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The Men Who Wrote the Old Testament

by Jeremy Cagle

It may surprise some readers to see an article on the writing of the Bible in our edition on The Canon. It would seem that such an article belongs in our 2006 edition concerning The Bible. However, we thought that in discussing the process of *choosing* which books were considered Scripture, we would include some articles on the lives of the men who were involved in *writing* Scripture. We hope this article and the next will prove helpful in understanding how a book like the Bible was created.

The format of this article will be different from all the previous ones in this edition because it is intended to be a summary article (albeit a lengthy summary). The following is a chronological list of the men who wrote the Old Testament. There will be another article following this one, and it will provide a chronological list of the men who wrote the New Testament. These lists will include the time period in which each of these men lived, the books they wrote, a brief biography of their lives, and some highlights from their writings and the writings of others.

I. MOSES

Time Period: 16th–15th century B.C.¹

Books Written: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalm 90

Biography: Moses is considered to have been the greatest leader in the history of Israel. He took the Israelites from slavery in Egypt to nationality at Mount Sinai. “Moses was a leader so inspired by God that he was able to build a united nation from a race of oppressed and weary slaves . . . As the interpreter of [Israel’s] covenant laws, he was the organizer of the community’s religious and civil traditions.”² Moses’ life can be divided into three forty-year segments (Acts 7:23, 30, 36). The first forty years of his life were spent in the empire of Egypt. He was born to a Hebrew mother but was soon adopted by an Egyptian princess. He was brought up and educated in the royal palace of Egypt. Such an educated upbringing would have been highly unusual for the son of a slave. Yet, according

to Acts 7:22, “Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.”

Some time close to his fortieth year, Moses killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave. Exodus 2:11–12 records the event:

Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

He soon fled from Egypt to avoid the wrath of the Pharaoh. Exodus 2:15 states that, “[w]hen Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses.” Moses stopped running near a well in the land of Midian, where he would remain for his next forty years.

Moses’ time in Midian could be appropriately referred to as his “exile.” Midian was an oasis in the desert, located somewhere between Egypt and Canaan.³ It would have been vastly different from the palace of Egypt. Moses’ time in this desert would have humbled him, for he worked there as a shepherd. (Shepherding was a detestable practice to the Egyptians, see Genesis 46:34.) This time in the desert also would have taught Moses how to navigate and survive in the land between Egypt and Canaan, where Israel would soon wander for forty years (Num 14:27–30).

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Towards the end of Moses' forty years in the land of Midian, the Lord spoke to him through a burning bush and told him to return to Egypt. Moses reluctantly obeyed and, with the help of his brother Aaron, approached Pharaoh with a word from the Lord: "Let My people go that they may celebrate a feast to Me in the wilderness" (Ex 5:1). Pharaoh refused to do so, and the Lord responded by sending ten plagues against the Egyptian people – starting with the Nile River being turned to blood and ending with the death of every firstborn man and animal in Egypt.

Such terrible plagues forced Pharaoh to release the Hebrew slaves from Egyptian control and, after a doomed last-minute effort by Pharaoh's army to pursue them through the Red Sea (Ex 14), all Hebrew subjugation to Egypt ceased. Moses and the Hebrews proceeded to enter the Desert of Sinai and to establish themselves – through the oversight of the Lord – as the nation of Israel. Soon afterwards, they rebelled and questioned the Lord's care for them (Ex 32), and the Lord cursed a generation of them to die as wanderers in the Desert of Sinai (Num 14:27–30).

This time of wandering marked the last forty years of Moses' life. During this difficult time of transition and hardship, Moses gave and explained God's Law to the Israelites. He also explained their book of the Law and warned them against disobeying it (Deut 28:58–61; 29:20–21). Before he passed away, he appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Deut 31:3, 7).

Highlights:

1. Being hidden in a wicker basket covered with tar and pitch at three months of age to avoid being put to death by the Egyptians (Ex 2:1–4)
2. Growing up in the palace of Pharaoh, the emperor of Egypt (Ex 2:5–10)
3. Talking with God through the medium of a burning bush (Ex 3:1–4:19)
4. Being used by God to send the ten plagues on the nation of Egypt (Ex 7–11)
5. Being used by God to part the Red Sea so that the Israelites crossed over on dry ground and the pursuing Egyptian army was destroyed (Ex 14)

6. Leading the Hebrews out of Egypt to the edge of Canaan to form the nation of Israel (Ex 13–Deuteronomy)
7. Receiving the Ten Commandments from God
8. Giving the Israelites their history (Genesis) and the Law they were to follow as a nation (Exodus–Deuteronomy)

II. JOSHUA⁴

Time Period: 15th–14th century B.C.

