
WHO'S WHO IN THE BIBLE

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PENGUIN BOOKS

Penguin Books, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ
(Publishing and Editorial) and Harmondsworth,
Middlesex, England (Distribution and Warehouse)
Viking Penguin Inc., 40 West 23rd Street, New York, New
York 10010, USA
Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria,
Australia
Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 2801 John Street, Markham,
Ontario, Canada L3R 1B4
Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 182 - 190 Wairau Road,
Auckland 10, New Zealand

First published in Great Britain by Viking 1987
Published in Penguin Books 1988

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Filmset in Sabon by Bookworm, Manchester

Made and printed in Great Britain by Richard Clay Ltd,
Bungay, Suffolk

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Published in association with Tigerlily Ltd

INTRODUCTION

This book is about a special aspect of the Bible – the people in it. Some of these people are as famous as anybody has ever been. Others are less famous than that but still very famous indeed. Then there are just ordinarily famous men and women, whose names are familiar even when what they did is ill remembered. Finally, there is a large supporting cast of the unfamous. About all these people, except the last category, we feel from time to time the itch to know more – to learn, to recollect or to settle an argument.

A Who's Who is not an encyclopaedia. A Who's Who is a select directory, to which entry has to be gained by fame or favour. It is for those who delight in thumbing works of reference and the names in it are those which set the thumbs moving. The entries in this book range from the very short to the very long. Their main purpose is to record the facts stated in the Bible about each of the persons listed, but that is not their only purpose. Telling about people involves telling who they were, what they did – but also something more. This something more has two faces. First, comment: thinking and reading about such out-of-the-ordinary personages as Moses or David, Isaiah or Paul, shapes ideas about their attributes and personalities and so invites appraisal as well as narrative.

The second additional element is posthumous. The Bible's main characters have lived on, in the imagination of later generations and in their works of art. For 2000 years artists have retold the Bible's stories in stone and glass, in prose and verse, in paint and music. Generation by generation these works have shaped the Biblical figures who were first presented to us by the Bible itself. Some of these works of art are mentioned in this book – an inevitably small selection from the mass that could be cited. In some instances – most obviously, the main events in the life of Jesus from the Annunciation to the Crucifixion – the wealth of material is too enormous, but for the rest a selection, however abbreviated and arbitrary, helps to underline the perennial vitality of these people and shows at the same time how different ages have seen and displayed them: tradition interacting with the spirit of the times.

These artistic references are drawn largely from the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance, when the Bible was the unchallenged prime source for artists and for the patrons who commissioned them. It was not, even then, the only source, for there were other good

stories around and also – for the graphic artist – the lures of natural beauty, including the beauties of the human body. But the Church was the fount of the most money, the most ostentation and so the most art. This ecclesiastical predominance was dented by the classical renaissance which diverted artists to the mythical and historical stories of Greece and Rome; and it was further dented by the self-esteem of patrons, aristocrats (including princes of the Church) and plutocrats who wanted pictures of themselves, their wives and their horses. But in spite of all this competition the Bible has held its place and has continued to fructify the artistic imagination. Within the last hundred years the Crucifixion has haunted poets as diverse as Housman and D.H. Lawrence, Edith Sitwell and Edwin Muir and Nikos Kazantzakis; Messiaen has devoted (the *mot juste*) his life to music in a spirit recognizably akin to that of the Middle Ages; OT and NT themes crop up constantly in the painting of Stanley Spencer; and the novels of Tolstoy, Thomas Mann, George Moore and Mikhail Bulgakov attest the vitality of these ancient tales.

To the artist an ancient story makes its appeal in two different ways. As a good story it demands to be retold: the artist as narrator does this. But the story needs also to be re-imagined, either in its original setting or displaced into the artist's own time. Thus when Raphael wished to paint Ezekiel's vision he had to form, in his own mind and then on canvas, his own idea of what Ezekiel saw and what he meant to convey. And when Kipling, in his poem called 'Uriah', tells the story of Jack Barrett, he is saying: 'It still happens.'

WHAT THE BIBLE IS.

