

BIBLE TIME LINE

(Sources: the Dartmouth Bible; Oxford Standard Revised Bible; The Book of J, Harold Bloom; The Pentateuch, Joseph Blenkinsopp)

Summary of political history of Israel:

(all dates until birth of Jesus are BCE; after birth of Jesus, dates are CE)

- 1000-961 united monarchy under King David (north and south)
- 722-721 **Assyria** takes over northern kingdom (Israel)
- 608-605 **Egypt** takes over southern kingdom (Judah)
- 605 **Babylonia** takes over after defeating Egypt
- 598/97 Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, first captures Jerusalem
- 587/86 Jerusalem destroyed by Babylonian king
- 539 **Persia**, under Cyrus, defeats Babylonia; Hebrews allowed to return to Jerusalem; Persian rule continues until
- 333-142 **Greece** rules, under Alexander the Great
- 142-63 Jewish state independent once again (except for five-year period from 134-129)
- 63BCE through birth of Jesus (about 4 BCE)
Rome rules Jewish state; in the midst of increasing dissatisfaction, rebellion
- 66-70 Jewish rebellion against Rome
- 70 final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus; deportation of many Jews

HEBREW BIBLE: TEXTS AND DATES

2000-1700 BCE: stories of the patriarchs begin during this period (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph); Abraham said to have migrated from Ur to the land of the Canaanites (the land which God said to have promised to Abraham and his descendants). The actual book of Genesis won't be written for another 800-1000 years, long after the time of Moses.

1700-1550 BCE: Jacob's migration from Canaan to Egypt; Hebrew prosperity in Egypt

1500-1290 BCE: period of Egyptian oppression of Hebrews (the period not in the Bible)

1290-1225 BCE: period of the Exodus (favored date for Moses' birth: 1292 BCE); Hebrews said to migrate from Egypt to Palestine. Book of Exodus

actually written some 300 to 400 years later.

1225-1025 BCE: period of the Judges (also the period of the battle of Troy, Trojan War)

1025-930 BCE: period of the United Hebrew Monarchy; period of Saul and David.

930-721 BCE: Hebrew people separated into two kingdoms--Judah in the south, Israel in the north

According to “documentary theory” of authorship, first Hebrew texts put into writing: “J” text (Judean) dates from approx. 850 BCE; stories, poems have been part of oral tradition to this time; another writer puts the date for the “J” book at 950-900 BCE

Northern text--“Elohist,” or “E” text--dates from roughly 850-800 BCE

Note: two sets of story traditions about the past--one northern, one southern being developed; early prophetic books also derive from different kingdoms

8th Century prophets: Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah

760-750: prophecies of Amos (begins preaching during the peaceful reign of Jeroboam--denounces Israelites for dependence on military might, immorality, injustice, shallow piety)

742-741: prophecies of Isaiah (the Book of Isaiah has a long history of composition, including passages from just before the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE)

(Reference: stories of the Trojan War compiled into the Homeric poems, The Iliad and The Odyssey, sometime between approximately 850-750 BCE)

732 BCE: independence of Judah (southern kingdom) limited by tribute money paid to Assyrians

721 BCE: Assyrian conquest of Israel (northern kingdom); chief people deported (the “ten lost tribes”); those permitted to remain mixed with alien colonists, became known as the Samaritans

721-586 BCE: Assyrian empire falls to Egypt; Israel subjected to Egypt

c. 700 BCE: compilation of the “J” text of Genesis (stories, materials from the northern and southern kingdoms)

Seventh century prophets: Jeremiah and contemporaries Sefaniah, Nahum, Habbakuk

c. 650-600 BCE: “Deuteronomic” editor(s) work over the Genesis text, add book of Deuteronomy (622: Book of Deuteronomy “discovered”--written to provide a foundation for religious reform, centralized worship, but presented to King Josiah as an original work of Moses. This is during Assyrian rule of Israel.)

605 BCE: subjection of Judah to Babylonia, which has defeated Egypt
(Jews caught between the superpowers)

597 BCE: first capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; first deportation of Jews to Babylonia

Sixth century prophets: Ezekial, Isaiah II, Haggai, Zechariah

Prophecies of Ezekial: c. 593-563

586 BCE: destruction of Jerusalem and second deportation to Babylonia

Lamentations (attributed to Jeremiah)

581 BCE: third deportation to Babylonia (known as the “Babylonian exile”)

539 BCE: another superpower conflict: Persia defeats Babylonia--Jews permitted to return to their homeland, rebuild Jerusalem

538-333 BCE Re-establishment of the Jewish community in Israel as a Persian province

Book of Zecharia 520-518

possible period of **Book of Job** (uses ancient folktale about a saintly man as setting)

c. 550-500 BCE: work of the “Priestly” writers on the first 5 books of the Hebrew Bible

(interesting connection: according to this dating, Pentateuch takes its final form at a time when the Greek historian Herodotus writing--another great national history, beginnings of historical consciousness)

c. 520-515 BCE: rebuilding of the Temple; 516 dedication of the Second Temple

c. 450-400 BCE prophets Ezra and Nehemiah

c. 400 BCE: **REDACTOR** (i.e., final editing and revising)--redaction of Torah

completed (i.e., first five books in the Hebrew Bible are in their final form--JEPD text)

