

HOW TANAKH EVOLVED

- **AUTHORSHIP**
 - **CANONIZATION**
 - **MASORETIC TEXT**
 - **INTERPRETATION (TRANSLATIONS & COMMENTARIES)**
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TORAH

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

PROPHETS

(early)

Joshua
Judges
Samuel (1-2)
Kings (1-2)

(later)

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Ezekiel
Minor Prophets

WRITINGS

(major)

Psalms
Proverbs
Job

(minor)

Song of Songs
Ruth
Lamentations
Ecclesiastes
Esther

Daniel
Ezra (Nehemiah)
Chronicles (1-2)



תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא בתרא דף יד עמוד ב

BT BABA BATRA 14B

- Our Rabbis taught: **The order** of the **Prophets** is, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and the Twelve Minor Prophets...

The order of the **Hagiographa** is Ruth, the Book of Psalms, Job, Prophets, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel and the Scroll of Esther, Ezra and Chronicles...

• ת"ר, **סדרן** של **נביאים**: יהושע ושופטים, שמואל ומלכים, ירמיה ויחזקאל, ישעיה ושנים עשר...

• סידרן של **כתובים**: רות וספר תהלים, ואיוב ומשלי, קהלת, שיר השירים וקינות, דניאל ומגילת אסתר, עזרא ודברי הימים...

- Let us examine this. Hosea **came first**, as it is written, “God spoke first to Hosea.” But did God speak first to Hosea? Were there not many prophets between Moses and Hosea? R. Johanan, however, has explained that [what It means is that] he was the first of the four prophets who prophesied at that period, namely, Hosea, Isaiah, Amos and Micah.
- Should not then Hosea **come first**? — Since his prophecy is written along with those of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, and Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi came at the end of the prophets, he is reckoned with them. But why should he not be written separately and placed first? — Since his book is so small, it might be lost [if copied separately].
- Let us see again. Isaiah was **prior** to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Then why should not Isaiah be placed first? — Because the Book of Kings ends with a record of destruction and Jeremiah speaks throughout of destruction and Ezekiel commences with destruction and ends with consolation and Isaiah is full of consolation; therefore we put destruction next to destruction and consolation next to consolation.

• מכדי הושע **קדים**, דכתיב: “תחלת דבר ה' בהושע.” וכי עם הושע דבר תחלה? והלא ממשה ועד הושע כמה נביאים היו! וא”ר יוחנן: שהיה תחלה לארבעה נביאים שנתנבאו באותו הפרק, ואלו הן: הושע וישעיה, עמוס ומיכה.

• **וליקדמיה** להושע ברישא! כיון דכתיב נבואתיה גבי חגי זכריה ומלאכי, וחגי זכריה ומלאכי סוף נביאים הוו, חשיב ליה בהדייהו. וליכתביה לחודיה וליקדמיה! איידי דזוטר מירכס.

• מכדי ישעיה **קדים** מירמיה ויחזקאל, ליקדמיה לישעיה ברישא! כיון דמלכים סופיה חורבנא וירמיה כוליה חורבנא, ויחזקאל רישיה חורבנא וסיפיה נחמתא, וישעיה כוליה נחמתא, סמכינן חורבנא לחורבנא ונחמתא לנחמתא.

- Some of the books are categorized as “*Nevi'im*” (“Prophets”).
- Some of the books are categorized as “*Ketuvim*” (“Writings”).
- Each set of books is presumed to belong in a particular order.
- This order is primarily chronological, in sequential order of the authors and editors to whom the works are attributed.
- Sometimes the order is dictated by theme rather than chronology.



HISTORICAL SOURCES FOR CANONIZATION



BEN SIRAH (2nd century BCE) Chapter 44

Praise of Israel's Great Ancestors

- ¹ I will now praise the godly,
our ancestors, in their own time,
- ² The abounding glory of the Most High's portion,
his own part, since the days of old.
- ³ Subduers of the land in kingly fashion,
renowned for their might,
Counselors in their prudence,
seers of all things in prophecy,
- ⁴ Resolute princes of the flock,
lawgivers and their rules,
Sages skilled in composition,
authors of sharp proverbs,
- ⁵ Composers of melodious psalms,
writers of lyric poems;
- ⁶ Stalwart, solidly established,
at peace in their own estates—
- ⁷ All these were glorious in their time,
illustrious in their day.
- ⁸ Some of them left behind a name
so that people recount their praises.

