Important People of the Old Testament

Aaron: Brother of Moses. Aaron was older than his brother Moses by three years. When God ordered Moses to go to Pharaoh, it was clear that Aaron would serve as the spokesman for Moses: “For I know that he can speak well” (Exodus 4:14). When Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, Aaron was left in charge of the encampment. When Moses did not return at the appointed time, the people became restless and demanded of Aaron, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us; as for this Moses…we do not know what has become of him” (Exodus 32:1). Aaron told the Israelites to bring whatever gold they possessed, and he fashioned a golden calf as an object of worship for the people. Aaron lacked the strength of spirit Moses so easily possessed.

Abel: The younger son of Adam and Eve. Abel was a shepherd. The first victim of murder recorded in the Bible, very little is known of Abel and his life.

Abiathar: One of two high priests in the court of King David. The only man to survive the massacre at the sanctuary of Nob under King Saul. For his loyalty, Abiathar was named High Priest in Jerusalem under King David. Supporting Adonijah’s claim to the throne nearly cost Abiathar his life, and he was exiled from the land of Canaan.

Abijah: Second King of Judah. Abijah claimed the whole of the divided kingdom, on behalf of the house of David. Abijah nearly defeated the forces of Israel and expanded the territory of Judah as had never been done before.

Abram (Abraham): Founder of the Hebrew nation. A father figure in Jewish and Christian faiths for his relationship with God. A man who lived in the Middle Eastern world nearly four thousand years ago. The main setting for Abram's story is the central hill country in the Land of Canaan, promised to him and his family by God. Abram (as he was first called) came from the land of Ur of the Chaldeans' (Genesis 11:28), a Sumerian city in the Euphrates valley, near the opening of the Persian Gulf. With his wife Sarai (later called Sarah) and his nephew Lot, Abram moved to present-day Syria and settled there in a village named Haran. At Haran, God appeared to Abram and instructed him to leave, "For the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). At this point, God promised Abram that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2).

Sodom and Gomorrah:

When God revealed to Abram that He intended to destroy the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram pleaded with God to spare the cities for the sake of the good men and women who might be among the inhabitants. Before the destruction of the twin cities of evil, Abram was able to rescue Lot and prevent his death.

Isaac & the Covenant:

In his old age, God appeared to Abram and stated that henceforth his name would be Abraham and his wife shall be called Sarah. God also reminded Abraham that He had, "Made him [Abraham] the father of a multitude of nations" (Genesis 17:5). As a physical sign of Abraham's covenant with God, all male members (including Abraham) were circumcised, and thereafter every male infant when he was eight days old. When God told Abraham that Sarah would give birth to a son, Abraham "Fell on his face and laughed" (Genesis 17:17). Sarah also laughed because she was well past child-bearing age. However, in due course, Isaac was born, just as God had foretold. Abraham's obedience and faith in God was soon put to the test. Abraham was commanded to kill Isaac as an offering to God. Abraham, obeying God's demand, set out on a donkey with two servants and Isaac at his side (Isaac unaware of his father's intentions). On the way, Isaac questioned his father: "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7) Abraham did not answer directly, stating that God would provide the lamb. When they reached the indicated spot, Abraham built the altar, placed Isaac on the altar, and presented his knife. Just as he was about to strike Isaac, an angel of God stated: 'Do not lay your hand on the child .... for now I know that you fear God' (Genesis 22:12). In a nearby thicket Abraham observed a ram that was stuck by its horns. The animal was sacrificed instead of Isaac.

Conclusions:

This episode symbolizes the rejection by Abraham (and the Hebrew faith) toward child-sacrifice practiced among pagan cults. As well, the story of Abraham marks the beginning of a people who removed all pagan gods from their lives and committed themselves to God (Yahweh) alone. This process is called "monotheism." Finally, the episode marks the beginning of the importance of Canaan, or the Promised Land. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. This great family was given the right to settle in Canaan (Promised Land) under divine charter, or permission.

Absalom: Third son of King David. Challenged his father for the throne of Israel in a powerful and well organized plot. King David was taken completely by surprise. Absalom's attempt to seize power was not successful. His father's well-trained army (under the command of General Joab) was no match for power. In due course, Absalom attempted to escape. While riding on his mule through a forest path, he caught himself in overhanging branches of an oak tree and remained dangling in the air while his mule ran away. He was killed by General Joab.

Achish: King of the Philistines; allowed David to take refuge among his people during Saul’s persecution.
Adam: The first human being. On the sixth day of creation, God created the beasts, and then Man in His own image, male and female. God told them to be fruitful and multiply, and He gave them authority over all living creatures. The story of creation is told in the Book of Genesis.

Adonijah: Fourth son of King David. In David’s old age, Adonijah seized power and proclaimed himself King of Israel, with the support of Generla Joab, several priests, and Abiathar. Adonijah’s bid to seize power was opposed by the Prophet Nathan, Bathsheba, and David himself.

Agag: King who was defeated in battle by Saul. Saul sought to spare Agag alive, but the Prophet and Judge Samuel killed Agag under the Ban as retribution for Agag's brutality against the Chosen People.

Ahab: Seventh King of Israel after the monarchy divided. Confronted publicly many times by the Prophet Elijah, Ahab was a man who loved the worship of pagan gods.

Ahasuerus: The King of Persia, who in the third year of his reign concluded his search for a suitable Queen to replace Vashti. He selected Esther, the adopted daughter of Mordechai, a Jewish court official. Because of her authority as Queen, Esther was able to stop the evil plans of Haman.

Ahimelech: The chief priest at the village of Nob, a priestly sanctuary just outside Jerusalem. When David became a fugitive from King Saul, he took refuge at the sanctuary. Ahimelech paid a cruel price for his helping David. All the priests of Nob were rounded up and brought before Saul. Ahimelech protested that he had done nothing wrong. Saul, not listening to any excuses, killed Ahimelech and the eighty-five priests in residence at Nob. There was only one survivor, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech. He soon joined David in the mountains.

Alexander the Great: When Philip of Macedonia was assassinated in 336 B.C., his crown fell to his gifted 20-year-old son, Alexander who proved himself a resolute, ambitious king from the start of his reign. In a series of quick successions, Alexander conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Eventually, Alexander defeated the Persia Empire and became absolute ruler of the known world. His legacy was a distinct period in world history with new cultures and traditions we call the Hellenistic Age. Alexander is mentioned in the First Book of Maccabees.

Ammonites: A fierce people living north east of the Dead Sea who were bitter enemies of Israel.

Amnon: King David’s eldest son who seduced his half-sister Tamar and was killed in revenge by her brother Absalom.

Antiochus IV: Tyrant leader of Syria who forbade the practice of Judaism, desecrated the Temple, tortured and murdered Jews, and passed innumerable anti-Semitic decrees. An ambitious ruler, Antiochus called himself “god-manifest,” leading many historians to consider the possibility of insanity. Antiochus gained power following the death of Alexander the Great. An admirer of Greek culture, religion, language, and lifestyle, Antiochus forced Hellenization upon the people of Israel. Rejecting such acts forcefully, the Hebrew people quickly turned to rebellion as the solution to Antiochus’ rule.

Assyrians: Masters of the Fertile Crescent who lived in constant warfare. The Assyrians were imperialistic people, demanding the finest in terror, political administration, and support of commerce and trade. However, in 612 B.C., the Empire collapsed and was soon replaced by Babylonia as the new dominant power of the Near East.

Baal: The pagan god of rain and life. Baal was worshipped commonly in the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, despite repeated warnings from the Prophets.

Babylonians: The second masters of the Fertile Crescent. Under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonians defeated the Assyrians and destroyed the Kingdom of Judah thereafter. (Babylonian Exile soon followed) The capital of the Empire, Babylon, was an impressive city with only the finest architecture. It will be under Alexander the Great that Babylonian architecture will gain global recognition.

Babylonian Exile: Occurs during the years 685-539 B.C. A bitter time in Jewish history when 14,000-20,000 inhabitants of Judah were forcibly deported and made prisoners at the mercy of the Babylonians. Emotions of loss and humiliation are expressed in Psalm 137 on behalf of the Chosen People at this event.

Bathsheba: Wife of David and mother of King Solomon. A woman who captured the heart of David, she remained by his side until death. Bathsheba was instrumental in working with Nathan to see that Solomon was named King following David’s death.

Barak: Hebrew name meaning "lightning." The Israelite military commander and Judge who fought against Sisera. Chosen by Deborah to lead the Israelites in battle, Barak gathered his forces successfully in combat. Before the great battle with Sisera, Deborah told Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which God has given Sisera into your hand" (Judges 4:14).
**Bildad:** One of three friends of Job who grieved with him for seven days and nights. When Job began to curse the day he was born and protest his sufferings, Bildad asked him, "Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the hand of evildoers" (Job 8:3-20). Job made no effort to conceal his impatience with Bildad, and utterly rejected the advice to bear his trials with silence.

**Boaz:** Husband of Ruth. A prosperous landowner in Bethlehem. On a spring day, Boaz went to his barley field where his servants were reaping the harvest. He noticed that behind them a young woman gleaning the scattered ears left behind by the reapers. He learned on inquiry of Ruth, a widow who had recently arrived in Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Boaz spoke kindly to her and praised her devotion to Naomi. Ruth was given permission to glean in the fields of Boaz with his servants and share their food and water.

**The Winnowing Floor:**
At the end of the harvest, Boaz spent the night on the winnowing floor after the feast. Under Naomi's guidance, Ruth dressed in her best clothes and went to lie at the feet of the sleeping Boaz (a sign of seeking a marriage). Boaz woke in the middle of the night and was surprised to find Ruth. She asked for his cloak and Boaz was impressed: “For all my fellow townsman know that you are a woman of worth” (Ruth 3:11). Concerned that Ruth be seen with Boaz, she sent her away before dawn with a cloakful of grain.

