CHAPTER – 2

THE BOOK OF TORAH

2.1 Introduction to the Torah

Torah is the Hebrew for “instruction” or “teaching.”\(^1\) The word "תורה" “Torah” in its generic term is a reference to the first five books of the Old Testament Bible, also known as the “Five books of Moses” thus the Greek “Pentateuch” meaning “five books.”

“The five books of Moses (ἡ Πεντάτευχος sc. βιβλίος, Pentateuchos sc. Liber, the book in five parts) are called in the Old Testament Sepher hattorah, the Law-book (Deut. xxxi. 26; Josh. i. 8, etc.), or, more concisely still, Hattorah, ὁ νόµος, the Law (Neh. viii. 2, 7, 13, etc.), - a name descriptive both of the contents of the work and of its importance in relation to the economy of the Old Covenant. The word תּוֹרָה, a Hiphil noun from הורָה, demonstrare, docere, denotes instruction. The Thora is the book of instruction, which Jehovah gave through Moses to the people of Israel, and is therefore called Torath Jehovah (2 Chron. xvii. 9, xxxiv. 14; Neh. ix. 3) and Torath Mosheh (Josh. viii. 31; 2 Kings xiv. 6; Neh. viii. 1), or Sepher Mosheh, the book of Moses (2 Chron. xxv. 4, xxxv. 12; Ezra vi. 18; Neh. xiii. 1). Its contents are a divine revelation in words and deeds, or rather the fundamental revelation, through which Jehovah selected Israel to be His people, and gave to them their rule of life (νοµός), or theoretical constitution as a people and kingdom.”\(^2\)

2.1.1 Torah to the Jews

The Torah or Pentateuch comprises of the book of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, as found in the Bible today. For the Jews, it is the holiest part of the Bible and is thus kept in a most honourable place in the synagogue.\(^3\)

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1 W.R.F. Browning, Dictionary of the Bible (Oxford University Press, 1996), 374
3 Browning, Dictionary of the Bible, 288
fivefold division of the Pentateuch is also known as the “Law of Moses”\(^4\) thus the Hebrew terminology for “Torah.” However, the reference to the five books as ‘Law’ may be too restrictive since laws comprises only a small percentage of the text.\(^5\) The Torah is a compilation of narratives, instructions for worship, guidelines for sacrificial offerings, ethical conduct and even judicial procedures.

With the development of the religion of Judaism, the current five books of Moses came to be referred as the written Torah, and the oral Torah comprises of the traditions that were long held by the Jews, which were eventually written down in the Mishnah, as seen today in the Talmud.\(^6\)

### 2.1.2 Torah to Christians

Accepting Jewish traditions and canon, Christians adhere to the books of the Torah, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are given individual names in the Christian Bible but are simultaneously understood as a singular continuous book of Moses as was the tradition in the Jewish faith. Since Christianity sprang initially as a reformed movement of the Judaism, it is not alien to the Christian faith to accept the Jewish traditions and understanding of the books of the Old Testament theologically and historically. Like Jewish faith, Christianity believed in the origin of life and the nation of Israel as written in the Torah.

The narratives of the Torah may be understood as the explanation of all beginnings, and may be understood as the closest thing to the written accord of pre-historic times. The most controversial part of the Torah being the book of Genesis, “the very latest event mentioned therein had occurred, at the shortest estimate, more than half a century before the birth of Moses, and the preceding human history covers a

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\(^4\) Browning, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 288
\(^6\) Browning, *Dictionary of the Bible*, 374
period extending to more than two thousand years prior to antiquity… [it] covers about one-half the history of the world, or a period roughly equivalent to that which separates the Exodus from today.”

Christians today are divided on their understanding of the Torah. While some adhere to the literal interpretation of the Torah, others see it as a mere attempt to explain the unknown of the past. When other takes it in moderation of their understanding with a mixture of history and myths, others take it as a pure myth. Nevertheless, to the Christian faith, the Torah plays a very important role since Jesus expounded on the laws of Moses and the apostles made mention of the characters and events of the Torah frequently. The Torah cannot be dismissed in Christian traditions and is given prominence perhaps only next to the Gospels and the Epistles.

2.1.3 Torah to Muslims

In Islamic tradition, the Torah also plays an important role in the development and understanding of the religion. Though unlike Christianity, the Torah is not included in the Islamic holy scripture of the Qur’aan; but the mention of the name “Torah” can be found a handful of times in the Qur’aan. Islamic tradition upheld that the Torah or the five books of Moses was a holy book given to Moses by God. Moses, in Muslim tradition is a prophet that came before Muhammad. Islamic tradition is silent on the tradition that Moses being the writer of the Torah. However, Moses is referred as Kalim Allah or “Speaker with God.” It upheld the Jewish tradition of Moses being the lawgiver and the one who delivered the Israelites from oppression, and the builder of

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the nation of Israel. The Qur’aan also retold the story of Moses striking a rock to provide water for the people of Israel.\textsuperscript{9}

Islamic traditions believe that the words of the Torah are the words of God and that it had been the source and reference of judgment before the advent of Muhammad and the Qur’aan. Surah 5:44 of the Qur’aan states that the ancient prophets of the Jewish traditions, teachers and priests were judged by the words of the Torah, which is God’s scripture.

“Lo! We did reveal the Torah wherein is guidance and a light, by which the Prophets surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah’s Scriptures as they were bidden unto to observe; and thereunto were they witnesses. So fear not mankind, but fear Me. And barter not My revelations for a little gain. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are disbelievers.”\textsuperscript{10}

The Qur’aan does not indicate Moses as the author of the Torah, but mentioned that all the prophets were governed and judged by this book. The word “Torah” or “Tawrat” is mentioned 18 (eighteen) times in the Qur’aan, and Moses’ name is mentioned 136 times. Similar passages such as “eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe,”\textsuperscript{11} found the Pentateuch can also be found in the Qur’aan.

“And We prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoso forgoeth it (in the way of charity) it shall be expiation for him. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are wrong-doers.”\textsuperscript{12}

There are many similarities and parallelism between the Jewish understanding of the Torah and the traditions of the Qur’aan. Parallels could easily be drawn between

\textsuperscript{10} The Holy Qur’aan 5:44, 117
\textsuperscript{11} Exodus 21:24, 25 (KJV)
\textsuperscript{12} The Holy Qur’aan 5:45, 117
the Islamic community and that of the Jewish community both under the traditions of
the Qur’aan and the Torah respectively. To some extent, it may even be said that Islam
must have drawn some traditions and understandings from the Torah in building the
ethos of the Islamic community, even during the times of the prophet Muhammad.

Basic aspects of Islamic laws are evident in the Hebrew traditions of the Torah and
Moses.

The Qur’aan also mentions about the end times in manners which seems
parallel with biblical understanding. This eschatological understanding of the last
judgment, of hell and paradise, according to the Qur’aan is from the “Books of
Abraham and Moses”\textsuperscript{13} which must have been a reference to the Torah or the Hebrew
Tanakh.

Islamic tradition held Jesus as one of its prophet and is very much revered by
the faithful. The Qur’aan speaks of Jesus and that he was familiar with the Torah was
that he taught it.\textsuperscript{14} Jesus and his mother Mary are also mentioned several times in the
Qur’aan and that they belong to the traditions that knew the traditions, teaching and
laws of the Torah.

Even after the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, traces and influences of
the Torah seems evident in the hadith. The hadith is the collection oral tradition that
recalls the words, habits and deeds of the Muhammad. It is the second source of
doctrine, ritual, political theory and law of the Islamic tradition, only next to the
Qur’aan. The collections of hadith or hadith as a collective term provided wealth of
information and narratives on the subject of the life, personality, family, activities and
belief of the prophet Muhammad, his family and his community. The hadith serves as
illustrations and examples for comparison and understanding, providing direction and

\textsuperscript{13} The Holy Qur’aan 87:19, 590
\textsuperscript{14} The Holy Qur’aan 5:110,111, 127, 128
regulation in matter of law and rules not stipulated in the Qur’aan.\textsuperscript{15} Reza Aslan however stated that certain portions of the hadith or certain sayings have very much been influenced and perhaps copied from other traditions including that of the Torah.

“After a few generations, almost anything could be given the status of hadith if one simply claimed to trace its transmission back to Muhammad. In fact, Hungarian scholar Ignaz Goldziher has documented numerous hadith the transmitters of which claimed were derived from Muhammad but which were in reality verses from the Torah and Gospels, bits of rabbinic sayings, ancient Persian maxims, passages of Greek philosophy, Indian proverbs, and even an almost word-for-word reproduction of the Lord’s Prayer.”\textsuperscript{16}

It might as well be said that Muhammad or his followers were very much influenced by the Torah. Either way, it is evident that the Torah played an important role during the life of the prophet Muhammad and in the later years of the Islamic traditions. The involvement of the Hebrew Torah and the Christian Gospels in the development or the revelation of the Qur’aan to the Muhammad is evident in the Islamic scripture itself, where Muslims are advised to say to the Jews and Christians, “We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ismael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction to any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.”\textsuperscript{17} This relation of the traditions of the Torah, the Gospels and that of Islam had been advocated and emphasized by various scholars.

“…the Quran proposes the unprecedented notion that all revealed scriptures are derived from a single concealed book in heaven called the \textit{Umm al-Kitab}, or “Mother of Books” (13:9). That means that as far as Muhammad understood, the Torah, the Gospels, and the Quran must be read as a single,
cohesive narrative about humanity’s relationship to God, in which the prophetic consciousness of one prophet is passed spiritually to the next: from Adam to Muhammad.”

Reza further added,

“Of course, Muslims believe that the Quran is the final revelation in this sequence of scriptures, just as they believe Muhammad to be “the Seal of the Prophets.” But the Quran never claims to annul the previous scriptures, only to complete them.”

This belief in the continuation of the revealed scripture must have a profound influence on Muhammad and his early followers since for two centuries after the death of the prophet Muhammad, Muslims read the Torah alongside the Qur’aan in the footsteps of Muhammad. The Qur’aan even advocated that they should avoid arguing with the “People of the Scripture,” referring to those of the traditions and religion of the Torah and the Gospels.

2.2 Authorship of the Torah

One of the major critical problems in the Old Testament is the date and authorship of the Torah. Traditionally, Moses is attributed as the author of the book; modern scholarship has however suggested that it was an editorial compilation of sources from different dates. Even though most English Bibles carries “the books of Moses,” these titles on the first five books of the Old Testament are not in the Hebrew manuscripts. They were probably done through Tyndale’s version of the Bible which in

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19 Aslan, No god but God, 99
20 Aslan, No god but God, 101
21 The Holy Qur’an 29:46, 394
22 Browning, Dictionary of the Bible, 288
turn was probably derived from Luther’s translation since Luther uses only the numerical titles, “First Book of Moses”, and so on till the fifth.\textsuperscript{23}

Despite the fact that the books of the Pentateuch as a whole are anonymous, there are numerous passages that refer Moses to have been writing a part of it. (Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 24:7; Num. 33:1-2; Deut. 31:9, 22). Moses is attributed with enunciating the Torah (Deut. 4:44) but the Torah in its widest sense was promulgated by kings, priests, and wise men (Prov. 6:20).\textsuperscript{24} A reference to the Pentateuch is also made in 2 Chronicles 35:12 as the “book of Moses,” thus hinting that the tradition of Moses’ authorship of the Torah was a general belief in the early kingdom of Israel.

Jewish historians Josephus and Philo accepted the tradition of Mosaic authorship, which was eventually accepted by the early Christian Church.\textsuperscript{25} This tradition is still believed strongly by some Christians and Jewish community today. The questions and challenges towards Mosaic authorship began to appear in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century after the Protestant Reformation which gave rise to the period of higher criticism during the Enlightenment Period. The Enlightenment Period saw scholars and thinkers question the origin, authorship and historicity of the Bible. This age of reason brings about theologians and biblical scholars to rethink the traditions and beliefs towards the Bible. This led to the studying and questioning of many writings especially the “five books of Moses”.

Tools for higher criticism which proves useful in the development of our understanding of the authorship, background, literary forms, origins, etc. towards the Pentateuch were developed. Literary of the Pentateuch were analyzed in trying to understand the literary style, background and authorship. Traditions of the Ancient

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{The Concise Holman Bible Dictionary} (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997, 2001), 480
\item \textsuperscript{24} Browning, \textit{Dictionary of the Bible}, 374
\item \textsuperscript{25} R.L. Hnuni, \textit{The People of God in the Old Testament} (Lakshi Publishers & Distributors, 2013), 124
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Near East were also compared; genre of the text and the search for the original sources of the Pentateuch began. This period also saw the collection and comparisons of various Pentateuch texts such as the Masoretic and the Samaritan text.

