

LESSON 3 - THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS  
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

What are the first five books of the Bible together called? Who wrote them? How do we know who wrote them? What is written about in those first five books? These are questions you should be able to give clear answers for after carefully studying and reviewing this lesson.

NAMES FOR THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS

There are a number of different names that are commonly used to designate the first five books of the Old Testament. They are sometimes called the Pentateuch. This name comes from two Greek words that mean the "five volumes" or "five scrolls." These five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) are also called the Law. The Hebrew name for them is the Torah, the Hebrew word for "law." They are also called The Law of Moses or The Five Books of Moses.

WHO WROTE THE PENTATEUCH?

The human author of the Pentateuch was Moses. There is no introduction to the Pentateuch that tells us this directly. However, the following evidence shows us clearly that Moses is the author.

1. EVIDENCE FROM THE REST OF THE PENTATEUCH: In a number of verses from books of the Pentateuch we are told that Moses wrote down what God had directed him to write. Look up these passages -

Ex. 24:4      Ex.34:27      Num.33:1-2      Deut. 31:9

2. EVIDENCE FROM THE REST OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: Other books of the Old Testament besides the Pentateuch speak of Moses being the author of the Pentateuch. See these passages -

Josh. 8:31    2 Kings 14:6    2 Chron 35:6    Neh. 9:13-14    Mal 4:4

There are many more such passages in the Old Testament which clearly speak of the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Old Testament.

3. EVIDENCE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT, ESPECIALLY JESUS' TESTIMONY: See these passages -

Mat. 19:7-8 Mat. 8:4 Luke 24:27 & 44 John 5:46-47 Acts 3:22; 15:21

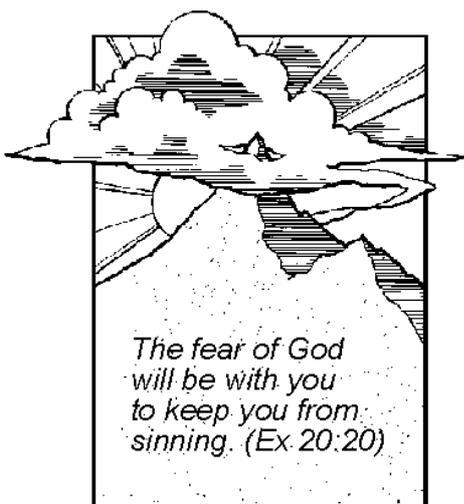
It is evident from these passages and many more that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament credited Moses with the writing of the Pentateuch.

We have pointed out this evidence for the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch because of the views expressed by some. They say that Moses did not write these books. They say that these books are only oral traditions written centuries after Moses. They claim that they were written by a number of men whose words do not always agree. The testimony of Jesus, however, is sufficient. Jesus Christ credits Moses with the human authorship and speaks of the books written by Moses as having the authority of God.

THE CONTENTS OF THE PENTATEUCH The Pentateuch covers the period of time from creation of the world to the death of Moses just before the conquest of the promised land under Joshua in BC 1406. That means that in the Pentateuch Moses writes about events covering thousands of years.

Here is a brief outline of what is covered in these five books of Moses:

GENESIS begins with an account of creation. Adam and Eve are created and given the responsibility of caring for the world about them. By their sin they lose their holiness. God promises the Savior. People become so wicked that God destroys all but one family in a flood. Noah and his family are spared. God chooses to work out His plans of redemption through Abraham (BC 2166-1991). Genesis Chaps. 12-50 record the events in the lives of the Patriarchs - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Through this family line God promised the "seed" through whom all the people of the earth would be blessed. The account of one of Jacob's sons, Joseph (BC 1915-1805), is related in Chaps. 37-50.



