

Learn how you can use this guide [here](#)

Introduction to the Pentateuch

“For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.” - Acts 15:21 NIV

The word, ‘Pentateuch’ comes from the Greek word ‘*pentateuchos*’ which means the ‘*five instruments*’ or ‘*five volumes*’. It actually means one complete story written in five volumes. It is the first five books of our Bible and of the Hebrew Bible, known to the Jews as the *Torah* (“teaching”, “instruction” or “law”). They are known as the books of the law because they contain the laws and instructions given by the Lord through Moses to the people of Israel. These five books are,

- Genesis (*in hebrew, ‘Bre’shiyt’ which translates ‘In the beginning’*)
- Exodus (*in hebrew, ‘Shemot’, which translates ‘These are the names’*)
- Leviticus (*in hebrew, ‘Vayiqra’, which translates ‘And He called’*)
- Numbers (*in hebrew, ‘Bemidbar’, which translates ‘In the wilderness’*)
- Deuteronomy (*in hebrew, ‘Debariym’, which translates ‘These are the words’*)

The Pentateuch establishes the larger biblical narrative as the story of God’s Word and the human revolution against that Word. The story may be framed as a question because the matter is still open at the end of the Pentateuch: *How will God’s Word prevail over the human rebellion?* The answer lies somewhere in the future, beyond the story itself.

What is the Pentateuch story?

Genesis begins with an account of God’s speaking the world into existence. God said, “Let there be light,” and, indeed, there was light. God’s Word is powerful. The prophets prefaced their oracles with “Yahweh says” to denote the authority with which they claimed to speak. When God speaks in the beginning of Genesis, everything listens, everything except human beings. Humankind rebels against the single command God gave them. Moreover, humanity as a whole constantly defies God’s will. The human exception—whether or not human beings will finally accord with the Word of God—forms the problem of the biblical story. God spoke his answer to Abraham and promised him seed, land, and blessing. God has spoken and it will be. It is the way

Joseph interpreted the events in his story—even those things intended for evil God used for good to accomplish His Word.

Exodus opens with a king of Egypt who had forgotten Joseph, but God had not forgotten His promise to Abraham. Because of the ancient promise, He spoke to Moses from a burning bush and led His people from slavery to the mountain by His mighty arm. From the mountain God spoke. The people responded by saying they would obey His voice. The children of Israel, however, proved to be like their ancestors and like all other human beings—sinful and rebellious against God’s will. Yet, in spite of the people’s failures, God’s presence descended to the tabernacle and He lived with them.

Leviticus starts with God calling out to Moses from the tent of meeting. The book records his instruction for the people to attain holiness so that they may continue to enjoy God’s presence among them. The other options are unthinkable—He will leave them or His holiness will kill them.

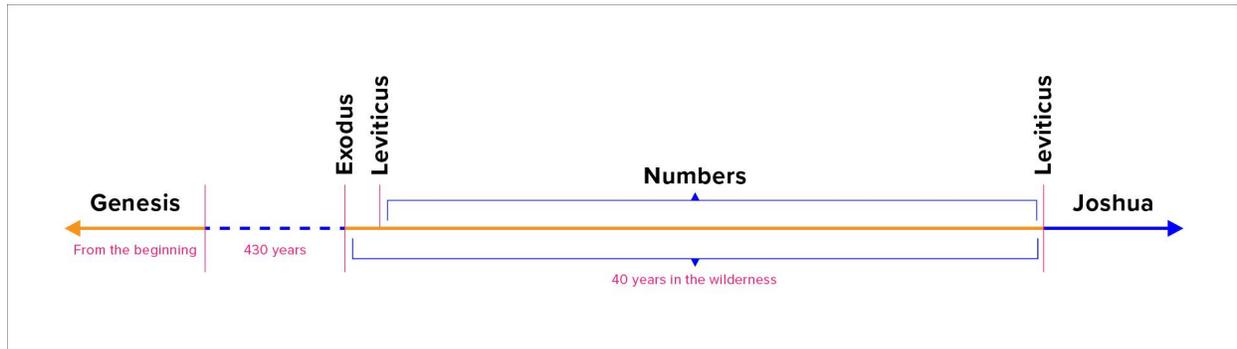
Numbers continues the story of the people in the wilderness. At every turn they succumb to temptation, grumbling and rebelling against God and His leading. His Word is rejected. Even after the first generation is gone, the second proves to have the same dilemma—a propensity toward sinfulness. God’s consistent provision demonstrates, in the end, that the people’s problems spring not from the wilderness around them but from their own wickedness. Still, in spite of the failures and rebellions of the second generation, God will take them into the land He promised their ancestors.

