

Introduction

Dr. Carl Pace

כתובים

The Writings

Ketuvim: Contents

Jewish Order (<Hebrew Bible)

Sifre Emet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psalms/Tehillim• Proverbs/Mishlei• Job/Iyyob
Five Scrolls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Song of Songs/Shir ha-Shirim• Ruth• Lamentations/Eikhah• Ecclesiastes/Qohelet• Esther
Other Books:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Daniel• Ezra-Nehemiah• Chronicles/Divrei ha-Yamim

- 11 Books, mixed contents
- Catch-all category

“The contours of [the Writings] are more blurred than those of the two preceding parts [Torah and Prophets]. It contains writings of very different character, the common feature of which is essentially that they have not been incorporated in one of the two other parts of the canon.” (Rendtdorff, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 245)

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- 11 Books, mixed contents
- Catch-all category
- Subcategories
- Sifre Emet “Books of Truth”
 - Job, Proverbs, Psalms
 - A Hebrew acronym:

איוב

משלי

תהילים

אמת “truth”

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- 5 Megillot (scrolls), read during five festivals
 - Song of Songs – **Passover**
 - Ruth – **Shavuot/Weeks**
 - Lamentations – **9th of Av (Tisha b'Av)**
 - Qohelet – **Sukkot/Booths**
 - Esther – **Purim**

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- The remainder, largely historical works, but for Daniel:
 - Court Tales and Apocalyptic

Canonical Orders

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“The order of the Writings is: Ruth and the book of Psalms, and Job and Proverbs; Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations; Daniel and the Scroll of Esther; and Ezra and Chronicles.

But to someone who says ‘Job lived in the time of Moses, so let the book of Job precede the others,’ [we say]: We do not begin with suffering...

‘But the book of Ruth, with which the Writings opens, is also about suffering...’

Yet this is suffering which has a future of hope and redemption.” (Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 14b)

A Detour – Authorship

“Who wrote the books of the Bible? Moses wrote his own book (the Torah), and the portion of Balaam in the Torah, and **the book of Job**... Samuel wrote his own book, the book of Judges, and the book of Ruth. David wrote **the book of Psalms** by means of ten elders of previous generations, assembling a collection that included compositions of others along with his own... Jeremiah wrote his own book, and the book of Kings, **and Lamentations**. Hezekiah and his colleagues wrote the following...: Isaiah, **Proverbs, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes**. The members of the Great Assembly wrote the following...: Ezekiel, and the Twelve Prophets, **Daniel, and the Scroll of Esther**. Ezra wrote **his own book** and **the genealogy of the book of Chronicles until his period.**”

Babylonian Talmud, Baba bathra 14b-15a

Authorship

- Moses: **Job**
 - Samuel: **Ruth**
 - King David: **Psalms**
 - King Solomon
 - **Proverbs/Mishlei**
 - **Song of Songs**
 - **Ecclesiastes**
 - Jeremiah: **Lamentations**
 - Men of the Great Assembly
 - **Esther**
 - **Daniel**
 - Ezra
 - **Ezra-Nehemiah**
 - **Chronicles**
- There are many reasons to see these authorial attributions as fanciful and unlikely.
 - How can David be identified as author/editor of material that comes from after the exile, centuries after his death?
 - Ecclesiastes seems to be influenced by Hellenistic/Greek thought (centuries after Solomon)
 - Daniel appears to have been written in the second century BCE!
 - Why make such associations?

Authorship

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- King Solomon
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“The era of prophecy is the era of revelation, and thus, by the same token, the canonical era; Moses stands at its beginning and Ezra at its end. Everything written that is holy and inspired can have come only from their time. The scribes of the Hellenistic period did not draft a list nor did they close the canon; they simply enunciated the principle that the time of revelation belonged to the past... **a writer who wanted his text to gain the same status as the holy books had to convince his audience that his work was of high antiquity.**”
(Karel van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible*, 256)

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Now back to the issue of canonical orders...

