

Differences in the Hebrew and Septuagint Old Testament Canons of Scripture

As odd as it may seem, the order of the books as found in the Jewish Old Testament is different than what we find in our Bibles today. In our Bibles, the Old Testament is broken down into the three major divisions: the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. But in the Jewish canon, the order is the Law, the Prophets, and then the Psalms (see chart). This can be seen in Scripture.

Lk. 24:27 And **beginning** at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in **all** the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Jesus **began** with the Law (Moses) and the Prophets and then progressed to the Psalms; and indeed, all of Scripture is about him (Jn. 5:39 e.g.).

Lk. 24:44 And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the **law** of Moses, and *in* the **prophets**, and *in* the **psalms**, concerning me.

Notice the order: the Law (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi'im), and then the Psalms (Writings: Ketivum). But there's more. In reproving the Pharisees and other religious leaders of his day, Jesus says:

Mt. 23:35 That upon you [Pharisees] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.

This represents the Jewish canon of Scripture because Abel was slain in Genesis 4:8 and Zacharias was slain in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22: the first and last books as found in the Jewish canon of Scripture. In addition, the Jews have a shortened term for these three main divisions called the *Tanakh*, which means, "*that which is read.*" It's derived by taking the first letter of each word used in naming their three main divisions: "T" from *Torah* (Law), "n" from *Nevi'im* (Prophets), and "k" from *Ketivum* (Psalms), which yet again reveals the threefold division as found in the Hebrew canon of Scripture.

But what's the significance of this, if any?

Because of the arrangement as found in our Bibles today, people have the tendency to believe that the prophets of Israel prophesied *after* the period of Kings and Chronicles when in fact they prophesied *during* these times. This in and of itself isn't earth-shattering, but it's something we need to be aware of.

Second, and more importantly, the canon found in our Bibles today was inspired by the order of the books as found in the Septuagint, which begins in Genesis and ends in Malachi, and also includes the books of the Apocrypha. But yet, we're often told that Jesus (and his disciples) quoted from the Septuagint, although we've learned today that he didn't. Because as we've seen, Jesus constantly referred to the three main divisions as found in the Hebrew canon of Scripture and not that of the Greek Septuagint.

Hebrew Canon (Tanakh)		Canon Today			
<i>The Law (Torah)</i>	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	<i>The Law</i>	<i>Pentateuch</i>	Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	
<i>The Prophets (Nevi'im)</i>	Joshua Judges 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings Isaiah Jeremiah Ezekiel Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi		<i>Historical Books</i>	Joshua Judges Ruth 1 Samuel 2 Samuel 1 Kings 2 Kings 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles Ezra Nehemiah Ester	
			<i>The Psalms</i>	<i>Poetical Books</i>	Job Psalms Proverbs Ecclesiastes Song of Solomon
				<i>Major Prophets</i>	Isaiah Jeremiah Lamentations Ezekiel Daniel
<i>The Psalms (Writings or Ketivum)</i>	Psalms Proverbs Job Song of Solomon Ruth Lamentations Ecclesiastes Ester Daniel Ezra Nehemiah 1 Chronicles 2 Chronicles	<i>The Prophets</i>	<i>Minor Prophets</i>	Hosea Joel Amos Obadiah Jonah Micah Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Haggai Zechariah Malachi	