



The history and the literary history of Israel

This diagram is a summary, so don't begin here!
 The dotted vertical lines divide up history into centuries, from 2000 BC to AD 100.

1. History: the upper part of the diagram

The rectangle running right through the diagram, above the figures indicating the centuries, represents Egypt: its history is divided into the various dynasties.

The rectangles above that appear one after the other in succession: they represent the peoples of Mesopotamia (the Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, Persians, Babylonians), of Asia Minor (the Hittites), or of Europe (Greeks and Romans), who in turn became masters of the Middle East.

The rectangle in blacker lines represents Israel. It was divided into two when the United Kingdom of David and Solomon broke into two parts: the Northern Kingdom (or Israel, Samaria), and the Southern Kingdom (or Judah, Jerusalem).

2. Literary history: lower part of the diagram

This part of the diagram shows the particular period in which a book of the Bible was composed (sometimes this is pure hypothesis). The straight lines ——— indicate the composition of a book. The broken lines - - - - represent an oral tradition on the way to becoming an edited text.

The dots surrounding a straight line indicate a probable period.

The vertical grill between 600 and 500 represents the time of exile in Babylon.

The two horizontal grills between 1000 and 700 represent the northern kingdom. For the Law, the letters JEDP represent the traditions edited at different periods. J = Yahwistic tradition (at Jerusalem in the time of Solomon); E = Elohist tradition (in the northern kingdom, about 750); JE = the Jehovistic tradition (a fusion of the Yahwist and the Elohist in Jerusalem); D = the Deuteronomic tradition (a core formed in the north was taken up and completed in the south); P = the priestly tradition (during and after the exile in Babylon).

These four traditions, regrouped after the exile, constituted the Law (or the Pentateuch), divided into five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