2.2.1 Mosaic Authorship

The belief in Mosaic authorship of the Torah was close to a dogma for the Jewish and Christian communities and to suggest otherwise was to provoke charges of heresy. Christians following the traditions of the Jews firmly held the belief in Mosaic authorship until the 17th century when Mosaic authorship was questioned upon critical reasoning.

There are number of passages in the Pentateuch and elsewhere in the Old Testament that assert that Moses is the author. This tradition is also affirmed in the New Testament writings as well.

In Exodus 17:14, God told Moses to write the account of the battle with the Amalekites in a book – “Write this for a memorial in a book…” suggesting Moses role in the composition of the Pentateuch inevitable. Exodus 24:4 asserts, “Moses wrote all the words of the Lord…” The Ten Commandments, however were inscribed by the “finger of God” (Exodus 31:18) in two tablets of stone, they were written again by God himself (Exodus 34:28)26 after Moses broke them upon seeing the people of Israel bowing to a golden calf.

“Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book…” (Deuteronomy 31:24) stressed the pen ship of Moses in the composition of the law, which is a major constituent of the Pentateuch.

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26 Exodus 34:28b “And he wrote the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.” Though often understood by some as Moses rewriting the commandments again, most theologians and scholars contend that “he wrote” refers to God and not Moses. (cf. Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary; John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible; Albert Barnes’ Note on the Bible; John Wesley Explanatory Notes; The Complete Pulpit Commentary, &c.) This view is supported by passages such as Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 10:2, 4.
2.2.2 Moses qualifications

Upon reading and investigating the book of Torah, there is every reason to believe that Moses had a role to play in the development and compilation of the Pentateuch. Moses was a Hebrew who was adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter after he was rescued from the River Nile. Moses grew up in Pharaoh’s palace and would have received the best of education in the land. “And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). The Jewish philosopher and historian Philo illustrates the kind of education and training he must have received in Egypt as follows:

“Accordingly he speedily learnt arithmetic, and geometry, and the whole science of rhythm and harmony and metre, and the whole of music, by means of the use of musical instruments, and by lectures on the different arts, and by explanations of each topic; and lessons on these subjects were given him by Egyptian philosophers, who also taught him the philosophy which is contained in symbols, which were exhibit in those sacred characters of hieroglyphics, as they are called, and also that philosophy which is conversant about that respect which they pay to animals which they invest with the honours due to God.

And all the other branches of the encyclical education he learnt from Greeks; and the philosophers from the adjacent countries taught him Assyrian literature and the knowledge of the heavenly bodies so much studied by the Chaldaeans. And this knowledge he derived also from the Egyptians, who study mathematics above all things, and he learnt with great accuracy the state of that art among both the Chaldaeans and Egyptians, making himself aquatinted with the points in which they agree with and differ from each other- making himself master of all their disputes without encouraging any disputations disposition in himself- but seeking the plain truth, since his mind was unable to admit any falsehood, as those are accustomed to do who contend violently for one particular side of a question; and who advocate any doctrine which is set before them, whatever it may be, not inquiring whether it deserves to be supported, but acting in the same manner as those lawyers who defend a cause for pay, and are wholly indifferent to the justice of their cause.”

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Assuming his birth approximately about 1500 B.C., Moses was probably trained in the court of the 18th Dynasty, which was one of the most advanced and powerful kingdom in the history of the Egyptians.\(^28\) Discoveries such as the Tell-el-Amarna tablets in 1887 suggested that the rulers of Egypt were in close contact with the rulers of Palestine and Syria.\(^29\) Even though the Hebrew slave may have been uneducated, it may be safe to assert that Moses was educated and was able to read and write. Moses had the qualifications to be the author.

Moses settlement in the land of Midian after his involvement in the struggle of a Hebrew slave with his master suggest that Moses would be very familiar with that area when leading the Israelites from the bondage of the Egyptians. Moses settled in the land of Midian for some forty years, and Midian was located in the Sinai desert, where the Israelites trod for over forty years. A large portion of the Pentateuch (Exodus 16 to Numbers 20) describes events and landscape of the Sinai Peninsula, and Moses’ familiarity of that part of the land would greatly enhanced the detailing of the account in the Pentateuch. Moses knowledge of the land of Egypt, the flora, fauna, geography and climate of the surrounding deserts would have guided the writings of the Pentateuch immensely.\(^30\)

Moses lived as a prince in Pharaoh’s palace. He would have and developed the skills and ability to lead others. He would have been introduced and taught how to handle political problems, communal crisis and how to rule effectively. On leading the people of Israel from the chains of the Egyptians, Moses becomes the leader of the Israel politically and religiously. He became the key figure and head in the

\(^{30}\) Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 61
establishment of the nation of Israel. Thus, it is apt that the writings of the Torah or the Pentateuch were attributed to Moses.

2.2.3 Problem with Mosaic Authorship

Upon studying the sources and literary construct of the Pentateuch, it is clear that the Pentateuch is a compilation of various documents and literary traditions. Critical study towards the Pentateuch questions the traditional view of the authorship of the Pentateuch which was once ascribed to Moses. Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) expressed such doubt as early as the 12th century, but this study came into full swing only after the Reformation. Serious study into the Pentateuch reveals that it is not the work of one author, not to mention Moses himself; it suggested that the Pentateuch is rather a compilation of various sources or documents.

In 1711, H.B. Witter notices that there are two sources in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. Later in 1753 Jean Astruc, a French physician identified two names for God, namely “Yahweh” and “Elohim.” Later in 1798, Illgen suggested the presence of different linguistic usage and style in the Pentateuch. Such differences may include the reference to the mountain of God as “Horeb” in Exodus 3:1, 17:6 and Sinai in Exodus 19:11, 18; the early inhabitants of Canaan were also named as “Canaanites” in Genesis 12:6, while Genesis 16:15 called them “Amorites.”

2.2.4 The Criticisms

Since the time of Jesus and during the development of the early church, the tradition of Mosaic authorship was prevalent and pervasive. Though doubts have been raised even then, it was not until the early 1800s that this consensus toward Mosaic

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31 Hnuni, The People of God in the Old Testament, 126
32 Ibid. 127
authorship of the Torah began to fall apart.\textsuperscript{33} European scholars and even Jewish thinkers began to question the tradition as the enlightenment period began.

By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, new understanding emerged advocating that the Pentateuch is a compilation of different sources over a period of time. This approach came to be known as source criticism. This understanding did not emerge suddenly out of one scholar but over a period of time as scholars began to find different variances in their search to understand the author of the Pentateuch.

Philosopher Benedict Spinoza in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century rejected Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. This rejection of Mosaic authorship was down-right blasphemy for his Jewish community. Spinoza, whose understanding of God and morals barely align with the belief of his Jewish community or that of the Christians then, suggested Ezra for the compilation of the Pentateuch or the Torah.\textsuperscript{34} This belief in Ezra as the primary compiler of the Pentateuch was not very new to Spinoza’s time. Ibn Hazam of Spain argued that Ezra was the main author while scholar Ibn Ezra supported Mosaic authorship but suggested that post-Mosaic insertions were made. This belief may have risen because of the book of Esdras.

“The pseudepigraphical book of 2 Esdras stated that Ezra reproduced the law and other Jewish books (14:19-48) with the help of scribes who wrote very rapidly. This legend may have influenced Jerome to believe that at least the final form of the Pentateuch came from Ezra’s time.”\textsuperscript{35}

Jean Astruc, the French physician in his publication “Conjectures sur les memoirs dont il parait que Moyse s’est servi pour composer le livre de la Genese” (Conjectures About the Original Memoirs Which It Appears Moses Used to Compose the Book of Genesis) in 1753 suggested two sources in the compilation of the

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid. 71
\textsuperscript{35} Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 71
Pentateuch. He assumed this based on the use of two different names “YHWH” or “Yahweh” (Lord) and “Elohim” (God) for God, thus the Yahwishtic source and the Elohistic source. For example, Genesis chapter 1 narrative of the creation uses the name “Elohim” for God, whereas the creation narrative in Genesis chapter 2 uses the name “Yahweh.” Astruc simply classify these sources in two tables as “A” and “B” with the Elohistic source as A and Yahwishtic source as B. Three decades after Astruc, the German rationalist Johann G. Eichhorn published his three volumes of the introduction of the Old Testament “Einleitung” or “Introduction to the Old Testament” supporting Astruc claim, indentifying two major sources – the Yahwishtic and the Elohistic sources. He initially asserted Moses to be the one who edited the sources but later ruled out Mosaic involvement. K.D. Illgen in 1798 further discovered that there were actually two Elohistic sources.

Using the legal codes of the Pentateuch as a point of departure, Scottish Roman Catholic theologian Alexander Geddes and J.S. Vater further suggested that the Pentateuch is a compilation of many fragments over a period of time. This hypothesis was called the “fragmentary hypothesis” as it suggested the presence of many fragmentary sources. Geddes suggested that the compilation may have been made during the reign of King Solomon. “They assumed that there were a number of unconnected sources which were collected and put together to form a continuous story only at a later period.” In 1805, Vater argued that the Pentateuch was compiled from many fragments as many as forty fragmentary sources. Geddes also included the book of Joshua in his study and that it may as well be edited by the same editor.

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36 Ibid. 73
37 Hnuni, The People of God in the Old Testament, 129
38 Ibid. 130
In studying the Hexateuch, H. Ewald in 1823 recognizes two Elohist sources in support to Illgen’s proposition. First, there is the Elohist source, and second, the Yahwhistic sources in the Decalogue and in the Book of the Covenant, then thirdly, another Elohist source which was added much later. This was known as the “Supplementary theory.”

In 1835, Wilhelm Vatke proposed that a large section of the Pentateuch were written as late as the exile of the Israelites. He believed that the Pentateuch was composed and produced in order to reminisce and remember the history of Israel rather than a religious constitution for the nation of Israel.

Later in 1853, V. Hupfield argued that there were two writers that used the word “Elohim” for God, besides the Yahwishtic writing. He also suggested Deuteronomy to be a separate document altogether, thus giving rise to four documents. So, there are the basic Elohist writing (E1), a later Elohist writing (E2), a Yahwhistic writing (J), and finally the Deuteronomy writing (D). Hupfield emphasized that there was a single unknown editor or compiler who was responsible in the compilation of all these sources. This proposal of one editor became popular with later scholars. The two Elohist writings and the Yahwishtics writings were believed to have been combined by one editor. E. Riehmn later affirm the Deuteronomy writings (D) to be an independent source, and even dated it to be later than the Yahwishtic writings.

The two Elohist writings, the basic Elohistic (E1) and the later Elohistic (E2), were later regarded as the Priestly writings (P) and Elohistic writings (E). Thus four

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39 Hexateuch is a reference to the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua. Certain scholars believed that this six books are part of one compilation and thus the term “hexa” meaning “six”, and “teuchos” meaning “scrolls” or “books.”
souces, the Elohistic (E), the Yahwishtic (J), the Deuteronomy (D) and the Priestly (P) were formally recognized.\textsuperscript{40}

The final formulation of the understanding of the authorship of the Pentateuch in the light of source criticism came about with the proposals to Karl H. Graf and Julius Wellhausen in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Graf in 1865 agreed with Vatke that the date of compilation of the Pentateuch may be as late as the time of the exile with Ezra playing a significant role. He discovered that a large portion of the Pentateuch, namely the Elohistic source (E\textsuperscript{1}) to be of priestly interests and its concern thereof. This E\textsuperscript{1} source was already considered by others as the Priestly writings (P). In an attempt to assign dates to these sources, Graf went beyond source criticism and widen the argument to historical criticism. This proposition paved the way for Wellhausen to establish his theory later. Graf initially agreed with Hupfield’s sequence of the sources (E\textsuperscript{1}-E\textsuperscript{2}-J-D), but later established the E\textsuperscript{2}-J-D-E\textsuperscript{1} sequence.

Abraham Kuenen argued that the Yahwishtic (J) sources to be earlier than the Elohistic (E\textsuperscript{2}) sources, thus establishing the sequence J-E\textsuperscript{2}-D-E\textsuperscript{1}. Since E\textsuperscript{1} was already considered as a Priestly writing (P), we are given the sequence J-E-D-P.

However, German scholars were divided over the date of the writings or the sources of the Pentateuch. They debated on the order of the sources and were divided in their opinion. Julius Wellhausen published his books in 1877 and 1883 to settle this debate, and gave birth to the so-called “Documentary Hypothesis.” The Documentary Hypothesis then became the most accepted explanation for the sources of the Pentateuch among scholars in Germany, Britain, France and America.\textsuperscript{41}

The Documentary Hypothesis suggested that the Yahwishtic or the J – document were composed around 580 B.C. in Judah and uses the name “Yahweh” for

\textsuperscript{40} Hnuni, \textit{The People of God in the Old Testament}, 130
\textsuperscript{41} Arnold & Beyer, \textit{Encountering the Old Testament}, 69
God. Since the English and German speaking scholars uses Jehovah for Yahweh, thus the letter J to denote the Jahvist or Yahwehist documents. This writing is simple and is written in a narrative style. The narratives present God in anthropomorphic terms with almost human qualities. God deals directly with people in this writing, even though angels made appearances. The Elohist sources or the E – document uses “Elohim” for the name of God and avoid any anthropomorphic traits towards God and in its terminology. “Elohim” is less intimate than “Yahweh” in the understanding of God. E – document exhibit the northern perspective in its style as it is more formal than J – document. After the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel, the Yahwishtic document and the Elohistic document were combined into one new document, the J and E documents. This new document is said to reflect the theological convictions after the historical crisis of the kingdom of Israel.

