

## Bible Overview

# The Pentateuch

**Genesis**

**Exodus**

**Leviticus**

**Numbers**

**Deuteronomy**

(Pentateuch means 'teaching' or 'instruction' and refers to the first five ('pent') books of the Bible, books that include considerable instruction and law.)

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## Genesis

The first book of the Bible Genesis is concerned with 'beginning' or 'origin'. A majority of scholars accept that Moses penned much of the first five books (the Pentateuch) but, of course, under divine inspiration.

Whilst it is easy to accept that Genesis is concerned with the beginning of man's history, it is more important to realise that it is God's revelation on how the world was created, how man was created, how man sinned and how redemption is made possible.

Genesis is not just a history of man from creation to Jacob, it is God's account of the way He made a promise after Adam's sin which would enable man to be redeemed. The promise is made in 3:15. At some time in the future the seed of the woman (Jesus) would bruise the head of the serpent (sin). The book follows with the story of man's fall and the way redemption was pursued - Enoch, Noah, the call of Abraham and the renewing of the promise (12:1 - 3), Isaac and the reminder of the promise (21:12 - 13), Jacob and another renewal (28:13 - 15, 35:9 - 12).

Genesis sets the scene for the essential framework of Scripture - creation, sin, judgement, redemption or deliverance and new creation. This theme is found in miniature in the episode of Noah where one family was saved from the surrounding sin by the Ark and baptism (1 Peter 3:20 - 21) and in the beginning of the account also the nation of Israel's freedom from the bondage of Egypt, (Acts 13:17).

Underlying the theme is the implication of God's love, that even though man was disobedient, God in His love and mercy made provision for man's hope of eternal life.

## Outline

1:1 - 2:25 Creation.

3:1 - 3:24 Adam's sin and punishment, but the promise of redemption.

4:1 - 5:32 Adam's life and death.

6:1 - 2:32 Noah's faith and God's covenant.

11:1 - 11:32 Babel - dispersion of the nations and the original Babylon.  
12:1 - 25:10 Abram ('high father') and Abraham ('father of a multitude').  
25:11 - 28:10 Isaac (and disloyal) - freedom and bondage (allocations 4: 21 - 31).  
28:6 - 36:43 Jacob and Esau - two nations.  
37:1 - 50:26 Joseph and his brothers. Entry into Egypt.

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## Exodus

Exodus literally means 'a going out' and this book, the second of the five ascribed to Moses, deals with the 'going out' of the children of Israel from Egypt.

The end of Genesis tells of the death of Joseph. The beginning of Exodus conveys the information that the Israelites began to increase in number significantly, a matter of some concern to the Egyptians who saw a threat to their own existence. In order to overcome this imbalance, the Egyptians saw three possible solutions: 1) The placing of the Israelites into slavery (1:11). When this was not successful, 2) work in slavery was made much harder (1:14), and 3) the killing of every male child (1:16).

It was against this background that Moses was born (2:2) educated in the Egyptian court (2:10) and selected by God to lead the Israelites out of their slavery and towards the land that God promised them (3:17).

The book naturally divides into two sections. The first deals with the deliverance of those who are oppressed and the judgement of the oppressors, and the the second, God's dealing with His people on their journey through the wilderness.

Key verses are found in 19:3 - 6 where God indicates His right to choose the children of Israel as His "own possession among all people". This was conditional on their keeping His covenant. God's justification for this choice was that "all the earth is mine".

As the people of God they had certain privileges and responsibilities which became evident in the text.

The message from Exodus is clear to those under the new covenant. God chooses whom He will. Continued blessing is dependent on obedience and the carrying out of responsibilities. It is through Jesus' sacrifice that the new covenant has been established and the new Exodus, the "going out" or deliverance from the bondage of sin is possible.

It is in Exodus that God makes Himself known by His memorial name (3:13 - 15). Even this revelation indicates His infinite greatness.

## Outline

1:1 - 4:31 Background. The children of Israel become more numerous. Moses is selected to lead deliverance.

5:1 - 15:21 Leaving Egypt.

- 5:1 - 6:30 Harder bondage and promise of deliverance.
- 7:1 - 25 Signs
- 8:1 - 10:29 Plagues
- 11:1 - 13:16 The Passover
- 13:17 - 14:31 To the Red Sea
- 15:1 - 21 Moses' Song of Thanks

15:22 - 19: To Sinai

19:3 - 24: 18 God's Laws

25:1 - 31: 18 Plan for the Tabernacle - a place for God to dwell - a place for people to worship.