**Arranging A Marriage:**
Boaz began discussions with his kinsmen who held family ties to Ruth. According to Jewish custom and law, Ruth (as a widow) was under the care of her closest male relative. In the presence of the town elders, Boaz inquired if anyone wished to buy from Naomi the piece of land that had once belonged to her late husband, Elimelech, and (at the same time) acquire Ruth as his wife. With no public offer, Boaz declared his intention to do so himself. The agreement was sealed in the manner of the time, by removing and handing over one sandal.

**The Family of David & Heritage of Jesus:**
Boaz married Ruth and a son was born, who was named Obed. In time, Obed's son Jesse became the father of David, Israel's second King. The heritage of Jesus was also unfolding. Jesus was born into the House of David, fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would arise from the genealogy of David.

**Cain:** The first-born of Adam and Eve. Cain was a tiller of the soil. Along with his brother, Abel, the two came to make their offerings to God. Abel brought young lambs while Cain brought the first fruits of the field. God rejected Cain's offering but accepted Abel's. Cain became angry and lured his brother into the fields, where he killed him. When God asked Cain what had happened to Abel, Cain replied: "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9) God was angry with Cain and ordered him to wander the land as a failure. Cain traveled to the village of Nod, east of the Garden of Eden where he settled, married, and had a son named Enoch.

**Caleb:** One of the twelve spies sent by Moses to review the land of Canaan (Promised Land). He returned, along with Joshua, confident and declared, "Let us go up at once, and occupy it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). But the report from other spies was discouraging. When the entire community of the Exodus entered Canaan after the battle at Jericho, Caleb was old and ill. However, he lived to enter the Promised Land.

**Cyrus of Persia:** King of the Persian Empire. He rapidly gained control and quickly conquered the Babylonian army and became the ruler of the largest empire the world had seen. [until Alexander the Great] A generous conqueror, Cyrus gave the captive Chosen People in Babylon permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city and the Temple. Second Isaiah wrote that Cyrus was, "A shepherd of the Lord" (Isaiah 44:28).

**Dagon:** A primary Philistine god to whom temples were built at Gaza and Ashdod. Samson died by pulling down the temple to Dagon in Gaza; many Philistines were killed. “Lord God, remember me and strengthen me only this once, O God, so that with this one act of revenge I may pay back the Philistines for my two eyes….let me die with the Philistines!” (Judges 16:28-30) The Book of Judges records that Samson killed with his death more than those he killed during his life. (Judges 16:30)

**David:** Name means "Hero." The second King of Israel. Anointed King by the Prophet and Judge Samuel at approximately age 13.

**Fight With Goliath & Popularity:**
In the low foothills surrounding Bethlehem, the Israelites were camped on a plateau near an open plain. The Philistine army was nearby, across a narrow valley. In this borderland the two armies faced each other. A narrow creek ran through the valley. Neither side would risk an attack across the open ground and up the opposing slope. The Philistines produced a giant soldier from the town of Gath called Goliath. In his armor, Goliath paraded daily between the lines, taunting the Israelites and challenging them to send out a champion against him. That was the sight that met David's eyes when he entered the Israelite lines and sought combat with Goliath. David said to King Saul, "Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (1 Samuel 17:32). Saul gazed at him in astonishment and dismissed the idea: "For you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth" (1 Samuel 17:33). David insisted that God would protect him, and Saul permitted him to try. David refused armor and chose to arm himself with rocks, a sling, and a shepherd's pouch, into which he put five smooth stones from the river brook. Goliath could not believe his eyes; David waited for the right moment and hurled a stone from his sling, hitting Goliath in the forehead. When Goliath fell to the ground, David leapt forward and cut off his head with Goliath's own sword. Seeing their champion slain, the Philistines started to flee, with the Israelites' army in pursuit.

**The Fugitive:**
David made full use of his victory over Goliath. His fame and popularity grew among the army. From the moment of David's victory over Goliath, Saul was determined to kill David. After several failed attempts to kill David, Saul arranged the marriage of one of his daughters, Michal, to David, provided David returned from battle successfully after slaying 200 Philistine warriors. David returned alive
and successful, and the wedding soon followed. Soon Michal would help David escape the wrath of her father's vengeance. One night, Michal lowered David out of a window and placed a dummy in her bed, pretending David was ill. David fled to the safety of Samuel's residence and prepared to live a portion of his life in exile. David secretly contacted Jonathan and told him, "There is but a step between me and death" (1 Samuel 20:3). Jonathan sadly agreed that David had to run for his life. After leaving the sanctuary of Nob, David lived in the desert hills fifteen miles north east from Gath, the Philistinie capital. The terrain was rocky and steep with gorges. David found support with four hundred fugitives and malcontents. King Saul continued his pursuit of David. At one point, David had the opportunity to kill Saul while he slept. David refused, referring to Saul as, "The Lord's anointed" (1 Samuel 24:6). Instead, David removed a piece of Saul's robe and demonstrated that he had never done any harm to the King and had, in fact, spared his life. Saul responded, "You are more righteous than I, for you have repaid me good, whereas I have repaid you evil" (1 Samuel 24:17). Saul continued his pursuit of David, but was never successful in killing him.

**David’s Rise To Power As King:**

News reached David soon after the Israelite defeat at Mount Gilboa and after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David was deep with grief. Though King Saul had persecuted him, he united Israel and led his people for two decades and had raised the young David from obscurity to fame. The victory of the Philistines had given them control of northern Israel. With the remainder of his troops, General Abner retreated east and proclaimed Saul's eldest surviving son, Ishbaal, King of Israel. David seized his chance in this confusing situation, became King of Judah (the largest and most powerful of the 12 Israelite tribes) and prepared to unite all of Israel once again. As civil war between Israel and Judah dragged on, General Abner lost patience with his puppet king and offered to assist David in becoming ruler over the whole nation. David's chief military aid, General Joab, did not accept the peace offer. He murdered General Abner at peace talks in Hebron. David condemned General Joab, but allowed him to live. Ishbaal was executed. The elders of the 12 Tribes came to Hebron to pledge allegiance to David as their new monarch. He had traveled a long and torturous path since the day he was anointed by Samuel. David was now thirty years old, and he was to rule over Israel for forty years.

**Deborah:** Judge and Prophetess of Israel. A woman with intense force and strong character. Led a successful revolt against the Canaanites (Philistines). A woman whose moral authority was regarded as inspired by God, Deborah settled all disputes. "The people of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Judges 4:5). She rallied the 12 Tribes of Israel into combat, many times over the complaints of other leaders. They defeated the Canaanite Sisera in battle near Mount Tabor, close to the Sea of Galilee. Caught completely off balance, the Canaanite forces were routed and destroyed. As a result of this victory, the land of the Israelites was at peace for forty years.

**Delilah:** The Philistine woman who betrayed Samson. When Philistine leaders heard that Samson was courting Delilah, they secretly visited her, and promised her 1,100 pieces of silver from each of them, if she would pry from Samson the secret of his strength. Three attempts were to capture Samson were unsuccessful, as he had lied to her of his strength. Delilah nagged Samson until, "his soul was vexed to death" (Judges 16:16). Samson told her the truth: because he had been a Nazarite from birth, dedicated to God, his hair had never been cut, and therein lies his strength. Samson was captured when Delilah cut his locks of hair. Samson’s betrayal by Delilah has become one of the most familiar accounts in the Old Testament.

**Devil/Satan:** In Hebrew, the name means “accuser” or “adversary.” As the prince of evil spirits, Satan works to bring death into a world God created as good. Satan flees from those who are righteous. In the early books of the Old Testament, the word is used in a general sense to denote an opponent or enemy. The first occasion it is used begins just after God's Creation of the universe. In the prophecies of Zechariah, Satan plays the same role of accuser of the high priest Joshua. In 1 Chronicles, Satan appears as the tempter of David. Here, as will be true throughout the Bible, Satan points out the failings of mankind.

**Book of Genesis:**

Satan appears as a serpent and the one who deceives Adam and Eve into sinning against God. The Book of Genesis says: “Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals that the Lord God had made. The serpent asked the woman, ‘Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?’ The woman answered, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it…lest you die.’ The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it…and she gave some to her husband. Then the eyes of both of them were opened….” (Genesis 3:1-7).

**Book of Job:**

Satan acts as the public prosecutor before God in Heaven of His righteous servant Job, questioning the very fairness of God. Satan asks the Almighty if humans serve God for themselves or their own profit? Can mankind create a being who worships freely? Agreeing to test Job, Satan sends his wrath upon the man and his family, ruining his life and afflicting Job with sickness and disease. The dialogue between God and Satan in the Book of Job has been interpreted as a crude representation of a divinity who cruelly permits the torture of His creation. The deeper reality of Satan’s presence in this context is his asking of God for permission to test Job. Satan has no hold or authority over God the Father or Jesus Christ.

**Doeg the Edomite:** Chief herdsman to King Saul. Doeg reported to the King, seeing David, who had fled from the court, being assisted at the priestly sanctuary of Nob. The furious Saul ordered the priests killed. Since his own servants shrank from doing so, Saul turned to Doeg, who willingly massacred eighty-five priests.