After the three patriarchs and Moses, he mentions:

- Joshua,
- the Judges,
- Samuel,
- Nathan,
- David,
- Solomon,
- Jeroboam,
- Elijah,
- Hezekiah,
- Isaiah,
- Josiah,
- Jeremiah,
- Ezekiel,
- Zerubbabel, and
- Nehemiah.

II MACCABEES 2:12–13

So, Solomon kept those eight days. The same things also were reported in the writings and commentaries of Nehemiah; and how he, founding a library, gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts.

JOSEPHUS: *AGAINST APION* BOOK I SECTION 8

For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, [as the Greeks have,] but only **twenty-two books**, which contain the records of all the past times; which are justly believed to be divine; and of them **five belong to Moses**, which contain his laws and the traditions of the origin of mankind till his death. This interval of time was little short of three thousand years; but as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the **prophets, who were after Moses**, wrote down what was done in their times in **thirteen books**. The remaining **four books** contain **hymns to God**, and precepts for the conduct of human life.

It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there hath not been an exact succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add any thing to them, to take any thing from them, or to make any change in them; but it is become natural to all Jews immediately, and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain Divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be willingly to die for them.

- Of course, our Tanakh has a total of twenty-four books, rather than twenty-two, and ~~the internal divisions are~~ somewhat different as well, consisting of only eight books of *Nevi'im* and eleven books of *Ketuvim*. Since Josephus' assertion is recognizable as generally valid, it is conceivable that the discrepancies can be accounted for as follows:
 - Three of the four books of “hymns” and “precepts” are certainly Psalms, Proverbs, and Job. The fourth, based on Josephus's characterization of “precepts for the conduct of human life,” probably is Ecclesiastes.
 - Daniel, Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah, and Chronicles may be classified as prophetic-historical, based on Josephus's characterization of “what was done in their times.”
 - Ruth may have been appended to Judges and Lamentations to Jeremiah, consistent with the *baraita's* assignment of their respective shared authorships and as witnessed in some editions of the Greek Septuagint.
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RABBINIC SOURCES FOR CANONIZATION

- *Genizah*: texts that were rejected from the canon were *concealed* or sequestered;
- *Tum'at yadayim*: scrolls containing genuine biblical books *defile one's hands*, i.e. impart a minor, rabbinically imposed degree of ritual impurity.

BT SHABBAT 115 A

Rabbi Yosei reported: Abba Ḥalafta once visited Rabban Gamli'el ... in Tiberias and saw him seated at his table ... reading a scroll of a *targum* of the Book of Job. He said to him: I well remember your grandfather, Rabban Gamli'el [the Elder], who was standing on the slope of the Temple Mount when a scroll of a *targum* of the Book of Job was brought before him, and he instructed the mason to bury it beneath a course of stones. [Whereupon,] he [too] instructed that it be **concealed**.

אמר רבי יוסי: מעשה באבא
חלפתא שהלך אצל רבן גמליאל
בריבי לטבריא, ומצאו שהיה יושב
על שולחנו... ובידו ספר איוב
תרגום והוא קורא בו. אמר לו:
זכור אני ברבן גמליאל אבי אביך
שהיה עומד על גב מעלה בהר
הבית, והביאו לפניו ספר איוב
תרגום, ואמר לבנאי: שקעהו תחת
הנדבך. אף הוא ציוה עליו **וגנזו**.

SHABBAT 30 B

The Sages sought to **conceal** the Book of **Ecclesiastes**, because it is self-contradictory. Why, then, did they not conceal it? Because it [both] begins and ends with words of Torah... They also sought to *conceal* the Book of Proverbs because it was self-contradictory. The Midrash (*Kohelet Rabbah* 1:4) reports a different consideration, namely that some verses in Ecclesiastes appeared heretical (*mattin le-ḡad minut*).

