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# Unit 1: The Shape of the Hebrew Bible

SESSIONS: 1–6

## Session 1: What on Earth is the Hebrew Bible?

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### Key Question

What experiences from your life have shaped your view of the cosmos? How has that affected you or those in your context? What are common experiences people have with the Hebrew Bible? What are some ways to move through any challenges you might have?

### Session Quote

*“Are we imposing a set of questions that are foreign to what the authors are trying to communicate? Do we need to set our cultural agendas aside to just listen?”*

## Notes

*One of the most fundamental questions which has faced theology and the Church in every age... is whether or not Christianity also needs an Old Testament. Is the Old Testament to be thrown away as obsolete, or preserved as a relic from days of yore, or treasured as a classic and read by scholars, or used occasionally as a change from the New Testament, or kept in a box in case it should be needed some day? Or is the Old Testament an essential part of the Christian Bible, with continuing validity alongside the New Testament?* — D.L. BAKER, TWO TESTAMENTS, ONE BIBLE: A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS; CITED IN T. DESMOND ALEXANDER, “ROYAL EXPECTATIONS IN GENESIS THROUGH KINGS: THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY” TYNDALE BULLETIN 49/2 (1998): 191-192

## Session 2: How Jesus and the Apostles Read Their Bibles

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### Key Question

This session reflects on how Jesus and Paul talk about Scripture. Summarize how you would express what they think the Hebrew Bible is all about. What do you make of their view of the Hebrew Bible? Is it similar or different from how you typically view these Scriptures?

### Session Quote

*"It's about an anointed representative who goes into death and suffering, out the other side, so that a whole new direction—repentance and forgiveness—can open up for all of the nations."*

## What is the Hebrew Bible?

### Jesus and the TaNak

Jesus and his first followers consistently portray the Hebrew scriptures as a unified collection of wisdom literature that tells a forward pointing story.

#### Luke 24:25-27

*[Jesus] said to [the disciples], "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And **beginning with Moses and all the Prophets**, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*

#### Luke 24:44-47

*Now He said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are **written about me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.*

#### 2 Timothy 3:14-17

*You [Timothy], continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned, how from childhood you have known **the sacred scriptures** which are able to **give you wisdom** that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Messiah Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in doing what is right, so that God's people can be proficient, equipped for doing good.*

How did Jesus and his followers reach this conclusion? They did not invent this way of reading the Hebrew Bible. Rather, they inherited from their Jewish tradition a set of convictions about the origin, nature, and meaning of these texts. And not only that, they also grew up in communities that modeled how to read and make sense of the Hebrew scriptures.