**Eli:** A descendant of Aaron's family, Eli was chief priest at the sanctuary of Shiloh in the later period of the Judges. One day he saw a woman near the altar praying, but she did not utter a sound. The woman identified herself as Hannah and stated that she had come to pray because she was barren. Eli said to her, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition which you have made to him" (1 Samuel 1: 17). Without his knowledge, Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, had grown to become wicked and corrupt; they were defeated
in battle with the Philistines. The sacred Ark of the Covenant was captured, and Eli's sons died in the conflict. Eli was sitting in the
gateway of his home when he received the terrible news. The shock of losing both sons and the Ark was too much for Eli: "He fell over
backward from his seat by the side of the gate; his neck was broken, and he died" (1 Samuel 4:18).

Eliphaz: The eldest of Job's three friends who visits with Job to console and comfort him. They tore their clothes, sprinkled dust on their
heads, and sat with Job in silence for seven days and nights. When Job began to curse the day he was born and protest his sufferings,
Eliphaz expressed the traditional view that God does not punish good people, only bad ones. When Job refused to cease complaining,
Eliphaz grew tired of listening. "Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills?" (Job 15:7) Finally,
Eliphaz listed a number of uncharitable acts he falsely attributed to Job.

Esau: The first-born twin son of Rebekah. While still inside Rebekah's womb, Esau and Jacob were in conflict. Esau grew to become a
skilled hunter. One day Esau returned from a hunting trip weak and hungry. He begged his brother for food, and Jacob gave him bread
and red lentil soup in return for Esau's surrender of his birthright as the first-born. Esau agreed. After many years, Esau settled in
the land of Seir, south of the Dead Sea. When messengers arrived in Esau's village declaring that Jacob was returning with his family, Esau
formed a small army and set out to meet his brother. The meeting took place near Jericho. Jacob arrived and fell down before his brother
and cried. Esau embraced Jacob and forgave him.

Esther: Jewish queen married to King Ahasuerus of Persia. Esther called on God to save the Chosen People from persecution. After an
edict, issued by Haman, ordered the termination of all Jews, Esther was called upon to speak for her people and defend them from
certain doom. Esther assumed this responsibility, covered her head with ashes, wore simple clothing, and prayed to God for His
intervention. In prayer, Esther stated that she found no pleasure in her position of authority nor her luxurious life: "Thou knowest that I
hate the splendor of the wicked and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised" (Esther 14:15). Esther was able to prevent the destruction of
her people by pleading with her husband, King Ahasuerus, to halt the persecutions. The story of Esther is non-historical, since no
Persian ruler is known to have had a queen called Esther, a chief minister called Haman, or a Jewish counselor called Mordechai.

Eve: The first woman. When Adam had been created and placed in the Garden of Eden, God decided that he should have a helpmate.
Adam was put into a deep sleep, one of his ribs was removed, and God created a woman. Upon seeing Eve for the first time, Adam
stated: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23). Adam named the woman Eve.

Garden of Eden: The center-point of God's creation on Earth. Located in "Eden of the east" (Genesis 2:8), the river that flowed from
the garden parted into four: (i) Pishon, (ii) Gihon, (iii) Tigris, and (iv) Euphrates. This would place Eden somewhere in ancient
Mesopotamia, the center of the Babylonian Empire and present-day Iraq.

General Abner: Cousin and commander of King Saul's army. After King Saul's death, Abner supported Ishbaal's weak claim to the
throne of Israel over David. Abner would, in time, lose all interest in Ishbaal and seek a lasting peace with David. Eventually, Abner
would openly support David and his claim to the leadership and assist in uniting Israel under one monarchy.

General Joab: Commander-in-chief to King David's army. Joab was tough, brave and skillful as army commander. He was intensely
loyal to David and ruthless towards his enemies. He was jealous of what he considered opposition to his authority. Joab murdered
General Abner during peace talks at Hebron (2 Samuel 3: 27). Joab led the successful conquest of Jerusalem when David named the city
Israel's new capital.

Goliath of Gath: The gigantic Philistine warrior slain by David with a slingshot. A fearsome champion from the city of Gath who
tormented Israelites in combat until his death.

Gomer: Wife of the Prophet Hosea. A loose woman who gave Hosea three children. Hosea divorced Gomer, but he continued to love
her and, eventually, forgave her sins and welcomed her back as his wife.

Hagar: The slave-maid of Sarah. Sarah proposed to Abraham that he should have a child by Hagar since she herself was barren and old.
Such a suggestion was not regarded as unusual by the customs of the time, which permitted a man to have more than one wife and as
many concubines as his wealth allowed. Hagar gave birth to a son named Ishmael.

Haggith: Wife of King David and mother of Adonijah.

Haman: Chief Minister of King Ahasuerus of Persia. Commanded the king's staff and ordered all under his authority to bow down
before him. Everyone obeyed except Mordechai, who also served in the court. Haman's anger at Mordechai turned into a hatred of the
Jewish race. Haman obtained permission from King Ahasuerus to deal with the Jewish population and issued a royal decree to all
authorities ordering them to slaughter all Jews on a certain day set by Haman. Queen Esther interceded with the king, and accused
Haman of having organized a mass murder against Judaism. The terrified Haman begged Queen Esther to spare his life. However,
Haman was seized and, "They hanged him on the gallows prepared for Mordechai" (Esther 7: 10).

Hannah: Mother of the Prophet Samuel. On pilgrimage to Shiloh, Hannah prayed to God so that she may have children. Eli, the chief
priest, saw Hannah and sought to console her. Hannah then offered a promise to Eli and the Almighty, "If God will give His maidservant
a son, then I will give him to God all the days of his life” (1 Samuel 1: 11). In due time Hannah gave birth to a child, whom she named Samuel, translated as "The Lord Heard."

**Herod Family Dynasty:** The family name of the senior officer in the court of the Hasmonan prince Hyrcanus II, called Herod Antipater. Antipater was military governor of Idumaea (called Edom in the Old Testament). The Idumaeans had been conquered in 120 B.C. by Hyrcanus II and forcibly converted to Judaism. Antipater was a skilled politician, who established his two sons within the court of Hyrcanus 11. One of these sons was Herod the Great. Herod found favor with Rome following their invasion of Palestine in 63 B.C. Herod would rise to become Rome's puppet ruler for greater Syria and Palestine. Despite shifts in power in Rome, Antipater's family remained in power for over one hundred years.

**Herod the Great:**
Roman proclaimed "King of the Jews" from 37-4 B.C. A political tyrant and skilled diplomat. The admirer of Greek culture and literature, Herod was a great builder and strengthened a political dynasty. The executioner of one wife, two sons, and thousands of loyal citizens of Israel, Herod was a man obsessed with messianic knowledge.

**The Wise Men & Massacre of the Innocents:**
The Gospel of Matthew records that Herod welcomed wise men (Magi) from the East to the capital city of Jerusalem. These wise men sought the Messiah, the Anointed One, from the family of David, whose star guided them through the night sky. Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem with instructions to return with news of the child born, "King of the Jews," a title Herod fancied for himself. The murderous massacre of the innocents in Bethlehem, following his discovery of his deception by the wise men, testifies well with the character of Herod in his old age.

**Hezekiah:** Thirteenth King of Judah after the monarchy divided. Governed a weak nation on the verge of Assyrian invasion. Hezekiah devoted himself to cleansing the nation of pagan worship and resoring the Law of Moses among the people. Remembered as a moral leader who attempted genuine reform against corruption. Supported by the Prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah’s efforts were halted by Assyrian and Babylonian invasions of Canaan.

**Hiram I:** King of Tyre who supplied King Solomon with cedar wood, carpenters, and masons to build the Temple. When Solomon defaulted on a payment, Hiram received 20 cities of his choice in towns of Galilee as a late payment.

**Holofernes:** Assyrian general in the Book of Judith. The commander-in-chief of Nebuchadnezzar's army, Holofernes was captivated by Judith's beauty and invited her to remain within his camp. While hosting a great banquet for his officers, Holofernes gave orders to have Judith join him: "For it will be a disgrace if we let such a woman go without enjoying her company, for if we do not embrace her she will laugh at us" (Judith 12:12). At the banquet, Holofernes consumed too much food and drink. When his staff left, Judith was alone with the General, asleep on a couch in a drunken stupor. Judith seized his sword and, with two blows to the neck, severed his head.

**Hophni:** A son of Eli. Hophni was a leader at the sanctuary of Shiloh where his father, Eli, was chief priest. Hophni abused his office by seducing women who came to pray and by taking for himself the best of the offerings made to God in prayer. Hophni was sent as a guardian for the Ark of the Covenant and was instructed to rally Israelite support for battle against the Philistines. The Ark was captured and Hophni was killed in battle.

**Isaac:** The second son of Abraham whose mother is Sarah. Isaac's name is translated as "He Laughed." Spared from a sacrifice to God, Isaac concerned himself with the responsibilities of becoming Abraham's heir. In this manner, it was very important for Isaac to be guardian for the Ark of the Covenant and was instructed to rally Israelite support for battle against the Philistines. Despite shifts in power in Rome, Antipater's family remained in power for over one hundred years.

**Ismael:** The first son of Abraham, whose mother is Hagar. God told Hagar that Ishmael would be, "A wild man; his hand shall be against every man and every man's against his" (Genesis 16:12). In Jewish tradition, Ishmael is regarded as an ancestor of the nomad desert tribes.

**Ishbaal:** The fourth son of King Saul; claimed the throne of Israel after the suicide of his father on Mt. Gilboa. Reigned over the northern tribes of Israel until defeated by David.

**Ishmael:** The first son of Abraham, whose mother is Hagar. God told Hagar that Ishmael would be, "A wild man; his hand shall be against every man and every man's against his" (Genesis 16:12). In Jewish tradition, Ishmael is regarded as an ancestor of the nomad desert tribes.