Books Written: Joshua

Biography: According to Merrill F. Unger, "It is difficult to form an estimate of Joshua's character, because the man is overshadowed by the very greatness of the events in which he is placed."⁵ While the man's character may be difficult to assess, his importance in the history of the nation of Israel is not. He took them from the death of Moses to the division of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes.

During Moses' guidance of Israel through the Desert of Sinai, Joshua served as Moses' personal aide. When Moses went up Mount Sinai for the first time, he took Joshua with him part of the way (Ex 24:13). Joshua was also the first person to meet Moses on his way down the mountain (Ex 32:17).

When the twelve spies returned from scouting out the land of Canaan, Joshua was one of only two spies who encouraged the invasion of the land (Num 14:6–9). The other ten spies, along with the people, cowered in so much fear that when Joshua and the other spy – Caleb – encouraged an invasion, "all the congregation [of Israel] said to stone them with stones" (Num 14:10).

Shortly before the death of Moses, Joshua was chosen by the Lord to lead Israel into the Promised Land. In Joshua 1:7, the Lord gave Joshua these familiar instructions before the Israelites' invasion of Jericho:

Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.

After leading the Israelites through a miraculous victory over Jericho (Josh 6), Joshua soon led them in victories over Ai (Josh 8); Gibeon (Josh 10); the territory of Hazor, Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph (Josh 11); and numerous other kingdoms (Josh 12). Before his death, the Israelites still had land and peoples left to conquer in order to rule the Promised Land (Josh 13), but Joshua would be forever known as their first great military leader.

Highlights:

1. Trusting that God would allow the Israelites to defeat the inhabitants of Canaan and possess the Promised Land (Num 14:6–9)
2. Taking over the leadership of Israel after the death of Moses (Josh 1)
3. Leading the Israelites in the capture and defeat of the city of Jericho (Josh 6)
4. Leading the Israelites in the defeat of the inhabitants of the Land of Canaan (Josh 7–13)
5. Leading the Israelites in the division of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel (Josh 14–22)

III. SAMUEL

Time Period: 11th century B.C.

Books Written: Judges⁶ and Ruth⁷

Biography: Samuel is considered by some to have been “the earliest of the great Hebrew prophets (after Moses) and the last judge of Israel.”⁸ Samuel is one of several Jewish leaders who served as religious and military guides.⁹

The first mention of Samuel is in connection with the events surrounding his birth. His mother, Hannah, was concerned that she would die without giving birth to a son, so she prayed to the Lord, and He provided by giving her Samuel. Hannah proceeded to dedicate Samuel to the service of the Lord from a very young age (1 Sam 1).

Samuel would eventually become the religious and military leader of the nation of Israel. His inauguration occurred when the Israelites won an important battle over one of their enemies, the Philistines (1 Sam 7:1–13).

Samuel showed his military and religious leadership by offering up a prayer and offering to the Lord before the official battle:

Then the sons of Israel said to Samuel: “Do not cease to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us from the hand of the Philistines.” Samuel took a suckling lamb and offered it for a whole burnt offering to the Lord; and Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel and the Lord answered him (1 Sam 7:8-9).

Samuel then began to serve in a traveling ministry to judge Israel (1 Samuel 7:16) until Israel demanded a king (1 Sam 8:4–9). He then anointed Saul as king over Israel (1 Sam 10) and continued to function as Saul’s spiritual advisor, while Saul led Israel in battle and served as their religious representative.

When the Lord rejected Saul as king, Samuel served as the spokesperson through whom the Lord announced this decision. In 1 Samuel 15:26, Samuel stated, “I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” Samuel then proceeded to anoint David as king (1 Sam 16).

At his death, all Israel gathered to mourn Samuel (1 Sam 25:1). Samuel’s work was not finished with his death, however. Some time after his demise, he appeared to Saul through the medium of a witch and chastised him (1 Sam 28).

