

Lesson 2: Overview of the Old Testament

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Lesson Notes:

[1. Introduction](#)

Many readers of the scriptures find the books of the Old Testament to be among the most difficult of the Bible. For most, the book of Isaiah ranks among the most complicated. Many of us, rather than paying the necessary price to discover its beautiful truths, choose instead to avoid reading the Old Testament.

It is true the Old Testament does present some obstacles that require additional effort on the part of the reader. Reading the Old Testament is similar to traveling to another country. Often the traveler will experience perplexing language and cultural challenges that must be addressed if they are going to have a positive experience.

Kent P. Jackson states,

"...The Old Testament is the product of a culture vastly different than our own. It was also written in a language that few [are familiar, and as a result] both cultural and language barriers stand in the way of most readers. Even in translation, readers of the King James Version must deal with an English text that is over 350 years old, in a dialect that few modern readers can understand without considerable effort." ("God's Testament to Ancient Israel" in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 10).

To those who wish to persevere, all is not lost. There are many aids available and solutions are within the reach of most individuals. The rewards for one's efforts will be substantial. The student of the Old Testament who is willing to make the extra effort required, including prayerful study, will find great satisfaction in their reading. As most of us have learned, hard work and patience are certainly not new to anyone who has ever wanted to expand their understanding.

For me, some of the benefits of undertaking a study of the Old Testament include: (1) An increased understanding of the love my Heavenly Father has for me as one of His spirit children, and that He has a plan for me. I am not here on earth by chance, but by design; (2) I have learned the attributes of both the Father and His Son of love, mercy, and patience are not conditional, but unconditional. While the focus of the Old Testament is upon the children of Israel, I have learned all who are willing to make and keep sacred covenants can receive special blessings; (3) I have learned the pre-mortal Christ was the Father's spokesman to each of the prophets of the Old Testament. He did not begin his ministry with the New Testament, it began in the Old Testament. For approximately three thousand years before his mortal birth, He had been personally involved with His Father's children as recorded in the Old Testament; (4) The atonement of Jesus Christ, which was the purpose of his mortal life, was originally taught to Adam as he was commanded to offer sacrifices after leaving the Garden of Eden in order to prepare the people for this special event. The offering of sacrifices continued until the death of Jesus Christ, and (5) I am so grateful for the words recorded by the prophets of the Old Testament. Though their writings, I am able to learn firsthand what my Father expects of me

during my journey here on earth and the blessings that will be mine (or the consequences that will occur), will be determined by my choices.

To continue our journey, it is important to understand both the Old and New Testament derives their names from the word “testament” which means covenant. The Old Testament addresses the covenant God established with Israel at Sinai. It includes a series of sacrifices and laws that addressed the external life of the individual. The New Testament focuses upon the internal covenant made between God and man as manifest by their actions toward God and others. The essential ordinance for the individual is to partake of, following their baptism, is the sacrament, as introduced by Jesus during his mortal ministry. The sacrament is symbolic of the body and blood Jesus Christ shed, and is given as a means of assisting the follower to both remember and to renew their covenants made at baptism. The prophet Jeremiah speaks of the contrast between the two covenants, Old and New.

Jeremiah 31:31-33

31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After these days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Kent P. Jackson states,

*“Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant that God would establish with his people, not like the old covenant written on tablets of stone, but a new covenant to be written in men’s hearts. Jesus introduced the sacrament as a ‘new testament.’ Though the terms Old and New Testament may not be entirely appropriate as titles for the two records—either historically or theologically—still the names convey well the concept of the covenant of Sinai being the precursor and the forerunner to the greater covenant of the gospel. And certainly the sacred record which we call the Old Testament serves well to set the stage and prepare the way for the greater revelation to come.” (“God’s Testament to Ancient Israel” in *Studies in the Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 3).*