**Jabin:** The Canaanite King of Hazor, in the time of the Judges, who oppressed the Israelites and whose general Sisera was defeated by Deborah and Barak. "And the hand of the people of Israel bore harder and harder on Jabin, the King of Canaan" (Judges 4:24).

**Jacob:** The second twin son born of Rebekah. While still in his mother's womb, "The children struggled together" (Genesis 25:22). Jacob was born clutching his brother's heel, became a herdsman and cultivator. His mother loved him more than she did Esau.

**The Birthright:**
When Esau traded his birthright in exchange for food, Jacob became the legal heir to Isaac's property and blessing. Jacob, with the help of his mother, deceived Isaac into giving his full blessing: "Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers” (Genesis 27:29). Esau hated Jacob because of the stolen blessing and threatened to kill him after Isaac's death. Rebekah, fearing for Jacob, arranged transportation for her son to stay with her brother, Laban, at his home. There he could find a wife and raise a family and continue the Covenant.
On his way to Laban's home, Jacob had a vision in his sleep of a ladder rising up to heaven, with angels going up and down on it. God spoke to Jacob and reaffirmed the promise made to Abraham that his family would multiply: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land" (Genesis 28:15). Upon awaking, Jacob stated: "Surely God is in this place; and I did not know it...this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Genesis 28:16-17). The site of Jacob's dream was twelve miles north of Jerusalem at a location Jacob called Bethel.

**Jacob's Stay With Laban:**
When Jacob reached the home of his uncle Laban, he was tired and in need of rest. Soon after his arrival, Jacob fell in love with Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter. In order to marry Rachel, Jacob was required to work for Laban for seven years. At the end of that time, Laban arranged a wedding and a feast. Jacob spent the wedding night with his bride and was shocked to find the following morning that Laban had substituted Leah (Rachel's older sister) in place of Rachel. A week later, Jacob married Rachel. However, he was required to work another seven years for Laban. After several years, Jacob owned large flocks of his own and acquired his own servants. Jacob decided that he wished to return to his land of Canaan (Promised Land) with his family. Laban protested.

**Jacob's Return to Canaan:**
At the Jabbok River, flowing from the Jordan River, Jacob camped with his family. At dusk, Jacob suddenly found himself wrestling with a mysterious stranger. The struggle continued until daybreak, when the other tried to get away, but Jacob held on to him until he obtained his blessing. The stranger said to Jacob that henceforth he would be called "Israel" which means "One Who Prevails With God." The sons of Jacob became the 12 Tribes of Israel.

**Jael:** The woman who killed Sisera. When the Israelites, inspired by the Prophetess and Judge Deborah, attacked the Canaanite army, Sisera escaped eastward and came to an encampment. Jael came out and invited Sisera into her tent, gave him milk to drink, covered him with blankets, and stood guard outside. After learning that he deserted his army, Jael killed Sisera while he slept. When Barak arrived in pursuit of Sisera, Jael showed him Sisera lying dead in her tent.

**Jebusites:** An ancient tribe of warriors living in Canaan (Promised Land). They ruled over the town of Jerusalem as warlords until they were defeated in battle by King David (2 Samuel 5: 6-10).

**Jehoiakim:** Eighteenth King of Judah. The son of King Josiah who forged a failed treaty with Egypt in seeking protection from the Babylonians. As a consequence of this treaty, Jehoiakim paid a heavy tribute in gold and silver to his Egyptian masters. It was the Prophet Jeremiah who railed at Jehoiakim for his foolish alliances.

**Jeroboam:** King of Israel just after the monarchy divided. A corrupt man who worshiped pagan gods, Jeroboam sought to unite the people of Israel by appealing to their worst qualities.

**Jesse:** The father of David and a resident of Bethlehem. On a visit to Bethlehem, the Prophet and Judge Samuel received Jesse and his sons and anointed David without explaining why. Jesse provided for his sons while in the service of King Saul.

**Jezebel:** Wife of King Ahab of Israel. A strong woman who openly supported and promoted the worship of pagan gods, specifically Baal. The Prophet Elijah condemned her for disregarding God’s laws.

**Job:** The central character in the Book of Job. The story of Job is told through a Prologue and an Epilogue. The main body of the text is poetry, cast in a dramatic form. It contains debates between Job and three of his close friends, ending with a confrontation between Job and God Himself. The Prologue pictures Job as a man who is blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. Job is blessed with seven sons and three daughters, and an abundance of livestock. One day, among the Heavens, God asked Satan whether, in the course of his earthly journeys, he had noticed Job. Satan replied sarcastically that it was easy for a rich man to be God-fearing, but remove everything and Job would certainly curse God. In a bizarre moment, God agreed to Satan's challenge; Job would be put to the test, provided he would not be touched by Satan himself.

**Misfortune:**
The following day, Job's animals were carried off by marauders, his sheep killed in a hailstorm, and the roof of his eldest son's home collapsed during a storm, killing Job's entire family, except for his wife. Job mourned but uttered no protest against God. Satan maintained that Job would react otherwise if his own body was afflicted. God agreed to give Satan permission to test Job further, provided Job's life would be spared. Job then broke out in dreadful sores from head to foot. As he sat in pain, his wife declared, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die! (Job 2:9)” Job replied that she was a foolish woman. If they accepted happiness from God, must they not accept sorrow as well?

**Job's Suffering Spreads:**
Word of Job's misfortunes reached three of his friends - Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. They visited Job and were shocked to learn that he was barely recognizable. For seven days and nights they sat with Job without speaking. Here, Job begins to curse his own existence: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, ‘A man-child is conceived.’ (Job 3:3)"

**Job Protests His Innocence:**
His friends try to console him and express traditional views concerning sufferings. As Job becomes more bitter, his three friends lose patience with him. Biliad asks, "How long will you say these things, and the words of your mouth be a great wind? Does God pervert judgment? Or does the Almighty pervert the right? (Job 8:2-3)" Zophar also criticizes Job. He suggests that if Job is afflicted, he must be a sinful man, and his protests must be prompted by a guilty conscience. Eliphaz even lists a number of uncharitable acts he falsely
attributes to Job! Job makes no effort to conceal his anger with his friends, whom he calls "miserable comforters." Job rejects advice to keep pain in silence.

Job Places God On Trial:
In a moment of confidence, Job declares: "I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God: "Behold, He will slay me. I will defend my ways to His face" (Job 13:3-15). Job recalls the good life he enjoyed and the respect received in society. Now, every one shuns him. Sadly, Job reflects on the pains of life. Repeatedly, Job protests his innocence and demands of God to, "Make me understand how I have erred!" (Job 6:24). Was it vanity? Lust? Failure to respect the rights of his servants? Failure to care for the poor? Worship of pagan gods? Evil wishes on his enemies? Ignoring strangers? Provided they are proven, Job is prepared to account for his actions. Job demands an impartial trial, where God's charges are fairly presented. Job questions how he can defend himself (for nobody else would stand for him) before God when He is so far away. "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! I would lay my case before Him and fill my mouth with arguments I cry to Thee and Thou does not heed me! (Job 23:3-4)"

God Responds to Job:
After Job finishes speaking (and sobbing), God answers him out of the whirlwind, placing questions of His own to Job: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man; I will question YOU, and you shall declare to me! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? When the morning stars sang together? When all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:2-7)" Job is left listening, while God continues to ask what Job could possibly fathom about control of the seas, the coming dawn, the snow, hail, thunder, lightning, rain, movement of the stars, and the ways of nature. God asks Job: "Shall you find fault with the Almighty? He who argues with God must answer! (Job 40:2)"

Job is Overwhelmed:
Job is overwhelmed by the presence of God, and also humbled by the majestic and mysterious workings of the universe. He accepts that there were matters beyond his comprehension. "Therefore, I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes see Thee; therefore, I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (Job 42:3-6)"

Conclusion:
With the trial ended, Job submits to God. The ending arrives. Job's friends are rebuked by God for their foolish advice; Job is restored to his former position in society and receives doubled wealth, over what he previously owned. All of Job's kinsmen and friends pay their respects and bring gifts. Again, Job produces seven sons and three beautiful daughters. Job lives to see his descendants and dies at the age of 140. The author of the Book of Job remains one of the boldest and most original theological thinkers. This text exists as one of the great unresolved mysteries of the Old Testament.

Jonathan: Eldest son of King Saul. One of the most open-hearted and likable human beings in the Old Testament who was caught in a feud between David and Saul. His father, Saul, demanded loyalty. His friend and brother-in-law, David, demanded respect. Jonathan was a daring and successful officer in Saul's army, skilled in archery. Jonathan became friends with David after the death of Goliath when, "The soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David" (1 Samuel 18: 1). When Saul came to hate David and attempted to kill him, Jonathan secretly informed David and sadly agreed that hiding was the only solution. They swore eternal loyalty to each other and departed. Jonathan died on Mount Gilboa with his father, and David poured out his anguish when the news reached him.

Joseph: The eleventh son born to Jacob by Rachel. Favored by his father over his brothers, Joseph was given a coat of many colors as a special mark of Jacob's favor. This act was deeply resented by his older brothers. To make matters worse for himself, Joseph had dreams of his entire family bowing down before him. In anger, Joseph's older brothers conspired to remove him. They threw Joseph into an empty well and sold him into slavery to a traveling herd of Midianite merchants traveling to Egypt. To deceive Jacob, the brothers tore Joseph's clothes and placed the blood from a lamb on the garment indicating his death by a wild animal.

