



A CONTEMPORARY INTRODUCTION TO  
**THE BIBLE**

*Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts*

Second Edition

**COLLEEN M. CONWAY AND DAVID M. CARR**

**WILEY** Blackwell

# **A CONTEMPORARY INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE**

**SECOND EDITION**

**SACRED TEXTS AND IMPERIAL  
CONTEXTS**

**Colleen M. Conway and David M. Carr**

**WILEY** Blackwell

This second edition first published 2021

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*Edition History*

John Wiley & Sons Ltd. (1e, 2010)

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Paperback ISBN: 9781119637059; ePub ISBN: 9781119636991; ePDF ISBN: 9781119637028.

Cover image: © Joseph Caley/Shutterstock

Cover design by Wiley

Set in 9.5/12pt STIX Two Text by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd,  
Pondicherry, India

# CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Title page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[LIST OF FIGURES](#)

[LIST OF MAPS](#)

[MAIN DISCUSSIONS/OUTLINES OF BIBLICAL BOOKS](#)

[LIST OF BOXES](#)

[PREFACE](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS](#)

[OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORICAL PERIOD](#)

[TIMELINE](#)

[PROLOGUE: ORIENTATION TO MULTIPLE BIBLES  
AND MULTIPLE TRANSLATIONS](#)

[CHAPTER 1: STUDYING THE BIBLE IN ITS ANCIENT  
CONTEXT\(S\)](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Why History Is Important in Studying the Bible](#)

[The Geography and Major Characters of the  
Biblical Drama](#)

[Major Periods in the Biblical Drama](#)

[Multiple Contexts, Multiple Methods](#)

[Looking Forward to the Big Picture](#)

[Chapter One Review](#)

[Resources For Further Study](#)

[Appendix: Israel's History and Empires](#)

## CHAPTER 2: THE EMERGENCE OF ANCIENT ISRAEL AND ITS FIRST ORAL TRADITIONS

Chapter Overview

Imagining Early Israel

Problems in Reconstructing Early Israel

Traces of the Most Ancient Israelite Oral Traditions in the Bible

The Oral Background of Genesis

Focus Text: The Song of Deborah

The Creation of “Israel” Through Cultural Memory of Resistance to Domination

Chapter Two Review

Resources for Further Study

## CHAPTER 3: THE RISE OF WRITING AND ECHOES OF PAST EMPIRES IN MONARCHAL ISRAEL

Chapter Overview

Imagining Early Monarchal Israel

The Rise of the Israelite Monarchy and Resistance to It

Influence of Ancient Empires on Early Israel’s Monarchy and Writings

Echoes of Near Eastern Royal Theology in the Royal and Zion Psalms

Echoes of Texts from Earlier Empires in Writings Attributed to Solomon

Focus Text: The Speech of Lady Wisdom in Proverbs 8

Echoes of Texts from Past Empires Elsewhere in the Bible

Focus Text: The Garden of Eden Story (Gen 2:4–3:24)

[Conclusion](#)

[Chapter Three Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

[CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVE AND PROPHECY AMIDST  
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Setting the Stage: The Rise of the Northern  
Kingdom of Israel and Its Texts](#)

[Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy](#)

[Amos, a Southern Prophet Preaching Justice and  
Doom to the North](#)

[Hosea, the Northern Prophet, Calling for Israel's  
Devotion to Yahweh Alone](#)

[Micah, a Southern Prophet, Predicting Judgment  
for Judah and Jerusalem](#)

[Isaiah's Vision of Hope for Jerusalem/Zion  
Embedded in the Book of Isaiah](#)

[The Use and Reuse of Biblical Traditions](#)

[Focus Text: Contrasting Prophetic Visions of Zion's  
Future](#)

[Chapter Four Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

[CHAPTER 5: TORAH AND OTHER TEXTS WRITTEN IN  
THE WAKE OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Religious and Textual Reform Amidst the Downfall  
of Assyria](#)

