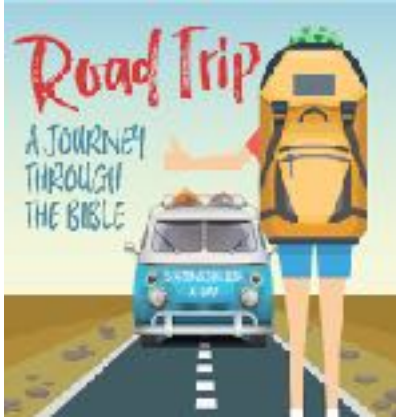


SESSION TWO: “Torah, Torah, Torah!”



- An Introduction to the Torah
- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE TORAH

“Torah” is a Hebrew word that means “the Law,” specifically the Law of God. Used generally, it refers to the first five books of the Bible. In the Greek, these books are called “the Pentateuch,” meaning “the five books.”

The traditional writer/compiler is Moses, and the Torah is often referred to as “The Book of Moses.”

The actual composition of the Torah is much more complex, as the styles, theology, language, and names for God change throughout the text. One clear example of this is the use of “Elohim” versus “Yahweh.” Comparison in Genesis 1-2:

“On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation...Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils, and the man became a living person. Then the LORD God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he placed the man he had made.” Genesis 2:2-3, 7-8

German scholars put forward a composition theory of the Old Testament in the late 1800s after extensive study of the oldest Hebrew texts. In short, they found four major voices in the Old Testament, brought together by a fifth.

J Source: This writer always uses the name Yahweh/Jehovah for God. He is the master storyteller of the Torah.

E Source: This writer always used the name Elohim for God. After the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed (722 BCE) J and E were combined.

D Source: The Deuteronomist. Centralized worship and power at the Jerusalem Temple after the destruction of Northern Kingdom of Israel, elevating David and his lineage. D uses a modern form of Hebrew.

The P Source: Known as the priest source, uses El Shaddai for the name of God. This narrative was written during the Babylonian Exile after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. P is defiant and “bombastic” in style.

The R Source: The “Redactor” finalized the Torah and much of the Old Testament after the Jewish return from the Babylonian Exile.

GENESIS

Time Frame: Creation to the Sojourn in Egypt (up to circa 1800 BCE)

Theme: Beginnings, Origins of the World and Israel

Key Characters: Adam and Eve (circa 4000 BCE)
Noah (circa 3000 BCE)
Abraham (circa 2000 BCE)
Jacob (circa 1900 BCE)
Joseph (circa 1800 BCE)

Important Verses: Genesis 1:1
Genesis 12:1-3

Outline:
1. Genesis 1-11 - Beginnings
2. Genesis 12-25 - The Life of Abraham
3. Genesis 25-37 - The Life of Jacob
4. Genesis 37-50 - The Life of Joseph

Key Lesson: “...Through you the nations of the world will be blessed.”

EXODUS

Time Frame: Enslavement in Egypt to formation of desert Tabernacle (circa 1400 BCE)

Theme: God’s Covenant, the Law, Emancipation, Salvation

Key Characters: Pharaoh
Moses
Aaron
Miriam

Important Verses: Exodus 3:7-10
Exodus 12
Exodus 20:1-20

Outline:
1. Exodus 1-6 - Preparation of Moses
2. Exodus 7-11 - Plagues on Egypt
3. Exodus 12-15 - The Exodus

4. Exodus 16-31 - The New Covenant
5. Exodus 32-34 - The Golden Calf
6. Exodus 35-40 - The Tabernacle

Key Lesson: "Let my people go..."

LEVITICUS

Time Frame: In the Sinai Desert post-Exodus (circa 1400 BCE)

Theme: Holiness, Ritual, Regulation of Worship, Atonement

Key Characters: Moses
The Levites
Priests

Important Verses: Leviticus 16:20-22
Leviticus 17:11
Leviticus 19:18

Outline:

1. Leviticus 1-7 - The Offerings
2. Leviticus 8-10 - The Levites
3. Leviticus 11-15 - Laws of Cleanness
4. Leviticus 16-17 - Yom Kippur
5. Leviticus 18-20 - Moral Laws
6. Leviticus 21-25 - Social and Economic Laws
7. Leviticus 26-27 - Further Regulations regarding the Covenant

Key Lesson: "...I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples."

NUMBERS

Time Frame: In the Sinai Desert and just outside the Promised Land (1400 BCE)

Theme: Rebellion, Failure, Journeying

Key Characters: Moses
Joshua and Caleb
Korah
Balaam

Important Verses: Numbers 6:24-26
Numbers 14:26-35
Numbers 20:12

Outline:

1. Numbers 1-10 - Israel at Sinai
2. Numbers 11-14 - On to Kadesh
3. Numbers 15-21 - On to Moab

4. Numbers 22-36 - Israel in Moab

Key Lesson: "The LORD will us into that land and give it to us. Do not rebel..."

DEUTERONOMY

Time Frame: On the plain of Moab just outside the Promised Land (1400 BCE)

Theme: Renewal, Faithfulness, Obedience

Key Characters: Moses
Joshua

Important Verses: Deuteronomy 4:2
Deuteronomy 6:4-9
Deuteronomy 34:9-12

Outline:

1. Deuteronomy 1-4 - What God Has Done
2. Deuteronomy 5-11 - What Israel Is To Do
3. Deuteronomy 12-30 - What God Will Do
4. Deuteronomy 31-34 - What Moses Did and Joshua Will Do

Key Lesson: "Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is One..."

"The Torah does not stand alone. It stands with God and with humanity. Love of Torah links awe of God with the individual's deeds of lovingkindness toward others. The Torah is the knot wherein God and man are interlaced." - Rabbi Joshua ben Korha, 3rd Century CE

"Fifty gates of understanding were created in the world and all were given to Moses, except one." *The Talmud*, 21b.

"A world without the Torah would be a world without Israel, and a world without Israel would be a world without God. Israel can never die, neither in this world nor the world to come, as it is impossible for God to cease to exist." - Maimonides, 1135-1204

"Once there was a king who gave his only daughter to marry a prince. He said, 'My daughter is my only child. My love for her is great. I cannot part from her though your realm is now her proper home. Permit me this one request: Always have a place ready for me that I may dwell with you and with her.' So said God to Israel: 'I have given you the Torah from which I cannot really part. I request only this: Wherever you go, make for me a house wherein I may dwell with you and her.'" When Israel accepts the Torah, she accepts God. A child's presence testifies to the life of its parent, and the Torah testifies for God." *The Mid-rash*

"The Torah must remain a dynamic concept. Once it becomes codified in law, it loses its essence; it is no longer the Torah. Inward surrender is the living element of the Torah. Outward conformity is only an empty shell." - Martin Buber, 1878-1965