Dreams & Joseph's Rise to Power:
In the course of time, Joseph showed a great ability to manage the household of the captain of Pharaoh's army. Joseph was a young man with a future. However, his master's wife attempted to seduce him. Joseph firmly rejected her. She arranged a trap and declared that Joseph had attempted to assault her. Angry, the master of the house had Joseph removed and placed in prison. While in prison, Joseph gained the trust of the chief warden, who put him in charge of the other prisoners. When the Pharaoh's main cupbearer and chief baker were placed in prison on the charge of stealing, Joseph sought to comfort the officials by interpreting their dreams: "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell them to me, I pray you" (Genesis 40:8). Joseph foretold the safe release of the cupbearer and the death of the baker. Two years later, Pharaoh himself was disturbed by dreams which none of the magicians at the court was able to interpret. The cupbearer then told Pharaoh about his own experience in prison with the Hebrew slave. Pharaoh had Joseph taken out of the dungeon and brought before him. In his dream Pharaoh had seen seven fat cows come out of the river and graze in a meadow. They were followed by seven skinny cows who devoured the fat ones while remaining just as thin themselves. He also saw seven fat ears of wheat on one stalk, and seven withered ears that devoured the fat ones. Joseph declared: "The dream of Pharaoh is one; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do" (Genesis 41:25). Joseph informed Pharaoh that Egypt would have seven years of plenty, which would be followed by seven years of severe famine. Joseph advised Pharaoh to, "Find a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt" (Genesis 41:33) to collect one-fifth of the crops in the good years and store them as a state reserve during the famine years. Joseph was selected and, at the age of 30, became Governor of the strongest nation on earth and the second most powerful man in Egypt after Pharaoh.

Joshua: Successor to Moses and leader of the Israelite invasion of Canaan (Promised Land) at Jericho. Moses had taken the exiled Chosen People and molded them into an organized community based on the legal and religious codes he taught them. Feeling that his task was complete and that death was approaching, Moses passed leadership to Joshua, who had been selected by God as a man, "Full of
spirit and wisdom” (Deuteronomy 34:9). At a solemn ceremony, Moses laid his hands upon Joshua and charged him with the task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Encamped in the Jordan Valley, Joshua planned the attack on Jericho carefully. On the appointed day of battle, God said to Joshua: “This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you” (Joshua 3:7). After his successful invasion, Joshua divided the conquered territory among the 12 Israelite Tribes.

Josiah: Sixteenth King of Judah who was eight years old when he assumed the throne. During his eighteenth year as King, a “Book of the Law” was discovered inside the Temple (An early version of the Book of Deuteronomy). When Josiah read the sacred work, he was filled with anger discovering how far the religious practices of his time had strayed from the Covenant. Josiah ordered an assembly in Jerusalem, where he declared that the priests and the prophets, all the people, small and great, shall read the whole of the Book of Laws. (2 Kings 23:2) Josiah undertook sweeping reforms in Judah. For these actions, Josiah is remembered as one of Judah's greatest Kings.

Judith: A beautiful, intelligent woman who lived quietly on a farm in the hill country of Judea. Judith spent much of her time mourning the death of her husband. When the Assyrian army, commanded by General Holofernes, invaded Judea from the north, Judith prayed to God for strength. "So the Lord God heard their prayers and looked upon their affliction” (Judith 4:13). Puzzled by their faith in God, the Assyrian General Holofernes asked, "What people is this that lives in the hill country? What cities do they inhabit? How large is their army, and in what does their power or strength consist? Who rules over them as king, leading their army? And why have they alone, of all who live in the west, refused to come out and meet me?” (Judith 5:3-4) When the history of the Chosen People and their protection from God was told to Holofernes, he became angry.

A Plan of Action:
When all of Judea was in danger of starvation, Judith devised a plan to save her people. Leaving her home town, Judith traveled to the enemy camp where she was seized and questioned. Judith told the Assyrians she had escaped from her home town to avoid death. She also revealed important information concerning secret routes whereby all of Judea could be occupied without Assyrian losses. Captivated by her story and beauty, Holofernes believed Judith. Four days later, Holofernes invited Judith to a feast where he ate and drank without care. When left alone, Judith prayed for strength, drew Holofernes's sword, and cut off his head at the neck. Judith left the Assyrian camp without delay and returned home. Upon arrival, Judith held up Holofernes's head and praised God who had delivered her to safety. Judith stated, "It was my face that tricked him to his destruction, and yet he committed no act of sin with me” (Judith 13:16).

At dawn of the following day, the Assyrian army, realizing the fate of their commanding General, fled Judea in panic. Judith resumed her quiet way of life, refusing all offers of marriage. Judith was a patriotic widow who saved her people. The Book of Judith was inspired by several historical events which accounts for its patriotic theme and spirit.

Joel & Abijah: Sons of the Prophet and Judge Samuel. Appointed minor Judges in Beersheba by their father, they were known to be corrupt and to accept bribes. The people of Israel demanded a monarchy because Samuel's sons were corrupt and unfit to succeed him.

Laban: Jacob's father-in-law. When the young Jacob was sent by his mother (Rebekah) to stay with Laban, an opportunity presented itself. Jacob served Laban for twenty years, then decided to depart. When Jacob left, Laban pursued him, protesting the removal of his daughters and grandchildren and accused Jacob of stealing the images of his household gods. Laban searched Jacob's camp but could not find his stolen idols. Before departing, Laban proposed an agreement of friendship and sealed their pact in accordance with custom and tradition. Laban declared, "May God watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other” (Genesis 31:49).

Leah: First wife of Jacob and the oldest daughter of Laban. The mother of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. One daughter was born to Leah: Dinah.

Lot: Nephew of Abraham. Living in the well-watered plains of Jordan, Lot made his home in the city of Sodom. One evening Lot invited two strangers to return home with him, thus protecting them from a mob of angry citizens. Unknown to Lot was the fact that his guests were angels sent by God to destroy the evil cities of the plain. The visitors urged Lot to leave the city and take his family. At dawn, Lot, his wife and their two unmarried daughters set out from Sodom. God then destroyed the twin cities with fire and brimstone. Though Lot's family were warned not to look back upon the destruction, his wife did so, and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Maccabees: Name means "hammer.” Leaders of the Maccabean revolt. The family consisted of five remarkable brothers: (i) John (ii) Simon (iii) Judas (iv) Eleazar and (v) Jonathan The father was named Mattathias, a priest in a small community outside Jerusalem. As a family, they opposed the Hellenization of the Promised Land by order of Antiochus IV. The Maccabees established a guerrilla base in the hills outside of Jerusalem. Joined together with other outlaws, they raided villages in the region, destroying pagan altars, circumcising male children and spreading the spirit of rebellion. After a series of successful raids, Jerusalem was open to attack. The family attacked the Syrian garrison and destroyed the forces of Antiochus IV. Judas devoted himself to restoring and purifying the Temple which had fallen into a state of neglect.

Melchizedek: The King of Salem who welcomed Abraham from victory by offering bread and wine in a sacrifice. Melchizedek represents the ideal king who is generous with his offerings and quickly recognizes the important role of Abraham.

Messiah: A man promised throughout the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. The Messiah traces his family ancestry to King David. It is the responsibility of the Messiah to herald the “Day of the Lord,” or that moment when God would intervene directly in the
human affairs of Israel and restore the Chosen People to righteousness. According to Scripture, the Messiah must suffer, be rejected, and die for our sins, qualities the people of Israel will overlook in Jesus in favor of His divine intervention in day-to-day problems.

Michal: Daughter of King Saul who fell in love with David. King Saul agreed to a marriage between his daughter and David if the young David could slay 200 Philistines. Successful, David soon married.

Miriam: The sister of Moses and Aaron and most likely the eldest of the three. After crossing the Red Sea during the Exodus from Egypt, Miriam led the women of Israel in a ceremonial dance and song of gratitude to God in what is now called the Canticle of Miriam.

Mordechai: Guardian of Esther. A devout Jew who resided in Susa, the capital of the Persian Empire. He adopted as his own daughter a young orphan whose Persian name was Esther. She was chosen by King Ahasuerus to be his queen, and Mordechai advised her not to disclose the fact that she was Jewish. Mordechai held an official position at the king's court and was well established there as a loyal servant of Ahasuerus. Mordechai discovered the foul plans of Haman and refused to bow down before him. When Haman sought to kill not only Mordechai but all Jews, intervention by Ahasuerus was needed. With the assistance of Esther, Mordechai revealed Haman's plans. After Haman's death, Mordechai was appointed chief minister in Haman's place. The king advanced Mordechai, "Until Mordechai was next in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and spoke peace to all his people" (Esther 10:3).

Mountains: Notable events occur on mountains in the Sacred Scriptures. Mountains were considered closer to the heavens, providing a neighboring connection to the sacred. These mountains are pivotal in the Old Testament:

- Mt. Sinai – Moses receives the Ten Commandments.
- Mt. Nebo – Moses viewed the Promised Land after forty years in the desert prior to Joshua’s invasion.
- Mt. Gilboa – King Saul commits suicide after a bitter defeat by the Philistines.
- Mt. Tabor – Judges Deborah and Barak engage Sisera in battle and are victorious.
- Mt. Carmel – Prophet Elijah confronts the pagan priests of Baal in a divine contest and wins.
- Mt. Zion – Location of the first and second Temple.
- Mt. Ararat – Noah’s ark rested in the mountains of Ararat.
- Mt. Moriah – Abraham is prepared to sacrifice Isaac.

Moses: The great Hebrew leader and lawgiver. One of the great figures from history, Moses authored the first five books of the Old Testament (also called the Torah or Pentateuch). These five books contain the Law of Moses, or the Mosaic Law. No one among the Old Testament figures has the same close relationship with God as Moses: "The Lord our God used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11).