[The Deuteronomic Torah of Moses and  
the Phenomenon of Hybridity](#)

[Historical Texts Infused with the Theology and  
Values of Deuteronomy](#)

[Jeremiah's Prophecy of Judgment on Zion](#)

[Focus Text: Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#)

[New Scriptures in the Twilight of Judean Monarchy](#)

[Chapter Five Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 6: BIBLE FOR EXILES: PROMISE AND STORY IN THE NEO-BABYLONIAN EMPIRE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[The Neo-Babylonian Destruction of Jerusalem and Exile](#)

[Forced Labor for Exiles Under Nebuchadnezzar](#)

[The Exilic Editions of Biblical Books](#)

[Ezekiel's Move from Judgment to Promise with the Fall of Jerusalem](#)

[Hope for Exiles in Second Isaiah \(also called "Deutero-Isaiah"\)](#)

[From Promise in the Prophets to Promise in Two Pentateuchal Sources: L and P](#)

[History and Fiction](#)

[Focus Text: Gen 12:1-3](#)

[Conclusions on \(Exilic\) Trauma and the Bible](#)

[Chapter Six Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 7: PERSIAN EMPIRE AND THE EMERGENCE OF A TEMPLE-CENTERED JEWISH COMMUNITY](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[History: The Persian-Sponsored Building of a Temple- and Torah-Centered Judaism](#)

[The Final Formation of the Torah](#)



[The Book of Psalms as a Torah-Centered Collection of More Ancient Psalms](#)

[Focus Text: Isa 56:1-8](#)

[Concluding Reflections on Scriptures in and After the Exile](#)

[Chapter Seven Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 8: HELLENISTIC EMPIRES AND THE FORMATION OF THE HEBREW BIBLE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Judaism and Hellenism Before the Hellenizing Crisis](#)

[The Crisis Over Hellenizing Jerusalem and the Book of Daniel](#)

[A Hellenistic Period Kingdom of Israel: The Hasmonean Revolt and Monarchy](#)

[The Hellenistic Period as the Setting for Other Hebrew Bible Texts](#)

[Focus Text: Daniel 10-12](#)

[The Formation of the Jewish Tanakh and Christian Old Testament\(s\)](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Chapter Eight Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [PROLOGUE TO THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT](#)

## [CHAPTER 9: THE JESUS MOVEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Imagining the Jerusalem That Jesus Knew](#)

[Rome Comes to Jerusalem](#)

[The Earliest Jesus Traditions](#)

[Searching for the Historical Jesus: Problems and Proposals](#)

[Chapter Nine Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 10: PAUL AND HIS LETTERS IN THE ROMAN COLONIAL CHAPTER OUTLINE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Paul's Travels and Letter Collection](#)

[Who Was Paul?](#)

[Three Undisputed Letters of Paul: Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and Romans](#)

[Focus Text: The Problem of Israel and the Place of the Gentiles \(Romans 9-11\)](#)

[The Disputed Letters](#)

[Conclusion: From Letters to Scripture](#)

[Chapter Ten Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 11: THE GOSPEL OF MARK: SUFFERING AND TRAUMA UNDER IMPERIAL RULE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[The Jewish War \(66-70 ce\)](#)

[Pointers to the Dating and Context of the Gospel of Mark](#)

[Rising Popularity of Jesus and Rising Conflict with the Authorities \(Mark 1:1-8:21\)](#)

[Teaching and More Misunderstanding on the Way \(Mark 8:22-10:52\)](#)

[The Suffering Messiah \(Mark 11:1-16:8\)](#)

[Mark's Enigmatic Ending](#)

[Focus Text: Mark 12:1-12](#)

[Chapter Eleven Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 12: THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: DEFINING COMMUNITY IN THE WAKE OF DESTRUCTION](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[The Synoptic Problem](#)

[The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew](#)

[The Matthean Jesus and Moses](#)