Kent P. Jackson continues,

*“The Old Testament is not a book—it is a collection, a collection of thirty-nine books that comprise the record of God’s dealings with his covenant people of the era of Moses—ancient Israel. The core of its record extends from the call of Moses, ca. 1250 B.C. to the mission of Nehemiah, ca. 432 B.C. Yet it also includes a record that extends as far into the past as the creation, and prophecies that extend as far into the future as the glorification of the earth. Its scope, therefore, is limitless, even as the scope of the gospel itself has no limits.” (“God’s Testament to Ancient Israel” in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 3-4).*

Roy A. Welker reminds us,

*“The books of the Old Testament were written over a period of approximately 1000 years by scores of different authors living under quite different circumstances and faced with varied problems. Each book should be considered separately. The Hebrew people have preserved, collected, and canonized these books into one for us. The religious purpose and inspiration also gives them a common thread for us” (*Spiritual Values of the Old Testament*. M Man Gleaner Course of Study 1960-61. Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Department of Education, 1960-61, 15).*

The Old Testament Gospel Doctrine manual states,

*“These books were collected into a single volume sometime between 280 and 130 B.C. Christ and his Apostles taught the people of their time from the writings of these prophets.” (*Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher’s Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989, 2)*

What are the Apocrypha writings?

The LDS Bible Dictionary states,

“Apocrypha. Sacred or hidden. By this word is generally meant those sacred books of the Jewish people which were not included in the Hebrew Bible. They are as valuable as forming a link connecting the Old and New Testament, and are regarded in the [Latter-Day Saints] Church as useful reading, although not all the books are of equal value. They are a subject of a revelation recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 91, in which is stated that the contents are mostly

correct, but with many interpolations by man.” (LDS Bible Dictionary, in Holy Bible. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1979, 610).

2. TimeTable

You will find in the reference section of this text a more detailed chronological TimeTable which covers approximately the first Four Thousand Years of the Old Testament history. This is included with other reference charts which may be of interest to the reader.

At this junction, I am providing as part of our overview only a limited and simple time table for your orientation.

Dates ¹	Event
4000 B.C.	Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden
2344 B.C.	Noah and his family survive the Flood
2243 B.C.	The languages are confused at the time of the Tower of Babel
2022 B.C.	Birth of Abraham
1754 B.C.	Joseph sold into Egypt at age of 17
1700-1487 B.C.	Jacob and his family live in Egypt
1597 B.C.	Moses is born
1517 B.C.	Moses leads the children of Israel out of Egypt
1479 B.C.	Conquest of Canan
1434 B.C.	Beginning of reign of Judges
1062 B.C.	Birth of Saul
1032 B.C.	Birth of David
995 B.C.	David crowned king of all Israel
950 B.C.	Temple of Solomon dedicated
922 B.C.	Solomon dies and the kingdom is divided
722-721 B.C.	Fall of Israel
587-586 B.C.	Fall of Judah
538 B.C.	Cyrus of Persia takes Babylon, permits Jewish exiles to return
516 B.C.	Second Temple completed
445 B.C.	Nehemiah leads back third group of exiles (from Persia)

1. approximate dates

Reference: W. Cleon Skousen. The First 2,000 Years, The Third Thousand Years, and The Fourth Thousand Years [1953-1966]. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft.