The word Bible means book in Greek but the Bible is not so much a book as a collection of books, a specialized library. The earliest Greek translation, the Septuagint, was not in fact called the Bible but the Old Testament, and the word Bible first appeared in Latin versions and in the plural: *Biblia Sacra*, Holy Books.

The division of the Bible into Old Testament, New Testament and Apocrypha goes back to earliest times: the Apocrypha antedates the NT. These three elements are very different from each other and add to the diversity of the entire corpus. The NT, considerably shorter than the OT, is also more homogeneous. Much the greater part of it is devoted to two topics: the ministry, passion and divinity of Jesus (the four Gospels), and the missions and teachings of Paul (Paul's own letters and the Acts of the Apostles). The whole of the NT was written in Greek and in the second half of C 1 AD or, in a

few cases, a bit later. It deals with the events of no more than a single century.

The OT is not only much bulkier but much more diverse. It covers an immense stretch of time but a comparatively restricted area and number of people. Even excluding its initial legendary period it extends over the best part of two millennia. It tells the story of a select people which trekked in remote times from the lower Euphrates to lands bordering the Mediterranean; abandoned these lands, probably for economic reasons, and pushed on into Egypt, where it prospered and then suffered through several centuries; escaped *en masse* to regain lost, now Promised Land, and did so after a whole generation of privations and frustrations on the way; conquered but did not eliminate the peoples whom it found in the Promised Land; created for a brief period the healthy and wealthy kingdom of David and Solomon but fell victim to internal divisions and greater empires; was almost expunged from history but not quite, half of it extinguished by the Assyrians but the other half making a comeback from captivity in Babylon; fashioned a religion which, initially a complex of ritualistic observances and prohibitions, was infused by the Prophets with profound ethical and social values; and so preserved its religious and racial identity without (except in the hundred years of the Maccabee priest kings) political independence.

The material of the OT is not only a record of these ups and downs, it also contributed to the ups. Traditions keep a people going. In good times they fortify; in bad times they comfort and foster hope. In good times they are voiced in songs and yarns; in bad times they are nostalgically collected and written down. The OT was largely written down during the decline of the post-Solomonic kingdoms, in captivity in Babylon, or soon afterwards. The OT is these writings. But its sources include much older sacred and profane legends and annals, songs and tales; and its oldest surviving texts are much later.

The OT was never a unitary work. It was seen as a miscellany in three parts: the Law, and the Prophets, and the so-called Writings which could just as well be called 'the rest'. The Law – in Hebrew Torah – consisted of the first five Books or Pentateuch (Greek for five books). They were ascribed to Moses and put at the beginning of the Hebrew Bible; the guardians of the Law, the priests, had a vested interest in their primacy. But the Mosaic authorship was suspect as much as a thousand years ago and now nobody with an open mind believes in it. A French C 18 AD scholar pointed out that there must have been two authors, and C 19 AD scholarship has added to this

number and has devoted much effort to disentangling them. The earliest known event in the emergence of the Law occurred in 621 BC when, in the reign of King Josiah of Judah, men engaged in repairing the Temple in Jerusalem discovered a MS which seems to have been Deuteronomy. Josiah was carried away by this discovery and inaugurated the trend, greatly boosted after the Captivity by Ezra and Nehemiah, of proclaiming the Law of (supposedly) Moses as a kind of constitution for a priest-kingdom. Deuteronomy is uncompromisingly monotheistic, more so than any known earlier document.

The Prophets were honoured almost equally with the Law. Many of them were also earlier. In this context the Prophets were, in the first place, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and, additionally, a group of twelve beginning with the earliest of them all, Amos. These so-called Minor Prophets constituted one Book of the OT before they were divided into their present separate Books. Their lives spanned C8-C6 BC: the Books which bear their names achieved their present shape by 200 BC. Besides their spiritual messages they are an important adjunct of the OT's historical section, which includes Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings – a record covering the period 1200-586 BC and committed to writing in its surviving form in C6 BC.

