approach fifty years. These great teachers and companions have been and are a constant source of inspiration and life.

Portions of the Old Testament are quoted many times in this book. In a minority of cases, they are acknowledged as my own translation, from the *King James Version*, or from *The Bible in Today's English Version* (© 1966, 1971, 1976). In all other cases, biblical quotations are taken from *The New Revised Standard Version* (© 1989, by the division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches in the United States and are used by permission. All rights are reserved).

Mark McEntire

Chapter 1
Defining the Old Testament

Learning Objectives

1.1 Identify the contents of the Old Testament according to varying traditions.

1.2 Place the major events related to the formation of the Old Testament on a timeline of the past three thousand years.

1.3 Describe the tools and methods used to interpret the Old Testament and the kinds of results they produce.

Timeline

1200 B.C.E.	First mention of Israel on the Merneptah Stele in Egypt
500 B.C.E.	Approximate date for the completion of the final form of the Torah
200 B.C.E.	Approximate date for the beginning of translation of the Hebrew scriptures into Greek
100 C.E.	Approximate date for the closing of the Hebrew canon
400 C.E.	Approximate date of the copying of the Vatican and Alexandrian Codices of the Septuagint
1000 C.E.	Copying of the Leningrad Codex
1450 C.E.	Invention of the printing press by Gutenberg and the production of the first printed Bible
1535 C.E.	First complete English translation of the Bible by Coverdale
1611 C.E.	Completion of the King James Version of the Bible

This chapter will introduce the collection of literature called the Old Testament by asking three questions about it. The section "What Is the Old Testament?" will present its contents and organization. It will also reveal that there is more than one form in which this collection is used, so there is no single definition. This multiplicity of forms will lead to the second question, which is "Where Did the Old Testament Come from?" This section will identify evidence both inside and outside the Old Testament, which provides clues about its origins, though it will reveal that the farther back in time we push this question, the less certain the answers become. The discussion will identify the available ancient manuscripts related to the Old Testament that are used to develop modern versions of the collection, and how this process works. The third question "What Should We Do with the Old Testament?" will examine how religious commitments affect the way we read the Old Testament and what we do with the results of our reading. It will also present the ways that the academic field of Old Testament studies works with these texts.

What Is the Old Testament?

1.1 Identify the contents of the Old Testament according to varying traditions.

Asking a question like the one above about a complex object can lead to several different kinds of answers. Should we start by describing the shape of the whole thing or by listing its smaller components? Should we tell the story of its origins or explain the ways it is currently used? Should we seek a concise answer that can be committed to memory or be as thorough as possible? Some people reading this paragraph already know a lot about the Old Testament, but how much of what they know is incorrect or the product of untestable speculation? Some have a prior relationship with the Old Testament that goes beyond knowledge. Reading part of the Old Testament may have helped them through the most difficult moments in their lives, or someone else may have used part of it to condemn and reject them. So, we approach the Old Testament and the attempt to say what it is with mixtures of love, hate, fear, indifference, and confusion, but the Old Testament is filled with all of these things, so such an approach is appropriate.

The Old Testament is a collection of literature, so our response to the question must be primarily literary. Most of the historical questions will wait for the next section, which attempts to say where the Old Testament came from. The advantage of this order is that we start with what we know and the end product to which we have direct access. Until very recently, if you asked someone for an Old Testament they would have handed you a book. Digital technology has made this no longer necessarily true, and this serves as a good reminder that there was also a time before it was true. The Old Testament is an idea, one that sometimes finds expression in certain physical objects.