Highlights:

1. Being born as an answer to the prayers of his mother and, consequently, being dedicated to the work of the Lord at a young age (1 Sam 1)
2. Becoming the judge of Israel in a ceremony at Mitzpah (1 Sam 7)
3. Warning the Israelites against their request for a king (1 Sam 8:6–9) and choosing Saul to be king for them (1 Sam 10:1–8)
4. Announcing Saul’s rejection as king (1 Sam 15:10–35)
5. Anointing David as the new king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1–13)
6. Speaking to Saul through the witch of Endor (1 Sam 28:7–20)

IV. DAVID

Time Period: 11th century – 10th century B.C.

Books Written: Psalms 3–9; 11–32; 34–41; 51–66; 68–70; 86; 101; 103; 108–110; 122; 124; 131; 138–145

Biography: If Moses gave Israel her Law, David gave Israel her land. The warrior-poet conquered all the land of Palestine in his lifetime and established Israel as the rightful ruler of the land of Canaan.

The Psalms, which compose the sum of David's writings, contain much material that consoles us even now, thousands of years later. John Calvin wrote of the applicable nature of David's writings in his commentary on the Psalms:

But since the condition of David was such, that though he had deserved well of his own people, he was nevertheless bitterly hated by many without a cause, as he complains in Ps. lxi. 4, "I restored that which I took not away," it afforded me no small consolation myself to the example of so great and so excellent a person. This knowledge and experience have been of much service in enabling me to understand The Psalms, so that in my meditations upon them, I did not wander, as it were, in an unknown region.¹⁰

David's life is demonstrated in his humility and his humanity. Concerning his humility, he was the youngest of seven brothers (1 Sam 16:10–11) and spent his childhood serving as a shepherd (1 Sam 16:11). Despite his youth, David was anointed king over Israel when the Lord rejected Saul (1 Sam 16:1–13). He also spent a considerable amount of time in pursuing music, and when King Saul wanted someone to play music for him and soothe his troubled spirit, David was called upon (1 Sam 16:18–23).

While serving in Saul's court as a musician and still pursuing his tasks as a shepherd, David stumbled across an upcoming battle over territory between the Philistines and the Israelites. The Philistine warrior Goliath – a nine-foot giant – challenged any warrior of Israel to fight and, in doing so, defied the God of Israel. David, armed only with a slingshot, took up Goliath's challenge and killed him (1 Sam 17).

As a result of his victory over Goliath, David's popularity

grew among the people of Israel – so much so that a song was sung about him in 1 Samuel 18:7: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Saul soon became jealous of David's success and began to pursue him with the intent to kill him. This pursuit would last the duration of Saul's life (1 Sam 19–31). At the death of Saul, David was chosen as king over Israel (2 Sam 1). One of his first acts as king was to conquer Jerusalem and make the city his capital (2 Sam 5:6–8). He soon brought the Ark of the Covenant to rest within the city's walls (2 Sam 6).

David's greatest act as king was his victory over all the surrounding nations and his consequent establishment of Israel as the ruling nation in the Promised Land (2 Sam 5; 8; 12:26–31; 21:15–22).

Concerning his humanity, David committed adultery with a woman named Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:1–5) and had her husband, Uriah, killed to cover up his act (2 Sam 11:6–27). David was confronted by the Prophet Nathan concerning this deed and he quickly repented (2 Sam 12:1–14). His repentance was shocking, considering the average conduct of kings in his day. Concerning David's actions after his reproach from Nathan, Charles Spurgeon writes,

The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialties in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offence the more monstrous.¹¹

David's sin did not come without consequences, and one of these consequences was the rebellion and mutiny of his son Absalom (2 Sam 15–18). David eventually regained the kingdom from the hand of his son and ruled successfully until his dying day. His last words are recorded in 2 Samuel 23:2–7,

The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me, "He who rules over men righteously, who rules in the fear of God, is as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, when the tender grass springs out of the earth, through sunshine after rain."

Truly is not my house so with God? For He has made an everlasting covenant with me, ordered in all things, and secured; for all my salvation and all my desire, will He not indeed make it grow? But the worthless, every one of them will be thrust away like thorns, because they cannot be taken in hand; but the man who touches them must be armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and they will be completely burned with fire in their place.