**Early Years:**
The story of Moses opens in Egypt. Jacob and his family had settled as a family clan in the land of Goshen near the Nile valley. Here their descendants lived and prospered four centuries until, "There arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exodus 1:8). This king decided that Jacob's descendants had become too numerous and strong. He turned them into slave laborers, "And God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to their way" (Exodus 5: 1). Pharaoh rejected the request. In response God declared, "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them" (Exodus 7:5). The whole of Egypt experienced a series of 10 plagues, except for the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived. As each plague became worse, Pharaoh agreed to let Moses' people go free.

**Let My People Go:**
Moses and Aaron gained an audience with the reigning Pharaoh. In the name of the God of Israel they requested him to, "Let my people go" (Exodus 5: 1). Pharaoh rejected the request. In response God declared, "The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth my hand upon Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them" (Exodus 7:5). The whole of Egypt experienced a series of 10 plagues, except for the land of Goshen where the Israelites lived. As each plague became worse, Pharaoh agreed to let Moses' people go free.

**The Wilderness:**
The great land between Egypt and Canaan (Promised Land) was the Sinai desert. The freed slaves attempted to move as quickly as possible. "And God went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give light to their way" (Exodus 13:21). Moses and his people traveled around the desert mountains for 40 years until the last generation of the freed slaves entered Canaan.
them light, that they might travel by day and night” (Exodus 13:21). Their haste was well founded. Pharaoh's advisors said to him, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" (Exodus 14:5) Pharaoh's army set out in pursuit with a powerful mobile force. When the Israelites saw them coming, they trembled with fear and cried out to Moses: "Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Exodus 14:11) Nothing but a miracle could save the Israelites. When they neared the Red Sea, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and the winds pushed the waters aside. The Chosen People passed through safely. When Pharaoh's army entered the Sea, the waters collapsed and entrapped the soldiers.

Mount Sinai:
The stage was set for one of the most important moments in human history: the handing down of the Law. God called Moses up the mountain and on the third day a thick cloud appeared. Out of it came thunder and lightning. "And Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because God descended upon it in fire..." (Exodus 19:18). Then the voice of God came forth and pronounced the Ten Commandments. A number of other laws were then made known to Moses.

Ending:
The Ten Commandments were placed in a special container, called the Ark of the Covenant. This portable container was covered with gold and became a temple to God wherever the Israelites traveled. For 40 years, the Chosen People wandered the Sinai desert. In his farewell address, Moses painted a pleasant picture of the Promised Land, a land he would never live to see. Before his death, Moses asked God to appoint a new leader to whom he could hand over authority. It was indicated that Moses' successor would be Joshua.

Naomi: Mother-in-law of Ruth. Naomi lived with her husband, Elimelech, in Bethlehem, with their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. When famine struck the land, the family moved to the country east of the Dead Sea and settled there. Elimelech died, and the sons married Moabite women, Ruth and Orpah. After ten years, both sons died, and Naomi returned to Bethlehem with Ruth.

Faithfulness & Integrity:
Naomi insisted that Ruth and Orpah return to their own homes. "Go, return each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me" (Ruth 1:8). The two young widows refused, at first, to leave Naomi. Orpah went back to her own family and their gods. Ruth, on the other hand, refused to depart from Naomi. The journey from Moab to Bethlehem was strenuous. When Naomi and Ruth arrived, they were greeted openly. Depressed, Naomi insisted that she be called Mara, meaning bitter in Hebrew.

Rags to Riches:
Ruth gleaned barley in Boaz's neighboring field. When Naomi discovered that Boaz treated Ruth kindly and was attracted to her, an honest plan was conceived. Trusting in the affection and integrity of Boaz, Naomi was deeply moved when Ruth was married. When a son was born, Naomi cared for the child and found much happiness.

Nathan: Hebrew Prophet and trusted advisor to King David. God revealed to Nathan in a dream that David would only begin the great Temple in Jerusalem. David's son, Solomon, would have the honor of completing the task. Nathan was a key player in spoiling Adonijah's rebellious claim to the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar [Book of Judith]: In the Book of Judith, the King of Assyria. Led his armies outward to punish the Jews, who had failed to assist him in a war against the King of Media. This reference has no historical basis. Nebuchadnezzar was in fact the King of Babylon and defeated the Assyrian Empire in combat.

Nebuchadnezzar: King of Babylon. Having risen from among the lowly ranks of warriors, he became the most powerful and energetic ruler on earth until Alexander the Great. Under Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon ranked as a great center of trade, architecture, art, astronomy and military power.

Nehemiah: Governor of Judah and a leader in Jerusalem. With the permission of King Cyrus, Nehemiah traveled to Jerusalem on many occasions and personally witnessed the hardships of the people. The solutions needed to rebuild Jerusalem were set forth by Nehemiah, who prayed to God for wisdom and support. Among his contributions, Nehemiah ordered the rebuilding of the walls and gates of Jerusalem, witnessed the city's population increase, ordered a census of the city's population, encouraged settlements outside the city walls (farming communities), fought corruption among the wealthy citizens in Jerusalem and demanded an oath from all citizens to uphold the Torah (Law) at all times and in all walks of life. His memoir ends with these words: "Remember me, o my God, for good" (Nehemiah 13:31).

Noah: Among the tenth generation from Adam, Noah was a just and decent man who loved God. However, Noah lived in a period when "The earth was corrupt and filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11). God told Noah that He intended to destroy all living creatures with a great flood. Noah was instructed to build a great wooden ark and, with his wife and three sons, await the great flood. Inside the ark was enough food for Noah and his family as well as every male and female creature upon the earth. When the rains came, the ark floated upon the waters while all other life perished from the earth. After five months, the floodwater started to recede. In the seventh month, the ark came to rest in the mountains of Ararat. Upon leaving the ark, Noah built an altar and made sacrifices to God. In response, God formed a covenant with Noah and declared that the floodwaters would not be repeated and that Noah's descendants would be fruitful and fill the earth again. God promised the cycle of nature would be restored: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22).

Obed: The son of Boaz and Ruth; the father of Jesse, and the grandfather of King David.
Jerusalem. At the age of 25 had a vision of God: And I heard the voice of God saying-Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? ' Then Prophet Isaiah:

I said, "Here I am! Send me." From that day onward, he dedicated himself as a messenger of God. Isaiah’s entire message is rooted in his personal feelings. Because of his feelings, Hosea dreamed of a day when his wife would return to him faithfully and admit her sins, just as God waits for the Chosen People to return with open hearts.

Phinehas: The wicked son of Eli. Along with his brother, Hophni, Phinehas lived a life of corruption and evil. "The sons of Eli were worthless men; they had no regard for God" (1 Samuel 2:12). Phinehas died in battle with the Philistines, along with his brother and the captured Ark of the Covenant.

Potiphar: Egyptian officer and captain of the guard in Pharaoh’s court. Bought Joseph as a slave for his household from Midianite traders. Joseph proved his worth to Potiphar and elevated him within his household to higher duties. When Potiphar’s wife made sexual advances toward Joseph, he was placed in jail.

Prophet Amos: A sheep farmer from the village of Tekoa; first appears as a prophet in the city of Bethel thundering condemnations against corrupt merchants who live life without obeying the Covenant. Among his condemnations, Amos preached that the Chosen People were blind to the Assyrian danger looming to the north. "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria” (Amos 6: 1).

Prophet Baruch: A scribe and devoted follower of Jeremiah. When Jeremiah was banned from preaching inside the Temple courtyard, Baruch read Jeremiah’s message to the people.

Prophet Elijah: Hebrew prophet who has captivated Old Testament readers for centuries. He is described as appearing mysteriously from an unknown background, fought as a soldier for Yahweh against heathen gods, championed for the poor, and was taken up to Heaven in a blazing chariot. Feeling his end was near, Elijah went to Jericho and attempted to convince his disciple, Elisha, not to go any farther with him. However, Elisha refused to leave Elijah alone. As Elijah was about to be taken up to Heaven, Elisha tore his clothes as a sign of respect and immediately assumed responsibility for Elijah's duties. Jews today believe Elijah is not dead and continues to wander the earth. He will reappear to usher in the Messiah.

Prophet Elisha: Disciple and successor to the Prophet Elijah. Preached in the Kingdom of Israel (against the pagan god, Baal. Elisha is remembered as a gentle man who lived among the common people pursuing his mission by working wonders, the first of which took place in the city of Jericho.

Prophet Ezekiel: Name means, "The Strength of God." Hebrew Prophet of the Exile. A major figure from the Old Testament. Ezekiel is the first Prophet of the Exile, starting with the first deportations from Judah in 598 B.C. His ministry spans twenty-two years, preaching his entire message in Babylon. Ezekiel condemns Judah for its faithlessness and warns of even greater troubles ahead for the Chosen People. Surrounding nations have intentions to conquer Babylon; the fall of Judah may be just the beginning of pain and suffering! Jeremiah offered his message of hope and comfort to the exiled Chosen People, promising a day when they will be allowed to return to the Promised Land free from oppression, Ezekiel, on the other hand, openly predicts a time ahead when a restored Israel will sit in power among all nations with a restored Temple and people who have faith in Yahweh alone. Such a day offers hope to a suffering Jewish people in exile.

Prophet Ezra: A priest and scribe who returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Ezra played a key role in the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. Under Persian decree, Ezra was given the authority to return to Jerusalem and require that all people comply with the Law of Moses as outlined by God at Mount Sinai. Restoration of the Law gave the Hebrew People a sense of national identity, once again, as the people “chosen” by God. Ezra put an end to foreign worship, pagan marriage, and contact with Gentiles: “You have transgressed and married foreign women...separate yourselves from the peoples of the land and from foreign wives” (Ezra 10:10-11). The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth) was restored, commemorating the time when all Jewish ancestors were led out of Egypt by Moses. Ezra laid the foundations for strict interpretations of the Law of Moses.