3. Gospel Dispensations

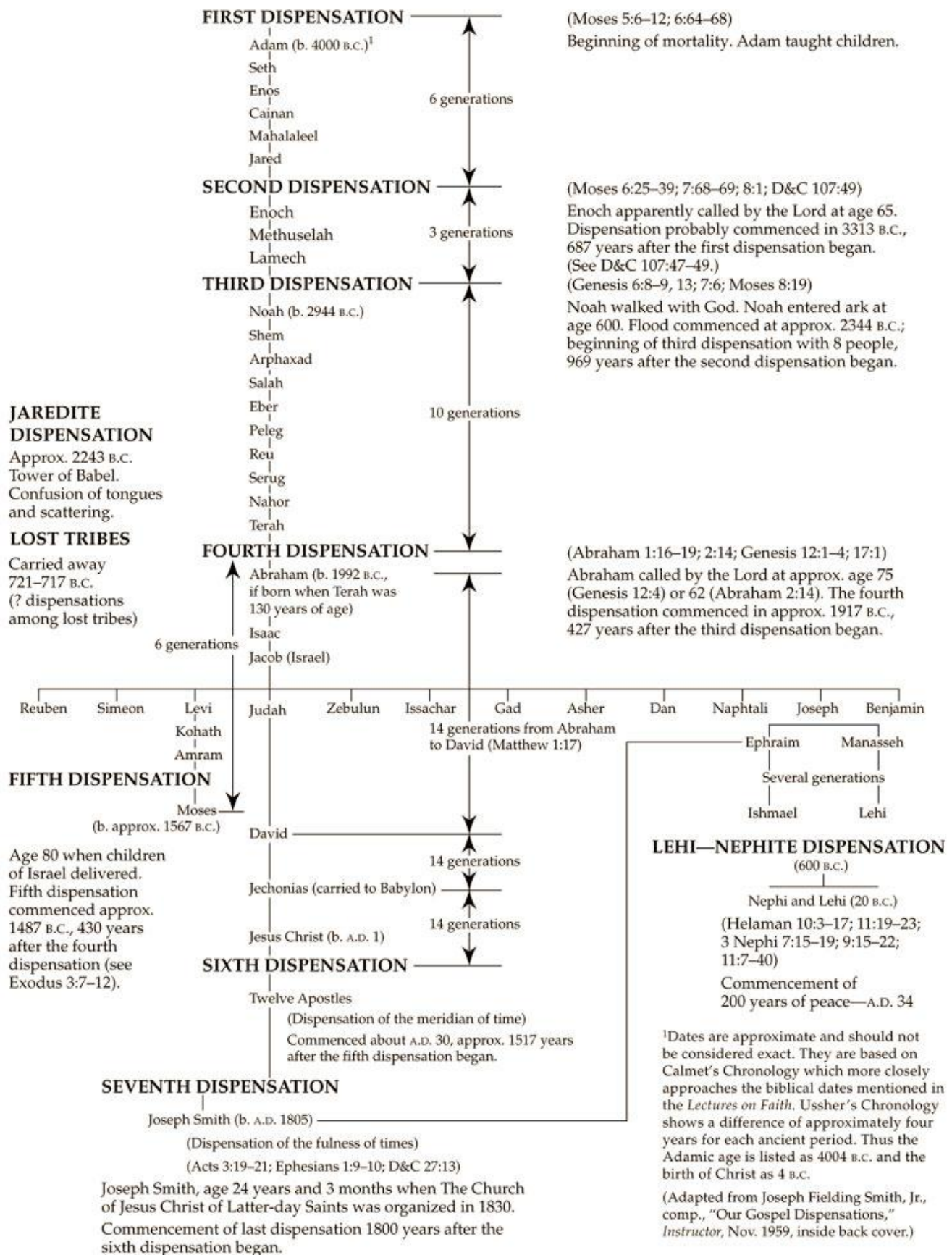
The dictionary definition of dispensation is, “a general state or ordering of things; a system of revealed commands and promises regulating human affairs” (Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary. Springfield, Massachusetts.: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1991, 141).

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

“...A dispensation of the Gospel is defined as the granting to divinely chosen officers, by a commission from God, of power and authority to dispense the word of God, and to administer in all the ordinances thereof. However, a dispensation has frequently embraced additional power and included a special commission or warning to the people, the making of a special and definite covenant with man, and the conferring of special powers upon chosen prophets beyond what other prophets may have received” (Doctrines of Salvation, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954, 160-161).

Reference for Gospel Dispensation Chart: Old Testament student manual Genesis—2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, Second Edition, Revised, 7).

Gospel Dispensations



There have been seven dispensations, not including the dispensations of the Jaredites, Lehi-Nephites, and Lost Tribes. The heads of each of the seven dispensations are: (1) Adam, (2) Enoch, (3) Noah, (4) Abraham, (5) Moses, (6) Twelve Apostles, and (7) Joseph Smith (see Gospel Dispensations chart). During our study of the Old Testament, we will address the dispensations of Adam through Moses. The New Testament includes the dispensation of the Twelve Apostles.