ביקשו חכמים **לגנוז** ספר
קהלת מפני שדבריו סותרין זה
את זה, ומפני מה לא גנזוהו?
מפני שתחילתו דברי תורה
וסופו דברי תורה... ואף ספר
משלי ביקשו לגנוז, שהיו דבריו
סותרין זה את זה.

HAGIGAH 13 A

Rav Yehudah said: Indeed, that man, Hananyah ben Hizkiyah, should be remembered fondly. If not for him, the Book of **Ezekiel** would have been **concealed**, because it contradicted the Torah.

What did he do? They brought up 300 measures of oil, and he sat in his attic and analyzed it [and reconciled the contradictions].

אמר רב יהודה: ברם, זכור אותו
האיש לטוב, וחנוניה בן חזקיה שמו.
אלמלא הוא **נגנז** ספר **יחזקאל**,
שהיו דבריו סותרין דברי תורה.
מה עשה? העלו לו שלוש מאות
גרבי שמן, וישב בעלייה ודרשו.

MISHNAH YADAYIM 3:5

- Holy Scriptures defile one's hands.

- The Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes defile one's hands.

- Rabbi Yehudah says: The Song of Songs defiles one's hands, but there is a dispute regarding Ecclesiastes.

- Rabbi Yosei says: Ecclesiastes does not defile one's hands, and the Song of Songs is in dispute.

- Rabbi Shimon says: [The status of] Ecclesiastes is one of the leniencies of the House of Shammai and stringencies of the House of Hillel.

- כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידיים.

- שיר השירים וקהלת מטמאין את הידיים.

- רבי יהודה אומר: שיר השירים מטמא את הידיים וקהלת מחלוקת.

- רבי יוסי אומר: קהלת אינו מטמא את הידיים ושיר השירים מחלוקת.

- רבי שמעון אומר: קהלת מקולי בית שמאי ומחומרי בית הלל.

- Rabbi Shimon ben Azzai said: I have a tradition from the seventy-two elders, from the day that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was made dean of the *yeshivah*, that [both] ~~the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes defile~~ one's hands.
- Rabbi Akiva said: God forbid! No Jew ever questioned [the status of] the Song of Songs [and suggested] that it does not defile one's hands, for all existence pales in comparison to the day that the Song of Songs was given to Israel. If all scriptures are holy, then the Song of Songs is of utmost holiness. If there was ever a dispute, it was only over Ecclesiastes

- אמר רבי שמעון בן עזאי: מקובל אני מפי ע"ב [שבעים ושניים] זקן ביום שהושיבו את רבי אלעזר בן עזריה בישיבה ששיר השירים וקהלת מטמאים את הידים.

- אמר רבי עקיבא: חס ושלום! לא נחלק אדם מישראל על שיר השירים שלא תטמא את הידים, שאין כל העולם כלו כדאי כיום שניתן בו שיר השירים לישראל, שכל כתובים קודש ושיר השירים קודש קדשים, ואם נחלקו, לא נחלקו אלא על קהלת.

B'MIDBAR RABBAH NASO 14

“Moreover, my son, beware” (Ecclesiastes 12:12). God said: I have written **twenty-four books** for you; beware lest you add to them.

Why? “Making many books endlessly”: whoever reads [liturgically] a verse that is not from the twenty-four books is judged as if he were reading from an illegitimate book. Therefore “beware the making of many books,” because one who does so has no share in the World to Come.

“ויותר מהמה, בני, היזהר” (קהלת י”ב,
י”ב). אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: **כ”ד** [עשרים
וארבעה] **ספרים** כתבתי לך; היזהר ואל
תוסף עליהם.

למה? “עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ” – כל
מי שקורא פסוק שאינו מעשרים וארבעה
ספרים, כאילו קורא בספרים החיצוניים.
הוי “היזהר עשות ספרים הרבה”, שכל
העושה כן, אין לו חלק לעולם הבא.