

Key stories in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

Book of the Bible	Story	Main Characters	Main Events and themes
Genesis	Creation and the fall of humanity	God, Adam and Eve, the serpent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of <u>everything</u> from <u>nothing</u> – God’s breath is the Holy Spirit. • All that God created was good. • The story in Genesis is a great contrast to other creation stories where gods created the universe from other things. • The creation of humanity - God gave us the gifts of intellect and free choice. • The coming of sin into the Garden of Eden through the snake. Original Sin. • Promise of a Saviour even as Adam and Eve are kicked out of the Garden of Eden.
	Cain and Abel	Cain and Abel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The spread of sin – even brothers can kill each other. • Cain kills Abel
	The Flood	Noah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sin had spread all over the world and God decided to punish the sinners. • God saved one man of faith (Noah) and his family • God’s covenant with humans that He will never destroy the world through a flood. The symbol is the rainbow.
	The Tower of Babel	The people of Babel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride and arrogance are sins. The people of Babel wanted to be as great as God and built a tower to reach into Heaven. God destroyed the tower after causing everyone to speak different languages.
	The story of Abraham	Abram (who becomes Abraham), Sarai (who becomes Sarah) and Isaac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God’s covenant with Abraham has three parts: the Promised Land, as many descendants as the stars and a son (Isaac). • Test of faith – God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to God. • Presage of the crucifixion. • Abraham is the patriarch in faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims.
	The story of how Jacob got his birthright and became the father of the tribes Israel	Isaac, Rebecca, Esau and Jacob. Leah and Rachel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Isaac marries Rebecca and they have twins – Esau (elder) and Jacob. • Importance of birthright. Esau sold his for a bowl of stew • Deceit – Jacob was a deceiver and was also deceived. He tricks his father Isaac by wearing Esau’s clothes and then is tricked into marrying two wives (Leah and Rachel). • Jacob has twelve sons and becomes the father of the Jewish tribes – changes his name to Israel.

Key stories in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

Book of the Bible	Story	Main Characters	Main Events and themes
	Joseph and his brothers	From Leah: 1. Reuben, 2. Simeon, 3. <i>Levi</i> , 4. Judah, 5. Issachar 6. Zebulun. From Rachel: 7. Joseph 8. Benjamin From Bilhah: 9. Dan 10. Naphtali From Zilpah: 11. Gad 12. Asher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jealousy is a sin that leads to bad events • Dreams – Joseph interprets dreams • This is how the Jewish people end up in Egypt. Where at first, they were viewed as friends, but once their numbers increased they were viewed as a threat and enslaved. The tribe names are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Judah ○ Issachar ○ Zebulun ○ Reuben ○ Simeon ○ Gad ○ <i>Ephraim</i> ○ <i>Manasseh</i> ○ Benjamin ○ Dan ○ Asher ○ Naphtali
	Life in Egypt	Moses, Aaron, Pharaoh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of the number of Israelites • The burning bush and God reveals Himself to Moses – ‘I am who I am’ • The ten plagues (Blood, frogs, lice or gnats, flies, pestilence, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, death of the first born) • The Passover meal is first celebrated – this would become the basis for Communion
Exodus	Escape from Egypt and life in the desert	Moses, Aaron and the Israelites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Red Sea is parted • God leads His people to the Promised Land and gives them quail and Manna from Heaven • The Ten Commandments are received and the Ark of the Covenant is built – Pentecost is the traditional remembrance of receiving the Ten Commandments • The Israelites do not always obey God. • Copper snake presages the crucifixion.
Exodus / Judges / Ruth	Arrival in the Promised Land and the time of Judges	Moses, Joshua, Samson, the Philistines and Ruth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God helps the Israelites conquer the Promised Land • Samson – Strong man whose strength came from God. Delilah his wife cut off his hair and he lost his strength. • Ruth – A non-Israelite who demonstrates strong piety, moral integrity and self-sacrifice who was rewarded by God and became an ancestor of David and Jesus

Key stories in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

Book of the Bible	Story	Main Characters	Main Events and themes
Kings I and II	Kings	Samuel (both Judge and prophet), Saul, David and Solomon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saul – the first king of Israel was anointed by Samuel • David – Second and greatest king of Israel was anointed by Samuel. He slew Goliath with a sling shot. The story of David’s lust for Bathsheba shows that God can make good out of evil. Credited with the book of Psalms • Solomon – the last king of Israel, very wise. Built the first Temple. Credited with the book of Wisdom. Married a non-Israelite and built temples to her gods. • After Solomon the Kingdom of Israel was broken up – Israelites wait for a great leader (the Messiah) to reunite them and vanquish their enemies.
Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John	Birth, life and ministry of Jesus, His death and Resurrection	Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the Apostles, Pharisees, Sadducees, Samaritans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The life, ministry, death and Resurrection – Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises of God. This is the last covenant. • Passover – becomes our Eucharist • Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles.

Some items and groups in the New Testament

At the time of Jesus, the Israelites lived in the Promised Land but were under the control of the Roman Empire.

Jesus was the Christ (Greek for anointed one), the Messiah (Hebrew for anointed one). Jesus was not the Messiah the Jews were expecting because he was not a warrior or king or leader who would overthrow the Romans.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were two important factions in the Israelite society at the time of Christ.

The **Pharisees** were strict in the observance of the law and did not want to allow any mixing with heathen influences. They were a minority in the ruling council (the Sanhedrin) and held a minority number of positions as priests. They became known for being self-righteous. Religiously, they accepted the written Word but they also gave equal authority to oral tradition. They believed the following:

1. They believed that God controlled all things, yet decisions made by individuals also contributed to the course of a person's life.
2. They believed in the resurrection of the dead.
3. They believed in an afterlife, with appropriate reward and punishment on an individual basis.
4. They believed in the existence of angels and demons.

Key stories in the Old Testament and in the New Testament

The **Sadducees** were wealthy aristocrats and held powerful positions, including that of chief priests and the high priest, and were the majority in the ruling council (the Sanhedrin). They tended to agree with the decisions of Rome and seemed to be more concerned with politics than religion. They were elitist in the sense of wanting to keep the priestly class, but were also willing to incorporate other philosophies into their lives.

The Sadducees focused on the authority of the written Word of God, especially the books of Moses. The following is a list of some key beliefs they held:

1. They emphasized the letter of the Law.
2. They were extremely self-sufficient to the point of denying God's involvement in everyday life.
3. They denied any resurrection of the dead.
4. They denied any afterlife, holding that the soul perished at death.
5. They denied the existence of a spiritual world, i.e., angels and demons.

Though the Pharisees were rivals of the Sadducees, they managed to set aside their differences on one occasion—the trial of Christ.

The Samaritans

After Solomon died, his son mismanaged the kingdom and it split into two – Judah in the south (remained true to God, capital was Jerusalem) and Israel in the north (worshipped idols, capital was Samaria). The Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom and the Jews were taken to Assyria. However, the Northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (named after sons of Joseph), survived the destruction. The king of Assyria sent people from other regions to inhabit this area and these foreigners intermarried with the Israelite population that was there. These people came to be known as the Samaritans and they embraced a religion that was a mixture of Judaism and idolatry. Samaritans were generally considered “half-breeds” and were universally despised by the Jews.

They also attempted to halt the rebuilding of the Temple, they built a temple for themselves on “Mount Gerizim,” which the Samaritans insisted was designated by Moses as the place where the nation should worship and they willingly received Jewish criminals and refugees from justice.

The Samaritans received only the five books of Moses and rejected the writings of the prophets and all the Jewish traditions.