

Chronology of the Old Testament

Bible scholars do not agree on a chronology of the earlier parts of the Old Testament narrative. One key area of controversy is the dating of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the resulting year of their entry into Canaan. The following dates are based on the biblical evidence itself and on the careful research of archaeologists, historians and linguists during the last century.

Around 2090 BC	Abraham, the founding father of the Israelites, leaves his home in Mesopotamia and journeys to Canaan.
Around 1880 BC	Jacob and his family settle in Egypt.
Around 1445 BC	The “exodus event”, when the Israelites are delivered from bondage in Egypt.
Around 1405 BC	The Israelites are led by Joshua across the Jordan River and enter Canaan, the Promised Land.
Around 1375 BC	Death of Joshua The time of the judges lasts from the death of Joshua to the beginning of Samuel’s ministry. Ruth settles in Bethlehem near the end of the time of the judges.
Before 1100 BC	Birth of Samuel
1050–1010 BC	Saul king over the Israelites
1010–970 BC	David king over the Israelites
970–930 BC	Solomon king over the Israelites The Jerusalem temple is built by Solomon.
930 BC	The division of the Israelite kingdom after the death of Solomon
930–722 BC	The Northern Kingdom (called Israel or Ephraim) is ruled by kings (all described as “evil in the eyes of the Lord”) belonging to many dynasties. It is finally conquered by the Assyrian empire.
930–586 BC	The Southern Kingdom (called Judah) is ruled by kings (most of them “evil”, a few of them “good”), all in the family line of David. It is finally conquered by the Babylonian empire. Jerusalem and its temple are destroyed and many Jews are deported to Babylon.
605– 586 BC	A series of deportations of Jews from Judah to Babylonia
538 BC	Cyrus, king of Persia, allows Jews to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem.
516 BC	The Jerusalem temple is re-dedicated
Around 480–470 BC	Esther, a Jewess, is queen of Persia.
Around 430 BC	Nehemiah’s final reforms and the end of Old Testament period