

Episode: Other Letters Series No. 03

Narrator: Moses

Primary Scriptures: Genesis 1:1

Story Summary: An introduction to the Old Testament

Location: Israel

Time: circa 1500 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Genesis 1:1

The Old Testament can be viewed as the story of God creating the universe and all things in it, including humankind. Because he loves his creations so much, he continually acts in their benefit so they can be in relationship with him, but they often choose to separate themselves from him by their actions and beliefs.

The Bible consists of two parts named the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament contains the same things as the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) used by the Jews, but the material is arranged in a different order. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew by many different writers from about 1500 BC to 400 BC. The Old Testament is not written in chronological order but it grouped by subject. The writings in the Old Testament are called “books.”

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament contain the history of the Hebrew (Jewish) people from their beginning founder, Abraham, until after their return from exile in Babylon. This covers the time period from about 2100 BC to 400 BC.

The first five books of the Old Testament (*Genesis – Deuteronomy*) are known as the Pentateuch or the Talmud. They are traditionally attributed to Moses, although they were possibly passed down by oral tradition before being written. *Genesis* is the first book. It contains the creation story, the story of Noah, and the stories of the first four “Patriarchs” of the Hebrews – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel) and Joseph. The next four books contain the stories of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt, the covenant between the Hebrews and God, the Tabernacle, and their time wondering in the deserts for forty years.

The next three books (*Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*) tell of the Hebrews’ conquest of Canaan and their first few hundred years while in the land.

1 Samuel – Esther tell of the times of the kings and prophets, the exile of the Jews to Babylon, and the return of the people to Israel, about 1100 BC to 400 BC.

The next five books (*Job – Song of Songs*) are known as books of poetry or books of wisdom. Much of the material in these books is attributed to David and Solomon.

The last seventeen books (*Isaiah – Malachi*) are books of the prophets. These prophets gave their messages during the times of the kings and prophets. The prophets were messengers of God who told the people how they needed to change their thoughts and actions. Sometimes they were also giving prophecies of future events.

The Old Testament ends about 400 BC. Throughout the pages of the Old Testament are allusions and prophecies that point to the coming of a Messiah, or savior of mankind. Christians believe that occurs with the birth and life of Jesus about four centuries later.