Canonical Orders

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Christian Order (<Septuagint)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Judges > Ruth > Samuel – Kings >• 1-2 Chronicles• Ezra-Nehemiah• Esther	Historical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Job• Psalms• Proverbs• Ecclesiastes• Song of Songs	Poetic & Wisdom
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeremiah > Lamentations > Ezekiel• Daniel > The Twelve	Prophets



Canonical Orders and Implications

“‘Canonical intentionality’ ...is coextensive with the meaning of the biblical text.” (Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 79)

“The Ketuvim provides a model for the restoration of the ideals of Jewish life in the land of Israel and the world at large laid out in the Torah and disrupted in the Prophets.” (Sweeney, *Tanakh*, 372).

- The Jewish Canon ends with 2 Chronicles, suggesting that the end goal is restoration to the land.



Canonical Orders and Implications

- The Jewish Canon suggests that the end goal is restoration to the land.
 - Contrast this with the end of the Christian OT Canon in Malachi, which sets the goal as the Day of the Lord and the appearance of Elijah as forerunner.
- Likewise, the placement of Daniel *before* Ezra-Nehemiah:
 - Promised future reestablishment of God's people is fulfilled in the Return to Zion
 - Christianity reads Daniel as indicating a Messianic future fulfilled in Jesus

Dating the books

- Some (parts) of these texts may go back to the pre-Exilic period
 - Esp. Proverbs, Psalms, Song of Songs
- Others were written only after the Exile, post-530 BCE
- But most of them reached their final form only after the exile
- So knowledge of Israel's story in the post-exilic period is really important here!



Psalms

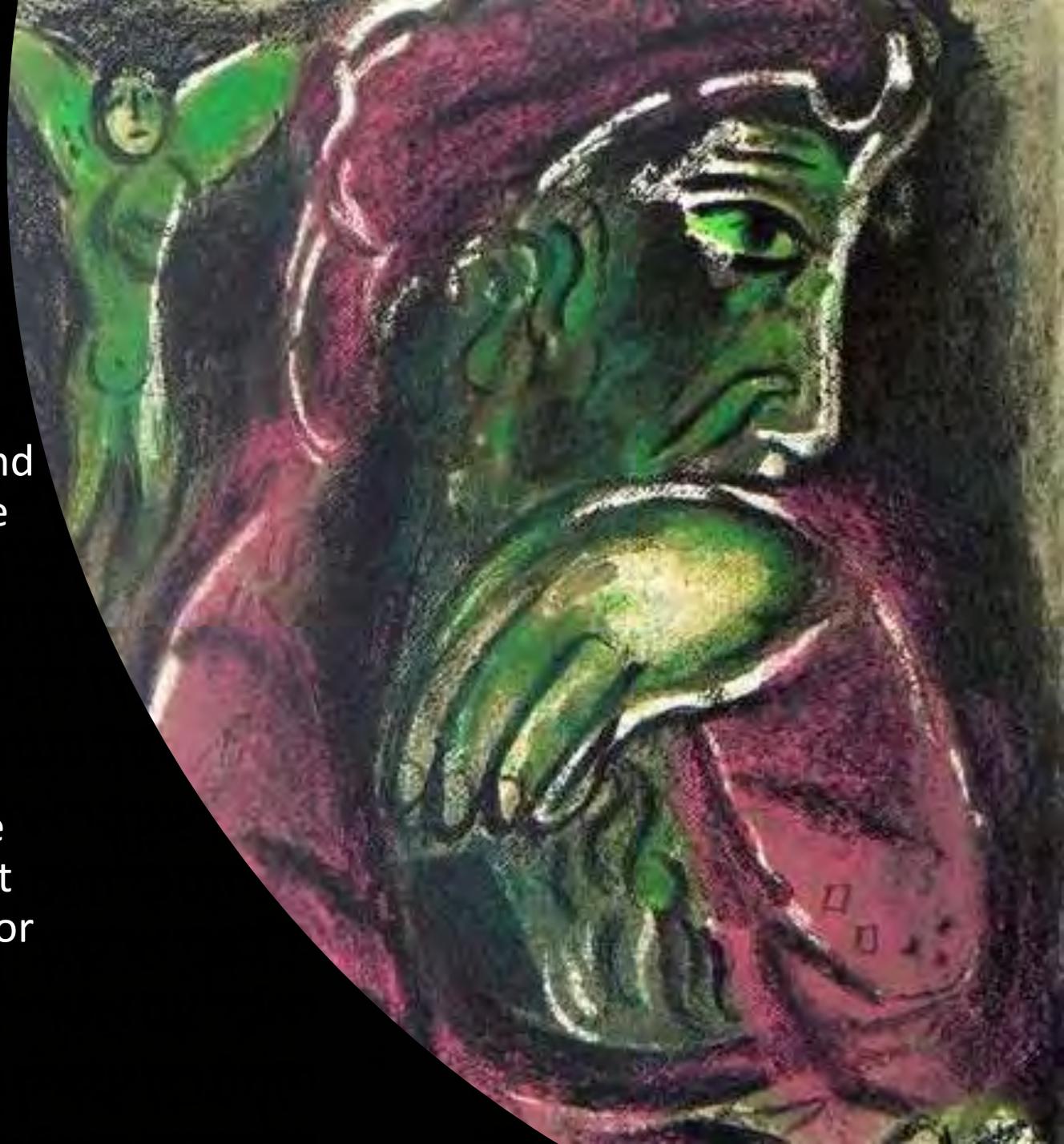
- 150 psalms in the Jewish and Western canons (Eastern canons sometimes include more, esp. Ps 151)
- Some very ancient material, going back (we think) to some of the earliest days of Israelite religion
- But also includes material written during and after the Exile
- Rich corpus for all sorts of reflections
- Theologically diverse, blending comforting and challenging ideas
 - God's love, praise of his creative genius, hope of salvation, forgiveness of sins
 - but also ethnic superiority, the cursing of enemies, and wishing bloodshed upon them (the imprecatory psalms).