Highlights:

1. Being anointed king over Israel, although he was the youngest of eight brothers (1 Sam 16:1–13)
2. Serving in Saul's court (1 Sam 16:14–23) and fleeing for his life as Saul tried to kill him (1 Sam 19–31)
3. Killing the famous Goliath as a young boy in front of the Philistine and Israelite armies (1 Sam 17)
4. Refusing to kill Saul, even though Saul was trying to kill him (1 Sam 24, 26)
5. Conquering the city of Jerusalem, making it his capital (2 Sam 5:6–8), and bringing the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath Jearim (Josh 15:9) to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6)
6. Conquering all the nations surrounding Jerusalem and fortifying the nation of Israel in the land of Canaan (2 Sam 5:17–25; 8:10; 12:26–31; 21:15–22)
7. Committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband (2 Sam 11–12)
8. Experiencing the rebellion of his son Absalom against his kingdom and watching him rule Jerusalem for a brief period of time (2 Sam 15–18)

V. SONS OF KORAH; ASAPH, ETHAN THE EZRAHITE, AGUR, LEMUEL

Little to nothing is known about the identity of these men. Because of this, it would not be helpful to discuss their lives. The following is a brief list of their contributions to Scripture.

Sons of Korah: Psalms 42, 44–49, 84, 85, 87

Asaph: Psalms 50, 73–83

Ethan the Ezrahite: Psalm 89

Agur: Proverbs 30

Lemuel: Proverbs 31

VI. SOLOMON

Time Period: 10th century B.C.

Books Written: Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Psalm 72, 127

Biography: In his book *Practicing Proverbs*, Richard Mayhue writes, "I am convinced that the most sorry life in all of the Bible, second only to Judas, is the life of Solomon."¹² Mayhue goes on to write, "He possessed all of the delights, all of the provisions, and all of the revelation of God, yet he squandered them for his own pleasure and satisfaction rather than to accomplish God's purposes."¹³

Solomon's life was one of tremendous success and tremendous failure. Concerning his success, Solomon's reign was one of great prosperity. He increased Israel's boundaries to encompass an area of approximately 50,000 square miles (1 Kings 4:21).¹⁴ Furthermore, Israel lived in safety (1 Kings 4:25), and Solomon himself lived in luxury. First Kings 4:26 states that "Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen."

Solomon's success in large part was due to his prayer for wisdom. First Kings 3:5, 9–13 records this event:

In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, "Ask what you wish me to give you" . . . [Solomon replied] "So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days."

Solomon also built the famous temple at Jerusalem (1 Kings 6). This massive project required a work force of 70,000 men to carry materials to and from the temple, 80,000 men to quarry stones in the mountains of Israel, and 3,600 men to supervise the workload (2 Chron 2:18).

Concerning Solomon's failure, his marital life was a moral nightmare. His nuptial involvement with foreign women led him to sin against God and it eventually led his son to propagate the division of the nation of Israel. Solomon's involvement with a thousand women (1 Kings 11:3) and his marriage to Gentiles led him to worship their gods to the point that the Jerusalem temple was used for idolatrous practices (1 Kings 11:1–13).

Solomon's throne would not last long after his death. His son Rehoboam foolishly told his followers, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke, my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions" (1 Kings 12:14). As a result, the northern tribes of Israel left his leadership and never returned (1 Kings 12:15–19).

Highlights:

1. Becoming the wisest man that ever lived (1 Kings 3:5–12) and the wealthiest man of his time (1 Kings 3:13)
2. Becoming Israel's most powerful and successful king (1 Kings 4–11)
3. Constructing the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 6)
4. Having 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3)
5. Intermarrying with foreign women and worshipping their gods (1 Kings 11:1–8)
6. Raising a foolish son who would cause the nation of Israel to split (1 Kings 12)

VII. ISAIAH

Time Period: 8th–7th century B.C.

Books Written: Isaiah

Biography: Not much is known about Isaiah's early life. He was the son of Amoz and prophesied during the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1). He must have had significant social influence because he often held audiences with the kings of Judah when making his prophecies.

In the year that King Uzziah died (Is 6:1), Isaiah received a vision and a commission to speak the word of the Lord.