The third category of OT writing is a job lot. The Book of Psalms is a collection of poetry ascribed to David and, like any ancient anthology, derived in fact from widely different times (C8-C2 BC). There is a clutch of works (some of them in the Apocrypha) which, however disparate, may be subsumed under the heading of Wisdom Books, many of them attributed to Solomon and composed in C3 BC: Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, Job. There are simple tales: Ruth, Esther, Tobit, Daniel; more purposeful pieces such as Ecclesiastes and Lamentations, and a lyrical interlude in the Song of Songs. Finally, a quartet of late works dedicated to the promotion of the priestly view of how things had been and should be: 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah. (Chronicles, composed c. 300 BC, is a tendentious version of the events related in Samuel and Kings. It is concerned only with the kingdom of Judah and leaves out anything discreditable to David or Solomon.) This third category of the OT is so various that it can be, and has been, broken down in more ways than one. It contains, however, a striking number of the Books which give the OT its special flavour.

The genesis and history of the Apocrypha are related in an entry in the main body of this book.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

The original language of the OT was (with small exceptions) Hebrew; that of the NT Greek. The material on which they were written was at first papyrus and then, from C AD 400, vellum. Sections of papyrus were stitched together end to end, rolled in the form of scrolls and stored in cylinders. To keep the scroll from crumpling the end section was stitched on to the rest of the scroll across the grain (this was the 'protocol' – Greek for first leaf). Sheets of vellum were stitched or stuck together like a modern book instead of in rolls and the resulting object is called a codex. Among the surviving 2-3,000 Biblical MSS, which range from single Books or parts of Books to virtually complete Testaments and Bibles, those on papyrus are fewer and more fragmentary. Nothing like a first edition survives.

The text of the OT was fixed by AD 100. It was written in an early form of Hebrew (unvocalized – that is, in a script without vowels) and no version of it has survived complete. The earliest vocalized Hebrew text dates from C 10 AD and was first printed in Venice in AD 1524. In a discovery as astonishing as it was accidental hundreds of Hebrew scrolls were found in AD 1947 in eleven caves at Qumran by the Dead Sea after a young goatherd had stumbled on a cache which had been undisturbed for nearly 2000 years. The finds, which included at least fragments of every Book of the OT except one, were in some instances older than any previously known Biblical document, going back to C 3 BC.

The oldest surviving written OT is, however, not Hebrew but Greek. It is the Septuagint, a translation from Hebrew made in Alexandria in C 3 and C 2 BC for Greek-speaking Jews. Strictly speaking, the Septuagint was the Greek translation of the Pentateuch only, but the name was applied to the whole of the OT as the rest of it came to be added. For linguistic reasons the Septuagint acquired a wider currency than the Hebrew text among Christians and consequently many more Greek MSS have survived than Hebrew. The two versions have one major discrepancy: the Greek translators included in the Septuagint fourteen Books which were not and are not in any Hebrew text. These are the Apocrypha and they have continued to appear in Christian Bibles in spite of doubts about their spiritual value, doubts which have been expressed through the ages from St Jerome to our own time. St Jerome himself included the Apocrypha in his Latin Vulgate Bible only because these Books were already in the Septuagint.

Of surviving MSS of the whole Bible (or most of it) two were

written in C 4 AD. These are the Codex Vaticanus, which is almost complete and has been in the Vatican for 500 years, and the Codex Sinaiticus, which is complete with a few uncanonical extras. The latter codex was discovered in AD 1859 in a monastery on Mount Sinai; it was presented to the Russian Tsar and is now in the British Museum. From C 5 AD two other substantial MSS survive: the Codex Alexandrinus, almost complete and with extras, also in the British Museum, and the Codex Bezae, with the text in Latin as well as Greek, now in Cambridge.

The Bible is the most widely disseminated book in the world. The root cause of this phenomenon is the demand for the Christian scriptures, reinforced by missionary zeal and a degree of *gratis* distribution unparalleled before the deluge of modern advertising. But this demand could hardly have been met without two major technical contributions: printing and translation. The printing of the Bible, which began in C 15 AD, made it possible to produce Bibles which were both identical and numerous; before printing, when Bibles were made by hand, they were relatively few and frequently discrepant. Translation has been an even more powerful aid to ubiquity. The number of translations into languages and dialects of languages is amazing. It is not a subject to be pursued in this book, but a brief note on translation into English will not be out of place.