A Variety of "Canons"

The Old Testament forms part of the sacred literature of Christianity. The name correctly implies that there is also a part commonly called the New Testament. Together, the two literary collections are most often called the Bible. This seems simple enough until we recognize that Christianity is a large and complex religion with perhaps as many as 2 billion adherents around the world, so there are many different understandings of the idea called the Old Testament. The word "canon" is often used to describe a relatively fixed collection of literature considered sacred by a religious community, and it is possible to use the phrase "Old Testament canon," as long as we recognize that it does not have the same meaning for everyone who might use it. To understand why different groups within Christianity define the Old Testament differently, it is necessary to recognize that Christianity inherited the literature in the Old Testament from an older religion called Judaism. Table 1–1 contains some canonical lists of books, and it begins with the Jewish canon because this is the oldest and simplest list.

The Jewish canon contains twenty-four books, divided into three sections, the English names of which can be Law, Prophets, and Writings. Those who have encountered the Old Testament before will recognize some or all of the names of the "books" in the Jewish **canon**. In contemporary Judaism, the Hebrew names for the three sections—*Torah*, *Nebi'im*, and *Ketubim*—are sometimes used to form the acronym **TANAK** as a way to name the collection. The second column in Table 1–1 contains the earliest canonical list within the Christian religion, the one still recognized by Roman Catholic Christianity. Though there are forty-six items in this list, the difference in content is not as large as that the numerical difference may indicate. Christian tradition typically divides and counts the books differently, and this practice produces most of the apparent expansion. There are seven additional books in the list, which are italicized, and many of the books are placed in a significantly different order. For

Table 1–1 Canon List

Hebrew Canon	Greek Canon/Catholic Old Testament	Protestant Old Testament
24 Books	***46 Books***	***39 Books***
Law	Genesis	Genesis
Genesis	Exodus	Exodus
Exodus	Leviticus	Leviticus
Leviticus	Numbers	Numbers
Numbers	Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
Deuteronomy	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges	Judges
Former Prophets	Ruth	Ruth
Joshua I	I Samuel*	
I Samuel		
Judges II	II Samuel	II Samuel
Samuel I	I Kings	I Kings
Kings II	II Kings	II Kings
	I Chronicles	I Chronicles
Latter Prophets	II Chronicles	II Chronicles
Isaiah	Ezra	Ezra
Jeremiah	Nehemiah	Nehemiah
Ezekiel	*Tobit*	Esther
The Twelve	*Judith*	Job
	Esther (plus Greek additions)	Psalms
Writings	*I Maccabees*	Proverbs
Psalms II	*Maccabees*	Ecclesiastes
Job	Job	Song of Songs
Proverbs	Psalms	Isaiah
Ruth	Proverbs	Jeremiah
Song of Songs	Ecclesiastes	Lamentations
Ecclesiastes	Song of Songs	Ezekiel
Lamentations	*Wisdom of Solomon*	Daniel
Esther	*Sirach*	Hosea
Daniel	Isaiah	Joel
Ezra-Nehemiah	Jeremiah	Amos
Chronicles	Lamentations	Obadiah
	Baruch	Jonah
	Ezekiel	Micah
	Daniel (plus Greek additions)	Nahum
	Hosea	Habakkuk
	Joel	Zephaniah
	Amos	Haggai
	Obadiah	Zechariah
	Jonah	Malachi
	Micah	
	Nahum	
	Habakkuk	
	Zephaniah	
	Haggai	
	Zechariah	
	Malachi	

*The Greek tradition actually refers to the books of I and II Samuel and I and II Kings as I, II, III, and IV Kingdoms.

example, the work called the Book of the Twelve, or just "The Twelve," at the end of the section called the Prophets in the Jewish canon is counted by its twelve individual components, Hosea through Malachi, in Christian tradition, which places them at the end of the canon.

The importance of language quickly becomes apparent when describing the Old Testament. Because the Old Testament contains a collection of literature, the language in which it is written determines a major part of its identity. When Judaism established its canon, the literature included was written in Hebrew, so the Jewish canon can also be called the Hebrew canon. Christianity used Greek as its original literary language, and at the time the canon we now call "Catholic" was produced, this was its language, so it can also be called the Greek canon. People have now translated the Old Testament into many hundreds of languages, while the number of languages into which parts have been translated is in the thousands. Some parts of the Old Testament were probably translated into new languages even before other parts were written, so the impulse to translate these writings is an ancient one that becomes part of its identity. This is another factor that makes talking about what the Old Testament is without talking about where it came from difficult, but we will continue to hold off that discussion.