[The Matthean Jesus, Righteousness, and Torah Obedience](#)

[The Matthean Jesus, Wisdom, and Torah](#)

[Matthew's Apocalyptic Vision and the Kingdom of Heaven](#)

[The Matthean Polemic Against the Pharisees](#)

[Focus Text: Matt 25:31-46](#)

[Chapter Twelve Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

## [CHAPTER 13: LUKE-ACTS: LEGITIMIZING THE JESUS MOVEMENT IN THE MIDST OF EMPIRE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[The Lukan Prologues](#)

[The Lukan Jesus in Continuity with Israel's Past](#)

[The Jesus Movement in Continuity with Israel's Past Salvation to the Gentiles in Luke-Acts](#)

[Situating the Jesus Movement in the Roman Empire](#)

[The Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts](#)

[Focus Text: Jesus's Sermon in Nazareth \(Luke 4:14-30\)](#)

[Chapter Thirteen Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

[CHAPTER 14: THE GOSPEL OF JOHN AND THE JOHANNINE LETTERS: TURNING INWARD AS A STRATEGY FOR LIFE IN THE EMPIRE](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[Who Is the Johannine Jesus?](#)

[Knowing and Believing in the Johannine Jesus](#)

[Opposition from the World](#)

[The Problem of "the Jews" in the Gospel of John](#)

[Focus Text: John 17](#)

[The Johannine Letters](#)

[Chapter Fourteen Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

[CHAPTER 15: FOLLOWING CHRIST IN THE EMPIRE: DIVERSE APPROACHES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT](#)

[Chapter Overview](#)

[The Revelation to John: Visions of "Conquering" Roman Power](#)

[Focus Text: Revelation 17-18](#)

[Hebrews: Platonic Perspectives on Christ](#)

[1 Peter: Living as Aliens and Accommodating to the Empire](#)

[Conclusion: Three Different Relationships to the Roman Empire](#)

[Chapter Fifteen Review](#)

[Resources for Further Study](#)

[Epilogue: The Final Formation of the Jewish and Christian Bibles](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Index](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

## List of Illustrations

### Chapter 0

[0.1 Scholarly edition of the same text as in Figure 0.2.](#)

[0.2 One of our earliest manuscripts of the book of Isaiah.](#)

### Chapter 1

[1.1 Ancient visitors to Egypt from the East \(Canaanite ancestors of Israelites?\).](#)

### Chapter 2

[2.1 Part of the hill country of central Israel.](#)

[2.2 Typical pillared house of the Israelites.](#)

[2.3 Tablet containing a letter from Abdi-heba.](#)

[2.4 Merneptah stela](#)

[2.5 Animals feeding on trees.](#)

### Chapter 3

[3.1 Artist's reconstruction of Solomon's Jerusalem.](#)

[3.2 Scribe standing before the king of a small neighboring kingdom.](#)

[3.3 Student exercise tablet.](#)

[3.4 Letters inscribed into the surface of a stone.](#)

[3.5 The “Gezer Calendar.”](#)

[3.6 Copy of the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope.](#)

[3.7 The stela of Hammurabi.](#)

[3.8 Titian’s painting of Adam and Eve taking the apple.](#)

## Chapter 4

[4.1 One of the ivory carvings found in Samaria.](#)

[4.2 Detail from a wall-sized panorama of the defeat of the town of Lachish in Judah.](#)

[4.3 Panel from the Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III.](#)

[4.4 The Sennacherib prism.](#)

[4.5 Pillar figurines of a sort common in archaeological remains of the eighth century.](#)

[4.6 Drawing and inscription found at a desert trading post called Kuntillet Adjir...](#)

[4.7 Judean seals from the time of Isaiah and Micah.](#)

## Chapter 5

[5.1 Seals and other images from the late seventh century.](#)

## Chapter 6

[6.1 Ashes and arrowheads left from the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem.](#)