In this vision, he saw several seraphs calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (6:3). He then proceeded to tell his fellow Judahites about the revelations that this holy God had given to him.

Isaiah's message to Judah would be a rejected message. In Isaiah 6:10, the Lord told Isaiah that his prophesying would:

[m]ake the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.

This rejection was partly due to the nature of Isaiah's message; he was telling the nation of Judah to turn from their idolatries and apathetic worship. This message so consumed Isaiah's life that the Lord told him to name one of his sons "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz," (8:3), which means "Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty"¹⁵ because "the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria" (8:4). His son's name would serve as a reminder to Judah that they soon would be taken into captivity because of their own wickedness.

One remarkable feature of Isaiah's life is the book that bears his name. According to Geoffrey W. Grogan,

In parts of the book the language is so sublime that the aesthetically sensitive reader sometimes has to remind himself that all this beauty does not exist for its own sake but that it is the *meaning* of the words that is all-important. There is also a beauty of structure in the book.¹⁶

Highlights:

1. Being given a special commission from God (Is 6)
2. Condemning the empty religion of the leaders and people of his day (Is 1–5; 8–10; 28–34; 40:18–20)
3. Having several of his prophecies fulfilled in his lifetime (Is 37:6, 7, 36–38; 38:5; 44:28; 45:1)
4. Prophesying the future coming of the Messiah (Is 7:4–16; 11:1–4; 40; 42:1–7; 52:13–15; 53; 61:1–2)

VIII. JEREMIAH

Time Period: 7th century–6th century B.C.

Books Written: Jeremiah, Lamentations¹⁷

Biography: While Jeremiah has often been called the “weeping prophet,” it should also be noted that he was the greatest prophet of his generation.

Any study of the person of Jeremiah makes one immediately aware of his uniqueness. His life is unlike any other in Scripture. In his day he was unquestionably the greatest spiritual personality in Israel.¹⁸

No prophet in his generation had more cause for discouragement than Jeremiah, and no prophet carried himself with more fortitude.

The Lord called Jeremiah to ministry at a young age. Jeremiah 1:4–6 records the event:

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth.”

Jeremiah’s ministry was difficult for him to perform and for his audience to accept. Many of his prophecies were the recordings of future judgment for the nation of Judah due to their sins. One example of this is Jeremiah 11:11–13,

Therefore thus says the Lord, “Behold I am bringing disaster on them which they will not be able to escape; though they will cry to Me, yet I will not listen to them. Then the cities of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem will go and cry to the gods to whom they burn incense, but they surely will not save them in the time of their disaster. For your gods are as many as your cities, O Judah.”

Because of this, Jeremiah was often grieved and distressed. Jeremiah 9:1 describes one particular example of his grief: “Oh that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” Yet, in spite of such difficult ministry, Jeremiah described his inability to stop preaching the truth,

But if I say, “I will not remember [the Lord] or speak anymore

in His name,” then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I am weary of holding it in, and I cannot endure it (Jer 20:9).”

As Jeremiah predicted, the nation of Judah eventually was defeated and taken into exile by the Babylonian army. Jeremiah himself recorded the event in Jeremiah 34–45. He also described his response to such a disaster in the book of Lamentations. Some Jews remained behind in Jerusalem, and Jeremiah continued to minister to them until a revolt occurred and he was forced to spend the rest of his days in Egypt (Jer 43–44).

Highlights:

1. Mourning the upcoming destruction of the nation of Judah (9:1; 14:17)
2. Suffering persecution for the message of repentance that he was preaching (Jer 20)
3. Promising a future restoration of Israel during the Messianic kingdom (23:3–8; 30–33)
4. Promising the future downfall of Judah and Babylon (Jer 25)
5. Ministering to the people of Judah during the decline and fall of Judah’s kingdom (Jer 34–45)

IX. EZEKIEL

Time Period: 6th century B.C.