The original language of the OT and NT ceased to meet the needs of readers as early as C 2 AD when knowledge of Greek was already on the decline in western Europe. Nor had Greek ever been current in those parts of north Africa where the Christian Church developed strongly in the first centuries AD. So Latin translations began to appear (and, for similar reasons, Syrian and Coptic translations). These early efforts were manifestly imperfect and in C 4 AD the Pope commissioned the immensely learned and immensely industrious St Jerome to produce a more reliable Latin Bible. The result was the Vulgate, completed in AD 405, translated mainly from Hebrew and Greek but with references to other intervening translations, a stupendous achievement although faulty in parts, the father of all medieval Western Bibles, still officially approved by the Roman Catholic Church although no longer the only officially approved version.

The Vulgate became the source for other European transiators — for example, Bede who translated some of the Bible into Anglo-Saxon, King Alfred who translated the Psalms into English, and John Wycliffe who was the first to translate the whole Bible into English (1380-82). A century and a half later William Tyndale went one

better than Wycliffe by translating from the original Hebrew and Greek, but he failed to complete his work because he was hounded, imprisoned and brutally executed before he could finish it. His work was completed by Miles Coverdale who used, chiefly, the Vulgate and a Swiss version of Luther's German Bible. Both Tyndale (1526) and Coverdale (1535) were printed in Germany. The first English Bible to be printed in England was Matthew's Bible (1537), a compendium of Tyndale and Coverdale by one Rogers, who used the pseudonym Matthew but did not thereby escape the stake in the Roman Catholic backlash of the Marian persecution. The Great Bible, published in 1539 and republished in 1568 as the Bishops' Bible, was the first official English Bible. It was a revision by Coverdale of Tyndale's published and unpublished work and was issued in France before it appeared in England.

Up to this point all important English Bibles since Wycliffe's stemmed from Tyndale and Coverdale, but the next two versions were fresh departures. Both were the work of exiles. The Geneva Bible (1560) was produced by Protestant exiles; it was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek, was printed about simultaneously in Geneva and London, was the standard English Bible until 1611 and retained its popularity for a hundred years after that date. Roman Catholic exiles were also at work: first in Rheims and then in Douai. Using the Vulgate they produced a NT in 1582 and their complete Douai Bible in 1610. The most famous year in the annals of English Bible Translation is 1611, when the Authorized Version, sometimes called the King James Bible, first appeared. Six committees worked on particular sections. At a second stage two members of each committee formed a reviewing committee, and finally the entire work was again reviewed by one bishop and one future bishop. All worked from the oldest known Hebrew and Greek versions and from later translations. This most famous English translation became and has remained, for the English themselves, the most authoritative and most loved version, even when imperfectly understood.

Two factors have contributed nevertheless to a stream of further versions. The first is Biblical scholarship, normally divided into Textual or Lower Criticism and the Higher Criticism – the former concerned with the establishment of an accurate text, the latter with everything else (sources, dating, history, meaning). New scholarship was the main spur to the revision of the Authorized Version of 1611 which was undertaken towards the end of C 19 AD and produced the Revised Version between 1881 and 1895. By contrast the main

impulse behind the American Revised Standard Version (1952) and the New English Bible (1961 and 1970) was the desire to have a Bible more easily intelligible to people at large than was the language of 1611. In this endeavour the promoters of these versions were echoing the original NT which was written in current conversational Greek and not in the literary style of the receding classical age.

DATES

Dates are a great help in giving context and reality to the doings of the characters whom this book enumerates. Dates, however, are elusive and so that useful adjunct 'c' appears with perhaps disconcerting frequency, e.g. in placing the reigns of kings of Israel and Judah. While the lengths of these reigns are correct, they may be displaced in time by a few years in one direction or the other. The alternative would be to enter into more detailed chronological debate than I have deemed appropriate for a book of this nature.