[6.2 Reproduction of part of the magnificent temple of Ishtar.](#)

[6.3 Silver amulet, dating to just before the fall of Jerusalem.](#)

## Chapter 7

[7.1 Relief from the Persian capital of Persepolis.](#)

[7.2 The Cyrus cylinder.](#)

## Chapter 8

[8.1 Copy of the Hebrew book of Ben Sira found near the Dead Sea.](#)

[8.2 Coin from the time of the Hasmoneans.](#)

## Chapter 9

[9.1 Excavation of outer stairway and arches of the Jerusalem Temple.](#)

[9.2 Model of the Second Temple of Jerusalem.](#)

[9.3 Model of first-century CE Jerusalem.](#)

[9.4 The Forum of Augustus in Rome.](#)

[9.5 Parchment illustration of a scene from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.](#)

[9.6 Wall painting of Moses from Dura Europos, third-century synagogue.](#)

## Chapter 10

[10.1 Remains of the Via Egnatia.](#)

[10.2 Doorways of shops in ancient Corinth.](#)

[10.3 Statue of Augustus.](#)

[10.4 Artist's reconstruction of ancient Rome.](#)

## Chapter 11

[11.1 Silver shekel minted about 67 CE during the Jewish revolt.](#)

[11.2 Pillaging of the Jerusalem Temple depicted on the Arch of Titus.](#)

[11.3 “Judaea Capta” coin minted by Rome.](#)

## Chapter 12

[12.1 Two-source hypothesis.](#)

[12.2 Roman coin depicting Augustus subduing and ruling the earth.](#)

## Chapter 13

[13.1 Base of an honorific column in Rome showing the apotheosis of a second-century CE emperor and his wife.](#)

[13.2 Book cover dating to the fifth century CE and depicting the heavenly ascent of an emperor.](#)

## Chapter 14

[14.1 Papyrus with lines from the Gospel of John.](#)

[14.2 Medieval image of the church preferred over the synagogue.](#)

## Chapter 15

[15.1 Fourth-century CE catacomb painting.](#)

[15.2 The whore of Babylon.](#)

## Epilogue

[16.1 Bust of Constantine.](#)

[16.2 The Codex Sinaiticus.](#)

# List of Maps

## Chapter 0

[0.1 The ancient Near East.](#)

## Chapter 1

[1.1 The land of Israel and its surroundings.](#)



[1.2 The major routes of the ancient Near East.](#)

[1.3 The reach of three of the major empires that dominated Israel and/or Judah.](#)

## Chapter 2

[2.1 Areas of the hill country occupied by the Israelites and Judeans.](#)

## Chapter 3

[3.1 Areas ruled and dominated by David and Solomon.](#)

## Chapter 4

[4.1 The neighboring kingdoms of Israel and Judah.](#)

## Chapter 5

[5.1 The Judean kingdom after the fall of the north.](#)

## Chapter 6

[6.1 The journey to Babylonia.](#)

## Chapter 7

[7.1 Judah as a province of the Persian empire.](#)

## Chapter 8

[8.1 The expanding kingdom of the Hasmoneans.](#)

## Chapter 10

[10.1 The Roman Empire in the 1st century CE.](#)

[10.2 Map of cities addressed in Pauline letters](#)

## Chapter 11

[11.1 Palestine in the first century CE.](#)

## Chapter 15

[15.1 Cities of Revelation.](#)

## Chapter 16

### [16.1 Spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean world by 300 CE.](#)

# FIGURES

[0.1](#) Scholarly edition of the same text as in [Figure 0.2](#).

[0.2](#) One of our earliest manuscripts of the book of Isaiah.

[1.1](#) Ancient visitors to Egypt from the East (Canaanite ancestors of Israelites?).

[2.1](#) Part of the hill country of central Israel.

[2.2](#) Typical pillared house of the Israelites.

[2.3](#) Tablet containing a letter from Abdi-heba.

