

1. Basic Terminology

Terms for the Hebrew Bible

TaNaKh (Acronym for 3 sections of Jewish Bible: Torah, Neviim, Ketubim)
Old Testament (Term for first section of Christian Bibles)

Terms for the first five books as a unit

Torah (Hebrew term = “T” of TaNaKh; another term used is Chumash [“five”], esp.
when referring to separate books as opposed to a scroll containing all five)
Pentateuch (Term of Greek derivation; five cases)

Names of the five books

Hebrew titles (= the first word of each book in the original Hebrew, following an ancient convention of titling texts)	English titles (derived from titles in the Septuagint [= Greek translation of the Bible] as also adopted in the Vulgate [= Latin translation])
Bereshit (“In the beginning...”)	Genesis (lit. origin)
Shemot (“The names...”)	Exodus (lit. departure)
Vayiqra (“And he called...”)	Leviticus (lit. about Levites)
Bamidbar (“In the wilderness...”)	Numbers (English translation of Greek name, <i>Arithmoi</i>)
Devarim (“The words...”)	Deuteronomy (lit. second law)

Historical periods

BCE – Before the Common Era (used by scholars and others in place of “BC”)
CE – Common Era (used by scholars and others in place of “AD”)

Israelite History

Patriarchal Era = ca. 2000-1700 BCE?? (period treated in Genesis 12-50)
Exodus and migration(s) to Canaan = ca. 1300-1200 BCE?? (period treated in
Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua)
Period of the Judges = ca. 1200-1050/1000 BCE
Monarchic Era = 1000-587 BCE
Babylonian Exile = 586-537 BCE
Second Temple Period = 538 BCE–70 CE

Cultural context for the formation of the Pentateuch = Ancient Near East

2. The Form and Content of the Pentateuch

Original Language: Hebrew

Voice: Third-person narration

Genre: Myth, legend, history, law, epic?

Contents –

From Creation of the World to the Death of Moses.

- Creation and earliest history of all humankind (Genesis 1-11)
- God’s establishment of a covenant with Abraham and his family, ancestors of Israel (Genesis 12-50)
- The slavery of Abraham’s descendents in Egypt, Moses’ rise as leader of them, their deliverance by God, and the beginning of their migration across the wilderness to the land promised to Abraham. (Genesis 37–Exodus 18)
- God’s revelations of laws to the people at Mt. Sinai in preparation for their entry into the Land and for taking on the role of chosen nation (Exodus 19-40, Leviticus)
- Migration from Sinai to the east side of the Jordan River, on the border of the Promised Land (Numbers)
- Words of Moses to the Israelites before his death, instructing them and appointing Joshua as his successor, all on the edge of the Promised Land, which he sees but does not enter (Deuteronomy)

Authorship:

- From the first century CE, Jewish and Christian texts speak of Moses as author of the entire Pentateuch
- Theories about authorship in secular biblical scholarship posit multiple authors and redactors, who progressively combined older traditions, oral and written, into a single whole woven out of many parts

Original audience: The Pentateuch’s collective authorship and prolonged process of redaction (i.e., editing) both point to the intention of these materials to speak to the traditional self-understanding as well as changing concerns and needs of Israelites during a formative time in the people’s history.

4. Major Scholarly Approaches to the Pentateuch

	Patriarchal & Mosaic Eras 2000-1200 BCE	Monarchic Period 1000-587 BCE	Babylonian Exile 586 BCE		
<i>Stages in the Growth of the Pentateuch</i>	ORAL→→→→→→→→WRITTEN→→→COLLECTION→FINAL→→→→→→→→TRANS-TRADITIONS →→→→→ SOURCES →→ & REDACTION →FORM→→→→→MISSION →→				
<i>Scholarly Methods for Studying Each Stage</i>	Form Criticism; Tradition Criticism; Historical Approaches	Source Criticism	Redaction Criticism	Literary Approaches; Textual Criticism	History of Interpretation