

Torah

The first five books of the Bible are collectively known as the Torah or the Pentateuch. Torah is the Hebrew word for *instruction* or *teaching* and is often translated as *law*. The books of the Torah are the books of the law. Pentateuch means *five books*.

The Torah contains Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The majority of the Torah was written by Moses. The end of Deuteronomy, containing the account of Moses' death, was probably added by Joshua.

Genesis

The first book of the Bible, Genesis tells us about the creation, the fall, the flood, the dispersion of the people, the establishment of God's covenant people, and the journey to Egypt. Genesis is mostly a book of history, starting with a history for all creation and focusing down to a history of the people of God.

In Genesis we find the establishment of God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants. God promises Abraham the land of Canaan and that he will have descendants that become many nations. God's covenant with Abraham will last forever.

Exodus

Exodus begins with an account of the suffering of Abraham's descendants. It then tells us what God did to rescue the people from slavery in Egypt. The rest of Exodus is a mix of narrative and law. Most of the book tells us about the law God established with Moses and the people. God promised to always be with the Israelites but they had to follow specific commands about how to organize their society and their worship.

Leviticus

Leviticus is primarily a book for the priests. It describes in great detail how the priests are to carry out tabernacle worship. It contains instructions on the kinds of sacrifices to be offered as well as how and when they are to be offered. Leviticus also provides the guidelines for determining whether people

are clean or unclean. Those who are unclean were not able to participate in tabernacle worship and in some cases were to be put outside the community of Israel for a time.

Leviticus also establishes the specific feast days that would guide the Jewish calendar and the various holy days. The most significant feast was Passover which served to remind the people of God's mercies in leading them out of Egypt. The most significant sacrifice took place on the Day of Atonement when the high priest offers a sacrifice for the sins of the people.

Numbers

The events in Numbers take place during the wilderness wanderings. Numbers contains several narrative events but also describes the arrangement of Israel in the wilderness. In Numbers we find various censuses and records of the possessions of the people. It also describes the physical arrangement of the tribes of Israel around the tabernacle.

Deuteronomy

The last book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy is the final instruction of Moses to the people of Israel. Knowing his death will soon occur, Moses wants to remind the people of God's commands and his faithfulness to them in the wilderness. After Moses dies the people would pass into Canaan. Moses does not want them to forget all that has taken place.

There is little new material in Deuteronomy, it mostly repeats what we find in the rest of the Torah. Nonetheless, Deuteronomy is also a more devotional book, not just describing the law or presenting history but drawing out a response of faith and feeling toward Yahweh.