The third column in Table 1–1 shows the contents of the Old Testament canon for Protestant Christianity. This is newest understanding of the Old Testament, dating back only a few hundred years. The Protestant canon is best understood as taking the contents of the Jewish canon and putting them in the order of the Catholic canon. The count of thirty-nine books is achieved by the removal of the seven additional books from the Catholic canon. Some Bibles produced by and for Protestant Christians will omit these books entirely, while others put them in a separate section called the **Apocrypha**, which is usually placed between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The three lists in Table 1–1 do not exhaust the question of canon. Along with Catholic and Protestant Christianity, there are a number of Christian traditions that fall under the general heading of Orthodox. These Orthodox Christian traditions typically use an Old Testament canon similar to that of Catholic Christianity, but some add even more additional books.

The discussion above is enough to reveal that a single answer to the question "What is the Old Testament?" does not exist. In addition to the somewhat official lists in Table 1–1, billions of different people use the Old Testament, many of whom rarely read from more than a few of the individual books. Sometimes Old Testament books, most often Psalms and/or Proverbs, are attached to the Christian New Testament and printed in pocket-sized editions. If a canon of the Old Testament is determined in part by what is printed on a page and in part by what people actually read, then we could say that every reader of the Old Testament has their own canon. The recognition that people read and use different parts of the Old Testament differently points toward the need to examine the individual components more carefully.

Literature and Language

A later section will explore in greater detail where the Old Testament came from, but saying what it is requires acknowledging that the Old Testament is the literary repository of an ancient culture, the Israelites. Therefore, it contains many different kinds of writings. The Jewish canon begins with nine books that are primarily narrative in character, telling a story beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the destruction of Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C.E. In addition to stories, however, poems, laws, genealogies, census lists, land allotments, ritual procedures, building instructions, and other kinds of literary units are embedded within the narratives. The books that follow the first nine have all of the same

kinds of literature plus others, including romantic poetry, proverbial sayings, and prophetic speeches. Different kinds of literature, in any culture have different purposes, and this is no different for the literature now found in the Old Testament. For its original readers, or hearers, some of it was meant to tell them who they were, some to tell them how to act, some to encourage them in times of difficulty, and some primarily to entertain them. As modern readers encounter ancient texts, they should remember the massive cultural space between themselves and those for whom it was first written.

Language is always the best reminder of the distance, because it is the central element of all human cultures. Translations of the Bible are essential for most modern people to read it, and they reveal the meaning of the text to us, but translations also conceal a lot about a written text. Some examples of this paradox appear in the first several verses of the first book of the Old Testament, Genesis. According to Genesis 1, the initial condition of the world was an undifferentiated, dark mass of water. The character called "God" in the narrative must do a lot of separating to make the world inhabitable, so God begins by making light and separating light from darkness. The second act of creation is the separation of the waters in order to create livable space between the "waters above" and the "waters below." In order to perform the separation, God makes a *raqiya'* in Genesis 1:7. The classic English translation of the Bible, the King James Version produced in seventeenth-century England, translated this word as "firmament," a word that appears to have been developed specifically to translate this biblical passage into English. It was a slightly altered form of the Latin word *firmamentum*, which appears to have been developed about twelve hundred years earlier in order to translate this passage in Genesis into Latin. The meaning of firmament, therefore, is the thing that God makes in Genesis 1:7 in order to separate one mass of water into two. It was derived from the root word in Latin from which we get the English word "firm." Other than this it has no meaning, and modern speakers of English do not use this word, so most modern English translations of the Bible have abandoned it. Some translators have begun using the word "expanse," but it has the same problems as "firmament." It is not a word English speakers use for anything else, but it is a noun derived from the verb "expand," so it means "an expanded thing." Once again, translation conceals as it struggles to reveal. The New Revised Standard Version, the English translation of the Bible that will be quoted most of the time in this textbook, chose to translate this word as "dome," an altogether different kind of translational move than anyone had ever used before. This is a word that is in the functional vocabulary of most English speakers in the modern world, so it has actual meaning apart from this text in Genesis, but perhaps the most common way that modern American speakers use this word is in reference to a sports stadium, which may make it seem out of place in a text like Genesis 1. "Dome" may seem to some hearers or readers to clank on the ear. It does not have the poetic flow of a word like "firmament."