The problems of chronology may be broadly divided into two sections: the period before c. 1000 BC and the period after that date. No dates can be given for the legendary period from Adam to Noah: even if Noah's flood reflects a real event it is impossible to say which of many inundations over thousands of years was his. Biblical history begins with Abraham and the first half of it ends with the conquest of the Promised Land by Joshua. Abraham trekked to the land of Canaan. Moses and Joshua trekked back to it. In this period the outstanding events were Abraham's migration from Ur on the lower Euphrates, up that river and then westward into what was later called Syria; and the career in Egypt of Abraham's great-grandson Joseph, and the Exodus from Egypt under Moses which paved the way for the re-establishment of Abraham's seed in the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.

Abraham's dates have been shifted by historical research but remain uncertain. He used to be generally dated around 2050 BC, largely because of the belief that the king called in Genesis Amraphel was none other than the famous Babylonian monarch Hammurabi who flourished at that time. But it is now more widely, although not unanimously, believed that Abraham lived c. 1450 BC. At the nearer end of the period stretching from Abraham to Moses the Exodus is most commonly placed around 1200 BC. But this creates congestion. Between Abraham and Moses room has to be found for the generations between Abraham and Joseph (say, a little more than 100 years) and for the continued sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt after Joseph's death, which is traditionally fixed at 400 years. The

simplest, and possibly the most accurate, way to dispose of this problem is to disbelieve the 400-year span, and there is some justification for doing so since the figure 400 is frequently used, in ancient and mediaeval parlance, to mean nothing more precise than 'a lot'. This computation gives 150 or so years as the space remaining between Joseph's pharaoh and Moses' pharaoh (c. 1350-1200 BC). But it remains possible that Joseph did in fact reach Egypt much earlier, during the period when Egypt was being invaded by people (like himself) from the north: the Hyksos, northern invaders, ruled Egypt c. 1700-1570 BC. It is also possible that the Exodus took place c. 1500, which would return Abraham to his earlier era but creates problems yet unelucidated about what happened between 1500 BC and the deeds of King David c. 1000 BC. An interval of 500 years between Moses and David is uncomfortably long.

The high point in the history of the Jews as recorded in the OT is the kingdom of David and Solomon which flourished in C 10 BC. It was made possible by a time of troubles which occupied much of the preceding 500 years (1500-1000 BC) and covered the whole of a wide region, within which the Israelites inhabited a comparatively small part. In that time greater powers rose, clashed and dissolved. In Egypt the New Empire came into being shortly before 1500 BC. It did so by evicting the alien Hyksos and it re-established Egyptian power in western Asia as far as the Euphrates. But it came again under pressure from the north, this time from the Hittites who, from their base in what is now Asia Minor, inflicted a crippling defeat on the Egyptians in 1280 BC. The Hittites, however, did not long survive this victory. They were assailed in their turn by the Phrygians and towards the end of C 13 BC both Hittite and Egyptian empires disintegrated. In the general disorder of C 12 BC two events momentous for Bible history occurred: a new Assyrian empire began to arise in the east, while in the coastal lands of Canaan and Israel the Philistines established a domination which lasted until c. 1000 BC. These were to be the principal scourges of the children of Israel.

The chronology of the last millenium BC is easier to handle. The conquest of the Promised Land by Joshua and its settlement by the twelve tribes of Israel during C 12 BC were followed by the period of the Judges, who were *ad hoc* leaders of groupings of tribes against the peoples whom the Israelites had incompletely subjugated and who from time to time turned the tables on them. This inchoate phase ended with the creation of a unified state under, first, Saul and then David and his son Solomon. And from this point time-scales may be represented diagrammatically.

Introduction

	BC	
David Solomon	1000	Recovery of Phoenicia under leadership of Tyre
Division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah		
	900	
		Assyrian revival
	800	
Amos, Hosea, Isaiah		Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria
Extinction of Israel		
	700	
		Sennacherib
Jeremiah		Sack of the Assyrian capital Nineveh by the Medes Defeat of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon at Carchemish
	600	
Babylonian Captivity of Judah		
Returns to Jerusalem led by -Zerubbabel -Ezra -Nehemiah	500	Cyrus the Persian conquers Babylon
	400	
		Alexander the Great conquers Persia
	300	
		Alexander's successors rule Seleucids in Syria, Ptolemies in Egypt
	200	