Prophet Haggai: Post-Exilic Prophet who played a part in the life of Jerusalem after the arrival of the Chosen People from Babylon. Provided moral guidance and pressure in resuming work on the destroyed Temple.

Prophet Hosea: Prophet in the Kingdom of Israel (N). Denounced idol worship and prophesied the disasters that would come as punishment from Yahweh. A man who had a disastrous family life. His wife became a harlot (prostitute). Hosea depicted the Chosen People as a spouse betraying God, her husband, and committing adultery with pagan cults. For Hosea, mere observance of the Mosaic Laws is not enough. True faith is a matter of the heart. Because of his feelings, Hosea dreamed of a day when his wife would return to him faithfully and admit her sins, just as God waits for the Chosen People to return with open hearts.

Prophet Isaiah: Prophet in the Kingdom of Judah (S). Considered by many the greatest of all the Old Testament Prophets. Born in Jerusalem. At the age of 25 had a vision of God: And I heard the voice of God saying-Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." From that day onward, he dedicated himself as a messenger of God. Isaiah's entire message is rooted
towards the city of Jerusalem, his "faithful city" he so admired. A man of deep conviction, he insisted on faith in God alone. He saw the corrupt Kings of Judah as the enemy opposed to God's will. He supported the reform measures by King Hezekiah in Judah, despite mounting pressure from the military of Assyria. In vivid language, Isaiah foretold the fate of Judah and its enemies. He railed against religious hypocrisy, greed, exploitation of the poor, and moral perversions. His greatest contributions were his writings and preaching on the Messiah. In Isaiah 7:14-15, we have the famous passage predicting the virgin birth of Jesus Christ: "Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This passage is greatly expanded in Isaiah 9:6 which states, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Prophet [Second] Isaiah: The author of Chapters 40-66 in the Book of Isaiah. This name of this author is unknown, but his style is clearly a tone of consolation after the suffering endured during the Exile. Second Isaiah addresses his audience from Babylon. Most importantly, Second Isaiah awaits with anticipation for the Messiah in Jerusalem: "Comfort my people, says your God, speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:1-3).

Prophet Jeremiah: Name means, "God Will Elevate." Hebrew Prophet who is considered one of the giants of the Old Testament. Lived in the city of Jerusalem during the final years of the Kingdom of Judah. Like Prophets before him, Jeremiah was a God-driven man who fearlessly denounced the sins and social ills of Judah, and warned of the disasters that could follow if the Chosen People did not repent and return to the Covenant (Mosaic Laws). Born in Anathoth, a village three miles north east of Jerusalem, Jeremiah descended from a family of Temple priests. For Jeremiah, faith in God was an intensely personal matter, and God would judge each person by what was in his or her heart. To accomplish his mission as Prophet, Jeremiah planted himself in the courtyard of the Temple and public squares in Jerusalem. Jeremiah's outspoken criticisms brought him into continuous trouble with Jewish authorities. Jeremiah denounced pagan practices and spoke in God's name: "And you and all who dwell in your house shall go into captivity; to Babylon you shall go; and there you shall die, and there you shall be buried, you and all your friends, to whom you have prophesied falsely." (Jeremiah 20:6)

Prophet Jonah: The reluctant Prophet who carries a message and a warning to the city of Nineveh. Very little is known about the personal side of Jonah. Jonah was called by God to preach to the city of Nineveh on the Tigris river. Nineveh is the capital city of the defeated Assyrian Empire. For the Chosen People, Nineveh was a city representing impurity and sin. When Jonah arrived in Nineveh, he proclaimed that it would be destroyed in 40 days. "Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies; all who hear the news of you clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?" Alarmed, the inhabitants repented and put on sackcloth. Men and women fasted. Entire communities renounced their evil ways. God relented and the doom over the city was avoided. Jonah was a man who doubted his own skills and talents. God, however, looks beyond the faults and shortcomings of Jonah and calls him to an extraordinary life.

Prophet Micah: Prophet in the Kingdom of Israel (N). Born in the town of Moresheth, Micah had a prophecy of disaster for the Chosen People. He took his message of lament (sorrow) in vivid language, and provided a description of the Messiah: "His greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace."

Prophet Zechariah: Post-Exilic Prophet who resided in Jerusalem after the return of the Chosen People from Babylon. Sought moral pressure in getting work resumed on the Temple. Zechariah prophesied the coming of the Messiah as a time when enemy nations would be conquered and freedom would welcome the Chosen People everywhere. Zechariah also prophesied the arrival of the Messiah on a donkey: "See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9).

Queen of Sheba: A foreign leader from Arabia who travels to Jerusalem to personally witness the wonder and wisdom of King Solomon. She was a curious woman who intended to see if King Solomon was as wise and rich as legends have told. She recognized that he was wise and favored by Yahweh when she stated, "Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report I heard ... Blessed be the Lord, your God, whom it has pleased to place you on the throne of Israel" (1 Kings 10:7).

Rachel: Second wife of Jacob and the younger daughter of Laban. The mother of Joseph and Benjamin.

Rahab: A prostitute in the city of Jericho who protected two Israelite spies sent into the city by Joshua. She hid the Hebrews from the authorities on a promise that the Chosen People would spare her and her family. When Jericho fell, Rahab and her family found safety within the camp of Israelites.

Rameses II: The ruling Pharaoh of Egypt during the Exodus. Reigned from 1290-1224 B.C. The long reign of Rameses marked the beginning of a great decline in Egyptian authority and power.

Rehoboam: Son of King Solomon. Succeeded his father to the throne of Judah but could not convince the Tribes of Israel of his leadership. Civil war soon followed.

Ruth: The Moabite ancestress of King David. The account of devotion between the Israelite widow Naomi and her Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth is set against the bitter years of the Judges.
Famine & Honor:
During a famine, Naomi, her husband, and two sons left Bethlehem and moved east, beyond the Dead Sea, to the mountain plateau of Moab. There Naomi's husband died and her sons married. Ruth became Naomi's daughter-in-law. Ten years later, Ruth's husband died and Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. Ruth accompanied Naomi on the journey, stating: "...For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (Ruth 1: 16).

Rags to Riches:
The two destitute women reached Bethlehem at the beginning of the wheat and barley harvest. Ruth went into the fields to glean the ears of corn left by the reapers, hoping that a farmer would show kindness to her. By chance, Ruth's gleaning brought her into the land belonging to Boaz, a wealthy relative of Naomi's late husband. Boaz inquired about the unknown young woman and was told of Ruth, the Moabite who would not leave Naomi's side. Boaz felt drawn to Ruth, spoke with her of the devotion she demonstrated, and insisted she remain in his fields and share the food and water of his workers. Boaz left instructions that Ruth was to glean and be left safely alone.

A Marriage is Sought:
Boaz wished to marry Ruth; however, there were legal complications. Naomi informed Ruth that Boaz, one of her husband's relatives, could retain a right to redemption over both of them as widows. In this era, Israelite law demanded that a deceased man's next-of-kin possessed the right to marry the widow, or "redeem" her, and if he renounced that right, it would pass to the nearest male relative. Naomi urged Ruth to continue working in Boaz's field where she would receive kind treatment and would not be assaulted. This Ruth did, gleaning the barley and wheat harvests. When Naomi learned that Boaz would be in his own field winnowing the barley and then spending the night on his threshing floor, after customary food and drink with the workers, she advised Ruth to wait until Boaz was asleep next to a barley heap. Then, Ruth turned back the edge of Boaz's cloak and lay down at his feet. In the middle of the night, Boaz awoke and was surprised. Ruth requested marriage, for Boaz was a next-of-kin. Boaz praised Ruth for her loyalty to Naomi and explained that the right of redemption was held by another kinsman, closer than he. If the kinsman did not exercise the right, he, Boaz, would do so and marry Ruth. Before daybreak, Ruth was sent away in order to avoid scandal.

A Marriage is Sealed:
Boaz addressed the town elders, sought Ruth in marriage, and was successful. In the presence of the witnesses, Boaz declared that he would acquire the property of Naomi's late husband and Ruth, "That the name of the dead may not be cut off from among his brethren" (Ruth 4: 10). All those present called upon the blessings of the Lord for the union. Ruth later gave birth to a son, Obed.

Samson: Judge over Israel for twenty years. A popular leader who captivated the hearts of Israelites with feats of incredible strength. Often depicted in combat with the Canaanites (Philistines), Samson planned one-man border wars. From the day of his birth, Samson was dedicated in service to God. Soon, he "Began to deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5).

Samuel: Prophet and the last Judge of Israel. In his youth, Samuel heard the voice of God and said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:9). Samuel was warned by God that Eli's household would suffer for the evil misdeeds of Hophni and Phinehas. When Samuel reported this warning to Eli, the experience became a turning point in his life. It was the first of many times when God would speak directly to Samuel.

Kingmaker:
When Samuel was elderly, he appointed the final Judges of Israel. Many were corrupt, accepting bribes and perverting justice. The elders of Israel complained to Samuel, saying: "Behold, you are old and do not walk in our ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5). This request changed the structure of Jewish life. In all of Jewish history, God was their King and His commandments were their Law. Samuel was outraged at the demands of the elders and warned of the consequences of a kingship for Israel. The elders refused to change their demand, and Samuel was forced to call the Chosen People together to select a King. The choice fell upon Saul, and Samuel presented him to the people. All shouted, "Long live the king" (1 Samuel 10:24). Samuel told the people the rights and duties of the king and dispersed the gathering. Saul was publicly acclaimed as leader.