The most important dispensation of the seven is the last dispensation referred to as the “Dispensation of the Fulness of Times.” Each of the previous dispensations have ended in apostasy as the wickedness of the people has become so great that the authority to act in God’s name has been taken from the earth. The seventh or last dispensation, however, will continue to survive until the Savior returns to reign upon the earth. There will be great wickedness upon the earth during the latter days, however, there will be a comparative small group of individuals who will claim membership in the authorized Church of Jesus Christ upon the earth, who will be directed by a living prophet, and who will remain righteous and continue to gather scattered Israel into the fold. Our study will include the promises made to the house of Israel and the latter day gathering that will occur.

Joseph Fielding Smith, Jr. states,

“Dispensation of the Fulness of Times. A period of refreshing and restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets, the sum total of all Gospel truths, this dispensation is the greatest of them all. It is the only dispensation foreordained before the world was made not to be overcome by wickedness. This dispensation will lead us into the millennial reign of the Redeemer, bringing forth truths which have been hidden from the foundation of the earth” (Old Testament Charts and Explanatory Text. Compiled from The Instructor Magazine by M. Ross Richards and Marie Curtis Richards. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1966, 2).

[4. Jewish Classification of the Books of the Old Testament](#)

The Old Testament scripture is, broadly speaking, the religious literature of Israel or of the Jews. They divided the Old Testament into three large groups: (A) The Law; (B) The Prophets, and (C) The Writings.

[4.1. The Law \(Torah/ Pentateuch\)](#)

Includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Leviticus.

Roy A. Welker states,

“These five books are traditionally ascribed to Moses as author...Exactly how much of them comes to us from Moses is impossible to say, for it is quite evident, both from the Book of Moses in the Pearl of Great Price and from Bible scholarship, that these books have been edited and reedited through centuries of time” (Spiritual Values of the Old Testament. M-Man-Gleaner Course of Study 1960-61. Salt Lake City: L.D.S. Department of Education, 1960, 16).

Roy A. Welker continues,

“Genesis:

“Genesis tells of the creation in simple, majestic words and the thrilling stories of the founders of the Hebrew nation—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. In it we read of the beginnings of a great people—God’s very own chosen, peculiar, people...”

“Exodus:

“Exodus continues the account of Israel where Genesis ends. Moses is the leading figure. In fact, this book is fascinating if read as a character study of Israel’s most revered prophet, Moses. It also covers, of course, the exodus of Israel from Egypt.

“Numbers:

“It is a continuation of the account of Exodus. Israel is numbered and moves nearer to the Promised land.

“Deuteronomy:

“Literally means the second statement of the law, and is one of the greatest books of the Old Testament. Moses, now an old man of about 120 years, having led his people through forty long and hard years, makes his last great plea for them to remember the laws which God has given them through him for their own good. This book is great oratory, forceful literature, and most of the counsel is valid for us today.

“Leviticus:

“It is for the most part a priestly book dealing with ritual and sacrifice, things clean and unclean. It is an interesting book from a historical point of view, but its ritualistic prescriptions are no longer a part of Judaism and never were adopted by Christianity. However, the so-called “Law of Holiness,” found in chapters 17 to 26, contains moral teachings far above anything practiced by Christians today. In fact, the basic purpose and theme of Leviticus is most inspiring. It is: “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord Your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19:1)

4.2. The Prophets

The Jews divided the prophetic books into two groups, the first of which were not written by known prophets and are of a very different character than the truly prophetic writings.

4.2.1. “Former” Prophets

These include the books of Joshua, Judges, I and II Samuel and I and II Kings. This group continues the story of Israel's history from when Numbers leaves off to the fall of Jerusalem to the New Babylonian Empire in 586 B.C.

4.2.2. “Latter” Prophets

These include Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve “minor” prophets: Amos, Hosea, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Joel, and Jonah.

“These are the truly prophetic books of the Old Testament. They were written by the so-called writing or literary prophets. Jonah is an exception in this group since the book which bears his name was not written by him but about him by an unknown author.