The hypothesis claimed that the Deuteronomy document (D) was written to establish and reinforce the cultic purity of worship in Judah. The Deuteronomy document emphasize on the worshipping of the “LORD God” combining the two names “Yahweh” and “Elohim.” This document is said to have “corrected and updated the less precise and older JE document.” \(^{(42)}\) Wellhausen initially suggested that the Deuteronomy document is limited to Deuteronomy chapter 5 to 26 and 28 only, primarily because it were written in a style that was similar to a sermon often expressing theology in exhortations. He assumed in agreement with his predecessors that the Deuteronomy writings were as composed only as late as the 7th century B.C.

Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis suggested that the J, E and D documents were combined and interpolated sometime after 587 B.C. when Jerusalem was in the captivity of the Babylonians. Sometime during the 5th century B.C., the

\(^{(42)}\) Ibid. 69
Priestly writings or the Priestly Code (P) was written to address the priestly concerns which were felt neglected in the JED documents. This was perhaps seen as necessary by the post-exilic community of the Israelites.

“Wellhausen believed the P document contained the majority of the pentateuchal material concerning the sacrificial system. This document’s legal materials concerns priests, Levites, and the various types of sacrifices (e.g., Lv 1 – 7), and emphasizes the transcendence and awesomeness of God.” 43

The Priestly document (P) and the other three documents (JED) were believed to have been combined around 400 B.C. This complex combination of four sources, namely the Yahwishtic (J), Elohistic (E), Deuteronomy (D) and the Priestly (P), into one document came to become the Pentateuch that we know today.

The dating of these documents varies from scholars to scholars. However, the sequence of the sources in the order of their age is generally accepted. R.L. Hnuni in accordance to B.W. Anderson put the dates as follows and adopted his diagram as follows44:

Table 2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period of the Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yahwishtic (J) source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elohistic (E) source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomistic (D) source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priestly (P) source</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 Arnold & Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 69
Wellhausen however believed that monotheism and cultic legislation were developed only later in the history of the Israelites. He suggested that references to a central sanctuary namely the tabernacle and the exclusive worship of God in Jerusalem and later in the temple in Jerusalem had to be later than 622 B.C. when the young King Josiah’s reforms were enacted.\textsuperscript{45} This view is also in agreement with de Wette’s proposal in dating the D – document with the reform of King Josiah.\textsuperscript{46} Wellhausen’s Documentary Hypothesis and reconstruction of the Pentateuch is purely philosophical and anti-supernaturalism in its thought leaving no room for divine intervention or even a revelation. This hypothesis is based and constructed for scholarly and historical

\textsuperscript{45} Arnold & Beyer, \textit{Encountering the Old Testament}, 69, 70

\textsuperscript{46} 2 Kings 22
thought. Wellhausen was successful in this proposition of the Documentary Hypothesis that he argued the lateness of the development of the Israelite laws. He assumed that the pentateuchal laws only appear at the beginning of the Jewish nation after the exile, rather than the beginning of the Israelite history.\textsuperscript{47} His brilliance in the explanation and correlation of the JEDP sources with the religious and political history of ancient Israel enables his hypothesis to be the widely accepted criticism and understanding of the development of the Pentateuch.

### 2.3 General Composition of the Torah

Based on the content of the text in the Pentateuch, a brief division of the Torah may be made as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.2</th>
<th>General themes of the Torah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 1 – 11</td>
<td>Primeval history: Creation to Abraham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 12 – 36</td>
<td>Patriarchal history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 37 – 50</td>
<td>The story of Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 1 – 18</td>
<td>The exodus of the people of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 19 – Numbers 10:10</td>
<td>Israel at Sinai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 10:11 – 21</td>
<td>Israel in the wilderness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers 22 – Deuteronomy 34</td>
<td>Israel in the plains of Moab</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Torah opens by asserting the supremacy and the sovereignty of God, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It tells of God as the creator and source of all life. The creation narrative advocate the superiority of God by telling its

readers that God is the creator of all things, including man. Genesis 1 & 2 tells of God’s act in creation and the order in which the world was created.

Genesis 3 narrates the fall of man and how sin entered into the world. The devil in the form of a serpent deceives mankind by tempting them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which God restricted them from eating. Due to their disobedience, they were banished from the bliss of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis 4 – 11 is the brief story of mankind immediately after the fall; on how they increase in population and in sin, how mankind rival against God by building the tower of Babel, and how confusion entered into the world. It tells of the judgment of God through Noah and the tower of Babel.

Genesis 12 – 50 narrates on God’s election, covenant, promise, faith and providence of his people. Characters include Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph. A great deal on the community and civilization of the era can be drawn from these narratives.

The major theme in Exodus and Deuteronomy are that of divine deliverance of the people of Israel by God. The making of covenant and law (Exodus 19 – 24), worship and social ethics (Exodus 25 – Numbers 10:10), the guidance of rebellious people through the wilderness (Numbers 10 – 21), and the preparations for going over Jordan and conquering Canaan (Numbers 22 - Deuteronomy 34) are the basic content of the rest of the Pentateuch.³

The Pentateuch also contains genealogical lists (Gen. 5; 11; Ex. 5), geographical and ethnographical list (Gen. 10; 26), lists of tribes (Gen. 29; Deut. 33), offerings (Ex. 35), census (Num. 1 -4; 26), and details of the campsites during their stay in the wilderness (Num. 33).
2.4 Genesis

2.4.1 Introduction: Purpose and scope of the book

Genesis may be referred as the book of origins. It is revelation and the description of the origin of creation, mankind, sin, evil and the beginning of history to its believers. The book presupposes God in its existence even before time began. The book in Hebrew is "תבראשית" (beresit) meaning “In the beginning.” This word is equivalent to the Greek “geneseōs” from which we derived the English title “Genesis.” This style of naming the title of book is seen throughout the five books of Moses or the Pentateuch.

The opening line of Genesis had become the iconic passage of the Bible as it is the opening line of the Pentateuch and the Christian Bible as well. The Hebrew text had widely been translated as “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” However, other scholars, including some Jewish Tanakh translation prefer, “When God began to create heaven and earth” over the common translation found in the English Bible. Other scholars on the other hand claimed that such translation “needlessly complicates the syntax of the first three verses and grammatically does not appear to be preferable.” Furthermore, the Gospel of John seems to use this understanding when he wrote “In the beginning was the Word.”

Genesis must have been written as a prologue to the rest of the Bible – both Jewish Tanakh and the Christian Bible with the New Testament. It is the basis of the theological and historical understanding of the history of Israel and the people of God. It may be considered as the account of the origin of the universe, the beginning of the physical world, the creation of human life, the commencement of culture and the

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48 Genesis 1:1 (KJV)
49 JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh (Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, USA, 1999), 1
50 Wolf, An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch, 93
51 John 1:1
foundation of the people of God. Genesis seemed to provide the answers to man’s unquenchable questions. If one should trace back its history, according to Genesis, it would have ultimately led to God who is eternal and his existence is before time. The transcendence of God perhaps ends the discussion in understanding the origin of the universe and life itself. The book dealt with the creation of the world and the majestic details of man’s creation. Not only does it deal with creation, it also explained how sin entered the world and how it destroyed God’s original creation. Theologically, one may find God’s plan of redemption within the book of Genesis itself.

The book of Genesis functions like an historical account. The first few chapters deal with the creation story, followed by Noah’s flood and later the story of Abraham as a chosen father of nations. From then on, it began to trace the generations that follow and the Patriarchal story. The ending portions of Genesis describe the life and times of Jacob who later became “Israel.”

The book of Genesis spans from the origin of the universe to the gathering of a chosen people in a covenant with God. Attention is given primarily to God, man and the land. The book may be divided into two parts, chapters 1 to 11 and chapters 12 to 50. The first part deals with the origin of the world, the fall of mankind, the devastation of the flood and the tower of Babel. This section has widely been considered as a realm of mythology as there can be no certain historical tie to these events. The second part, from chapter 12 to 50 focuses on the Patriarch of Israel. It began with Abraham, his son Isaac, then Jacob and Joseph. It talks of the land of Canaan and the nomadic life of people. Unlike the first part, this section may be considered as the beginning of historical account. This distinction of the book of Genesis into two parts relegating the first part to the realm of mythology and the second part to history is common, however,
“from a literary standpoint such a sharp distinction is difficult to make.”

Walter Kaiser in his article entitled, “The Literary form of Genesis 1-11” notes that the first part of Genesis contains 64 geographical terms, 88 personal names, 48 generic names and at least 21 cultural items such as wood, metals, musical instruments, etc. Kaiser further claims that Genesis 1 to 11 is a prose rather than poetry. The literary structure of the book of Genesis may be divided as follows:

Table 2.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divisions of the book of Genesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1: The Origin of All Things</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction and Creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of the Heavens and the Earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Adam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Noah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Shem, Ham, and Japheth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Shem (chosen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Part 2: The History of God’s People</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Terah (Abraham)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Ishmael (not chosen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Isaac (chosen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Esau (not chosen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[The Account of Esau Repeated]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Account of Jacob (chosen)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In light of the source criticism towards the Pentateuch, there are only two sources found in Genesis chapter 1 to 11, namely, the Yahwishtic (J) and the later

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52 Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 95
54 Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 96
Elohistic, which came to be known as the Priestly (P) sources. These sources are classified as under:

### Table 2.4

**J & P sources in Genesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>J source</th>
<th>P source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:1 – 4, 5 – 8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:1 – 5, 7, 10, 12, 16b, 17, 22, 23</td>
<td>6:9 – 22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:2b, 3a, 6 – 12, 13b, 20 – 22</td>
<td>8:1 – 2a, 3b – 5, 14 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:20 – 27</td>
<td>9:1 – 17, 18 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:1, 8 – 19, 21, 24 – 30</td>
<td>10:2 – 5, 6 – 7, 20, 22 – 23, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:1 – 9, 27 – 32</td>
<td>11:10 – 26, 27, 31, 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.4.2 Creation theories

As an introduction to the Pentateuch and to the rest of the Bible, Genesis opens with a very magnificent statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Within a span of few verses it gave an account of the creation of the world in six days. It detailed the command of God in creation – “let there be…”, how the command came to completion – “and it was so…”, and the judgment of God after each creation – “God saw that it was good.” We also find the sequence of creation with the marking of each day with morning and evening. When God completed the creation of the world in six days, he rested on the seventh day to set it apart as a special day. This effortless flow of the creation narratives in Genesis 1 stands out among other sections of the Pentateuch.

However, this chapter had produced more questions to the scholars that tried to understand it. This chapter which set forth the work of creation with simplicity and beauty had become a subject of controversy. How is the creation narrative to be

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understood and interpreted in the light of scientific discoveries? How should it even be discussed theologically? Christians, Muslims and Jewish scholars had debated and interpreted this passage in many ways over the past century. Each of these scholars, some very devout, differ sharply in their approach towards this passage.

2.4.2.1 The Meaning of ‘Day’

The biblical account of creation in six days had been a subject of controversy to many. This problem arrived with the explanation of the word “day.” In light of modern scientific discoveries and advancements, belief in a six days creation story seems absurd. Upon Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and natural selection, biblical account of creation becomes a mere myth and subject to faith. Furthermore, to some scholars and theologians, the creation account of the Pentateuch had become a mere poem or a tale to explain the origin of the world to the nomadic tribes of Israel.

2.4.2.2 Twenty-four-hour day theory

The most uncomplicated interpretation of Genesis 1 would be the understanding of the word “day” as a literal 24 hour day. God created the world and everything in it within a literal six days. This theory accepts the biblical account of creation as it is written. There is no room of consideration towards the poetic expression there might be. God rested on the seventh day after the completion of the creations. This act of God became the reason why the Israelites must rest on every seventh day or the Sabbath day. This became a part of the commandment in Exodus 20. Such correlation leads to the understanding that the length on the seventh day (or the Sabbath) must be similar to that of the other days mentioned in the creation narrative.

