

OLD TESTAMENT EXPERT

Categories of Books in the Old Testament

Lesson # 2

I. QUIZ FOR TESTING YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO THE LORD IN DOING YOUR HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

A. Fill in the chart below with the books of the Old Testament in the six groups you were assigned to memorize them in

Group One		Group Two		Group Three	
1		1		1	
2		2		2	
3		3		3	
4		4		4	
5		5		5	
Group Four		6		Group Five	
1		7		1	
2		8		2	
3		9		3	
4		10		4	
5		11		5	
		12		6	
Group Six					
1		3		5	
2		4		6	

B. See if you can fill in the chart below with the general content of the assigned reading sections in Genesis

Assigned chapters	General content
Genesis chs. 1-3	
Genesis 6-9	
Genesis 11:1-9	
Genesis 12:1-3	
Genesis chs. 15-19	
Genesis ch. 22	
Genesis 37	
Genesis 45	
Genesis 49-50	

II. CATEGORIES OF OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS IN THE ENGLISH BIBLE

The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with small portions written in Aramaic. After Alexander the Great conquered the nations around the Mediterranean Sea, Greek became the common language and the Hellenistic period began (325 BC to 31 BC) where Greek culture saturated the nations around the Mediterranean Sea. One hundred years into this time period more and more Jews were speaking Greek and the use of the Hebrew language was declining. One of the principle academic cities at the time was Alexandria Egypt. It was at Alexandria that scholarly Hellenistic Jews or Jews that had adopted the Greek language and some of the Greek culture, decided to write a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. This translation is commonly known as the Septuagint or “LXX,” (Roman number for seventy). Many myths have sprung up around the Septuagint but one author summarizes the translation of the Septuagint with these words:

The Letter of Aristeas relates that the librarian at Alexandria persuaded Ptolemy to translate the Torah into Greek for use by Alexandrian Jews. As a result, six translators were selected from each of the twelve tribes, and the translation was completed in just seventy-two days. The details of this story are undoubtedly fictitious, but the letter does relate the authentic fact that the LXX was translated for the use of the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria.¹

Scholars are divided as to when exactly the LXX translation was completed, a proposed early date might be 250 BC a later date 100 BC. You might be wondering what all this has to do with this particular study. It just so happens that the LXX reclassified and rearranged the books of the Old Testament according to subject matter which our English Bibles adopted. The earliest Hebrew Bibles contained two categories of books, the law and the prophets. By New Testament times the two fold division was expanded into three, the law, the prophets, and the writings (See Lk. 24:41). The three fold division contained all the same books we have in our Bibles except that some of them were combined making the number of books in the Hebrew Bible 24 or 22.

This brings us to our English Bibles which have followed the tradition of the Septuagint not the Hebrew Bible. The Septuagint had four divisions of books based on subject matter. Later, it became popular to distinguish the first five prophets (major prophets) from last twelve prophets (minor prophets). Yet all the prophets appear together in our English Bibles.

It is helpful to know this because when you are studying the Old Testament you will discover that some books seem to appear in the Bible in chronological order but other books do not. You might wonder why that is or be confused thinking that after finishing one book the next book will start from where the previous book left off. Yet this only happens some times. The reason is that a chronological categorization of books was rejected for arrangement by subject matter. For instance, you have Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, which happened late in Israel’s history, appearing in the middle of the Old Testament. The reason is that their subject matter is historical in nature so they were lumped with the historical books.

¹ Geisler, Norman L., and William E. Nix. *A General Introduction to the Bible*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1996, p. 503.

Hebrew Bible Arrangement

Hebrew Old Testament Arrangement of Twenty-Two Books		
The Law or <i>Torah</i>	The Prophets or <i>Nevi'im</i>	The Writings or <i>Kethuvim</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy 	<p>Former Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joshua 2. Judges (combined with Ruth) 3. Samuel (both books combined) 4. Kings (both books combined) <p>Later Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isaiah 2. Jeremiah 3. Ezekiel 4. The twelve 	<p>Poetical Books</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Psalms 2. Job 3. Proverbs <p>Five Rolls (<i>Megilloth</i>)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ruth 2. Song of Songs 3. Ecclesiastes 4. Lamentations 5. Esther <p>Historical Books</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Daniel 2. Ezra-Nehemiah 3. Chronicles

English and Septuagint (Greek) Old Testament Arrangement

Septuagint and English Bible Arrangement the Old Testament, Thirty-Nine Books				
The Law or <i>Pentateuch</i>	Historical books	Poetry Books	Prophets	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Genesis 2. Exodus 3. Leviticus 4. Numbers 5. Deuteronomy 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joshua 2. Judges 3. Ruth 4. I Samuel 5. II Samuel 6. I Kings 7. II Kings 8. I Chronicles 9. II Chronicles 10. Ezra 11. Nehemiah 12. Esther 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job 2. Psalms 3. Proverbs 4. Ecclesiastes 5. Song of Solomon 	<p>Major Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isaiah 2. Jeremiah 3. Lamentations 4. Ezekiel 5. Daniel 	<p>Minor Prophets</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hosea 2. Joel 3. Amos 4. Obadiah 5. Jonah 6. Micah 7. Nahum 8. Habakkuk 9. Zephaniah 10. Haggai 11. Zechariah 12. Malachi

- A. **Five Books of the Law** – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- B. **Twelve books of History** – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, I & II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther
- C. **Five books of Poetry** – Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon
- D. **Five Major Prophets** – Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel
- E. **Twelve Minor Prophets** – Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

III. HOMEWORK

- A. **Make sure you have all the books of the Old Testament memorized. This is absolutely necessary if you are going to learn the material in the rest of the class. If you don't have the books memorized, keep working at it.**

- B. **Make sure you know the four categories of books and how they are frequently divided up into five categories. Know what books go into what category.**

- C. **Read Exodus chs. 1-4, chs. 12-14, chs. 18, chs. 19-20:21, chs. 32, 35, 40. As you read these chapters, write a word or a short phrase that describes each chapter or group of chapters if they have a related theme.**
 - 1. Chapters 1-4
 - a. Chapter 1
 - b. Chapter 2
 - c. Chapter 3
 - d. Chapter 4

 - 2. Chapters 12-14
 - a. Chapter 12
 - b. Chapter 13
 - c. Chapter 14

 - 3. Chapter 18

 - 4. Chapter 19-20:21
 - a. Chapter 19
 - b. Chapter 20:1-21

 - 5. Chapter 32

 - 6. Chapter 35

 - 7. Chapter 40