4.3. The Writings

“Includes the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, I and II Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

“Writings:

“This group was not considered quite as authoritative as ‘The Law and the Prophets.’ It contains books of practical wisdom. (Job, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs), the devotional Psalms, inspiring stories of Esther and Ruth, history of reestablishing the Jews in Palestine in Nehemiah and Ezra, the love poem of Song of Solomon, and Daniel’s prophecies of hope for Israel. I and II Chronicles covers most of the same group as I and II Kings, but with less historical value and literary excellence.” (Reference: Roy A. Welker. Spiritual Values of the Old Testament. M Man Gleaner Course of Study 1960-61. Salt Lake City: LDS Department of Education, 1960, 15-18).

5. Old Testament Books Based on Content

Kent P. Jackson states,

5.1. The Prologue

“The Prologue to ancient Israel’s sacred record is the book of Genesis. It can be called a “prologue” because it is not part of the basic historical narrative collection which comprises the core of the Old Testament. Yet it provides the absolutely essential backdrop to that narrative which begins with the mission of Moses. Indeed the Old Testament begins with Moses, a fact which we learn from the first two chapters of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s inspired revision of the Bible. According to that restored account (which has been canonized in the Pearl of Great Price as Moses 1 and 2), Moses, sometimes after the call to his prophetic mission, saw in vision the endless works of the Father and learned of the mission of his Son. He was commanded: “I will speak unto thee concerning this earth upon which thou standest; and thou shalt write the things which I shall speak” (Moses 1:40). Continuing, the Lord said: “I reveal unto you concerning this heaven, and this earth; write the words which I speak...In the beginning I created the heaven and the earth upon which thou standest; (Moses 2:1). With this begins the familiar creation account.

“Genesis is significant not only for the account of the creation but for the material that follows as well. In it we learn of mankind’s temporary sojourn in Eden and expulsion into mortality. We trace the parallel and contemporaneous developments of the kingdoms of God and Satan and follow the line of patriarchal priesthood from Adam to Jacob and his children.

“Outside of the creation account in the first few chapters, which were revealed prior to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Moses 1:26), we do not know at what point in Moses’ career the Genesis material was revealed or otherwise made known to him and Israel. But ancient Israel’s profound need for Genesis should be clear to all who read it. The Israelites in Moses’ day were experiencing both a rebirth as a people and a restoration of revealed truth. The information contained in Genesis was vital for their establishment as a covenant people and for their relocation to the land that had been promised to them through their forefathers. Genesis taught Moses’ people who they were, where they came from, and where they were going. It taught them that they were created in the image of the one true God, who personally cares about his mortal children and takes an active interest in their affairs. It made clear to them the fact that they were the inheritors of sacred covenants that God had made with the pious men and women from whom they descended. And it let them know that the land to which they were being led was theirs.

“Some Scholars believe that Genesis was written centuries after the time of Moses in the social and political setting of the Israelite monarchy. Although we cannot trace with exactness the history of the Genesis text, and although it is possible that the text as it stands now was influenced by later scribes and historians (as in the case with Mormon’s

editing in the Book of Mormon), there is no doubt in [the mind of many Mormon scholars] that the setting of the revelation of Genesis is with Moses and the Israelites. Genesis was revealed to Moses at that time. It provides answers to questions that were more relevant to Moses' generation than to any other, and it serves well as the prologue to the history of the House of Israel that was being constituted into a nation under Moses' inspired direction.

"In the [LDS] Church today we understand our role as modern Israel partly because of the book of Genesis, which is as vital to our own understanding of our position in Israel as it was to our spiritual and lineal forefathers of ancient times. It is not insignificant that the modern-day restoration of true religion also included the restoration of much of the foundational material that is part of the Genesis history, including such things as the Book of Moses, the Book of Abraham, the Joseph Smith Translation changes and additions to later parts of Genesis, and several key revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants that pertain to our origin and our covenant heritage" (Reference: Kent P. Jackson. "God's Testament To Ancient Israel" in *Studies in Scripture*, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book Co., 1985, 3-8).