“Nevertheless, there are hints in Genesis 1 that twenty-four-hour days may not have been intended. First, we observe that the sun was not created until day four (v. 16), so how could days one-three have been regarded as solar days? This argument has been by those who say that the creation of the sun did take place in day one when God said, “Let there be
light” (v. 3). Perhaps the sun was hidden behind thick vapor until the fourth day… A second argument focuses upon the amount of activity that took place on the sixth day…All of these events are virtually impossible to squeeze into one twenty-four-hour day, even if the animals were created instantly at the start of the day. It must have taken a long time to name the animals and birds, and Adam’s excitement in verse 23 implies that the creation of women ended a lengthy period of loneliness.”

The belief in a literal twenty-four-hour day theory had been upheld by many Young Earth Creationists and had advocate the value of this view from theological implications to astronomical theories.

2.4.2.3 Day-Age theory

In contrast to the literal twenty-four-hour day theory, the Day-Age theory view that each day in Genesis 1 is a representation of an indefinite period of time. This period of time may be equivalent of a geological age ranging from many thousand to millions of years. This view rest on the scientific understanding that the age of the earth is over billions of years old.

A branch of this view even suggested a period of 6000 years with each day representing a literal 1,000 years. This thousand-year day had been adopted from the understanding of Psalm 90:4 which is echoed again in 2 Peter 3:8 in the New Testament. The text states that a thousand years is like a day in God’s sight. This theory was widely accepted even from theological standpoint as it posits the Millennial Sabbath to start soon. With Archbishop Usshur’s calculation in the 17th century, the understanding of the Millennium in the book of Revelation seems legit.

Even though this view of biblical creation had widely been accepted, it is not free from problems either. If each day represents an age or a long period of time, how would the plants created on day three survive without the sun which was created only

56 Wolf, An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch, 100
57 E.K. Victor Pearce, Evidence for Truth: Science (OM Books, Secunderabad, India, 2003), 60
on day four? Many proponents of this view also support the idea of theistic evolution whereby God created the world through evolution. Evolution is seen as guided by God to fill the world with life and forms.

2.4.2.4 Revelatory-day theory

Another approach to understanding the creation narrative is the Revelatory-Day Theory. The theory suggested that God revealed the account of creation to Moses in six twenty-hour days. God told Moses the sequence of the creation of the world and Moses wrote them each day as revealed. According to this theory, correlation between the six days of the account and real-time does not matter. The theory answers away all those debate of what actually happened and what a day may represent in the creation account.

2.4.2.5 Intermittent Day Theory

Intermittent Day Theory suggested that God created the world and everything in it on six single days, but with great spans of time between each day or each activity.

2.4.2.6 Gap Theory

Another theory that became common to many Bible students was the Gap-theory. The theory assumes that Genesis 1:1 describes an initial creation that was aborted with a pre-Adamic race. The fall of Satan, according to the assumption of this theory, happens during this time. Thus a period of time gap is suggested between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis1:2. Some proponents of this theory explained away the extinction of dinosaurs during this gap time. This theory was part of the explanatory notes of the Old Scofield Bible, thus making this theory popular to both scholars and lay-men.

2.4.2.7 Evolution and Creation

With the publication of Charles Darwin’s “The Origin of Species” in 1859, the theory of evolution had become the ultimate dogma in the scientific community in understanding the origin of life. Even though some scholars, especially among
Christian communities, propose a scientific approach to the understanding of the origin of life through the lens of Intelligent Design or ID as it is abbreviated, it had faced immense criticism and attack from many scientific communities. To those who hold to biblical statement as a foundation for their belief, they are faced with this dilemma, especially in the United States of America where any form of education outside evolution is considered religious and pseudo-scientific.

However, evolutionary understanding of the origin of life cannot give substantial evidence for the origin of the first life or the first cell. Theistic evolutionists have explained this by stating that God created the first cell and let it evolve over billions of years. Advocate of this theory also suppose that God guided the evolutionary process without actively involving in the creation. To many believers of the Bible, or the Pentateuch in particular – the Jews, Christians and Muslims – this understanding of the origin of life through the lens of theistic evolution unacceptable and does not adhere to the over-all picture of the scripture.

Micro-evolution is evident as changes within species are a common sight. Changes through the process of natural selection due to environmental changes, etc. had been accepted and verified in laboratory. However, to extrapolate macro-evolution from micro-evolution is a far step. Macro-evolution or the general theory of evolution suggested that organisms evolved to such extent that it evolved into a new organism altogether. The theory however barely fulfills the demonstrability, repeatability and observability of a good scientific experiment. For this reason, the general theory of evolution fails to bring consensus among biblical scholars and scientific researchers themselves. Furthermore, the theory of evolution had been found to be difficult to be accepted because it leaves out the role of God in the creation of the world. The idea of God as the origin and source of life seems to be explained away by the theory.
Nevertheless, over the years since the introduction and development of the theory of evolution, many biblical scholars had found a way to relate them and allow these theories to sit comfortably within the biblical account without great disagreement.

The debate of creation and evolution may never be settled even in the next century; however, scholars and researchers from both areas have found correlation with these views. E.K. Victor Pearce in his book “Evidence for Truth: Science” correlate these views irrespective of the interpretation of the time span as under:\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Table 2.5}

\textbf{Correlation of Science and Scripture}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{Science} & \textit{Genesis chapter 1} \\
\hline
\textbf{Before the days of Creation} & \\
The universe begins with the explosion of the primeval atom & ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ v 1 \\
‘Streams of light quanta from…the Big Bang’ (Gamov) & ‘Let there be light’ v 3 \\
diffusing light protons throughout the universe & \\

\textbf{Pre-Cambrian Eras} & \\
Condensation into oceans and vapours above & 2\textsuperscript{nd} day of creation ‘Let an expanse separate the waters from the waters’ \\
Early Pre – Cambrian Schists with rocks oxidized by chloroplast and blue-green algae to put oxygen into the air & 3\textsuperscript{rd} day of creation land emerges v.9 ‘Let the earth bring forth green matter (Hebrew \textit{deshe}) v 11 \\
Dense vapours clear to reveal sun, moon and stars & 4\textsuperscript{th} day of creation ‘Let there be lights in the sky’ v 14 \\
& God had already made (historic tense) the sun, moon and stars v 16 \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{58} Pearce, \textit{Evidence for Truth: Science}, 39
**Post-Cambrian Eras**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fossils</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marine fossils</td>
<td>5th day of creation ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of life’ v20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insects and angio-sperms</td>
<td>‘Winged creatures’ v20b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphibians and Reptiles</td>
<td>‘Great sea monsters’ (Heb. taninim) v21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Life Eras**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land animals</td>
<td>6th day of creation (first part) ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of mammals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mankind</td>
<td>6th day of creation, latter part, ‘Let us make Man’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.4.3 The fall of man

The work of creation in the creation narrative culminates to the creation of man. God created mankind in his “own image”\(^{59}\) giving them power and dominion to rule over all other creations. The Pentateuch and all other biblical writings that followed suggested that the created world was created with man at the centre of it all. Man, both male and female, is made in the image of God. Known in classical Christian theology as *imago Dei*, it refers to the “idea that humankind, by virtue of creation and mandate, corresponds somehow to the Creator.”\(^{60}\) It is the unique nature of mankind in their relationship to the Creator God. However, the unblemished nature of man was tainted with the fall of the first man and woman.

The fall of man is the traditional name for the sins of the first man and woman – Adam and Eve. The fall brought about God’s judgment on both nature and mankind. According to the biblical account in Genesis, Adam and Eve had all the freedom to partake from the goodness of God’s creation. Their freedom was however limited in that they cannot eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This

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\(^{59}\) Genesis 1:27  
\(^{60}\) Alexander & Baker, *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 441
restriction and understanding of this tree had been a subject of much debate to theologians and scholars alike. Debates and speculation had been raised whether the tree should be taken literally or symbolically. It had long been speculated that the tree must have been a symbol for sexual knowledge; while other writes believed it to be “a merismus for everything (i.e., eating from this tree would give omniscience).” Still, other scholars assumes it to be a reference to moral autonomy; whereas G.J. Wenham suggested that the tree of knowledge of good and evil gave wisdom when wisdom should begins with the “fear of the Lord.”

“The “knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 3:5, 22) was the object and symbol of God’s authority, reminding Adam and Eve that their freedom was not absolute but had to be exercised in dependence on God. In prideful rebellion the couple grasped for an absolute self-directing independence. Such absolute dominion belongs only to God. Their ambition affected every dimension of human experience; for example, they claimed the right to decide what was good and evil.”

The fall of man and the story that follows had become the starting point for understanding morals in the Pentateuch. Satan in the form of a serpent tempted mankind by distorting God’s order not to eat from the tree. The serpent in the story invited the woman to treat God’s word as an object to be considered and evaluated. God becomes the one who sadistically and arbitrarily placed a prohibition to suppress the enjoyment of the couple in the garden. The serpent attack God’s character when he suggested to the woman that they shall not die.

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61 Ibid. 286
62 Proverbs 1:7
63 The Concise Holman Bible Dictionary, (Trent C. Butler, Ed., Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 221
When God intervened in the picture, judgment and punishments immediately follows. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden, and they had to toil for their living. Human sin brought about death, against the lie of the serpent.

The fallen state of man and nature is evident even in New Testament writings. The apostle Paul declares that sin and death entered because of Adam, and that sin and death become common to all humankind. In biblical ethics, this is the beginning of man’s fault in the destruction and fall of all things that is good. Sin produces alienation between God and man, between human themselves, towards nature and to himself. It brings about unhappiness and a sense of incompleteness.

2.4.4 The extent of the flood

The great flood mentioned in Genesis can be referred as the great deluge God used to discipline the world from sins. The story of Noah began from Genesis chapter 6 to the 10th chapter, where the account is detailed as a story. The cause of this judgment of God is seen as the corruption and violence in the world. Genesis chapter 5 details the genealogy from Adam, and using the information, Noah’s flood must have occurred in the ninth generation from Adam. God in righteous indignation purged the earth of the ungodly race by water. Despite the world being corrupted and full of crime, the Pentateuch reveals that Noah was a “just man and perfect in his generations.”

God commanded Noah to build an ark of 300 cubits long, 50 cubits broad and 30 cubits high. Genesis 6:3 tells us that Noah worked to build this ark for one hundred and twenty years. Noah was asked to house animals in the ark to save them from the catastrophe. During all those times, Noah preached and invited others to be saved from the disaster. When the catastrophe came, water came from the “fountains of the deep”

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64 Cf. Romans 5:12; 6: 23
65 Genesis 6:9 (KJV)
and the “windows of heaven” were opened and water filled the land. It rained continuously for 40 days destroying all life and vegetation on the land. The waters however prevailed for 150 days. When the waters subsided, Noah’s ark landed on the “mountains of Ararat,” not necessarily the peak of the mount. God made a covenant with Noah with a rainbow as a symbol of that covenant. God promised that there he will not destroy the earth with water anymore.

The story of Noah’s flood is cited by the prophet Isaiah as “the waters of Noah.” New Testament writers presented the narrative of Noah’s flood as a historic event. It is mentioned in the Gospels and later in the writings of Peter. They served as an example of God’s judgment upon mankind. The story was used as a reminder of God’s grace and also as a warning to the people of God.

The story of Noah’s flood had been a subject of spirited debate even in the contemporary world. Doubts and questions had been raised whether the flood was universal or local. Did the flood even occur in history? Archaeologists, geologists, historians, biblical scholars and researchers of varying fields had differed widely in their acceptance of the narrative.

Verses in Genesis indicated that the flood must have a worldwide impact. When God called Noah to built the ark, he is told that waters should flood the earth “to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under the heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die.” God’s judgment in this verse indicates the catastrophe to be worldwide. “And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that

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66 Genesis 7:11
67 Genesis 9:11
68 Isaiah 54:9 (KJV)
70 Genesis 6:17 (KJV)
were with him in the ark.” Proponents of the universal flood also claimed that God would have broken his promise if the flood was a mere local flood, since there have been many local floods in the history of mankind.

In opposition to the universal flood, many scholars suggested a local flood. The account of Noah and the flood is set in the Mesopotamia, and if the flood were universal, Noah’s ark settling on the mountains of Ararat after drifting in the waters for over a year seems implausible to many scholars. The Hebrew word for “earth” need not necessarily be the globe as we know it, but would easily be translated as “land” or “country” depending on the context. Local flood theorist also purports that the caring of local animals would be more manageable and acceptable.

### 2.4.4.1 Legends from around the world

Despite all the questions and doubts Noah’s flood may raised, the story could not be simply brushed aside as a mere myth because there has been many similar stories from around the world. Civilizations from around the world had exhibited similar stories like that of Noah where a man, in some tradition a demi-god, is asked to build a ship to carry animals in order to save the seed of life on earth because God or gods had decided to destroy the earth with water.