Maccabee revolt and rule in Jerusalem	100	Pompey conquers Syria and Judaea
Birth of Jesus	BC	Herod the Great, king of Judaea
	AD	
Paul	1 AD	Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judaea
Revolt of the Jews against Rome		Nero emperor
	100	

Author's note An asterisk placed before a name indicates that that name has an entry of its own at the appropriate alphabetical spot. Although this is a register of persons I have included in it certain groups of persons – families, tribes, nations – for example, Israelites, Amalekites, Semites, Philistines. I have also included some individuals whose proper names are not given in the Bible: the witch of Endor, Longinus, the Prodigal Son, the Queen of Sheba, Salome, the Shulamite, the Shunammite. Lot's wife and Potiphar's wife are to be found in their husbands' entries. There are also a few general entries. These are: Apocrypha; Assyria and Babylon; Captivity and Return; Egypt; Judges; Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, Essenes; Prophets; Samaritans; Syria.

Dates BC are so marked, but I have used the prefix AD only where it might be confusing not to do so. The symbol C stands for century. Thus the tenth centuries BC and AD are abbreviated as C 10 BC and C 10 respectively.

In a few cases where the location of a work of art is not given the work is privately owned.

While working on this book I have laid family and friends under obligation for information and ideas, but my pre-eminent debts are to James Michie and John Whale, both of whom read my whole draft and gave me many comments on substance and style which have been a very great help.

Finally, I have made a large assumption: that the events narrated in the OT took place where everybody has for centuries supposed they took place, namely in or around Palestine. But not everybody supposes so now. Professor Kamal Salibi, for one, has argued that an area by the Red Sea in western Arabia fits the facts better, but since even he admits that his case, which rests on linguistic scholarship, needs to be reinforced by archaeology I have, in the absence of such reinforcement, followed the traditional geography.

GLOSSARY

Apostle: A person who is sent out (Greek). Jesus picked twelve apostles whom he despatched to spread his teachings. See also Disciple.

Ark: A container or vessel. Two arks of very different dimensions figure prominently in the OT: Noah's ark, and the ark made to hold the Tables of the Law given by God to Moses and other sacred documents. For the adventures of the latter, see entry for Eli.

Deuteronomy: Second Law (Greek), i.e. the second Book of the Law, the first being Leviticus.

Diaspora: Dispersal or scattering of a people (Greek). Also used as a collective noun to denote the people dispersed as distinct from those who stayed put. The diaspora of the Jews was both violent and peaceful – violent from the destruction of the kingdoms of Israel by the Assyrians in C 8 BC and of Judah by the Babylonians in C 6 BC, but also more gradually fostered by improved communications and commercial opportunities, particularly by the spread of the Roman empire. See entry for Captivity and Return.

Disciple: A pupil (Latin). Besides his 12 apostles Jesus enlisted 70 further disciples to help with the work of spreading his teachings.

Epistle: A letter (Greek). The NT consists almost entirely of epistles and gospels. Most of the former were written by Paul and these are the oldest surviving Christian documents. For details see under Paul.

- Evangelist:** One who brings or proclaims good news' (from *evangel*, good news in Greek). See also Gospel.
- Exodus:** Going out (Greek), specifically the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt under the leadership of Moses.
- Genesis:** Becoming or beginning (Greek), specifically the creation of the world by God.
- Gospel:** Good news, from Old English, particularly the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God. Many gospels were written in C 1 and C 2 AD, including the four which are in the NT. The author of a gospel is an evangelist.
- Messiah:** A person anointed (Hebrew). The messiah of the OT was a future deliverer of the Jews from alien rule and oppression in this world. In the NT the title is applied to Jesus and the role becomes other-worldly.
- Patriarch:** The ruler of a family (Greek). The Biblical patriarchs were the principal ancestors of the Jews: essentially Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; or these three and their remoter forebears; or, additionally, the twelve sons of Jacob. In later terminology a patriarch is the ruler of a church, notably the four senior eastern sees of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Constantinople, but also Venice and a few others.
- Pentateuch:** The first five Books of the Bible (from the Greek for five vessels or books). They are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Hexateuch (six books) is these five plus Joshua.