[2.4](#) Merneptah stela

[2.5](#) Animals feeding on trees.

[3.1](#) Artist's reconstruction of Solomon's Jerusalem.

[3.2](#) Scribe standing before the king of a small neighboring kingdom.

[3.3](#) Student exercise tablet.

[3.4](#) Letters inscribed into the surface of a stone.

[3.5](#) The "Gezer Calendar."

[3.6](#) Copy of the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope.

[3.7](#) The stela of Hammurabi.

[3.8](#) Titian's painting of Adam and Eve taking the apple.

[4.1](#) One of the ivory carvings found in Samaria.

[4.2](#) Detail from a wall-sized panorama of the defeat of the town of Lachish in Judah.

[4.3](#) Panel from the Black Obelisk of the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III.

[4.4](#) The Sennacherib prism.

**4.5** Pillar figurines of a sort common in archaeological remains of the eighth century.

**4.6** Drawing and inscription found at a desert trading post called Kuntillet Adjrud used by eighth-century Israelites.

**4.7** Judean seals from the time of Isaiah and Micah.

**5.1** Seals and other images from the late seventh century.

**6.1** Ashes and arrowheads left from the Babylonian attack on Jerusalem.

**6.2** Reproduction of part of the magnificent temple of Ishtar.

**6.3** Silver amulet, dating to just before the fall of Jerusalem.

**7.1** Relief from the Persian capital of Persepolis.

**7.2** The Cyrus cylinder.

**8.1** Copy of the Hebrew book of Ben Sira found near the Dead Sea.

**8.2** Coin from the time of the Hasmoneans.

**9.1** Excavation of outer stairway and arches of the Jerusalem Temple.

**9.2** Model of the Second Temple of Jerusalem.

**9.3** Model of first-century CE Jerusalem.

**9.4** The Forum of Augustus in Rome.

**9.5** Parchment illustration of a scene from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.

**9.6** Wall painting of Moses from Dura Europos, third-century synagogue.

**10.1** Remains of the Via Egnatia.

**10.2** Doorways of shops in ancient Corinth.

**10.3** Statue of Augustus.

**10.4** Artist's reconstruction of ancient Rome.

**11.1** Silver shekel minted about 67 CE during the Jewish revolt.

**11.2** Pillaging of the Jerusalem Temple depicted on the Arch of Titus.

**11.3** "Judaea Capta" coin minted by Rome.

**12.1** Two-source hypothesis.

**12.2** Roman coin depicting Augustus subduing and ruling the earth.

**13.1** Base of an honorific column in Rome showing the apotheosis of a second-century CE emperor and his wife.

**13.2** Book cover dating to the fifth century CE and depicting the heavenly ascent of an emperor.

**14.1** Papyrus with lines from the Gospel of John.

**14.2** Medieval image of the church preferred over the synagogue.

**15.1** Fourth-century CE catacomb painting.

**15.2** The whore of Babylon.

**16.1** Bust of Constantine.

**16.2** The Codex Sinaiticus.

# MAPS

[0.1 The ancient Near East.](#)

[1.1 The land of Israel and its surroundings.](#)

[1.2 The major routes of the ancient Near East.](#)

[1.3 The reach of three of the major empires that dominated Israel and/or Judah.](#)

[2.1 Areas of the hill country occupied by the Israelites and Judeans.](#)

[3.1 Areas ruled and dominated by David and Solomon.](#)

[4.1 The neighboring kingdoms of Israel and Judah.](#)

[5.1 The Judean kingdom after the fall of the north.](#)

[6.1 The journey to Babylonia.](#)

[7.1 Judah as a province of the Persian empire.](#)

[8.1 The expanding kingdom of the Hasmoneans.](#)

[10.1 The Roman Empire in the 1st century CE.](#)

[10.2 Map of cities addressed in Pauline letters](#)

[11.1 Palestine in the first century CE.](#)