The Egyptian legend mentioned in Plato’s “Timaeus” talks of the gods purifying the earth by destroying it with water by a great flood. Only few shepherds escaped the ordeal by climbing to the summit of a high mountain. In the Hindu tradition, a similar narrative is found in the laws of Manu where a fish told Manu that a deluge will sweep all creatures away. He is commanded to build a vessel and as the waters came, he is guided and saved by the fish. The Chinese book of “Li-Ki” also describe a catastrophe where the pillars of heaven were broken, and the waters enclosed

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71 Genesis 7:23 (KJV)
72 Wolf, An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch, 122
within the earth burst forth with violence and overflowed the earth, which resulted in
disorder and the harmony of nature was destroyed. According to Plutarch, the Greeks
had five different traditions of the flood, of which the story of Deucalion being the
most important. Prometheus warned his son Deucalion of the flood that Zeus was to
bring upon the earth because of the wickedness. Deucalion constructed an ark which
landed on Mount Parnassus. Upon their disembarkment, they repopulated the earth by
the process revealed by the goddess Themis. The Druid legend of Britain also spoke of
a supreme being sending a flood where the waters of the sea lifted themselves on the
highlands of Britain, and rain pouring from the heavens. The patriarch, distinguished
for his integrity with a selected company was saved in a strong ship. Similar narratives
are found in other places of the world including that of the American Indians. Other
tribal communities also spoke of such calamity where the earth was tilted over and
drowned all men.73

2.4.4.2 Gilgamesh Epic

The narrative of Noah’s flood had been a subject of comparison with the ancient
Mesopotamian Gilgamesh Epic since its discovery. The Epic account the life of
Gilgamesh who is considered a historic figure, probably a king of Uruk around 2600
B.C.74 Gilgamesh meets Utnapishtam, an equivalent of the biblical Noah, who told him
of the divine plan of a catastrophe to happen. Utnapishtam, the Babylonian Noah built a
large reed boat and was saved with his family and pairs of all animals.

“On the seventh day the ship was completed.
The launching was very difficult,
So that they had to shift the floor planks above and below,
Until two-thirds of the structure had gone into the water.
Whatever I had I laded upon her;
Whatever I had of silver I laded upon her;

73 Cf. Deluge of Noah, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) (James Orr, John
Nuelsen, Edgar Mullins, Morris Evans, Melvin Grove Kyle, Ed., 1939)
74 Wolf, An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch, 124
Whatever I had of gold I laded upon her;
Whatever I had of all the living beings I laded upon her.
All my family and kin I made go aboard the ship.
The beasts of the field, the wild creatures of the field,
All the craftsmen I made go abroad.”

Another account of the great flood was also found in the Atrahasis Epic. Atrahasis is the hero and flood was sent by the gods because men were too noisy and the gods could not sleep.

Though there are significant differences between the Genesis account and the Babylonian accounts, there definitely are similarities. Do such similarities indicate that the stories were burrowed from one or the other? Might it be possible that these varying accounts points to a catastrophic event in the history. Nonetheless, the Genesis account gave a reason for the event, while other accounts describe more of folk-lore tales. In the biblical account, the story of the flood is followed by the building of the tower of Babel by the later generations of Noah in order to escape such catastrophe if it ever happens again. The builders wanted to build a name for themselves and defy God’s authority. God punished them and scattered them far and wide, confusing them in their languages. This became the understanding for many scholars on the dispersion of mankind all around the world.

2.4.5 The Patriarch and the Birth of the Nation of Israel

The Patriarch refers to the founding fathers of the nation of Israel, namely, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the twelve sons of Jacob. The growth of the Hebrew nation was a promise made by God to Abraham in the patriarchal covenant. For this reason, the history of the nation of Israel traces their birth and origin from Abraham. A large portion of the book of Genesis deals with the life and stories of the patriarchs. From the

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75 Utnapishtim to Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh Epic XI, 76 – 85 (RANE 68), as quoted in Encountering the Old Testament, 85
76 Genesis 11:4
12th chapter till the end of the book of Genesis in the 50th chapter, the text deals with the life of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, his twelve sons, and in detail Joseph. However, there is little or no historical record of their origin or even their existence. Deuteronomy accounts the creed of the Israelites, where they confess, “a wandering Aramean was my father…”

The fathers of the Israelites were probably a nomadic tribe that wandered from land to land. They were a pastoral people tending flocks and herding cattle, moving from place to place in search of good pastures and water. The “Aramean” referred to is probably Jacob or even Abraham himself. Either way, Aram could also be a reference to Syria (as translated in other Bible, e.g., the Authorized King James Version, Revised Version, American Standard Version, &c.). For the first time, Abraham is called “the Hebrew” in Genesis 14:13, from which his descendants were called by the same name. The origin of such name may be difficult to trace, but may suggest a society of people that lacked citizenship in an established nation of the Ancient Near East.

“One popular view is that such a title was appropriate because he [Abraham] was descended from an ancestor named Eber (Gen. 11:14ff) as the two are closely connected in spelling (‘ibri = Eber = Hebrew). Eber is described as the father of Peleg, the ancestor of many clans, so that Hebrew is a broader term than Israel. As it appears to have a slightly unfavourable tone, it might originally have been a sort of nickname applied to people by outsiders. In many ancient records a name appears variously written as Habiru, Apiru, Hapiru, or Aperu, they may represent same name and probably the same word as ‘Hebrew.’ These references are found in the documents of the 2nd millennium B.C. These people seem to be people scattered through Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria, Canaan and Egypt.”

The Pentateuch traces the history of its people back to the time when they were nomadic wandering tribes, and even back to the time of the beginning of the world.

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77 Deuteronomy 26:5 (ESV)
78 Hnuni, *The People of God in the Old Testament*, 16
With the obsession of tracing their history and genealogies, which they probably picked up from their time of exile in Babylon, it was important for the children of Israel to remind themselves of their legitimacy as a people and a nation.

2.4.5.1 Abraham

Abraham is regarded as the first among the Hebrew patriarch, son of Terah, a prime example of faith and the friend of God. In Islamic tradition, Abraham or Ibrahim as he is called is recognized as a prophet and messenger of God. The Qur’aan also spoke of God’s promise to Abraham to be the father of all the nations of the world.\textsuperscript{79}

His exemplary life is praised and mentioned as well.

“Lo! Abraham was of a people obedient to Allah, by nature upright, and he was not of the idolaters…follow the religion of Abraham, as one by nature upright. He was not of the idolaters.”\textsuperscript{80}

The Pentateuch records of Abraham being called by God to migrate from the land of Ur to Canaan. God promised Abraham that he would be a father of a great nation that will spread all around the world. Abraham was however childless. Because of a famine, Abraham and his family moved to Egypt where his wife’s beauty attracted the pharaoh, where God had to intervene in order to save her.

God make a covenant with Abraham when they returned to Palestine. The Jewish tradition of circumcision is understood of have been born from this covenant. The male child of every generation of Abraham was required to cut off their foreskin as a symbol of separation and purity. This action was necessary for Abraham to enjoy the blessings of God.

Abraham had a son Ishmael through his handmaid Hagar, despite God’s promise to give him a child through his wife. Later, when Sarah bore him a son, Ishmael was expelled with his mother Hagar to the wilderness. God tested the

\textsuperscript{79} The Holy Qur’aan 2:124
\textsuperscript{80} The Holy Qur’aan 16:120 – 123, p.273, 274
allegiance of Abraham when Isaac, his only legitimate son to be sacrificed. In obedience, Abraham took his son to be sacrifice, but God intervened and provided an alternate sacrifice and saving Isaac’s life. This act of Abraham and God’s command to sacrifice Abraham’s son had become a subject of moral debate.

Abraham remarried in old age and had further children. He died at the age of 175. Abraham had become the point in history where the relationship between God and man is mutually established. The Jews appropriately identify God as the God of Abraham.

2.4.5.2 Isaac

Isaac was the only son of Abraham by his wife Sarah, as promised by God. Isaac was born when his mother Sarah was 90 years old and Abraham was 100. Isaac was asked to be sacrificed by God to his father Abraham, but God stopped the ordeal and provide a substitute for the sacrifice.

Isaac married Rebekah, and had two twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Of the twin, Esau was older but sold his birth-right to his brother Jacob. Isaac became prosperous and moved to Beersheba. Upon his old age, Isaac was deceived by his son Jacob, pretending to be his older brother Esau, to receive blessing in place of Esau. Isaac blessed Jacob, thus making Jacob the basis of the nation of the Israelites. Isaac died at the age of 180 and was buried by his sons.

2.4.5.3 Jacob

Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebekah is the original ancestor of the nation of Israel. He is the father of the 12 ancestors of the 12 tribes of Israel. The story of Jacob occupies half of the book of Genesis. Thus was the importance given in the understanding the origin of Israel by the writers of the Pentateuch.
Jacob, the quiet and integrated son favoured by his mother over his elder twin brother Esau, the rough and hairy hunter beloved by his father bargained for Esau’s birthright. The narrative in Genesis tells us of how Jacob and his mother deceived his father in giving him the blessings. The blessing conveyed the status of head of the family and also the inheritance. Rebekah arranged for Jacob to flee from the wrath of Esau.81

When Jacob was 40, God gave him a dream or a vision where he saw a ladder that started from the earth and reaches the heaven. Jacob realized the presence of God, naming it Bethel. Jacob made an oath binding himself to God. Later, Laban tricked him in marrying his elder daughter Leah. However, after working for Laban, he married Rachael, the younger whom he loved. Eventually, Jacob had 12 children with four women.

Jacob in fear of his brother Esau sent enormous gifts when he knew that Esau’s seemingly hostile group was advancing. Jacob then wrestled with God until daybreak when they crossed the river Jabbok. Jacob hip was dislocated at daybreak by the opponent. From then one, Jacob was renamed “Israel,” meaning ‘the one on whose behalf God strives.’ Jacob’s fear of meeting Esau proved fruitless, when they met but with great love. The twins met again when their father Isaac died. Jacob returned to Bethel to receive the patriarchal promises. His 12 children became the basis of the 12 tribes of Israel.

When severe famine struck Canaan, Jacob and his family moved to Egypt where he dwelled in Goshen until his death. He gave his blessings to his favourite son Joseph who was then an effective administrator in the land of Egypt.

81 Genesis 27:46-28:1
The New Testament contends that God chose Jacob because of what he would become rather than his birth-right or the trickery thereof. The long endurance of Jacob in all his afflictions stands out despite the quarrels and fights over fortune and family possessions.

2.4.5.2 Joseph

Joseph was one of the 12 children of Israel, and the favourite among the 12 by his father Jacob, who later came to be called Israel. Joseph received a coat of many colours and was highly favoured by his father, making his other brothers jealous. Joseph dreamt that he would one day be a ruler, thus enraging his other brothers. He was sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites who in turn sold to the Egyptians. However, Joseph found favour with his Egyptian master as well.

In Egypt, his master’s wife tempted him but Joseph rejected, which led him to be imprisoned by false accusation. There, he interpreted the dreams of two prisoners and later ended up interpreting the dream of the Pharaoh. Because of Joseph, Egypt was saved from seven years of famine; and he was highly rewarded by the Pharaoh. Joseph moved his family from Canaan to Egypt under his patronage. The fast multiplying descendents of Joseph occupy the land which eventually led to their bondage in Egypt. Joseph died in Egypt where he was embalmed and entombed. His bones were however taken away from the tomb to be reburied later by the Israelites.

2.5 Exodus

2.5.1 Introduction: Purpose and scope of the book

The second book of Moses, “Exodus” deals with the Israelites escaping the bondage and slavery of Egypt. It is a very dramatic narrative with powerful

\[82\text{ Cf. John 4:12; Acts 7:8-16; Romans 9:10-13; Hebrews 11:9, 20, 22.}\]
descriptions. It is a book of salvation, deliverance and liberation under the mighty hand of God.

The title of the book “Exodus” was given by the Greek translators of the Old Testament. The word “exodus” is a Latin variation of the Greek translation simply meaning “exit,” “going out” or “departure.” The Hebrew title, שמות is simply the opening lines of the book, “These are the names of…” Unlike Genesis, the Hebrew title does not convey the overall content of the book of Exodus. The Latinized Greek seems to convey a better title for the book.

The book of Exodus describes the struggles and bondages of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt, and it also reveals the faithfulness and sustenance of God, who delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians. Exodus is not only the story of deliverance but also account the entering of the new formal covenant between the people of Israel as a nation and God on Mount Sinai. God gave the Ten Commandments showing the Israelites how to maintain proper relationship with Him and with one another. As we progress in depth into text of the Pentateuch, we see the transcendent nature of God beginning in Exodus with the revelation of God at the burning bush. The book of Exodus reveals God’s desire on how the people should live and how they should worship.