Samuel Anoints A Man After God's Own Heart:
As Saul turned away from God, Samuel warned the King that, "God has torn the kingdom of Israel from you" (1 Samuel 15:28). Samuel then proceeded to anoint the boy David as the future King of Israel in his hometown of Bethlehem. Samuel died of old age and was mourned by all Israel.

Sarai (Sarah): Wife of Abraham. A woman who was barren until old age when she was promised a child by God. The child born was a son, whom she named Isaac.

Saul: The first King of Israel. In his youth, Saul is described as, "A handsome young man from his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:2). The kingly office was bestowed upon him by the Prophet and Judge Samuel at a time when the Israelites were being pressed by their enemies and felt desperately in need of a single leader, behind whom they could unite.

Saul Rises To Become King:
It took a military emergency to propel Saul into the leadership for which he had been marked. The Israelite town of Jabesh-Gilead, east of the Jordan River, was being attacked by the Ammonites. The townspeople sought surrender terms. The attacking army denied any requests for surrender. The elders of the town prayed for time while they sent out appeals for help. Saul was coming from the fields when he heard of the grim situation at Jabesh-Gilead. He quickly mobilized a large force and marched to the assistance of the town. Approaching at night, Saul launched a surprise attack at dawn. The Ammonite army was driven away, and Jabesh-Gilead was saved. This victory established Saul as a great military leader. Samuel assembled all the Israelites together at Gilgal and Saul was crowned King in a great ceremony followed by public rejoicing.

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When Saul had been King of Israel for two years, he felt ready to challenge the power of the Philistines. They were a formidable enemy equipped with large fighting forces and war chariots. The Israelites, on the other hand, were relatively poor and backward as warriors. The Israelites were a people's militia armed with pitchforks and other farm tools. The swords and spears used in combat belonged to the Philistines.

**Saul's Lack Of Military Leadership:**

Saul's conflict with Samuel was marked by a desire to assert his power and authority. The Israelites were preparing to destroy Israel. Meeting the advancing Philistines at Mount Gilboa, Saul felt abandoned and fearful. Unable to reach God in prayer for guidance, Saul turned to a witch to summon the spirit of Samuel from the dead. (This practice was illegal according to the Mosaic Law) What the witch foretold was shattering: The Israelites would be defeated in battle and Saul, along with his two sons, would die in the conflict at Mount Gilboa. Saul was in shock. The Israelite forces were disastrously defeated on Mount Gilboa. Saul's two sons were among the slain. The King himself was wounded by Philistine archers and begged his armor-bearer to kill him rather than let him fall into the hands of the enemy. Afraid to kill the King, the armor-bearer fled. Saul took his own sword, and fell upon it (1 Samuel 31:4). The following day the Philistines found Saul's body on the battlefield. They cut off his head and removed his armor as a trophy of their victory.

**Sheshbazzar:** The leader of the first phase of the Return. Sheshbazzar received the vessels of silver and gold that had been pillaged from the Temple by the Babylonians and were sent back by Cyrus with the returning Jews.

**Sisera:** Canaanite commander of the army of King Jabin. After nearly conquering the Israelites and punishing them for twenty years, the Judge & Prophetess Deborah roused the Israelites to battle. Sisera's army was defeated near the Kishon River. The commander himself fled on foot and was later killed in a tent by a woman named Jael.

**Solomon:** Son and successor to King David. Solomon is remembered as a "magnificent failure" in Israel's history, as he shares with David a list of great accomplishments and failures. Yet father and son emerge with markedly different lives and personalities. Solomon inherited a united Israel and kept the monarchy out of war during much of his reign.

**Mount Gilboa:**

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**Solomon As King:**

When King David was aged and ill, his eldest son Adonijah made a bid for the throne, supported by General Joab and Abiathar. Bathsheba rushed to inform David that Adonijah was attempting to seize the monarchy. Supported by the Prophet Nathan, Bathsheba was able to convince David that Adonijah should at once be crowned. Solomon was anointed and crowned King to prevent a family civil war. The dying King David's last words to his son were, "I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, and show yourself a man” (1 Kings 2:2). If Solomon wished to be a successful ruler, he would have to obey God and observe the Mosaic Laws at all times. As a young and inexperienced King, Solomon acted with surprising forcefulness in crushing the men who had turned against his father and remained a threat to his throne. Solomon quickly purged his court of all opposition, including Adonijah, General Joab, and Abiathar (exiled only). Following these actions, Solomon's kingdom was established (1 Kings 2:46).

**The Administrator:**

From the list of chief ministers in Chapter 4 of the First Book of Kings, it appears that King Solomon sought continuity in the conduct of the kingdom's affairs by relying mostly on those who had served his father, or by appointing their sons. For administrative and taxes purposes, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into twelve districts. Each district was placed under the charge of a commissioner who was provided with an official residence and storehouses for grain, oils, and other taxed goods. Each district was to provide the food for its inhabitants. King Solomon's foreign policy rested on securing political alliances and developing trade with the surrounding countries. As had always been the custom with monarchs, diplomatic relations were most reliable with a suitable marriage. The Kingdom of Israel was a center of vast trade routes. The revenue produced from tolls was immense. King Solomon's partnership with Hiram I of Tyre opened a sea route through the Mediterranean. Since the Chosen People were primarily hill people and shepherds, they lacked seafaring skills. With the help of Hiram I, wooden vessels and sails served as suitable transports for copper and timber.

**The Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem:**

Based upon expanded commerce within the Persian Gulf, a kingdom called Sheba became the newest trading partner for the Israelite Kingdom. Located on the south west comer of the Arabian peninsula (what is today Yemen), their strategic position was the center of
enterprising trade and included multiple sea lanes of commerce. Their chief commodities were gold, gems, and spices. The Queen of Sheba was intrigued by the reports of King Solomon's legendary wisdom and the growing wealth and power of Israel. Sheba saw prospects of extending her nation's commercial activity and decided to pay a royal visit to the Israelite court in Jerusalem. King Solomon received the Queen of Sheba. She was dazzled with the luxury of his household and came with many riddles and difficult questions to test his knowledge. She also presented a large quantity of gold, precious stones, and spices than had ever been seen at one time in Israel.

_A Divided Kingdom:_

In the later years of King Solomon's reign, Israel faced increasing difficulties. A lack of religious observance to the Law on the part of King Solomon proved troublesome. Solomon allowed his many wives to worship their assorted heathen gods freely. He was broad minded enough to provide them facilities for their worship. What was worse, many Israelites felt that the King himself did not remain immune to these idolatrous practices. "For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father" (1 Kings 11:4). God was angry with King Solomon and declared that the Kingdom of Israel would be torn apart when he died. King Solomon died after nearly forty years on the throne, and he was buried in Jerusalem, with David. The damage to the Kingdom, however, could not be repaired.

_Solomon's Accomplishments:_

(1) A man of great wisdom and judgment.
(2) A loyal and strong administrator; he undertook tremendous construction projects never seen before within Israel.
(3) Trade and commerce began within the Mediterranean for the first time.
(4) Building a great Temple for the Ark of the Covenant.
(5) Building the royal palace in Jerusalem.
(6) Wealth from trade and commerce overflowed the treasury.
(7) Contributed to the Book of Proverbs and The Song of Songs.

_Solomon's Failures:_

(1) Marrying outside the Jewish community and the Mosaic Law.
(2) Solomon's wives embraced pagan gods. Yahweh declared that Israel would be torn apart after Solomon's death for this insult.
(3) Israelites were very unhappy with heavy taxes and forced labor.
(4) The Northern and Southern tribes argued needlessly; they were unable to co-exist as a united nation. Civil war was coming.

_Terah:_ Father of Abraham.

_Uriah:_ Means "God is my light." First husband of Bathsheba. A field commander in King David's army under the direct command of General Joab. King David took advantage of Uriah's absence in battle to have an affair with his wife. When King David learned Bathsheba was pregnant, he sent a secret message to General Joab to have Uriah sent home. When Uriah remained in battle, King David grew fearful of a scandal and ordered General Joab to place Uriah at the front lines of combat, and then draw back from him so that he may die (2 Samuel 11: 15). Uriah was soon killed and David was able to marry Bathsheba.

_Woman [Witch] of Endor:_ The medium through whom King Saul contacted the spirit of Samuel from the dead.

_Zadok:_ Second High Priest in the court of King David. Anointed Solomon as David’s legal successor.

_Zedekiah:_ Twentieth and last King of Judah. The son of King Josiah, he assumed the throne of Judah as Jerusalem was surrendering to the Babylonians. The Babylonians stripped away much of the territory held by Judah and imposed harsh rules over the city of Jerusalem. Refusing to submit to the Babylonians, Zedekiah and some of his fighting men escaped Jerusalem under cover of darkness and fled eastwards. They were pursued and captured near Jericho. Zedekiah was brought before King Nebuchadnezzar of the Babylonians and forced to witness the slaying of his children. Zedekiah's eyes were cut out and he was placed in prison where he later died. The independence of Judah had come to an end along with the monarchy.

_Zerubbabel:_ The leader of the second phase of the Return. He had authority over the Jewish settlers. Upon arrival in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel started to organize and supervise the rebuilding of the Temple. When work on restoring the Temple was complete, a great celebration took place. After this event, Zerubbabel seems to have disappeared, and his end is unknown.

_Zophar:_ One of three friends of Job who grieved with him for seven days and nights; Zophar was shocked at Job's appearance. When Job began to curse the day he was born and protest his sufferings, Zophar attempted to console him sternly: "Oh, that God would speak, and open His lips to you....know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves" (Job 11:5-6). In the end, Job made no effort to conceal his impatience with all three friends.