Books Written: Ezekiel

Biography: While Isaiah and Jeremiah lived during a time of national upheaval, “Ezekiel lived during a time of international upheaval.”¹⁹ Ezekiel began his prophetic ministry when the empires of Babylon, Assyria, Persia, and Egypt were immersed in constant warfare for, among other things, the land of Palestine.²⁰ “Thus Ezekiel’s life paralleled the years of the greatest crisis of Israel’s history.”²¹

While among the Jewish exiles in Babylon, Ezekiel received his call to ministry (1:1–3). His ministry can be divided into two phases. The first concerned the upcoming destruction of the city of Jerusalem (Ez1–32). Ezekiel 6:1–7 describes some of the horrors of this coming event:

And the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel, and prophesy against

them and say, 'Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys: "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places. So your altars will become desolate and your incense altars will be smashed; and I will make your slain fall in front of your idols."

"I will also lay the dead bodies of the sons of Israel in front of their idols; and I will scatter your bones around your altars. In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars may be cut down, your works may be blotted out."

During this first phase, Ezekiel received his unusual vision of a windstorm with a fire in the center and four living creatures who appeared to be men moving about in its center. Each of these creatures had four faces and four wings each (Ez 1:4–5). Ezekiel was also commanded to do some bizarre things to illustrate his messages. The Lord commanded him to lie on his left side for 390 days to illustrate that Israel will bear their own sins (Ez 4:1–5), to pack for an exile though no exile was taking place (Ez 12:1–7), and to refrain from mourning the death of his own wife (24:15–18).

During the second phase of Ezekiel's ministry, he comforted the Jewish exiles over the destruction of their temple and their beloved city (33–48). It was during this phase of his ministry that Ezekiel encouraged Israel by telling them that God had not forgotten them. In Ezekiel 36:15, he relayed a prophecy to Israel from the Lord: "I will not let you bear insults from the nations anymore." The book of Ezekiel closes with a description of the future temple in which Israel will worship (Ez 40–48).

Highlights:

1. Relaying an unusual vision of four living beings containing four wheels each (Ez 1)
2. Prophecy of the restoration of Israel to the Lord's favor (Ez 33–39)
3. Prophecy and describing the creation of a millennial temple (Ez 40–48)
4. Relaying another unusual prophecy concerning a valley full of dry bones that come to life (Ez 37)

X. DANIEL

Time Period: 6th century B.C.

Books written: Daniel

Biography: While the life of Daniel is one of the most colorful in Scripture (his stories frequently told in Sunday school classes), his writings are just as colorful. "The prophecy of Daniel is the first great book of apocalyptic literature in the Bible."²²

At an early age, Daniel was deported from the land of Judah to the land of Shinar, under the rulership of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 1:1–2). While there, he served in the king's service (1:8–16) and performed several miraculous feats. One of these was the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a statue (Dan 2). This is all the more amazing considering the punishment that was promised to the king's sorcerers if they failed to interpret the dream:

The king replied to the Chaldeans: "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap" (Dan 2:5).

While serving in the king's court, Daniel earned the jealousy of his fellow servants and was consequently thrown into a den of lions (Dan 6). The jealous men who brought this about did so not account of Daniel's wicked behavior, but account on his faithfulness to his God.

Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God" (Dan 6:5).

After Daniel miraculously survived an evening with hungry lions (Dan 6:19–23), King Darius found him alive and praised Daniel's God (Dan 6:25–28). He then proceeded to have Daniel's opponents thrown into the den of lions (Dan 6:24).

During Daniel's latter years, he received some of his strangest revelations, including a vision of four beasts (Dan 7), an eschatological timeline of seventy weeks (Dan 9, 11), and several other futuristic visions.

Highlights:

1. Interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's image dream (Dan 2)
2. Refusing to stop worshipping God, even though it meant death and enduring a night in a cave full of lions (Dan 6:1–23)
3. Relaying several unusual visions concerning four beasts (Dan 7), a ram, a goat, and a little horn (Dan 8), and a vision of seventy weeks (Dan 9)

X. EZRA

Time Period: 5th century B.C.

Books Written: 1 Chronicles,²³ 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah²⁴

Biography: While it was the work of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls protecting Jerusalem (Neh 2), and while it was the work of Jeshua and Zerubbabel to rebuild the Jerusalem temple (Ez 5:1–2), it was the work of Ezra to bring about a religious reformation for the nation of Israel.