The bondage of the Israelites under the Egyptians in the book of Exodus is in direct fulfillment to the prophecy of Genesis 15:13, where Abraham was told that his “descendants will live in a land that is not their own, where they will be slaves, and they will be oppressed for 400 years.” However, God did not forget his people and the book of Exodus is the story of that deliverance and liberation. For the Jewish community today and the Israelites in the past, the story of exodus is the ultimate story

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83 Genesis 15:13 (GW)
of salvation and redemption. The book of Exodus is where God revealed his ambiguous name יהוה “YHWH” or the later developed “Yahweh” to the nation of Israel. God appeared to Moses in the burning bush where God disclosed that he was the great “I AM.” Through the ten plagues that fell upon Egypt and through the crossing of the Red Sea, the Israelites understood the power and might of Yahweh. Learning the hard way, the Egyptians came to recognize the God of Israel as the Lord of power and might.

At the same time when God reveals to his people his power and might, he also reveals his compassion and mercy. God sparing the firstborn sons of the Israelites during the last plague was a symbol of God’s mercy. This moment in history became the institution of the Feast of the Passover. That day, the blood of the lamb painted on the door-post marked the house of the Israelites whereby the angel of death passed over those house sparing the firstborn sons, while the household of the Egyptians were filled with weeping over the death of their firstborn sons. In the Old Testament, this Feast of Passover became the most important religious festival observed by the children of Israel. It reminded them of God’s deliverance and mercy.

The exodus of the Israelites was suppose to be a relatively short journey to Canaan but it was not so. The Israelites first spent a year at Mount Sinai where God gave instructions and laws to Moses for the newly established nation of Israel. This period in the wilderness was also utilized as a time to prepare them to fight the Canaanites. The later chapters of Exodus reveal the Sinai covenant also known as the Mosaic covenant.

At Mount Sinai, God gave the Israelites the principles of godly living through the Ten Commandments which were followed by specific guidance. If the nation of Israel obeys God’s laws and keep his covenant, God promised to make them his special nation, where he will dwell among them. With Moses supervision, the tabernacle was
built as instructed by God himself. Moses’ brother Aaron became the high priest and the tabernacle enables the Israelites to worship God, keeping him at the centre of their lives.

However, the book of Exodus also reveals how the people of Israel became restless and began worshipping a golden calf. Moses condemned the people and his brother Aaron. Israel’s violation of the covenant enraged God, and God vowed to destroy them and start all over again with Moses. Moses pleaded with God on the basis of the promises to Abraham and the earlier patriarchs. Moses broke the tablets of the Ten Commandments, but God gave him two new tablets again. The book of Exodus is dark chapter wherein God’s wrath is often invoked first by the Egyptians and later by the Israelites. In the midst of all the contentions, God’s mercy, goodness and compassion are also revealed.

The book of Exodus may be split in the following parts.\textsuperscript{84}

\textbf{Table 2.6}

\textbf{Divisions of the book of Exodus}

\textbf{Part 1: Exodus (Historical Narrative)}
- The Oppression of Israel
- The Call of Moses
- The Ten Plagues
- The Exodus and Journey to Mount Sinai
  - The Passover (Chap. 12)
  - The Feast of the Unleavened Bread (13:3-10)

\textbf{Part 2: Legal Section}
- The Book of the Covenant
  - The Ten Commandments (Chap. 20)
    - (Covenant Stipulations)
- Chaps. 19 – 24

\textbf{Part 3: Worship}
- Instruction for Building the Tabernacle
  - Ends with command to keep the Sabbath (31:12-17)
- False Worship: The Golden Calf
  - Chaps. 32 – 34
- The Building of the Tabernacle
  - Begins with the command to keep the Sabbath (35:1-3)
  - Chaps. 35 – 40

\textsuperscript{84} As given in Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 154
The book of Exodus had also been an influence and aspiration for many liberation theologians recently. The deliverance of the people of God from oppression and injustice on weaker sections of the society had been the major theme from this theology. Much of this theology had also been appealed with the writing of philosophers such as Hegel and Marx, with some attempts to Christianize Marx, though the goal not being atheistic Communism.\textsuperscript{85} Freedom and deliverance from oppression of various forms had been the main theme of these theologians. The book of Exodus had been the account of the events that showed the liberating power of God, and his supremacy above all the other gods. It was also an event that made a people with no identity a nation that came to be known worldwide. It provides the “paradigm of liberation for all other oppressed groups of the society today.”\textsuperscript{86}

2.5.2 Moses and the ten plagues

Moses is the unrivaled leader of the nation of Israel. He is revered by the Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. A mention of his name frequently occurred in the Qur’aan as “Musa.” In the book of Exodus and the Pentateuch as a whole, Moses is the central figure in all the account that follows after the exodus. He is the leader that brought the people of Israel free from the bondage of the Egyptians. He is the leader through whom God revealed his glory and power. Moses is the one through whom God liberated the nation of Israel.

The story of Moses began with the judgment of death issued by Pharaoh in the land of Egypt when the child of Israel grew too large in number, outnumbering the Egyptians themselves, which instilled fear to Pharaoh. When Pharaoh commanded all Hebrew boys to be killed, Moses mother secretly placed him in a basket and set it afloat the Nile to be found by the princess. Moses was adopted into Pharaoh’s court and was

\textsuperscript{85} Cf. Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 156
\textsuperscript{86} Hnuni, \textit{The People of God in the Old Testament}, 31
educated there. Upon maturing, Moses was concerned with the oppression of the slaves which landed him into trouble when he killed an Egyptian task-master. Moses fled Egypt and settled in Midian tending the flock of Jethro.

While tending the sheep of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses encountered God through a burning bush. God told Moses to remove his footwear since he was standing on holy ground. Here, we see the facet of God’s character, which is holiness. The transcendental nature of God seems to be the main characteristic of God throughout the book of Exodus. God revealed his name to Moses, but in a very ambiguous manner, whereby it came to be translated as “I am who I am.” God commanded Moses to return to Egypt and set his people free.

Moses demand was thoroughly rejected by the Pharaoh, whereby God sent his judgment upon Egypt in the form of ten plagues. The affliction of the ten plagues began with the turning of the river Nile into blood where the fish died and the river stank. The second plague was the plague of frogs; which was followed by the plague of lice. The fourth was the plague of flies, which was followed by the death of the cattle and livestock of the Egyptians. The sixth plague was of boils and blains and it came without any warning. The plague of hail with fire and thunder follows making it the seventh. The eighth plague was the arrival of swarms of locust that destroys the plantations and crops of the land of Egypt. Within a short period of time, the land was covered with darkness, with the exception of the land of Goshen where the Israelites dwell. The tenth plague was the last and most fearful of all the plagues; it was the death of all the first-born of Egypt. The children of Israel were spared from such death because they had covered their door-post with the blood of a lamb as instructed. On seeing the blood, the angel of death passed over their houses sparing their firstborn; thus the birth of the feast of Passover.
The acts of God through the plagues were recorded as “great acts of judgment”\(^87\) because is seen as deserving these plagues for their mistreatment of the Israelites. Joseph brought great blessings to Egypt and saved them from the famine, and the Egyptians returned the favour in keeping the descendents of Joseph as slaves. Though Egypt was a great kingdom, the rulers and the people of Egypt fell before the Lord of Israel. It stands as a reminder to the children of Israel that the God they served is mightier than the greatest kingdom on earth. Biblical scholars, archaeologists, historians and scientific researchers had to some extent agreed that these plagues must have occurred in history through natural means, of which the plausibilistic contender being the immediate effects of the Santorini volcanic eruption.\(^88\) Theologically, these plagues were directed as an assault against the gods of the Egyptians, and none of the gods were able to divert and stop the plagues.\(^89\)

### 2.5.3 The Passover

The tenth and last plague was the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians. The Israelites were not safe from the death that was supposed to fall that night unless they do as they were instructed. They were told to mark their door-posts with the blood of a lamb, and on seeing the blood the angel of death would pass over their house sparing their firstborn. This act of sacrificing a Passover lamb and the feast of Unleavened Bread became the annual commemoration of this event in history.

A Passover lamb or goat was instructed to be a male one year of age. On the night of the Passover, the lamb was sacrificed and was eaten that very night with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. Like the moment when Isaac was replaced by a ram when God told Abraham to sacrifice his son, the Passover lamb became a

\(^87\) Exodus 7:4 (ESV)


\(^89\) Wolf, *An introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 158
replacement for the firstborn of that household. This substitutionary nature of the lamb came to be understood in the Christian understanding as Jesus taking the place of sinners, thus the reference of Jesus as the “Passover Lamb” according to Paul.\(^{90}\) The lamb died in their place.

Closely associated with the Passover is the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. The feast began the next day when the people could not bake bread with yeast as it would not have the time to be leavened. In later traditions, this feast became a reminder of the Jews of their bitter experience in Egypt.

The Passover is the starting point in Jewish history as it was the moment when they dedicated themselves anew to God. According to Exodus 4:22, Israel is regarded as God’s firstborn; thus, the Passover is an important symbol in affirming that status. The act and rituals involved in the Passover was much regulated and much concern was given on the performance. The lamb that was slaughtered must be eaten that night and it must be roasted. The bread must be unleavened and every male that keep the ceremony must be circumcised in accordance to the Abrahamic covenant. The Passover could be celebrated by slaves and aliens as well, but they too must be circumcised.

### 2.5.4 The Sinai covenant

The Passover was followed by the exodus of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. However, as they were on their way, Pharaoh changed his mind and decided to bring them back. The Israelites were caught between the armies of Pharaoh and the Red Sea.\(^{91}\) However, God miraculously part the water giving way for the children of Israel.

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\(^{90}\) 1 Corinthians 5:7

\(^{91}\) “Scholars have long been stymied in their attempt to pinpoint the place where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, partially because the term is more properly the “Reed Sea.” The Hebrew word * sûp*, which corresponds closely to the Egyptian *tjuf* (“papyrus”), refers to the reeds along the bank of the Nile in Exodus 2:3 and to the seaweed in the Mediterranean in Jonah 2:5 [HB 2:6]. Since there are a series of lakes with abundant supplies of reeds and papyrus north of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Suez) – such as Lake Menzaleh and Lake Timsah – it is felt that one of these may have been the “Reed Sea” crossed by the Israelites.”
to cross the other side walking on dry grounds. When the chariots of Pharaoh’s armies advance towards them, the waters came back and drowned them all.

This act of deliverance from the power of Pharaoh’s armies became the prime example of salvation and deliverance. “Israel saw the great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.” The triumph of the Israelites was God’s doing and Moses’ sister Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, danced and sang praises to God with other women. Salvation is a moment worth celebrating with exuberance and joy, thus the event was joyously expressed in singing as found in the book of Exodus.

“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name.

"Pharaoh’s chariots and his host he cast into the sea, and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they went down into the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries; you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble. At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them. I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'

You blew with your wind; the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?

You stretched out your right hand; the earth swallowed them.

You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

The peoples have heard; they tremble; pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.

Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of


92 Exodus 14:31 (KJV)
Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O LORD, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased. You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

The LORD will reign forever and ever. ³⁹³

As the Israelites advanced after the crossing of the Red Sea, they enter the wilderness. And three months after their exodus from Egypt, they arrived at Mount Sinai where God met them in a powerful manner. There God gave Moses and the people instructions on how they should live and worship. This great nation as promised to Abraham entered into a covenantal relationship with God. This relationship was later compared to a marriage covenant by the prophet Jeremiah. ³⁹⁴ By entering into this covenant, Israel agreed to obey God’s laws and they become a “kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” ³⁹⁵ The Israelites were set apart to worship God and to have him only as their God.

This significant covenantal relationship was expressed by God in an awe-inspiring display at Mount Sinai. God came down to the mount of Sinai with thunder, lightening, earthquake and great clouds of smoke. The children of Israel stood in fear at the foot of the mount, terrified they thought they would die. They begged Moses to listen to God on their behalf and they in turn would listen to Moses. Moses mediated on their behalf, and God revealed his laws and the Ten Commandments to Moses. God revealed his laws to the people of Israel through Moses.

The Ten Commandments is the central theme of the Sinai covenant. Its importance in the development and understanding of moral and ethics had shaped our mind even in the twenty-first century. The Ten Commandments “summed up the

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³⁹³ Exodus 15:1 – 18 (ESV)
³⁹⁴ Jeremiah 3:8
³⁹⁵ Exodus 19:6 (KJV)
requirements of the law and represent the moral law as distinguished from the civil or ceremonial law.”

The first section of the Ten Commandments deals with man’s relationship with God and the later section with man’s relationship with man. The first part of the commandments state that the God of Israel is the only God and that graven images should not be made to worship. The name of God was to be hallowed and should not be taken in vain. The next commandment was a command to observe the Sabbath since God himself rested on the seventh day of creation. The commandment “Honour your father and mother” is claimed as the first commandment with a promise. The later commandments forbid murder, stealing, adultery, bearing false witness and coveting. Soon after Moses received the Ten Commandments, he was met with the Israelites worshipping a golden calf, to which Moses broke the two tables in which God wrote the Ten Commandments. God later gave Moses the tablets again and was kept in the Ark of the Covenant as a symbol of importance and as a reminder of the sacred covenant the children of Israel had entered.