Kent P. Jackson continues,

5.2. The Historical Core Books

"Includes the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah.

"The Core:

"The core of the Old Testament is the large body of historical material than extends from the calling of Moses to the last record of the career of Nehemiah (ca. 1250-432 B.C.) These books which were written by a variety of authors, chronicle the history of Israel from its reconstruction in the days of Moses to the end of the Old Testament period. They constitute the core to which the Genesis prologue and the collections of Writing and Prophetic Books were added.

"Like the Book of Mormon, the Old Testament teaches its messages primarily through history. In these pages we can see how God is active in the affairs of mankind and how men and women have responded, or failed to respond, to the efforts of God and his chosen servants. The pious (and unnamed) historians of the Old Testament wrote from a perspective of deep personal commitment and obedience to the Lord's will. Their objective in writing is obvious: they hoped that future generations would learn through the examples of the past not to make the mistakes that had been made before, while duplicating the behavior of those who had lived righteously. Sadly, most of the lessons that modern readers can learn from the history of ancient Israel are from bad examples.

"The historical books of the Old Testament, including Genesis, make up the largest group in the Bible, totaling 668 pages (using the LDS Bible publication), or 56.4 percent of the Old Testament. This compares with 404 pages total in the New Testament and 531 pages in the (1981 English) Book of Mormon. Certainly there is much to learn about life from the experiences related in the Old Testament (see 1 Cor. 10:11).

5.3. The Books of Writings

"Includes the books of Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon (also known as Song of Songs), and Lamentations.

"The Writings:

"Modern translations place the literary works of the Old Testament in a group before the books of the Prophets. The traditional ancient grouping places them last.

"Several of these books belong to a category of writing called 'wisdom literature,' in which wisdom, or the capacity to go through life prudently and successfully, is conveyed through various literary styles. Perhaps the finest example of wisdom literature in the world is the book of Proverbs, a collection of brief sayings that convey wisdom from one generation to the next. The book of Psalms, the hymn book of ancient Israel, is unparalleled in its expression of Israelite devotion.

"The Writings include 200 pages of the Old Testament, or 16.8 percent of the total.

5.4. The Books of the Prophets

The division between "major" and "minor" is based solely on the length of the books and not on the importance or quality of the content.

5.4.1. Major Prophets

These are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

5.4.2. Minor Prophets

These are Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

“Unlike most of the other books of the Old Testament, which are anonymous, the Prophetic Books are identified by the name of the author (except in the case of Jonah, which appears to be the anonymous work named for the prophet in the story.)

“It is significant to note that in the Book of Mormon the words of the prophets are integrated into the historical narrative, while in the Old Testament they are found in a separate collection.

“The Prophetic Books comprise 317 pages or 26.8 percent of the Old Testament.” (Reference: Kent P. Jackson. “God’s Testament To Ancient Israel” in Studies in Scripture, Vol. 3. Edited by Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet. Salt Lake City: Randall Book, 1985, 8-10).

6. The Books of the Old Testament in the King James Bible

1.	Genesis	21.	Ecclesiastes
2.	Exodus	22.	Song of Solomon
3.	Leviticus	23.	Isaiah
4.	Numbers	24.	Jeremiah
5.	Deuteronomy	25.	Lamentations
6.	Joshua	26.	Ezekiel
7.	Judges	27.	Daniel
8.	Ruth	28.	Hosea
9.	1 Samuel	29.	Joel
10.	2 Samuel	30.	Amos
11.	1 Kings	31.	Obadiah
12.	2 Kings	32.	Jonah
13.	1 Chronicles	33.	Micah
14.	2 Chronicles	34.	Nahum
15.	Ezra	35.	Habakkuk
16.	Nehemiah	36.	Zephaniah
17.	Esther	37.	Haggai
18.	Job	38.	Zechariah
19.	Psalms	39.	Malachi
20.	Proverbs		

7. Lost Books of the Bible

Those who assume the Bible is complete either have not read the Bible themselves or have not understood the reference in the scriptures to various books that are “missing” from our current scriptures.