32:1 - 34: 35 Disobedience, punishment and God's covenant.

35:1 - 40: 38 The construction of the Tabernacle.

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## Leviticus

Having brought His people out of bondage in Egypt, God gave them laws which had two functions. The first was to provide a code of behaviour which would enable them to worship Him, and indeed, be His holy people (20:26), and the second was to enable them to have a practical law to assist in their daily living.

These laws are contained in Leviticus which literally means "and he called". These are the opening words of 1:1 and they apply to the whole of Israel because as a nation they were called by God for a special purpose (Exodus 19:6). The words also apply to the specific priests, the sons of Levi, whose task it was to oversee the spiritual (and secular) life of the people.

The most significant aspect of Leviticus in our contemporary society is that it points forward to the way in which followers of Christ should endeavour to live their lives. Leviticus contains details of the sacrifices and offerings which were required to be made by the people in recognising their complete dependence on God and the necessity to continually honour Him. There were sacrifices and offerings to be made for a wide variety of reasons. Some were made as a recognition of sin; others were "free-will" offerings, which, as the name implies, were offerings made to God for no other reason than that the people wanted to worship Him.

The most important offering was made honour the day of Atonement (16:1 - 34) when a lamb without any blemish was offered as a sacrifice to "atone" for the sins of the nation. This pointed forward to Jesus who, as the lamb without blemish offered himself as a sacrifice once and for all as

an atonement for the sins of many (Hebrews 9:28). Through identifying with Jesus we can obtain the forgiveness which is promised (Matthew 26:28).

We are not required, under the new covenant, to offer sacrifices in the way the children of Israel were required. We do need to offer ourselves as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12: 1) to the service of God. Our whole life should be of continual service to Him.

## Outline

1:1 - 7:38 Sacrifices and offerings

1:1 - 1 -17 Burnt offering

2:1 - 2:16 Meal and fruit offerings

3:1 - 3:17 Peace offering

4:1 - 4:35 Sin offering

5:1 - 5:19 Trespass offering

6:1 - 7:38 Further explanations of the law concerning offerings.

8:1 - 10:20 Concentration of priests

11:1 - 15:33 Laws discerning cleanness and uncleanness

16:1 - 16:34 The Day of Atonement

17:1 - 20:27 Miscellaneous laws

21:1 - 22:33 Responsibilities of the priests NB 22:2

23:1 - 44 The Feasts

23:4 - 8 Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread

23:9 - 14 The Firstfruits

23:15 - 22 The Feast of Pentecost

23:23 - 32 The Feast of Trumpets

23:33 - 44 The Feast of Tabernacles

24:1 - 27:34 Further miscellaneous laws including reference to:

25:1 - 55 The year of the Sabbath and the year of Jubilee

26:1 - 13 Promise of blessing

26:14 - 46 Promise of punishment

27:1 - 34 Vows and tithes

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## Numbers

The title "Numbers" comes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, (the Septuagint) and refers to the emphasis on population numbers in the early part of the book. It is interesting that the Hebrew title comes from 1:1 "In the wilderness" and probably this is more appropriate because the book does describe events of the Children of Israel in 38 of the 40 years they spent moving from Egypt to the promised Land of Canaan.

If the book was considered only as an historical record of the wanderings then much of its message would be missed. It has far more significance than this. It has one major theme throughout. It reveals God's character through His dealings with His people. For example, His complete holiness is demonstrated in the incident of Moses smiting of the Rock to reduce water (20:7 - 13). His righteous jealousy is shown in 25:1 - 13. His justness can be seen in these verses in the establishment of the covenant of peace with Phinehas. His faithfulness is shown in 23:19. He established a covenant with Israel and the events of this book show His faithfulness to that covenant even in the face of adversity from His people.

In the book of Numbers we can see the first of many instances in the Old Testament when God's people choose to ignore Him and to worship other "gods". This reveals that God will punish wrong doing but be merciful to those who endeavour to follow His laws. This can be seen, for example, in 16:1 - 50, the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, where God punished the rebellious but accepted Moses' atoning intervention.

The message of Numbers is clear. God has established high standards which He expects His people to follow. At the same time He is just and merciful and He is faithful to His covenant. He continually dwelt with His people during their wilderness wanderings. The declaration made in Exodus 29:45 - 46 is repeated in Numbers 35:34 - God dwells with His people. He leads them (9:15-23) and He delivers them from adversity (21:1 - 54) . It is only proper that He expects faithfulness in return.

## Outline

1:1 - 10:10 Practical instructions for the wilderness journey.