Deuteronomy offers three dialogues to listeners then and to present readers across the generations. These dialogues look both back and ahead so that the readers do not forget what God has done when they get to where they are going, namely, the land of promise on the other side of the Jordan River. The book refers to itself as God’s revealed instruction to its readers. The instruction includes, among other things, the command to love God with all of oneself and to proclaim His Word everywhere all the time. How one passes God’s instruction to the next generation reveals the essence of one’s devotion to God.

The Pentateuch looks back and reveals the future. It offers an account of God’s world and God’s Word that is a challenge for the next generation. The Pentateuch ends with an expectation for a prophet to come, a prophet like Moses. The future looks like the past. The future hope and the teaching for generations to come are the same—to know God’s Word and to expect the one who will bring His Word to those who need it.

Schnittjer, G. E. (2006). [The Torah Story: An Apprenticeship on the Pentateuch](#) (pp. 36–38). Zondervan.

Timeline of the Pentateuch



A general timeline of the Old Testament will help you to understand how the major events fit together in the bible narrative. If we can understand how the major events of the Bible fit together, we will have a better idea when a piece of scripture comes up in a sermon or when we are reading the Bible in our own personal study, we will be able to map what we are reading to the general narrative of Scripture.

We have put together a short video that walks you through the timeline of the Old Testament. The timeline can be divided into ten handles. As you watch the video, take note of the ten handles and the critical points of Israel's history and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you, the character of God and His heart for His people.

This video does not cover every event in Scripture because the scope will be way too big for one video.

Timeline of the Pentateuch

A general timeline of the Old Testament will help you to understand how the major events fit together in the bible narrative. If we can understand how the major events of the Bible fit together, we will have a better idea when a piece of scripture comes up in a sermon or when we are reading the Bible in our own personal study, we will be able to map what we are reading to the general narrative of Scripture.

We have put together a short video that walks you through the timeline of the Old Testament. The timeline can be divided into ten handles. As you watch the video, take note of the ten handles and the critical points of Israel's history and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you, the character of God and His heart for His people.

This video does not cover every event in Scripture because the scope will be way too big for one video.

Watch the video



Application Questions

1. How would you describe the Pentateuch in your own words? To whom was it written? What do you think is the purpose of the Pentateuch? *Hint: Near the end of the Pentateuch Moses summarises his pessimistic view of the readers' potential for obedience (refer to [Deuteronomy 31:26-27](#)).*
2. In what sense is the Pentateuch five books and in what sense is it one story?
3. The video spoke of the biblical theme of a covenant. In the Pentateuch, these are some of the key covenants that God made with the patriarchs; Noahic covenant ([Genesis 6:18](#) and [Genesis 9:1-17](#)), Abrahamic covenant ([Genesis 12:1-3](#) and [Genesis 15](#)) and Mosaic covenant ([Exodus 19:4-6](#)). When you think of a covenant, what words come to mind? What makes God's covenant different from a simple agreement or contract?

References:

<https://bibleproject.com/blog/covenants-the-backbone-bible/>

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/covenants/>

4. What do you hope to gain from this study of the Pentateuch? Write this down.

Prayer: Connecting with God

End the time by praying...

Pray for a hunger for His Word.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word that will deepen your understanding of God and love for Him.

Pray for wisdom to apply His Word in your life.

Pentateuch

© 2022 Full Gospel Assembly

All Rights Reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission.



Full Gospel Assembly

15 Playfair Road, #03-01, FGA@Playfair, Singapore 367987

Contact: 6339 1317

Email: classes@fgasingapore.org

Website: www.fgasingapore.org

Text: Ashleigh Pandya, Sue-Ann Tan, David Lim and Angeline Lim

Edited by: Nalinee

Videographer: Dennis Low

Video Editors: Dennis Low, Natalie Lim, Ang Hui Yee, Terence Lim

Graphic Design: Faith Lim