EXODUS Chaps. 1-19 tell of the Children of Israel (Jacob) going from Egypt to Mount Sinai, a journey of 3 months (Exo 19:1). Exodus 19 to Numbers 10 tells of the encampment of the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai, where the Law was given. NUMBERS 10-21 tells of the wilderness wanderings of the Children of Israel, a period of about 38 years. In Numbers 22 to Deuteronomy 34 the Children of Israel are

encamped before entering Canaan. Moses delivers a long farewell address in the Book of Deuteronomy. From the time they left Egypt to the time they entered into the Promised Land of Canaan it was a total of 40 years. (Deuteronomy 8:1-4)

In all of the Pentateuch there are two main elements that show through all of the contents. The first is HISTORY. We do not mean that it is just a history of the ancient world or that it is a history of Israel. Rather it is especially a HISTORY OF SALVATION, a HISTORY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. The second element that shows through all the contents is LAW. Law is so prominent in the Pentateuch that all of the five books are often called simply THE LAW. The giving of the Law is a big part of Exodus; LEVITICUS is entirely composed of laws; NUMBERS has Law mixed up with historical accounts; DEUTERONOMY has laws as a large part of Moses' long address in the book.

We could say that the Pentateuch is a five volume book made up of HISTORY and LAW. (The Gospel always comes through in the history portions.)

#### THE NAMES FOR EACH OF THE FIVE BOOKS

Genesis - means "beginning." The book tells of the beginning of many things: the universe, man, sin, promise of Savior, languages, nations, the Hebrew people (Jews), etc.

Exodus - means "a going out," because it tells of Israel going out of Egypt.

Leviticus - means "relating to the Levites." The book is so called because it records many laws which applied to the Levites, the tribe named after Levi, the priestly tribe.

Numbers - The book is called Numbers because it relates the numbers of people included in the tribes of Israel.

Memorize Lk 24:44 - He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS Answer them first without looking at your lesson. Then go back and check your answers with your lesson. Make corrections where necessary. Remember, first thoroughly study and review the lesson. Then

answer the questions.

1. Give four names that are used to designate the first five books of the Old Testament:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Give three reasons why we know that Moses was the human author of the first five books of the Old Testament:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What do some people, who do not accept the Bible's evidence, say about who wrote the five books?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Very briefly, write the general contents of the Pentateuch.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What are the two main elements or features that show through the whole Pentateuch?

---

6. Match the following:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| a. Pentateuch  | ___ "beginning"                                   |
| b. Torah       | ___ "law"   |
| c. Patriarchs  | ___ "second law"                                  |
| d. Genesis     | ___ "relating to one of Israel's tribes"          |
| e. Exodus      | ___ "a going out"                                 |
| f. Leviticus   | ___ "five volumes"                                |
| g. Numbers     | ___ Abraham, Isaac and Jacob;<br>"ruling fathers" |
| h. Deuteronomy | ___ a book telling how many<br>people in Israel   |

Interesting fact People who doubted the historical accuracy of the Bible used to say that Moses (BC 1526-1406) could not have written the first five books of the Bible because writing had not yet been invented. However, since that time many ancient documents and tablets have come to light showing that writing was widespread long before Moses' time. A famous pillar of rock (a stele) was inscribed with the laws of King Hammurabi in 1727 BC. There are written records from the town of Ebla which stretch back to around 2400 BC. Acts 7:22 tells us that "Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action." Also in Serabit El-Khadem (a site in the western Sinai peninsula region) Sir Flinders Petrie discovered eleven unusual inscriptions on rock panels. The script consisted of twenty-three signs which are now recognized as the first alphabet ever used. The language was Canaanite. It is dated to 1500-1450 BC. Fragments of the same writing style have been found at Lachish, Shechem, Gezer, Tell el-Hesi and Tell el `Ajjul. Therefore an alphabetic script was already in

existence at the time of the exodus ( BC 1446). (Dict. Of Bibl. Arch. Blaiklock & Harrison, p. 408. Zondervan, 1983)



Pillar with law code of Hammurabi  
(1727 BC)

Detail of top of pillar