[15.1 Cities of Revelation.](#)

[16.1 Spread of Christianity across the Mediterranean world by 300 CE.](#)

# MAIN DISCUSSIONS/OUTLINES OF BIBLICAL BOOKS

## Where to Find Basic Information on Biblical Books (Basics Boxes and More)

Below is a list of where you can find basic discussions of books (or major parts of books) in the Hebrew scriptures, with the books listed here in the order that they appear in the Jewish Tanakh (//Hebrew Bible). The page given in **bold number(s)** indicates where you can find a “Basics Box” that provides major information about a biblical book. This includes an outline, information about the time(s) in which the book was written, and (usually) a discussion of a major issue in interpretation of the book or text. In addition, some other pages are provided where you can find more information on different biblical books.

|                                  |                                          |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Genesis                          | 48-51, 172-6, 184-5, <b>202-203</b>      |
| Exodus                           | 51-4, 179-89, <b>203-4</b>               |
| Leviticus                        | <b>183</b>                               |
| Numbers                          | <b>204</b>                               |
| Deuteronomy                      | 134-8, <b>135</b>                        |
| Joshua                           | 42-5, <b>138-40</b>                      |
| Judges                           | <b>140-1</b>                             |
| 1-2 Samuel                       | <b>142</b> , see also 62-5.              |
| 1-2 Kings                        | <b>143</b>                               |
| Isaiah                           | 118-23, 167-71, <b>169</b> , 200, 209-11 |
| Jeremiah                         | 145- <b>149</b>                          |
| Ezekiel                          | 164-7, <b>166</b>                        |
| Hosea                            | 108-15, <b>111</b>                       |
| Amos                             | 106- <b>108</b>                          |
| Jonah                            | 199-200                                  |
| Micah                            | 115-18, <b>117</b>                       |
| Nahum                            | 128- <b>129</b>                          |
| Zephaniah                        | <b>129</b>                               |
| Haggai                           | <b>195</b>                               |
| Zechariah                        | <b>196</b>                               |
| Psalms                           | 69-75, <b>73</b> , 206-8, <b>207</b>     |
| Job                              | <b>207</b>                               |
| Proverbs                         | 78-82, <b>79</b>                         |
| Ruth                             | 207                                      |
| Song of Songs/Solomon, Canticles | 75-77, <b>76</b> , 226                   |
|                                  |                                          |



|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ecclesiastes, Qoheleth | 77-81, <b>78-9</b> , 226 |
| Lamentations           | 159- <b>161</b>          |
| Esther                 | <b>226</b>               |
| Daniel                 | <b>220-22</b>            |
| Ezra-Nehemiah          | 227                      |
| 1-2 Chronicles         | 226                      |
| Matthew                | 301-21, <b>306</b>       |
| Mark                   | 279-99, <b>282-3</b>     |
| Luke                   | 323-42, 326              |
| John                   | 343-60, <b>346-7</b>     |
| Acts                   | 323-42, <b>326</b>       |
| Romans                 | 269-73, 270              |
| 1 Corinthians          | 266-9, 267               |
| Galatians              | 262-5, <b>263</b>        |
| Ephesians              | 274-5                    |
| Colossians             | 274-5                    |
| Hebrews                | 373-6, <b>374</b>        |
| 1 Peter                | 376-8, 377               |
| 1, 2 Timothy and Titus | 275                      |
| 1, 2, 3 John           | 360-61                   |
| Revelation             | 364-72, <b>365</b>       |

## **BOXES**

### **What Is a More on Method Box?**

These boxes give a brief introduction to methods used to interpret the Hebrew Bible. They detail the sorts of questions that each method attempts to answer, give an example of how the method has been applied, and include a reference to an article or book with more information about the method under discussion.