Exodus chapter 20 to chapter 23 is considered as the Book of the Covenant, a title taken from chapter 27, verse 7. The Book of the Covenant is the expansion of the Ten Commandments in details. It mentions each law in details and how the defiant should be punished. Kindness towards slaves, aliens, widows and orphans is also much emphasized in the book.

Unlike the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinai covenant emphasized the responsibilities of the people. This covenant revealed by God to Moses was confirmed in chapter 24 by the people of Israel saying, “All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.” Moses affirmed the people’s response with a sacrifice at the foot of

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96 Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 181
97 Ephesians 6:2
98 Exodus 24:3 (KJV)
Mount Sinai and sprinkled the blood on the people as a sign that they were set apart as God’s people. Moses received God’s instruction and the plans on the construction of the Tabernacle, and remained there on the mountain for forty days covered in clouds of glory. The Tabernacle became God’s dwelling place and was considered the most sacred space. It was a visible manifestation of God through the Tabernacle, and a constant reminder of God’s presence with the people of Israel.

### 2.6 Leviticus

#### 2.6.1 Introduction: Purpose and scope of the book

Though the book of Leviticus accounts certain events, its primary concern is with the worship and holy living through the ceremonies of sacrifice and offerings. The book may be summed up with the repeated command from God to be holy because God himself is holy.⁹⁹

The title of the book “Leviticus” is a derivation from the translation of the Septuagint and adapted by the Latin Vulgate, simply meaning “relating to the Levites.” The book deals heavily with the responsibilities and ceremonies that had to be performed by the priests. The priests were all from the tribe of Levi, and the title is thus very appropriate. The Hebrew title ויקדה is simply “and he called” from the first line of the text, in reference to God calling Moses from the tabernacle. The Hebrew title reveals the significant of God’s words and his calling throughout the book, while the Latinized title reveals the content of the book.

The book of Exodus ends with the erection of the Tabernacle, and the book Leviticus picks up from there with God calling Moses from the Tabernacle. God in Leviticus relays specific laws though Moses to the people of Israel. There are very little

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⁹⁹ Cf. Leviticus 11: 44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26
narratives in the book with the exception of Aaron’s ordination and the deaths of his sons.

In order for Israel to live with a holy God, as an individual, as a community, or as a nation, they must approach him though sacrifice and offerings. The role of holy priesthood who honours God and set themselves apart from uncleanness and immorality became the central emphasis of the book. The book of Leviticus is all about holiness, a state of being separated and standing out from the world, in this context, to stand out from the pagan world that surrounds them. The people are called unto holiness because God is holy. This demand may be seen as an attempt to restore the image of God that was tainted and destroyed when man sinned in the Garden of Eden. Leviticus display the holiness of God in fine detail, unlike the book of Exodus where God’s might and holiness is displayed on a cosmic scale. God’s expectation towards the priests and the people are spelled out in the laws. It details the process and ways in which they should offer their sacrifices and offerings. The book describes in details what is clean and unclean; and the depth and significance of atonement. Leviticus tells the nation of Israel how they should live a holy life and develop a holy nation. The book of Leviticus may be outlined as under.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{100} Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 195
Table 2.7  
Divisions of the book of Leviticus

Part 1: Ritual

General Procedure (1:1 – 6:7)  
Laws about Sacrifices  Chaps. 1 – 7  
Regulations (6:8 – 7:38)  
Ordination of the Priests  Chaps. 8 – 10  
Death of Aaron’s two eldest sons (chap. 10)  
(narrative insert)  
Regulations about Cleanness  Chaps. 11 – 15  
The Day of Atonement  Chap. 16

Part 2: Holy Living

Worship at the Central Sanctuary  Chap. 17  
Ethical and Moral Concerns  Chaps. 18 – 20  
Regulations and Observances  Chaps. 21 – 27  
Annual Festivals (chap. 23)  
Death of a Blasphemer (chap. 24)  
(narrative insert)  
Sabbatical Year and Year of Jubilee (chap. 25)  
Blessings and Curses (chap. 26)

The first seven chapters of Leviticus stand as a manual of offerings for the Israelites. Leviticus chapter 17 onwards is regarded as the Holiness Code as it describes the code of conduct and requirements towards holiness. It deals with moral laws, priestly regulations, vows and tithes. This section is devoted to a holy living outside the Tabernacle. Leviticus is concerned with right worship and right living, with becoming holy and staying holy.

2.6.2 The sacrificial system

Chapter 1 to 7 of Leviticus deals with the sacrificial system that is required of the Israelites. Like two bookends, the sacrificial system binds the book of Leviticus on both ends. The first seven chapters is a manual of sacrifice or offerings, and sacrifices for special occasions are mentioned again at the end of the book. Though many sacrifices are mentioned in detailed account in the book, they may be divided in
broader terms as burnt offerings, cereal or meal offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings.¹⁰¹

2.6.2.1 Burnt Offerings

Chapter 1 describes burnt offering which is a typical Hebrew offering, and is seen throughout in the Old Testament history. This form of offering may be considered as the oldest form of atonement offering for the Jewish faith and also outside the biblical tradition. The sacrifice of offerings is believed to have ascended to God. It involves the slaughtering of animals which was completely burnt on the altar with its smoke rising up to heaven. Leviticus describes the type of animals that should be brought, the condition and age of the animal that is to be sacrificed. It specifically requires a male that is without blemish. Various animals are listed so that the one offering the sacrifice may bring them in accordance to their financial ability.

2.6.2.2 Cereal or Meal Offerings

The cereal or meal offering is also considered as grain offering and is usually presented in union with burnt offerings. The offering is generally made of fine flour mixed with olive oil and incense, which would be baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a girdle. The priest would take a portion of the offering and burn it on the altar, and the rest would belong to the priests which was consumed by them. These offerings generally stand as a gift or it may have served as a less expensive burnt offering for those who could not afford an animal.

2.6.2.3 Peace Offerings

Peace offering is the basic form of sacrifices brought on feast days according to Leviticus chapter 3. It is a celebrative offering and is often paired with burnt offering. The offering has to do with restoration and reconciliation, rather than being atoning like

¹⁰¹ Arnold and Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament*, 120
the burnt offering. Thanksgiving sacrifice, votive sacrifice and freewill offerings are the subtypes that are understood under peace offerings.

2.6.2.4 Sin Offerings

Sin offerings are offered as atonement for their sins or offenses against God. It emphasized the act of purification and involved cleansing from ceremonial defilement, deception, misappropriation and seduction. Depending on the one offering the sacrifice, be it a priest, congregation, a ruler or as an individual, the requirement of the offering varies. The offerings deals with unintentional sins, sins of omission, sin against the sanctuary and sin of deception against another.

2.6.2.5 Guilt Offerings

Considered as a sub-category of sin offering, guilt offering is atoning in its purpose but is devoted to restitution and reparation. It generally deals with the profanation of sacred items and violations of social nature. Such guilt may include guilt for not testifying, guilt for touching unclean beast or human or guilt for false oath.

2.6.3 The priests and the Levites

For the sacrificial system to be effective and the process to run smoothly, effective ministry of priesthood was a necessity. A proper approach to God requires a holy priesthood that honours God and is set apart for such holy duties. Aaron and his sons are ordained to be the priests who would intercede for the people of Israel. The high priest was to maintain higher standard of holiness than anyone else; he could not become ceremonially unclean even at the death of his relative, and has to marry only a virgin. Because of his dignity and the honour of his office, he wore special garments that include the ephod, an apron-like garment made of linen with blue, purple and scarlet yarn and strands of gold threads. He is also ornate with precious stones and onyx. The holiness of the priest was of extreme importance on the day of Atonement.
Aaron’s sons and the Levites run the workings of the sanctuary. Apart from administrative functions, the priests officiated at the Tabernacle during the sacrifices and offerings. The priests were also given the task to teach the laws and commands given by God. They also handled judicial matters. The tribe of Levi was chosen by God to be special servants to serve in the sanctuary. The Levites could not serve as priests, but were vital in assisting the priests in their work. The Levites carried the Tabernacle wherever the camp moved.

Aaron and his sons were ordained as priests to assume the responsibility of priesthood so that they can minister of behalf of the people. Great care was taken in their ordination so as to cleanse and purify them of any uncleanness. The ceremony included an anointing of Aaron and a sacrifice of a ram, the blood of which was sprinkled by Moses.

Aaron’s two oldest sons, Nadab and Abihu were struck to death when they presented incense to the Lord that did not contain the ingredients specified by God in Exodus 30. The book of Leviticus states that fire of judgment consumed them. The role of priesthood was a privilege and honour, but such privilege entails responsibility and consequences. Later passages also clarified that drunken priests are prohibited from any ceremonial duties.

2.6.4 Clean and unclean

Chapter 11 to 15 of Leviticus is concerned with the regulations of cleanliness and it described those that can make a man impure from God. This regulation of cleanliness is both ceremonial and moral. They generally deal with bodily uncleanness and with wide aspect of food. It is not easy to understand the reasons behind these prohibitions but modern scientific discovery tells us that these regulations would probably be supported on ground of sanitation and health. The book list out animals that should not
be eaten; among four-legged animals the prohibition refers to those that are either part the hoof or chew the cud, or do both. Fishes without scales and fins are prohibited, while carnivorous birds are not permissible to be consumed. Only insects that leap are permissible to be eaten. Childbirth is considered ceremonially unclean, and contact with dead bodies is also considered unclean until they are ceremonially cleansed. Bodily discharges like blood, semen or any bodily fluids causes temporary uncleanness according to the law.

Diseases like leprosy are considered unclean because of the “offensiveness of the appearance and the seriousness of the actual condition.”\textsuperscript{102} The condition of a leper is examined and declared by the priests. The law demanded that person with leprosy should adhere to a certain code of conduct which involves them wearing torn clothes, letting their hair loose, cover his lips and cry “unclean!” when he see other approaching.\textsuperscript{103} They were also to dwell outside the camp. A healed lepper could return to his family only after the validation of the priest.

Uncleanness can also be cause by seminal discharge among men, and by menstruation among women. This is because such discharges of fluids are considered a compromise to the sanctity of the Tabernacle. The cleansing act would involve bathing for seven days and offering sacrifice on the eighth day. The laws of purity of regulations of cleanness complements the holiness code that is later described in chapter 17 onwards of the book of Leviticus.\textsuperscript{104}

2.6.5 The Day of Atonement

Occupying the centre of the book in Leviticus is the Day of Atonement, or יום כפור “Yom Kippur” in Hebrew. The Day of Atonement comes ten days after the New

\textsuperscript{102} Thomas, \textit{The Pentateuch}, 121
\textsuperscript{103} Leviticus 13:45
\textsuperscript{104} Sebastian Kizhakkeyil, \textit{The Pentateuch: An Exegetical Commentary} (The Bombay Saint Paul Society, Mumbai, 2009) 316
Year festival, and is considered as a day of atoning or expiation. It is the day of atoning for the sins of the nation and it includes prayer, penance and fasting. The main purpose of the feast was to cleanse the pollution of the sanctuary and to cleanse the people from their sins. This annual Day of Atonement is the centre and culmination of the Jewish festivals.

The festival of the Day of Atonement would include the sacrifices on the brazen altar, for which the high priest brings a bull and a ram, and the people bring two male goats and a ram. One of the goats is sacrificed on the altar while the other is released as a scapegoat for Azazel. The high priest would enter the holy place into the Holy of Holies; this was the only occasion the high priest would enter, and it was to be the high priest alone. The day involves the sprinkling of the blood on and around the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies, after which the priest would return in completion of his duties.

The account and laws of the festival of Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement is followed by what is considered as the Holiness Code. Chapter 17 to 26 instruct about the slaughtering of animals and sacrifices related to it. It condemns eating blood, and described in details the sanctity of sex. It laid down instructions and laws for penalties for various sins; the importance of priestly holiness and systematized holy things and holy times. Later chapters described the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee and what should and should not be done at such times. It closes with blessings and curses describing the spiritual applications of all the laws and Levitical duties. These instructions and laws regulate the action of the worshipper, demanding faithfulness towards the keeping of the laws.
2.7 Numbers

2.7.1 Introduction: Purpose and scope of the book

After spending a year around Mount Sinai receiving the laws and commands of God, the children of Israel set towards the Promised Land. As they advanced towards the north, the people chosen by God to be a holy nation loses their faith, murmured and complained against Moses and God. God’s judgment fell upon them causing them to wander the wilderness for thirty-eight more years; but showing his mercy throughout the ordeal.

