

Comparing Canons

Some **KEY TERMS** to start:

- Canon** – The group of writings considered to be holy or authoritative by a particular community.
From the Greek for “reed” or “measuring stick”.
- Tanakh** – The Jewish scriptures (canon) are called the Tanakh. This name is an acronym derived from the first Hebrew letter of the name for each of its three sections: **T**orah, **N**evi'im (Prophets), **K**etuvim (Writings).
- Torah** – The name given to the first five books of the *Tanakh*: *Bereshit*, *Shemot*, *Va-Yikra*, *Bamidbar*, *Devarim*. These books are more commonly known by their Greek names: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. The Hebrew naming convention uses the first prominent word in each text, as the name of that text, while the Greek names are derived from the overall *theme* of each text. Torah is from the Hebrew for “instruction” or “teaching”.
- Old Testament** – The first volume of the Christian canon. Testament is a synonym for covenant. Therefore, the names “Old Testament” and “New Testament” carry a theological connotation.
- Pentateuch** – The common name for the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
From the Greek for “five-volume work”.
- Hebrew Bible** – An attempt at a neutral academic term to refer to the collection of texts that comprise (much of) the Old Testament & Tanakh. The term is inaccurate however, as some texts were written in Aramaic.

Although Jews and Christians share many of the same texts within their respective canons, their canons are different. Most important:

1. The Old Testament is NOT the same as the Tanakh

There are 24 books in the Tanakh, equivalent to the 39 books in the Lutheran and Protestant Old Testament. But they are grouped and ordered (and numbered) differently than the books in the OT. Why does this matter?

The placement of a book within the canon both reflects *and* impacts the way that book is understood and interpreted.

For example, Daniel is grouped with the major prophets in the OT. But in the Tanakh, Daniel is placed within *Ketuvim* (Writings). Daniel is an important prophetic text in Christianity, but is regarded as “history” in Judaism.

2. The Old Testament is NOT the same across Christian denominations

While there are 39 books in the Lutheran and Protestant OT, there are 46 in the Roman Catholic OT, 50 in the Greek Orthodox OT, and 51 in the Slavonic Russian Orthodox OT. The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Slavonic bibles also include longer versions of Esther and Daniel.

Most of these differences stem from a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible called the **Septuagint**. The Septuagint was produced in Alexandria, Egypt in the third century BCE. It includes books, or parts of books, not found in the Hebrew Bible.

When the authors of the New Testament quoted from scripture, they were usually quoting from the Greek Septuagint (and not directly from the Hebrew or Aramaic texts).

The Lutheran and Protestant Old Testament includes only those books found in the Hebrew Bible and regards the rest as **Apocrypha** (meaning, “set aside” or “withdrawn”).

Roman Catholics refer to the extra books found in the Septuagint as **Deuterocanon** (“secondary scripture”, in a chronological sense).

To put all this another way, there is no such thing as *The Bible* – **different religious communities have different bibles.**

DIFFERENT BIBLES = DIFFERING THEOLOGIES

The Tanakh does not include the New Testament; it is a bible without Jesus. There is no notion of an “old covenant” in Judaism. The covenant Abraham, and then the Israelites, entered into with God is regarded as still intact.

Christianity regards the death and resurrection of Jesus as instigating a “new covenant”. With the idea of a “new covenant” comes the idea of an “old covenant”. But what happens with the “old”, now that there is a “new”?

According to the Letter to the Hebrews, the “new covenant” is “better” (7:22; 8:6), the “old” was actually “flawed” (8:7) and that

...in speaking of a ‘new covenant’, God has made the first one obsolete (8:13).

This idea – that a new covenant has replaced the old covenant – is called **Supersessionism.**

The terms Old Testament and New Testament reflect supersessionism.

The term Old Testament makes no sense in a Jewish context.

Tanakh

Old Testament

Torah		<i>Bereshit</i>
		<i>Shemot</i>
		<i>Va-Yikra</i>
		<i>Ba-Midbar</i>
		<i>Devarim</i>
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Former	Joshua
		Samuel (I & II)
		Judges
		Kings (I & II)
	Later	Isaiah
		Jeremiah
		Ezekiel
	Twelve Minor	Hosea
		Joel
		Amos
		Obadiah
		Jonah
		Micah
		Nahum
		Habakkuk
		Zephaniah
		Haggai
		Zechariah
		Malachi
Ketuvim (Writings)	Wisdom	Psalms
		Proverbs
		Job
	Megillot (Scrolls)	Song of Songs
		Ruth
		Lamentations
		Ecclesiastes
		Esther
	Histories	Daniel
		Ezra - Nehemiah
		Chronicles (I & II)

Protestant

Roman Catholic

Pentateuch	<i>Genesis</i>
	<i>Exodus</i>
	<i>Leviticus</i>
	<i>Numbers</i>
	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
Histories	Joshua
	Judges
	Ruth
	1 Samuel
	2 Samuel
	1 Kings
	2 Kings
	1 Chronicles
	2 Chronicles
	Ezra
	Nehemiah
	Esther
	Poetry
Psalms	
Proverbs	
Ecclesiastes	
Song of Solomon	
Prophets	Isaiah
	Jeremiah
	Lamentations
	Ezekiel
	Daniel
	Hosea
	Joel
	Amos
	Obadiah
	Jonah
	Micah
	Nahum
	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah
Haggai	
Zechariah	
Malachi	

Pentateuch	<i>Genesis</i>
	<i>Exodus</i>
	<i>Leviticus</i>
	<i>Numbers</i>
	<i>Deuteronomy</i>
Histories	Joshua
	Judges
	Ruth
	1 Samuel
	2 Samuel
	1 Kings
	2 Kings
	1 Chronicles
	2 Chronicles
	Ezra
Nehemiah	
Novellas	Tobit
	Judith
	Esther +
	1 Maccabees
	2 Maccabees
Wisdom	Job
	Psalms
	Proverbs
	Ecclesiastes
	Song of Solomon
	Wisdom
	Sirach
Prophets	Isaiah
	Jeremiah
	Lamentations
	Baruch
	Ezekiel
	Daniel +
	Hosea
	Joel
	Amos
	Obadiah
	Jonah
	Micah
	Nahum
	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah
Haggai	
Zechariah	
Malachi	