Textual Criticism

Tradition History and Transmission History

African American Biblical Interpretation

Afrocentric and Womanist Interpretation

Source and Redaction Criticism

Feminist Criticism and History of Interpretation/Reception

The Joseph Story and Literary Approaches

Postcolonial Criticism

Trauma Studies and the Bible

Insights from History of Religions

Ecological Biblical Criticism

Form Criticism and Genre

African American Biblical Interpretation and the New Testament

Gender Criticism and Masculinity Studies

Cultural Criticism of the Bible

# What Is in Special Topics Boxes?

These boxes offer extra information relevant to the broader discussion. Some pull together relevant dates for a period, while others show parallels between texts, or summarize information on a theme or question that relates to the topic at hand. This information is not optional or superfluous. Instead, these boxes highlight topics that are worth focused attention.

Contents of the Hebrew Bible/Tanakh/Old Testament

The Origins of Chapters and Verses 11

AD, BC, BCE, and CE

Visualizing (the Possible Ancestors of) Ancient Israelites

The Name of Israel's God: Yahweh/the LORD

The Name "Israel"

Archaeology and Problems of History Surrounding David, Solomon, and the Beginning of the Israelite Monarchy

Labels (e.g. "Psalm of David"): What They (Don't) Tell Us

A View from the Assyrian Imperial Court: The Annals of Sennacherib

Hosea and the "Book of the Twelve Prophets"

Isaiah 6 and the "Call Narrative"

Overview: The Covenant Code and Deuteronomy

The Books of the Former and Latter Prophets

The Conquest and Ancient Holy War

Forced Labor for Exiles Under Nebuchadnezzar

The Divine Council

Traditions That Moses Wrote the Pentateuch

The Story of Jacob at Bethel as an Example of the Addition of Promise to an Older Story

More Information: The Gap Between Ancestors and Moses J (the “Yahwistic source”), E (the “Elohistic source”), and the Documentary Hypothesis

Alternative Perspectives on Foreigners

The Emergence of “Judaism”

The Book of Judith (as an Example of a Hasmonean Text)

The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: The Boy Jesus and His Superpowers

More on the Historical Jesus Search

Eschatology Versus Apocalypticism

The Structure of Paul’s Letters

Paul and Slavery

The Question of Circumcision

Changing Perspectives on Paul

Markan Priority

An Exorcism of Rome?

More on Messianic Secret

Jesus the “Son of Man”

Intercalation or the Markan “Sandwich”

A Glimpse of Life Under Roman Occupation

More About the Q Document

Gender and Matthew’s Genealogy (Matt 1:1-17)

Who Were the Pharisees?

Possessions and the Poor: A Lukan Puzzle

The Priene Calendar Inscription

Was There a Johannine Community?

Tacitus's Account of Nero's Persecution of Christians in Rome

## PREFACE

This book introduces students to the books of the Bible as shaped in the crucible of the history of Israel and the early church. A prominent theme throughout is the way the books of the Bible reflect quite different sorts of interaction with empires that dominated the ancient Near East and Mediterranean. At first some students and professors may find this approach unusual, since we do not begin with Genesis and do not proceed through biblical books in order. The group of texts introduced early on in this textbook is quite different from the Bible they now know. So why have we chosen this approach? There are many advantages. On the basis of our experience with using this approach we have seen that the picture of the Bible's development comes into focus as the narrative of its formation unfolds. By the end, students should find meaning in aspects of the Bible that they once overlooked, even as they also understand that much of the power of the Bible has been its capability to transcend the original contexts in which it was written. Moreover, through discussion of the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation of focus texts toward the end of many chapters, students will gain a taste of how faith communities have used the Bible in creative, inspired, and sometimes death-dealing ways to guide and make sense of their lives. Given the already large scope of this *Introduction*, we have focused on texts included in the Old and New Testaments, with a particular emphasis – in the case of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament – on books included in the scriptures of Judaism and various forms of Christianity. This meant that we could not give sustained attention to apocryphal/deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament, or to the range of non-canonical early Christian