Job

- A wisdom-oriented book set in a distant land (not in Israel), pitched in a literary language that hovers between Hebrew and Aramaic
- Narrative framework + (original) poetry
- Theologically deep exploration of theodicy *with no real answer!*

“The speeches of Job in the dialogue part are marked by lamentations and invective against God which are unique in the Old Testament for their profundity, acuteness and their often challenging statements.” (Rendtdorf, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 250).



Proverbs

- Collection of long and short aphorisms with occasional long monologues emphasizing moral and practical wisdom
 - In Ancient Israel, “good” wisdom always considered moral implications
- *Fürstenspiegel* – intended to train the upperclass?
- May have formed part of the scribal educational curriculum in Ancient Israel, following Egyptian and Mesopotamian models

Most of the Sumerian proverbs we have today come down to us in the form of school tablets, created by scribal students as they learn their trade in the cuneiform scribal arts. (Niek Veldhuis, “Sumerian Proverbs in Their Curricular Context.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120,3 [2000]: 383-399.)



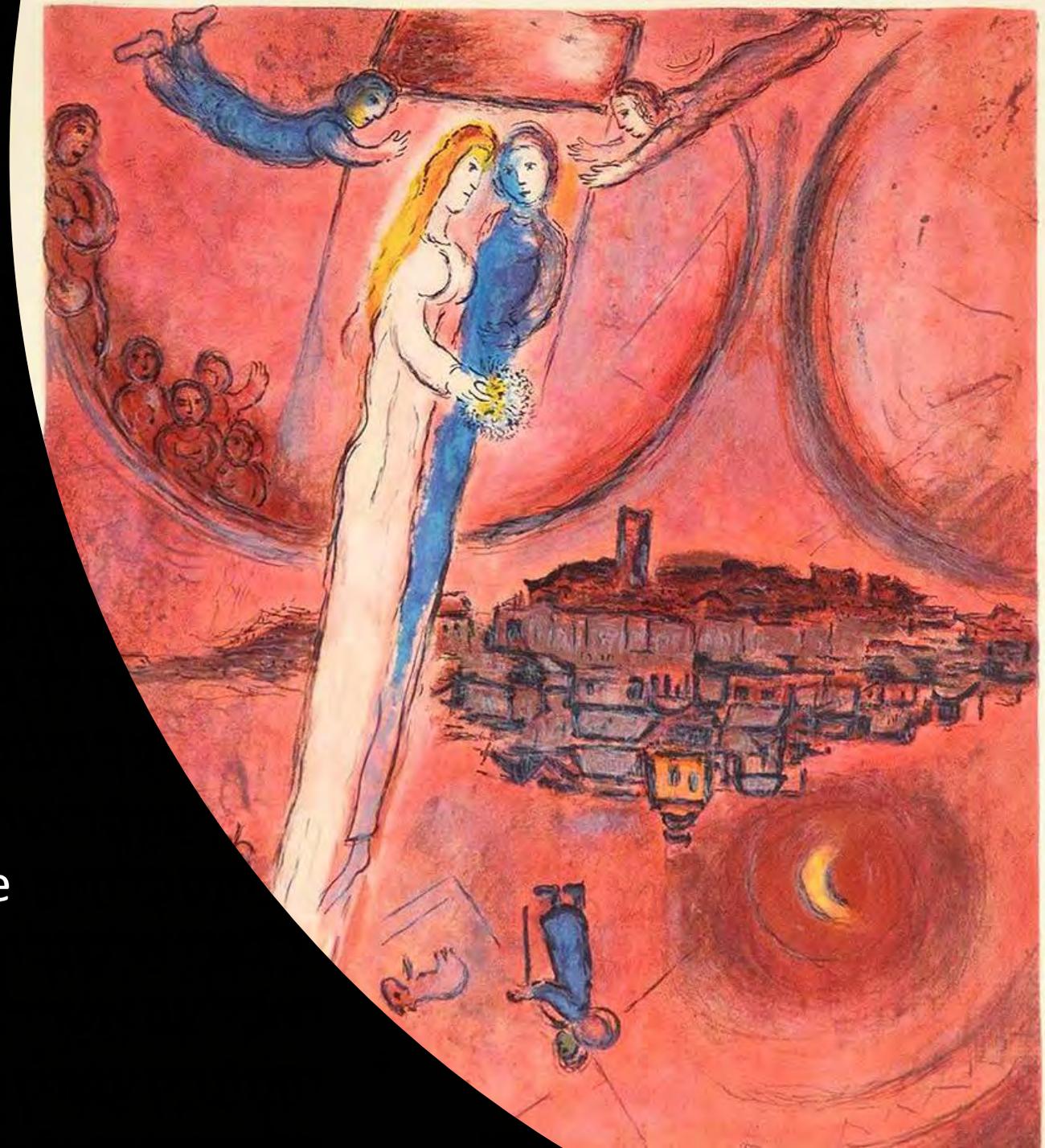
Ruth

- Short, quaint novella about a foreign woman who suffers loss but experiences redemption by attaching herself to Israel
- Set in the period of the Judges, thus sometimes placed alongside in the canon
- Ruth is an ancestress of King David
- Something interesting about the story of Ruth the Moabitess in light of Ezra-Nehemiah...



Song of Songs

- (Semi-)erotic love poem similar to love poetry from Ancient Egypt
- Perhaps copied as part of Ancient Israel's scribal curriculum
- Almost not included in the Jewish canon due to the absence of references to God and to the erotic nature of the work
- In Jewish and Christian tradition, frequently allegorized as the love between God and his people (cp. The marriage metaphor of Hosea, Jeremiah, Ephesians, etc.)





