

Historical Timeline of Key Events in the History of the Hebrew Bible and the Judeo-Christian-Islamic traditions founded on it

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For further explanation of this summarized table, see:
<http://purposewithoutgod.com/who-wrote-the-bible-when-and-why-appendix-to-an-early-draft-of-finding-purpose-in-a-godless-world/>

Note regarding dates: Academic scholars generally use the term B.C.E. (Before the Common Era) instead of B.C. (Before Christ), and C.E. (Common Era) instead of A.D. (Anno Domini—Year of Our Lord).

Date	Event	Mythological or historical?
19th or 18th centuries BCE	Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (if they had existed)	Mostly or entirely mythology
18th to 15th or 14th centuries BCE	Slavery in Egypt (if it had happened)	Almost entirely mythology
Sometime between the 15th and 13th centuries BCE (religious scholars tend to favor the end of the 13 th century BCE)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exodus from Egypt 2. Revelation of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai (the Torah or Pentateuch comprises the Five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and contains the Ten Commandments). 3. Conquest of Canaan led by Joshua (if all this had happened). <p>The majority of archaeologists agree that there is no evidence that the Exodus occurred in any form resembling the biblical story, and there is plenty of evidence contradicting it. (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Exodus#Historicity for a summary).</p> <p>The exodus might have been seeded in a much different event involving a different group of people in different circumstances—possibly the Hyksos. The story may have been handed down orally over centuries and progressively altered in the process, eventually being written in its present form by the Torah’s authors.</p> <p>In another theory, Richard Friedman, a biblical scholar with a strong personal affinity for Torah teachings, in his 2017 book “The Exodus” proposes a small exodus of just the Levite group under uncertain circumstances not resembling the traditional biblical story. He proposes that the Levites then merged with the larger Israelite people, who were indigenous to Canaan. He argues that the Israelites then much later incorporated an embellished version of the Levites’ exodus story into their own imagined national origin narrative, also adopting the Levites’ monotheism and values. For an informed critique of Friedman’s hypothesis see here.</p> <p>Regarding the revelation of the Torah, see the later section in this table highlighted in red, for the most likely timing of the writing of the Torah (8th to 6th centuries BCE).</p>	Mythology, with seeds of historicity

	The story about the Israelites under Joshua conquering Canaan is contradicted by archaeological findings of the patterns and timing of settlement building and destruction, in the parts of Canaan referred to in the biblical story.	
Approximately 13th century BCE to 11th century BCE	"Judges" of Israel	Partly mythological, partly historical.
15th century BCE to late 12th century BCE	Egyptian New Kingdom control / domination of Canaan (strength of control fluctuated). Note how this historical fact flatly contradicts any purported Israelite exodus from Egypt into supposedly non-Egyptian Canaan, and any purported conquest of Canaan by the Israelites. You can visit archaeological excavations of Egyptian garrisons in Israel that date from exactly the period when the Israelites are purported to have left Egypt and conquered Canaan. Egyptian control of Canaan may have ended around 1,100 BCE. For a good, easy-to-read review, see: https://www.archaeology.org/issues/262-1707/features/5627-jaffa-egypt-canaan-colony	Historical
c.1208 BCE	Earliest actual corroboration of existence of Israelite tribe (an Egyptian pharaoh reasserting control over Canaan lists the Israelites among many tribes in Canaan he boasts having decimated or subjugated). See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_ancient_Israel_and_Judah and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele	Historical
early 10th century BCE	Kings David and Solomon, possible united kingdom of Israel	Partly mythological, partly historical.
Late 10th to early 6th centuries BCE	Historical (actual) kingdoms of Israel and Judah	Historical
722 BCE	Destruction of northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians	Historical
8 th to 6 th centuries BCE	Much of the Torah (traditionally believed to have been dictated by God to Moses on Mount Sinai circa 13 th century BCE) was likely written in Judah during the 8 th to 6 th centuries BCE, by multiple authors and in disconnected stages. Multiple lines of evidence point to this, including many anachronistic details in the purportedly earlier written stories in the Bible that can be clearly demonstrated to be chronologically specific to frames of reference from this later time period. Parts of the Torah may have been written still later than this. Several books of the Prophets, including the earlier ones, would also have been written during this period (traditional beliefs agree that the later books of the prophets were written at this time).	Historical (exact dates uncertain)
586 BCE	Destruction of southern kingdom of Judah (and of the first Temple of Solomon) by the neo-Babylonians; Babylonian exile begins.	Historical
539 BCE	Defeat of the neo-Babylonians by the Zoroastrian Persian king Cyrus the Great, followed by the return of some exiles to Judah.	Historical
539-332 BCE	Persian rule of Judah	Historical
332 -141 BCE	Hellenistic rule of Judea (Greek adaptation of the name Judah), beginning with Alexander the Great conquering Persia, and continuing through the Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule of Judea.	Historical
5 th to 1 st centuries BCE	The Tanakh was probably redacted / edited during the Persian, Hellenistic and possibly Hasmonean eras (the Tanakh is the	Historical (exact dates uncertain)

	complete Hebrew Bible, of which the Torah is one part. The Tanakh also includes the books of the Prophets and the Writings)	
141- 40 BCE	Hasmonean Jewish dynasty in Judea, following the Maccabean revolt against Hellenistic rule, in 167-160 BCE.	Historical
2 nd century BCE to 1 st century CE	The Tanakh may have been canonized in the Hasmonean era (or possibly later—1 st or even 2 nd century CE).	Historical (exact dates uncertain)
2 nd century BCE to 1 st century CE	Dead Sea scrolls date from around this time. The scrolls demonstrate that not much has changed in the Tanakh content since that time.	Historical
63 BCE	Roman control of Judea begins, later becoming a Roman province.	Historical
b/w 30-33 CE	Crucifixion of Jesus, if this event was historical	Possibly historical
66-110 CE	Gospels written, later becoming the foundation of the New Testament.	Partly hearsay / legend, partly historical.
70 CE	Destruction of the second Jerusalem Temple (of Herod) by the Romans	Historical
135 CE	Roman suppression of the Bar Kochba revolt. Judea renamed Syria Palaestina.	Historical
325 CE	First Council of Nicaea convened by Constantine I produces the first uniform Christian doctrine	Historical
1 st century CE -500 CE	The Rabbinic era and compilation of the Talmud (interpretation of the Torah / Tanhakh), consisting of the Mishnah (completed c.200 CE) and Gemorah (completed c. 500 CE).	Historical
622 CE	The Hegira (migration of Muhammad from Mecca to Yathrib (Medina)—founding of Islam.	Historical

The above table reflects generally accepted history as can be found in a detailed reading of a public, openly editable reference like Wikipedia.

Additional Reading

1. Finkelstein, I. and N.A. Silberman, *The Bible Uearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of its Sacred Texts*. 2001, New York: Free Press.
2. Finkelstein, I. and N.A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition*. 2006, New York: Free Press.
3. Armstrong, K., *A History of God: the 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. 1st American ed. 1993, New York: A.A. Knopf : Distributed by Random House.
4. Armstrong, K., *The Bible: a Biography*. 1st American ed. 2007, New York [Berkeley, Calif.]: Atlantic Monthly Press; Distributed by Group West.
5. Armstrong, K., *The Case For God*. 1st ed. 2009, New York: Knopf.
6. Friedman, R.E., *The Exodus*. First edition. ed. 2017, New York, NY: HarperOne.