The Hebrew title for the book of Numbers is במדבר meaning “In the wilderness” from the first line of the text. The Septuagint uses the title Αριθμοῖ (Arithmoi) to emphasize the list of numbers recorded in the two censuses in the book. The Latin Vulgate uses the Greek title to become Numeri from which we derived the English title “Numbers.” The content of the book view from source criticism suggest that it was written “according to the presentations of the P, J and E traditions.”\(^\text{105}\) The Hebrew title seems to do more justice to the book than the name “Numbers” since the book accounts more of the journey of the Israelites in the wilderness.

The book of Numbers is basically the epic travel log of the Israelites though the desert on their way to the Promised Land, the land which was promised to Abraham. The journey ought to take only about two weeks but it took the children of Israel forty years. The book of Numbers mentioned three wilderneses – the wilderness of Sinai, Paran and Moab. The account of Numbers details their time in these wilderneses and their journey between each wilderness. The book ends with a large section in the wilderness of Moab which was right across the river Jordan from the Promised Land.

\(^{105}\) Kizhakkeyil, The Pentateuch, 356
The book is understood to be teachings on obedience to the Lord in the new established community. It reminds them of the wrath of God when they broke the covenant. On the positive note, it encourages the Israelites to put their trust in the journey to the Promised Land as God is their guide. Despite all the murmurings and disobedience of the people, they are persuaded to worship God and remind them of his salvation. The book gives the account of their wilderness experiences detailing events and things that should not have happened. The book of Numbers may be outlined as thus:

Table 2.8
Divisions of the book of Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Chapter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation to leave Sinai</td>
<td>1:1 – 10:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journey from Sinai to Paran</td>
<td>10:11 – 14:45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulations on sacrifices; capital punishment for Sabbath breakers</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge to Aaron’s authority; duties of Aaron’s sons and of the Levites</td>
<td>16 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of Miriam and Aaron; sin of Moses; journey to Moab; victory over Sihon and Og</td>
<td>20 – 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition of King Balak; Prophet Balaam and his oracles</td>
<td>22 – 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final rebellion and death of old generations</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A new generation; census; inheritance; Joshua’s succession; sacrifices; vows</td>
<td>26 – 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conquest of east Jordan; request of Reuben and Gad; travel itinerary; boundaries</td>
<td>31 – 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix – Leviticus cities; maintenance of the equal distribution of land</td>
<td>35 – 36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The book of Numbers is a book of narratives, travel itineraries, census, reports and legal disputes of the people of Israel. The book continued the historical journey of the Israelites in the wilderness from the book of Exodus. It entails the organization, disorganization and reorganization of the people of Israel as they advance towards the Promised Land.\textsuperscript{107}

**The twelve tribes of Israel**

The twelve tribes of Israel had been established based on the twelve sons of Jacob. However, with the tribe of Levites separating themselves for duties at the Tabernacle, the two sons of Joseph – Manasseh and Ephraim became the divisions of the house of Joseph.

The twelve tribes were arranged in camps around the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle at the centre of the camp stood as a symbol to the people of Israel to make God the centre of their life and that God is to be worshipped as a nation. The people were to be aware of God’s presence at all times. Moses received the greatest honour by setting his tent to the east of the Tabernacle. The Levites were divided in three groups and they set their camps of the other three sides of the Tabernacle. These camps stood as a buffer between the Tabernacle and the camp of the tribes. The tribes or divisions of the house of Israel were divided as shown\textsuperscript{108}:

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Cf. Thomas, *The Pentateuch*, 135
  \item \textsuperscript{108} Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 227
\end{itemize}
The book of Numbers then describes more laws and regulations with priestly duties and vocations. The arrangement of the tribes in the camps was to achieve maximum homogeneity of the tribes, a factor that was designed to reduce friction as the journey began.\textsuperscript{109}

### 2.7.2 Forty years in the wilderness

Moses chose twelve leaders from the twelve tribes and sent them on a spy mission to see what lies in the journey ahead. Going through the land of Negeb and the hills beyond, they evaluate the quality of the land and the strength of the cities that lies ahead. When the spies returned, they reported that they saw a land flowing with milk and honey. However, they were discouraged over the fact that the cities were well fortified and the inhabitants were giants. Joshua and Caleb encouraged the advancement towards the land while the other ten spies disagreed and discouraged. The dim report of the spies resulted in a rebellion and the rebellion demanded a new leader.

\textsuperscript{109} Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 228
who would take them back to Egypt. Such rebellion was seen as a total rejection to God. The people murmured against Moses and Aaron saying that they were better off in Egypt.

The rebellion was intervened by God in announcing through Moses that God would destroy them. Moses plead with God that if the Israelites do not enter the Promised Land, it would bring bad name to him. God promised a pardon and a punishment. None of the people that saw the glory of God’s act in Egypt would enter the Promised Land, but only their children would. Disturbed by the punishment, the Israelites admitted their sins and decided to attack Canaan. However, neither God nor Moses goes with them. Their invasion was unsuccessful as they were defeated by the Amalekites and the Canaanites. This became a reminder that while God remains faithful to his people, but at the same time will honour their choices if they choose to live in rebellion.

As they traveled toward Moab, even Moses grew weary of the murmurs and complains of the Israelites that in frustration struck the rock when God told him only to command. Then on, Moses was not worthy to enter the Promised Land either. Later, the Israelites rebelled again and God sent poisonous snakes to bite them, and only those that look onto the bronze snake that Moses was asked to make would live.

When Israel arrived in Moab, the king of Moab feared the Israelites because of the sheer size and might. King Balak summoned a pagan sorcerer named Balaam to curse them. However, Balaam was unable to curse them but could only pronounce blessings on them.

As they prepare to enter the Promised Land, the last portions of the book bring into picture the inheritance rights of women and the commissioning of Joshua. It also clarified the inheritance of the Levites and other matters related to the priestly duties.
The book of Numbers presents God as the redeemer of Israel but at the same time a consuming fire. The God who delivers them from the bondage of Egypt did not spared them when they rebelled against him. Despite God’s wrath against the rebellious nation of Israel, he raised a new generation to enter the Promised Land. Throughout the book of Numbers we see God’s wrath and mercy almost one after the other. The book also provides details of Israel’s conduct in worship and sacrifices. The book emphasized on the need and importance of priests in worship and toward the people.

2.8 Deuteronomy

2.8.1 Introduction: Purpose and scope of the book

The book of Deuteronomy may be considered as Moses’ final words to the nation of Israel. In it Moses challenged the new generation of Israelites to obey God’s commandments and keep the Sinai covenant. He urges them to love God wholeheartedly, and encouraged Joshua and the Israelites to occupy the Promised Land.

The English title of the book is derived from the Greek ∆ευτερονόµιον “Deuteronomion” derived from the 17th chapter, verse 18 deuteronomion touto which means “this second law giving.”\(^{110}\) The book of Deuteronomy contains repetition of the Ten Commandments and similar laws found in the book of Exodus, especially the book of the covenant. The Hebrew title דברים “Devarim” simply means “words,” a reference to the first line of the text, “These are the words…” of the book.\(^{111}\)

The book of Deuteronomy accounts the short period of the last month the Israelites dwell in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land. In the book, Moses is reminding the Israelites of their failure in taking the land of Canaan, which resulted in them wandering in the desert for many years. The Deteronomic writers

\(^{110}\) Cf. Wolf, An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch, 245

\(^{111}\) Cf. Kizhakkeyil, The Pentateuch, 419
seemed to insist these stories of the past be remembered least they rebel against God again. In it, Moses did not merely repeat the series of laws but also explained and expounded. The author or authors, or Moses himself developed the laws such that they become a reference to the moral purpose by which they should be prompted to obey them.

The book is concerned with justice and calls the people to love God above all else. It is also a narrative and explanation of God’s love for the chosen people, and in it God is the focus of the events and the explanations. The book also describes the dangers of apostasy and reminds them of curses that may befall upon them. Deuteronomy is written almost like a sermon in which Moses is the speaker. It may be considered as a series of sermons or addresses Moses made on the banks of the river Jordan before the Israelites enter the Promised Land.

“The book has the form of a farewell speech by Moses: his last will and testament to Israel. In style and vocabulary this book is immensely different from the other four books of Torah. It takes the form of Moses giving the Law once again to Israel. This was to make sure they understand the Law that Yahweh had given them years ago at Horeb (i.e, Sinai) and they would follow it diligently when they would enter the Promised Land and settle down there.”

The book in its sermonic style reflected on the history of the people in the wilderness, stressed on the importance of the laws and the covenant, warned against disobedience and rebellion, encouraged the new generations of Israel and pronounced blessings to the twelve tribes. The book ends with the death of Moses and God burying the great leader, and Joshua becoming the new leader of Israel. The structure of the book may be outlined as follows:

112 Cf. Kizhakkeyil, *The Pentateuch*, 420
Table 2.9  
Divisions of the book of Deuteronomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title/ Preamble</th>
<th>1:1 – 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Prologue</td>
<td>1: 6 – 4:43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stipulations</td>
<td>4:44 – 26:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blessings, Curses</td>
<td>27 – 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witnesses</td>
<td>31 - 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.8.2 Deuteronomy as exhortation

As mentioned earlier, the book of Deuteronomy may be considered a series of final sermons or exhortations made by Moses before the Israelites enter the Promised Land. It is the account of the renewal of the covenant and the repetition and expounding of the laws. Many passages in the book indicate that it is Moses speaking these words. The opening line of the book itself suggested, “These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan…”\(^ {114}\) These words or collection of words apparently by Moses are sermonic in style. Even when dealing with the laws, Moses exhorted and encouraged them to obey wholeheartedly. In the book, Moses brought events together like a retelling of a story from various times in the wilderness to remind them of the past and to teach them lessons from it. He challenged them to follow God and in return experience God’s great blessings.

The central sermon or theme of the book of Deuteronomy is probably what came to be known as the “Shema” or more precisely ישׂראל שׁמע "Shema Israel.” It is taken from the first line of Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 4 to 9, meaning, “Hear, Israel.” The Shema has become the fundamental dogma of the Old Testament and today Jewish communities. The verse reads, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”\(^ {115}\)

\(^{114}\) Deuteronomy 1:1 (JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh), 373  
^{115}\) Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (ESV)
This passage is also identified with Christ in the Gospels as the most important of all the commandments.\textsuperscript{116} Moses urged the children of Israel to use every means to teach the Shema and the commandments to their children, whether they are walking or are at the comfort of their home. Parents were to teach and encouraged their children constantly about God’s laws and the ways of holiness. Taking Moses’ sermon seriously, the Jews later wrote the passage in a strip of parchment and bind them on their arm and forehead. It had also become a custom to put the Shema at their door frames.

The basic teaching of the Shema may be understood as the core of all the other sermons or addresses in the book of Deuteronomy. It teaches that the “Israelites were to love God with their whole being, including their intellect, emotions, and will. In eight other passages the people were told to love, serve, or obey the Lord with all their heart and soul, for that kind of devotion would enable them to avoid the perils and pitfalls that lay ahead in Canaan.”\textsuperscript{117} The command demonstrated that their Lord is God and that he is one, which was essential to express since the Israelites were living in a culture that has many gods. In a way, the book of Deuteronomy stressed on Theocracy and builds them towards that nation that fears God.

\subsection*{2.8.3 The promise of blessing}

In the book of Deuteronomy, the Deuteronomic dictum that obedience will bring blessings is often repeated. It also warns them of the dangers of disobedience and how it would bring about God’s wrath upon them. In their obedience, God would love them and bless them; they will multiply among the peoples and will become a great nation. God promised to bless their children, and the fruit of their land; their grains, wine and oil will be in plenty. Even blessings to their cattle are promised. God

\textsuperscript{116} Cf. Mark 12:29-30
\textsuperscript{117} Wolf, \textit{An Introduction to the Old Testament Pentateuch}, 256
promised to bless them above all other people, and that there would be no barrenness among their men, women and cattle; sickness and diseases like that they saw in Egypt will not befall them.

However, if Israel violated the terms of the covenant God made on Mount Sinai, they would fail to receive God’s blessings and protection. The curses of disobedience are mentioned in the 28th chapter, which became a prophetic utterance of what would happen to the nation of Israel. They will suffer and invade if they cease to keep God’s commandments.

God promised protection from invading armies and that other nations will be attracted towards Israel so much so that they will enjoy their assistance. People from other places and tribes will come to them and learn the ways of God from them. They were promised to be a light to the world, and will bring spiritual restoration to the world.

In chapter 33, Moses pronounced his final blessings on the twelve tribes. We also see the acknowledgement of the tribes of Levi and their role in worship and offering sacrifices. Moses praised the nation of Israel for the privilege of being a chosen nation, to which he said, “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.”

Though Moses saw the people of Israel at their worst, his experience with God had become the assurance of them being a chosen people and that God will guide them through.

\[118\] Deuteronomy 33:29 (KJV)