The LDS Bible Dictionary states,

“The so-called lost books of the Bible are those documents that are mentioned in the Bible in such a way that it is evident they were considered authentic and valuable, but that are not found in the Bible today. Sometimes called missing scripture, they consist of at least the following:

1.	Wars of the Lord	Numbers 21:14
2.	Book of Jasher	Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18
3.	Book of the acts of Solomon	1 Kings 11:41
4.	Book of Samuel the seer	1 Chronicles 29:29
5.	Book of Gad the seer	1 Chronicles 29:29
6.	Book of Nathan the prophet	1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29

7.	Prophecy of Ahijah	2 Chronicles 9:29
8.	Visions of Iddo the seer	2 Chronicles 9:29; 12:15; 13:22
9.	Book of Shemaiah	2 Chronicles 12:15
10.	Book of Jehu	2 Chronicles 20:34
11.	Sayings of Seers	2 Chronicles 33:19

“To these rather clear references to inspired writings other than our current Bible may be added another list that has allusions to writings that may or may not be contained within our present test, but may perhaps be known by a different title; for example, the book of the covenant (Exodus 24:7), which may or may not be included in the current book of Exodus; the manner of the kingdom, written by Samuel (1 Samuel 10:25); the rest of the acts of Uzziah written by Isaiah (2 Chronicles 26:22).

“The foregoing items attest to the fact that our present Bible does not contain all of the words of the Lord that he gave to his people in former times, and remind us that the Bible, in its present form, is rather incomplete” (Lost Books. LDS Bible Dictionary, in Holy Bible. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1979, 725-726).

It is the position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, that the heavens are not closed today and that neither the Bible, nor modern scripture including the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, or Pearl of Great Price which are considered canonized scripture, contain all the words of the Lord. He yet has more revelation to give to his people through his modern day prophets. The heavens are not closed. God and His Son, Jesus Christ, continue to speak to us today through their appointed prophets, by the power of the Holy Ghost, just as they have done since time began.

8. Seven Keys to Understanding the Old Testament

The Old Testament Institute Student Manual offers seven keys to assist us in increasing our understanding of the Old Testament:

1. *Constant, diligent, and prayerful daily study is the major factor in understanding the scriptures.*
2. *Prayerful study, combined with a commitment to live the commandments [in our daily lives].*
3. *Become familiar with the Latter-day scriptures which provide many insights into the clarifying the Old Testament.*
4. *A [belief] that the gospel was previously revealed to the ancient prophets [is an essential beginning] ... for obtaining an accurate interpretation of their teachings.*
5. *A true understanding of the nature of [the Godhead as being made up of three separate personages who are one in unity]... provides special insight [into the scriptures].*
6. *The nature and purposes of God's covenants 'with his children' are important for us to understand.*
7. *Putting ourselves in the place of the ancients [or likening our lives unto theirs] as we read the scriptures is an important part of studying the Old Testament”*

(Old Testament Institute Student Manual: Genesis—2 Samuel. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1980, [Second Edition, Revised, 1981], 23- 25).

9. Major Stories of the Old Testament

The following chart provides an excellent introduction to the reader of the Old Testament. As you continue your study of the Old Testament, you will find some of the events listed to be like visiting an old friend you already know; others may be new to you. Like a friendship, old or new, each will provide you with valuable insight as you meet with them. They provide a preview of the coming attractions that await you as we proceed with our study of the Old Testament.