Almost no historical material in the Bible itself concerning the period from 397 BCE, the period of Ezra, down to the appearance of Jesus (except for the books of Macabees)

333 to 142 BCE Greek rule of Palestine

333-123 under Alexander the Great

323-198 BCE: ruled by Ptolemies, who also ruled Egypt

c. 300 BCE: **Ecclesiastes**

198-167 BCE: ruled by Seleucids as part of Mesopotamian/Syrian empire

169-7 BCE: Antiochus IV outlaws Judaism: profanation of the Temple

c. 250-100 BCE: putting together the Septuagint (translation of the Pentateuch into Greek); **THIS IS THE TEXT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE USED BY PAUL AND THE GOSPEL WRITERS**

- books of the Maccabees--the Hasmonean revolt

c. 90 BCE Canonization of the Hebrew Bible completed

63-4 BCE: Roman rule of Palestine before the birth of Jesus; Romans under Pompey capture Jerusalem

CHRISTIAN TEXTS AND DATES

4 BCE (or before--could be as early as 20 BCE) birth of Jesus

30 CE crucifixion

35-65 CE **PAUL**

35 probable date of Paul's conversion (no recorded activity until 47, when he joined Barnabas in a missionary expedition)

50-64 Paul's epistles, **earliest extant Christian documents**

64/65 Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome, during which Paul thought to have been executed

66-70 CE Jewish rebellion against Rome

70 destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus; deportation of many Jews

70-150 CE completion of Christian Bible (some controversy over dating--the following dates represent common scholarly opinion)

c. 45-62 letters of Paul

Authentic:

First Thessalonians (c. 51)
Galatians (c. 54)
First Corinthians (c. 56)
Second Corinthians (c. 56)
Romans (c. 57)
Philippians (c. 56? 62?)
Philemon (c. 56? 62?)

Pauline School:

Second thessalonians (c. 51?)
Colossians (c. 62?)
Ephesians (?)
Pastoral letters (125?)
First and Second Timothy
Titus

70 CE: Gospel of Mark

85-90 CE: Gospels of Matthew and Luke; Acts

95-98 CE: Hebrews, Book of Revelation, 1 Peter

100-110 CE: Gospel and Letters of John

120-150 CE: Jude and II Peter

c. 2nd century CE: **authoritative text of Hebrew Bible** finally settled, close to present text

IMPORTANT BIBLE TEXTS

- no autograph of any portion of the Bible has been found, hence all texts are hypothetical reconstructions of an original; many errors have crept in over centuries of copying. However, “. . . no essential N.T. teaching is seriously affected by any of these variants.”

SEPTUAGINT: by far the oldest and most important Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, commonly designated LXX (for 70)

Legendary origin: made about 250 BCE for the great library at Alexandria by 72 scholars (hence the name “septuagint”) at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus

More likely origin: text put together for Greek-speaking Jewish community in Alexandria; translation of the Pentateuch followed by that of the rest of the Hebrew Bible over about 150 year period

Became the Bible of Jews throughout the eastern Mediterranean. The Bible of Paul, the Apostles, and the early Church.

Quoted and used in arguments by Church fathers (i.e., the men who developed doctrine of the Catholic Church--Augustine, Jerome, Gregory, Tertullian, Origen, Clement, John Chrysostom), ceased from about 100 CE to be an authoritative text for Jews. The Bible of the Greek Orthodox Christian Church to the present day.

The **HEXAPLA**

c. 240 CE--an arrangement in six parallel columns of the Greek and Hebrew texts, made by Origen, the greatest Bible scholar of the early Church. 1st column consisted of the Hebrew text of the day; 2nd column the Hebrew text in Greek letters; 3rd, 4th, and 6th columns were earlier translations; 5th column his own revision of the LXX.

Greek manuscripts of Hebrew Bible survive which are older than the earliest complete Hebrew Bible; hence, LXX supplies important evidence for early Hebrew texts.

The **Vulgate Bible**

- 382 CE: produced by Jerome under commission from Pope Damasus; became the Bible of Western Christendom, virtually unrivaled for a thousand years; still the current Latin Bible. Work done in Bethlehem, in a grotto adjacent to what Jerome believed to be the Grotto of the Nativity. Jerome made a Latin version of the Hebrew Bible by direct translation, referring to the Greek translations, especially the LXX.

Thousands of vulgate manuscripts extant, but one of the best for the entire Bible is the codex Amiatinus, copied in England in 8th century, taken to Rome as a gift to the Pope. Manuscript now in Florence, Italy.

First printed edition of Vulgate appeared as the Gutenberg Bible, 1456 (a copy is on display at the Huntington Library).

Clementine Vulgate of 1592 became authoritative Bible of Catholic Church.

King James Bible 1611

The "Authorized Version," commissioned by King James, carried out by 47 of the most eminent Biblical scholars of the time. (Earlier English translations had been done in the 14th through 16th centuries by various individuals--Wyclif, Tyndale, Erasmus, Coverdale, John Rogers, et al.)