The functions he executed under Nehemiah's government were purely of a priestly and ecclesiastical character; such as reading and interpreting the law of Moses to the people, praying for the congregation, assisting in the dedication of the walls, and proclaiming the religious reformation effected by Nehemiah.²⁵

Not much is known about Ezra's early life other than the fact that he was trained as "a scribe skilled in the law of Moses" (Ez 7:6). Ezra's zeal for the Law of Moses was legendary, "[f]or Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ez 7:10). It only makes sense that God would use such a man to incite revival among the returning exiles.

Ezra was commissioned by the Persian king Artaxerxes to return to Jerusalem and help restore order among the people there (Ez 7:11–16). When he arrived in Jerusalem, he found that many of the Hebrew men had married foreign wives (Ez 9:1–2). Ezra soon insisted that these men divorce their wives and repent of their disobedience to the Mosaic Law regarding marriage (Ez 9–10). Ezra also found that the Israelites had forgotten the Mosaic Law and were in dire need of instruction. He proceeded to teach the Law to the people (Neh 8), bringing about a

nationwide revival and a renewed interest in studying the Word of God (Neh 9:1–3).

Highlights:

1. Successfully leading a cluster of exiled Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem to help rebuild the city (Ez 7:1–9).
2. Confronting the Israelites for their intermarriage with women from other nations (Ezra 9).
3. Reading the Law to the Israelites (Neh 8) and overseeing the repentance of the Israelites who gathered to hear him (Neh 9:1–3).

XI. MINOR PROPHETS

To be more concise, the information concerning the Minor Prophets will cover only their time of writing and some highlights concerning their lives. To make this list even simpler, the Minor Prophets are listed in the order they appear in the Bible as opposed to the chronological order used above.

i. Hosea

Time Period: 8th century B.C.

Highlights:

1. Forgiving his wife, Gomer, of her infidelity and doing everything possible for her full restoration in marriage (Hos 1–3)
2. Relaying his marital restoration to the restoration that God will give to the nation of Israel (11–14)

ii. Joel

Time Period: 9th–8th century B.C.²⁶

Highlights:

1. Prophesying the promise of the Lord's Spirit and the coming of the future Day of the Lord (2:28–32)
2. Prophesying the future battle of Armageddon (3:9–15)

iii. Amos**Time Period:** 8th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Prophesying the future punishment of Israel (7:1–9:10)
2. Prophesying the future restoration of Israel to the favor of the Lord (9:13–15)

iv. Obadiah**Time Period:** 9th century B.C.²⁷**Highlights:**

1. Prophesying the future judgment of Edom (1:1–18)
2. Prophesying the future restoration of Israel (1:19–21)

v. Jonah**Time Period:** 8th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Refusing to preach repentance to the city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1–5)
2. Being swallowed by a great fish and, consequently, traveling to Nineveh to preach repentance (1:6–2:10)
3. Leading Nineveh in a massive revival and conversion to the God of Israel (Jon 3)
4. Expressing displeasure at God’s kindness towards the heathen city (Jon 4)

vi. Micah**Time Period:** 8th–7th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Prophesying a future peace that “will come about in the last days” (Mic 4:3)
2. Prophesying a messianic ruler from Bethlehem (Mic 5:2)
3. Explaining to Israel the nature of true worship (Mic 6:8)

vii. Nahum**Time Period:** 7th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Predicting the future judgment of Nineveh (Nah 2–3)

viii. Habakkuk**Time Period:** 7th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Proclaiming to Israel that “the righteous will live by his faith” (Hab 2:4)

ix. Zephaniah**Time Period:** 8th century–7th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Prophesying future judgment on Judah and the surrounding nations (Zeph 1–2)
2. Prophesying future blessing on the nation of Israel (Zeph 3)

x. Haggai**Time Period:** 6th century–5th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Describing the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (Hag 1–2)
2. Prophesying the future reign of the Messiah over the earth (Hag 2:20–23)

xi. Zechariah**Time Period:** 6th–5th century B.C.**Highlights:**

1. Describing Israel’s future mourning over the pierced Messiah (Zech 12:10)
2. Describing the future reign of Christ (Zech 14:9–11)

xii. Malachi

Time Period: 5th century B.C.

