

The Bible: A Cheatsheet

This handout should give you a brief overview of the organization and contents of the Bible. Familiarity with this material will make your study of art, literature, and culture easier, which is crucial if you wish to begin to understand the richness and scope of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, or other periods of history influenced by Christianity.

The **Bible** is divided into two parts; the first is known as the **Hebrew Bible** or the **Old Testament**, and the second part is known as the **New Testament**. (Note that "Old Testament" is the term used by most Christians, but scholars consider it more accurate to use the term "Hebrew Bible.") Each Testament further divides into individual books, and each book divides into chapters. The writings of the Bible contain a diverse array of literary forms, including poetry, prose, myth, legend, history, hymns, love stories, letters, religious and secular law, proverbs, and prophecy. The **Hebrew Bible** (Old Testament) describes the religious life and history of ancient Israel *before the birth of Christ*, while the **New Testament** deals with the life of Christ, with the expansion of the early Church after his death, and with much of the doctrine of Christianity.

The Bible exists in multiple translations. If you are examining biblical influences on specific authors, it is useful to know what versions existed at the time the author wrote, and which ones he would likely have been familiar with. For instance, Shakespeare's works shows familiarity with the Geneva Bible (1560) and the Bishop's Bible (1568). However, he did not have access to the King James translation of the Bible during his early writing, as King James did not ascend to the throne until 1603. The medieval period used Saint Jerome's Vulgate Latin version, which is available in the Douay-Rheims English translation today. The following lists the titles of each book of the Bible, the type of writing each book contains, and some of the people and events you may encounter in your studies.

The Hebrew Bible originally was written in Classical Hebrew. In the book of **Genesis** we find the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, the Fall of Man, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Great Flood, Abraham and Isaac, and Rebecca at the Well. **Exodus** describes the slavery of Israel, Moses and the burning bush, the Ten Plagues of Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the Ten Commandments.

Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament

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|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Genesis | <i>Genesis through Deuteronomy are called the</i> | • Song of Solomon | <i>Love poetry</i> |
| • Exodus | <i>Pentateuch, or the Torah</i> | • Isaiah | <i>Prophecy</i> |
| • Leviticus | <i>by Jewish practitioners</i> | • Jeremiah | <i>Prophecy</i> |
| • Numbers | | • Lamentations | <i>Sad songs about exile</i> |
| • Deuteronomy | | • Ezekiel | <i>Ezekiel through</i> |
| • Joshua | <i>Joshua through Esther</i> | • Daniel | <i>Malachi are also</i> |
| • Judges | <i>are known as the</i> | • Hosea | <i>books of prophecy</i> |
| • Ruth | <i>Histories</i> | • Joel | |
| • I, II Samuel | | • Amos | |
| • I, II Kings | | • Jonah | |
| • I, II Chronicles | | • Micah | |
| • Ezra | | • Nahum | |
| • Nehemiah | | • Habakkuk | |
| • Esther | | • Zephaniah | |
| • Job | | • Haggai | |
| • Psalms | <i>Hymns / songs of praise.</i> | • Zechariah | |
| • Proverbs | <i>Sayings attributed to</i> | • Malachi | |
| • Ecclesiastes | <i>Solomon and wise men</i> | | |