- 1:1 - 54 The census
- 2:1 - 34 Positions of tribes during the journey
- 3:1 - 4:49 Duties of the priests
- 5:1 - 7:89 Various offerings
- 8:1 - 26 Consecration of the Levites
- 9:1 - 10; 10:10 The Passover and God's guidance

10:11 - 12:16 From Sinai to Paran

- 10:11 - 36 Moving camp
- 11:1 - 35 The people complain
- 12:1 - 16 Miriam and Aaron

13:1 - 20:13 At Kadesh

- 13:1-33 Spying out the land of Canaan
- 14:1 - 45 God's displeasure
- 15:1 - 41 Various laws

- 16:1 - 50 Korah, Dathan and Abiram
- 17:1 - 13 Aaron's rod
- 18:1 - 19:22 Duties of the priests, and various laws
- 20:1 - 13 Moses' error

#### 20:14 - 22:1 From Kadesh to Moab

- 20:14 - 21 King of Edom
- 20:22 - 29 Death of Aaron
- 21:1 - 22:1 Opposition to Israel

#### 22:2 - 32:42 The Plains of Moab

- 22:2 - 24:25 Balak and Balaam
- 25:1 - 18 Punishment for sin
- 26:1 - 65 Another census
- 27:1 - 11 Further laws
- 27:12 - 23 Joshua - Moses' successor
- 28:1 - 30:16 Further laws
- 31:1 - 54 War against the Midianites
- 32:1 - 42 Some settlement

#### 33:1 - 36:13 Sundry Matters

- 33:1-56 Summary of journeys
- 34:1 - 29 Settlement in the land
- 35:1 - 24 Cities of refuge
- 36:1 - 13 Concerning inheritance within the tribes of Israel

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## Deuteronomy

The title comes from Deuteronomy 17:18 which should be translated "a copy of this law". The word itself implies a "second" law giving but this is inaccurate unless the code under which Abraham operated can be regarded as the first "law".

The book concerns the discourses given by Moses late in his life at the time immediately before the Israelites entered the promised land. The discourses were given on the plains of Moab.

The theme running throughout is that God will continue to honour His covenant. Moses calls the people to obedience and reminds them that God brought them out of Egypt, guided them and provided for them whilst they journeyed in the desert. He counsels them to be careful not to follow the pagan ways of the people of the surrounding countries.

They are given further laws and statutes to assist them in their daily life. They are told of the blessings that will come through obedience (28:1 -14) and the cursings that will come through sin (28:15 - 68).

Another aspect of this book which is important concerns prophecy. The words of 18:15 concerning a future great prophet were applied by Peter (Acts 3:22) and Stephen (Acts 7:37) to Jesus. Jesus himself made reference to the book through the words "It is written ... " or, "You have heard that it has been said ... " (Matthew 5:21 etc) which demonstrates the importance that he placed on the Old Testament scriptures, even if he began to fulfil them as the bringer of the new covenant. His insistence that he came to fulfil the law rather than destroy is clearly given in Matthew 5:17 - 20.

Paul places the law in perspective for us in Romans 15:4. It was written for "our instruction ... that we might have hope."

## Outline

1:1 - 4:40 The first address

- 1:1 - 3:29 Summary of the wilderness journey
- 4:1 - 40 Words of exhortation
- 4:41 - 43 Cities of refuge named

4:44 - 26:19 The second address

- 4:44 - 49 Introduction
- 5:1 - 33 The Covenant in Horeb, and the ten commandments
- 6:1 - 11:32 Exhortations to righteousness
- 12:1 - 26:19 Statutes and judgements which include instruction concerning
  - 12:1 - 14 idolatry
  - 12:15 - 28 eating blood
  - 13:1 - 18 idolatry
  - 14: 3 - 21 eating particular food
  - 14: 22 - 29 tithing
  - 15:1 - 11 social welfare
  - 16:1 - 17 the keeping of feasts
  - 17:1 - 13 justice
  - 18:1 - 8 priests
  - 19:1 - 21 cities of refuge
  - 20:1 - 20 war
  - 22:1 - 25:16 morality
  - 25:17 - 18 Do not forget!
  - 26:1 - 19 Other matters

27:1 - 31:8 The third address

- 27:1 - 10 Inscription of the law
- 27:11 - 28:68 Cursings and blessings
- 29:1 - 31:8 Further exhortation and a reminder of God's blessings

31:9 - 33:29 Final words including

- 32:1 - 44 Moses' song
  - 34:1 - 12 Death of Moses
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