The discussion above about translation points back to the purpose of literature we are reading, and the purpose of literature is always related to its type. If the purpose of Genesis 1 is to describe something outside the text with clarity and precision, then "dome" might be a good choice. People in some ancient cultures thought that the sky was a solid, arched surface above the earth, a large dome. Modern readers, however, know it is not hard dome because many of us have flown above the clouds and a few have flown into outer space. On the other hand, if the purpose of Genesis 1 is to sing about the beauty of the earth in poetic and mysterious tones, then a strange and flowing word like "firmament" might be a better choice. Not everyone reading this book will be reading the Old Testament for the same reasons. This book is designed for use in an academic course so, for some, reading the Old Testament will be a purely academic pursuit. What can we learn from reading texts produced by ancient cultures? Others will have an interest in the beauty and enjoyment of literature,

so they will also want to pay attention to the Bible's aesthetic qualities. Still others will have some sense of commitment to the Bible as sacred literature and may be committed to allowing it to shape their lives in some way. Various approaches to the biblical text are not incompatible with each other, but their coexistence can sometimes create some tension. Sometimes the tension turns into conflict over the Bible, but it is also possible for the tension to be creative, providing the energy for new understanding of the text, ourselves, and each other. The goal of this book is to provide information and pose questions that will lead toward a more creative and productive path.

Where Did the Old Testament Come from?

1.2 Place the major events related to the formation of the Old Testament on a timeline of the past three thousand years.

When trying to describe what the Old Testament is in the previous section, it was impossible to avoid questions of origin entirely. Understanding where something came from can be an important aspect of understanding what it is. The difficulty with the origin question in relation to the Old Testament is that the farther back we go in seeking its origins the more sparse and uncertain the information becomes. A section in the next chapter of this book will address the subject of biblical archaeology, a field of study that examines information from outside of the text of the Bible for evidence that can help understand the Bible better. For now, we will begin with information primarily from within the text that points toward its origins.

Authors, Sources, and Dates

There are many texts within the Old Testament that make references to other texts not available anymore. Table 1–2 presents a list of several such occasions and the names of the "books." The list will use the potentially confusing word "book" in the names of these documents. In most cases, this is a translation of the Hebrew word *sapher*. It is important to remember that they are only "books" in the abstract sense. All of these texts were produced and lost before the physical object we think of as a book, cut and stacked pages glued together in a binding, was invented. It is likely that many of them were scrolls, but some may also have been inscribed in stone or clay.

The list in Table 1–2 is not exhaustive. There are as many as thirty such books mentioned inside the Bible. In some cases, these books may be closely related to books

Table 1–2 Extra-biblical "Books" Mentioned in the Old Testament

Genesis 5:1	The Book of the Generations of Adam
Exodus 24:7	The Book of the Covenant
Numbers 21:14	The Book of the Wars of the LORD
Joshua 10:13	The Book of Jashar
I Kings 11:41	The Book of the Acts of Solomon
I Kings 14:19	The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel
II Kings 12:19	The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah
II Chronicles 24:27	The Commentary on the Book of the Kings
II Chronicles34:14	The Book of the Law of the LORD
Ezra 6:18	The Book of Moses