Ecclesiastes

- Ecclesiastes or Qohelet means “one calls an assembly”
- Set as the speech of a king, traditionally identified as Solomon
- Reads like a collection of mostly-pessimistic aphorisms often centered on taking stock of life in light of meaninglessness and human limitations
- Progresses through various “ways of finding satisfaction/meaning” only to conclude that only reverence for Yahweh gives meaning
- Theologically challenging in its pessimism, but beautiful and profound in its own right

Lamentations

- Concerns the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 586 BCE and read on the anniversary of the Temple's destruction
- Written as a song of sorrow, with pleas for restoration and renewal of hope, often in a special meter used for laments, *qinah*.
- An acrostic poem: each line begins with a new letter of the alphabet in sequence (like Psalm 119)
 - 22 verses in chs. 1-2, 66 verses in 3, back to 22 in 4-5 – chapter 3 is special as the center/heart of the song



Lamentations

- Long history of laments in the Ancient Near East, often serving the purpose of placating deities that had become hostile, especially before rebuilding temples

“When the builders laid the foundation of the [second] temple of the LORD, the priests in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the directions of David king of Israel. And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD... But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy. (Ezra 3:10-13)



Esther

- A court tale describing how the wise Judeans “get along” in the exile in spite of the serious challenges they face
- Focused on the story of the near extermination of the Jews, who are saved at the last minute by the intervention of Queen Esther, a Jewish woman who married the King of Persia (Ahasuerus/Xerxes)
- Disturbingly relevant in light of the history of anti-Semitism and genocide
- Theologically challenging in that the Jews rise up to kill off their enemies

אם בא להורגך השכם להורגו – “if someone comes to kill you, arise first and kill him” (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 72a)





Daniel

- One of two books in the Old Testament with a significant portion written in Aramaic instead of Hebrew (Ezra is the other)
- Not registered among the Prophets in the Jewish canon, though it is in the Christian canon
- Odd-bird book
 - First half is filled with court tales like Esther (7 Habits...)
 - Second half is filled with prophetic/apocalyptic material
- Daniel 7-12 is a highly detailed account of various visions, some of which correlate *very* closely with known historical events.

1-2 Chronicles

- Largely a retelling of the story of Israel from 2 Samuel to 2 Kings, with a heavy dose of genealogies going back to Adam

