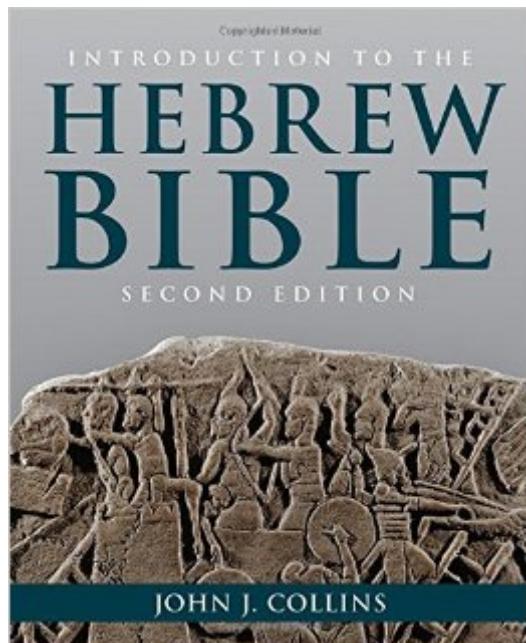


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# Introduction To The Hebrew Bible: Second Edition



## **Synopsis**

John J. Collins' Introduction to the Hebrew Bible is one of the most reliable and widely adopted critical textbooks at undergraduate and graduate levels alike, and for good reason. Enriched by decades of classroom teaching, it is aimed explicitly at motivated students regardless of their previous exposure to the Bible or faith commitments. Collins proceeds through the canon of the Old Testament and the apocrypha, judiciously presenting the current state of historical, archaeological, and literary understanding of the biblical text, and engaging the student in questions of significance and interpretation for the contemporary world. The second edition has been revised where more recent scholarship indicates it, and is now presented in a refreshing new format.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

It is difficult to imagine a critical, scholastic, introductory textbook to the entire Hebrew Bible (and deuterocanonical texts) that could do a better job than this. The book tops out at just over 600 pages, which is somewhat daunting, but well-worth a studious read. There is only so much that can be done in an introductory textbook without becoming overwhelming. I believe the book found it's way to that boundary between too much and not enough. Inevitably, with a book of this quality, criticisms might tend to become nit-picky. The "illustrations" gathered together in the center of the textbook are lackluster, few in number, and rather common. Anyone with a real interest in the Hebrew Bible or the ancient Near East will be familiar with most of the objects and places pictured. They could at least have presented color photographs. Even better, they could have included a CD

with a large archive of photographs to flip through as you read--which brings us to the included CD. I've always felt that including the textbook on an accompanying CD was rather pointless. It's probably done to claim an added value for the product and substantiate an increase in price. Fortunately, you can find the book steeply discounted on places like .com and then toss the CD without regret (except, perhaps, for the increase in environmental waste). But even if having the book on CD was a welcome option, the publisher chose to discriminate against a large number of its customers by making the work accessible only through a Windows-based operating system. The CD will not load, install, or run on Linux or (I assume) Mac. Being a Linux user, therefore, I found the CD doubly worthless. As a lover of the Tetrateuch, I was thrilled at how much space and time was committed to Genesis and the first half of Exodus. Unfortunately, the rest of the Tetrateuch suffered. The last half of Exodus as well as Numbers receive, perhaps, the poorest treatment in the entire textbook. Leviticus, thankfully, was not treated so unjustly, but its treatment still suffered. My biggest complaint is the biased judgment calls that Collins weaves subtly or not-so-subtly through the entire work. He repeatedly inserts factual judgments on ideas or arguments which he either has not presented evidence for or had previously discussed only as a possible way of viewing things. I found myself repeatedly writing the word "why?" in the margin or making some sort of note where Collins proceeded upon an assumption or argument that I found rather thin or unconvincing. It is clear that Collins attempts to bypass his own biases by giving time and attention to various arguments and evidences, but he is not consistent. Perhaps Collins felt the need when dealing with sacred literature to guard against the abuses of Fundamentalism. But since when was he the guardian of the text? Overall, the book comes highly recommended. One cannot fail to receive a great deal of critical, theological, and historical insight, while building a solid foundation in their study of the Hebrew Bible.

In my six years of study as a post-graduate Theology student, I have read many books introducing me to Hebrew Scripture. Many were excellent and scholarly yet none possessed the "flow and enticement" of Collins' research and presentation. I looked forward each night to resuming my study. Collins managed to tie all the information together, fill in all the gaps, present many perspectives and offer the latest assessment of the evidence thus far. I teach an Adult Bible Study - and ALWAYS have this book at my side. It's as pleasurable a read as it is informative!

This is an excellent book, which is exactly what it claims to be an "Introduction to the Hebrew Bible". It will be welcomed by all who want a scholarly, balanced and clear introduction to the difficult topic

of the Hebrew Bible. In over 600 pages the Hebrew Bible is discussed, based on solid research. However Professor Collins does not get bogged down excessively with erudite "on the other hands", which might confuse excessively. Professor Collins skill as a teacher in Yale comes through clearly, as he covers such an amount of material with expertise and knowledge. This book fulfills a real need for educated, interested readers who wish to gain an insight into the Hebrew Bible, which underlies our civilization.

John Collins' book gives a "big picture" view of the context within which the literature was written/edited. He discusses the culture, politics, geography, theology, and potential understanding of the authors/editors throughout history. I would recommend this book as a textbook for introductory Hebrew Bible courses and also for arm-chair Bible enthusiasts who want a deeper examination of the text. Appropriate for all Christian denominations: Catholic/Protestant, etc. John Collins writes in an easy-to-read style which allows for people of all reading levels to gain an appreciation for the Hebrew Bible.

The title of the book says it all. This is an introduction to the Hebrew Bible. And one could not ask for a more comprehensive and easy to understand introduction at that. Collins brings Old Testament scholarship down to the level of the layman while managing to salvage all the depth that is associated with such scholarship. Collins has a gift for bringing the material down to level of the average reader. Not once did I feel lost or bogged down in any academic rambles. For this reason alone this book is a gem. But Collins depth of the material needs also to be applauded. Coming in at over six hundred pages this book seems heady. This is because Collins gives all the relevant information one is looking for and more. One will learn a great deal about the Hebrew Bible as well as the surrounding context (aNE) that gave rise to such literature. The reader will leave this book with a wealth of information and insight. Moreover, at the end of each chapter is a list of books for further study. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Collins has produced the best up to date introduction to the Hebrew Bible—the second best would go to Lawrence Boadt's *Reading the Old Testament*. I will continue to go back to this book in the future because of its usefulness. Get the book!

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