Major Old Testament Stories:

Major Old Testament Stories

1.	The Creation of world	Genesis 1
2.	Fall of Adam and Eve	Genesis 3
3.	Cain kills Abel	Genesis 4
4.	Enoch and his city	Genesis 5
5.	Noah and the Flood	Genesis 6
6.	Tower of Babel	Genesis 11
7.	Sodom & Gomorrah and Lot	Genesis 18
8.	Abraham offers son Isaac	Genesis 22
9.	Jacob and Esau's birthright	Genesis 25

10.	Joseph sold as a slave	Genesis 37
11.	Pharaoh's dream	Genesis 41
12.	Jacob and Joseph reunited	Genesis 46
13.	Birth of Moses	Exodus 2
14.	Moses and the burning bush	Exodus 3
15.	10 plagues of Egypt	Exodus 7-13
16.	Manna for Israelites	Exodus 16
17.	10 Commandments	Exodus 20
18.	Golden Calf	Exodus 32
19.	The Tabernacle	Exodus 35
20.	Miracle of Quail	Numbers 11
21.	Snakes and the brass serpent	Numbers 21
22.	Walls of Jericho fall	Joshua 6
23.	Sun and Moon stand still	Joshua 10
24.	Deborah leads Israel	Judges 4
25.	Gideon and Israel	Judges 4
26.	Samson and Delilah	Judges 16
27.	Story of Ruth and Naomi	Ruth
28.	Samuel and Eli	1 Samuel 3
29.	Samuel makes Saul king	1 Samuel 9
30.	Samuel anoints David	1 Samuel 16
31.	David kills Goliath	1 Samuel 17
32.	David becomes king	2 Samuel 2
33.	David's great sin	2 Samuel 11
34.	Solomon becomes king	1 Kings 1
35.	Solomon's gift of wisdom	1 Kings 3
36.	Solomon's Temple	1 Kings 5-8
37.	Israel & Judah are divided	1 Kings 12
38.	Elijah and Baal	1 Kings 17
39.	Elijah and Elisha	1 Kings 18
40.	Elisha's 3 miracles	2 Kings 2
41.	Jonah and the whale	Jonah
42.	Isaiah and Hosea	Isaiah
43.	Jeremiah and God's call	Jeremiah
44.	Daniel and the King's dream	Daniel 2
45.	Daniel: Furnace and lions den	Daniel 3, 6
46.	Daniel's prophecies	Daniel 7-12
47.	Esther and Mordecai	Esther
48.	Job's trials and faith	Job
49.	Jews return to Jerusalem	Ezra 1
50.	Elijah will return	Malachi 4

Reference: C. Bruce Barton, Scripture Kit. [Major Old Testament Stories], 1988.

10. Conclusion

I hope this introduction to the books of the Old Testament and its overall content will provide a foundation upon which we can build together as we strive to increase our understanding of the Old Testament.

Jeffrey R. Holland states,

"...I have a theory about those earlier dispensations and the leaders, families, and people who lived then...the destructive circumstances that confronted them. They faced terribly difficult times and, for the most part, did not succeed in their dispensations. Apostasy and darkness eventually came to every earlier age in human history. Indeed, the whole point of the Restoration of the gospel in these latter days is that it had not been able to survive in earlier times and therefore had to be pursued in one last, triumphant age.

"We know the challenges Abraham's posterity faced (and still do). We know of Moses's problems with an Israelite people who left Egypt, but couldn't quite get Egypt to leave them. Isaiah was the prophet who saw the loss of the 10 Israelite tribes to the north. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel were all prophets of captivity...

"In short, apostasy and destruction of one kind or another was the ultimate fate of every general dispensation we have ever had down through time. But here's my theory. My theory is that those great men and women, the leaders in those ages past, were able to keep going, to keep testifying, to keep trying to do their best, not because they knew that they would succeed but because they knew that you would. I believe they took courage and hope not so much from their own circumstances as from yours..." (Reference: "Terror, Triumph, and a Wedding Feast." CES Fireside for Young Adults. Brigham Young University, September 12, 2004).

As we precede on our journey we will see how valiantly the previous generations tried to become God's chosen people and how patient He was with them and yet time and time again they came up short of their goal. Their prophets saw our day and gloried in it. They also wrote to us, those of the last dispensation. We are the beneficiaries of their efforts to lay the groundwork for the last days. Hopefully, we will learn the lessons from the past as they have been taught to us through the pages of the Old Testament. In spite of the wicked world in which we live, we can rise above it. The covenant promises reserved for those who are obedient will be ours because of our faithfulness.