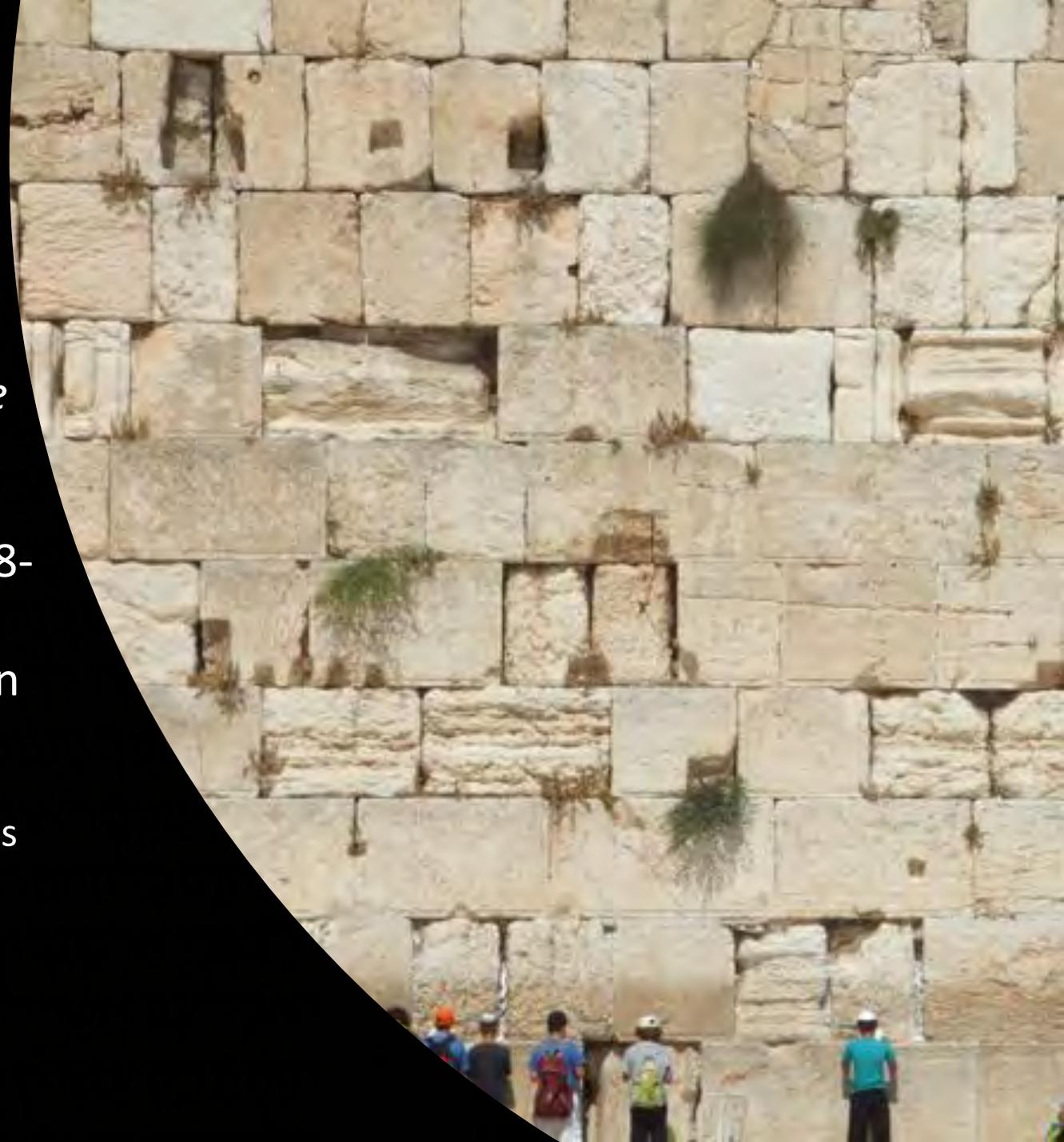
- But not really an identical work – lots of additions and subtractions!

“When it comes to Chronicles, the focus of investigation is usually not on the correlation between historical events and the text that describes them, but on how Chronicles relates to earlier tellings of the same events.” (Childs, *Introduction*, 643)

- Shows a demonstrative orientation toward priestly issues and interests and white-washes David and his heirs
- Was the Chronicler trying to overwrite the earlier history or negate it in some way? Or was he just offering a “davar aher”? Did the author ever imagine that his work would sit next to the other history?

Ezra-Nehemiah

- Regarded in the Jewish tradition as one book
- Although Jewish tradition places it *before* Chronicles, it reads well *after* (inner chronology)
- Ezra has a significant Aramaic portion (4:8-6:18)
- Describes the process of the Exiles' return to Judah and Jerusalem, the rebuilding efforts, and challenges along the way
 - Zerubbabel rebuilds the Temple, Ezra rebuilds the People, Nehemiah rebuilds the Wall
- Emphasis on restoration and purity, re-establishment of the Mosaic Covenant, exclusion of non-Israelites



Books that are odd fellows...

- Not all of the books among the Writings sit comfortably with each other.
 - In some ways the Ketuvim offer contrasting views and ideologies
- Ezra-Nehemiah describes the purging of non-Jews from Judah (including wives).
 - Contrast Ruth, Job, and Esther (not to mention Jonah and Malachi).
- The simple view of righteousness and blessing found in Chronicles and Proverbs is countered by the more complicated vision of the book of Job. (Sweeny, *Tanakh*)
- What is the theological significance of these problems? Is Scripture suggesting that theology is a conversation?

Looking to the near future

- We'll have four more classes to focus on the Writings/Ketuvim
- I'm open to suggestions of how best to proceed, but would like to talk more about...
 - The Psalms and their great diversity and significance
 - Wisdom literature as a whole (like Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes)
 - Daniel and its quirky apocalyptic material
- See you next Sunday!