Highlights:

1. Proclaiming the Lord's disgust at Israel's apathetic worship (Mal 1:6–14)
2. Relaying God's faithfulness to Israel in spite of her unfaithfulness (Mal 2:14–16)
3. Prophesying the coming of Elijah before the Day of the Lord (Mal 4:5–6)

XII. ANONYMOUS

It may interest the reader to know that only six Old Testament books were written by an unknown author(s): 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel,²⁸ 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Esther, and Job. There are quite a few Psalms that have no known author(s) as well: 1–2; 10; 33; 66–67; 71; 91–100; 102; 104–107; 111–121; 123; 125–126; 128–130; 132; 134–137; 146–150.

Endnotes

¹ All of the following dates are borrowed from John MacArthur's *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2006).

² *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. by Ronald F. Youngblood (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995) 859.

³ *Ibid.*, 860. Canaan was the location of Israel's Promised Land and the future site of Jerusalem.

⁴ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994). According to Gleason Archer,

It is reasonable to deduce that this book was largely composed by Joshua himself. Intimate biographical details are given from the very first chapter that only Joshua himself could have known (although of course he could have later imparted them to others). Joshua 24:26 records that the general himself wrote out his own farewell charge as quoted in the first twenty-five verses of the chapter. Earlier in the book (5:1, 6) we find passages in the first person plural, such as, "Jehovah had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over." Such language as this certainly points to the work of an eyewitness who participated in the events himself (286).

⁵ Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966) 611.

⁶ Gerard Crispin, *The Bible Panorama* (Rylands Road, Leominster: Day One Publications, 2005). The authorship of Judges is somewhat disputed, but the only human author that receives any serious consideration for authorship is the Prophet Samuel.

Judges . . . is the second historical book in the Old Testament. It was written in Israel, but views differ as to when it was written. Some think it was written between 1043 BC and 1004 BC. The human author is not clear either. Possibly it was Samuel, perhaps in an editorial role with input from others (115).

⁷ MacArthur, 288. "Jewish tradition credits Samuel as the author, which is plausible since he did not die (1 Sam. 25:1) until after he had anointed David as God's chosen king (1 Sam. 16:6-13). However, neither internal features nor external testimony conclusively identifies the writer."

⁸ Youngblood, 1122.

⁹ Others who would fulfill these two roles would be Joshua, Saul, and David.

¹⁰ *Commentary upon the Book of Psalms* in Calvin's Commentaries, Volume IV (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005 ed.) xlvi.

¹¹ Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, vol. 1 (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1977) 401.

¹² *Practicing Proverbs: Wise Living for Foolish Times* (Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2003) 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Youngblood, 1189.

¹⁵ Youngblood, 606.

¹⁶ Geoffrey W. Grogan in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 20.

¹⁷ Concerning the authorship of Lamentations: "The book does not expressly state who its author was, yet there was an early and consistent tradition that Jeremiah composed it" (Archer, 406).

¹⁸ Charles L. Feinberg in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, Col.: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004) 358.

¹⁹ Mark Hillmer in *NIV Study Bible*, ed. by Kenneth L. Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 1218.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia*, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975) 455.

²² J. Dwight Pentecost in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 1323.

²⁴ Concerning the authorship of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Gleason L. Archer writes,

Like the other historical books, Chronicles does not state the name of its author. Internal evidence points to a period between 450 and 425 B.C. as its time of composition. It is quite possible that the Talmudic tradition . . . is correct in assigning the authorship to Ezra. As the chief architect of the spiritual and moral revival of the Second Commonwealth, he would have every incentive to produce a historical survey of this sort (450).

²⁴ It is probably surprising to some that Nehemiah was not written by Nehemiah. While many of the events in Nehemiah were written in first person, most scholars point to Ezra as its author.

Though much of this book was clearly drawn from Nehemiah's personal diaries and written from his first-person perspective (1:1-7:5; 12:27-43; 13:4-41), both Jewish and Christian traditions recognize Ezra as the author (MacArthur, 533).

²⁵ Unger, 339.

²⁶ This date seems the most likely of options for the writing of Joel but the exact timing of his writing is unknown. "Nevertheless, while the date of the book cannot be known with certainty, the impact of its interpretation is minimal" (MacArthur, 983).

²⁷ As with Joel, the dating of the book of Obadiah is uncertain (Ibid., 1001).

²⁸ Samuel could not have written the books that were ascribed to his name, since his death is recorded before the close of the first book of Samuel (1 Sam 25:1).