

SECTION 3 AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOKS

MOSES

Moses, who lived from about 1525 to 1405 B.C. wrote the Pentateuch is conclusive Jesus Christ spoke the truth when He attributed authorship to Moses (Matt. 19:8; Mark 7:10; Luke 18:29-31; 20:37; 24:27; John 7:19, 22; cf. Acts 15:1). Moses was the son of Amram and Yochebed of the tribe of Levi. He was born in Egypt during the period in which the Pharaoh had ordered that all newborn male children be cast into the Nile. Rescued by the daughter of the Pharaoh, he was brought up in the splendor of the Egyptian court as her adopted son.

PENTATEUCH (the first five books of the Old Testament)

Each book of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), called the Torah [instruction] by the Jews) originally received its title in the Hebrew Bible from the first word or words in the book.¹

GENESIS

"Genesis" is a transliteration of the Greek word *geneseos*². This Hebrew word is the key word in identifying the structure of Genesis, and the translators have usually rendered it "account" or "generations"

Genesis provides the historical basis for the rest of the Bible and the Pentateuch, particularly the Abrahamic Covenant. Chapters 1—11 give historical background essential to understanding that covenant, and chapters 12—50 record the covenant and its initial outworking. The Abrahamic Covenant continues to be the basic arrangement by which God operates in dealing with humanity throughout the Pentateuch and the rest of the Bible.

EXODUS

The Hebrew title of this book (*we'ellesh shemot*) originated from the ancient practice of naming a Bible book after its first word or words. "Now these are the names of" is the translation of the first two Hebrew words.

Exodus cannot stand-alone. It would not make much sense without Genesis. The very first word of the book, translated "now," is a conjunction that means "and." The English title "Exodus" is a transliteration of the Greek word *exodos* from the Septuagint translation meaning, "exit," "way out," or "departure."³

"The purpose of the Book of Exodus is to celebrate God's gracious deliverance of His chosen people Israel from Egyptian slavery to the freedom of covenant relationship and fellowship with Him.

LEVITICUS

The Hebrews derived the title of this book from the first word in it, *wayyiqra*, translated "And He [the Lord] called" (1:1). "And" or "then" is a conjunction that shows that what

¹ The Hebrew word translated "in the beginning" is *beresit*. The English title "Genesis," however, has come to us from the Latin Vulgate translation of Jerome (*Liber Genesis*). The Latin title came from the Septuagint translation (the Greek translation of the Old Testament made about 300 years before Christ).

² The Greek word that translates the Hebrew *toledot*.

³ The Septuagint translators gave the book this title because of the major event in it, namely, the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

follows in Leviticus is a continuation of the narrative of Exodus. There is no break in the flow of thought. This is the third book of the Torah (Law).⁴

This title is appropriate since the book contains requirements of the Mosaic Covenant that relate to the Levites, or more specifically, the priests. Leviticus contains revelation that was particularly appropriate for the priests. While ritual and legal matters predominate, Moses wove them into the historical narratives so as one reads Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers in order there is chronological movement forward. As we shall see, the legislation appears in the narrative at significant and reasonable places.

Historically the book fits within the one month between God's occupation of the tabernacle (Exod. 40:17, 34-38) and the taking of the census at Sinai (Num. 1:1-3). However because it contains so much legal material, we should consider it along with the rest of the Mosaic Law that God began to reveal in Exodus.

"The central theme of the book is holiness. The book intends to show how Israel was to fulfill its covenant responsibility to be 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Ex 19:6; Lev 26:5). "How to maintain the vital covenantal relationship between the Israelites and their God is the concern of the book of Leviticus."

NUMBERS

The title the Jews used in their Hebrew Old Testament for this book comes from the fifth word in the book in the Hebrew text, *bemidbar*: "in the wilderness." This is, of course, appropriate since the Israelites spent most of the time covered in the narrative of Numbers wandering in the wilderness.

The translators chose this title because of the two censuses of the Israelites that Moses recorded at the beginning (chs. 1—4) and toward the end (ch. 26) of the book.⁵ These numberings of the people took place at the beginning and end of the wilderness wanderings and frame the contents of Numbers.

When the book opens the Israelites were in the second month of the second year after they departed from Egypt (1:1). In chapters 7—10 we read things that happened in the nation before that. These things happened when Moses finishing setting up the tabernacle, which occurred on the first day of the first month of the second year (7:1; cf. Exod. 40:17). When Numbers closes the Israelites were in the tenth month of the fortieth year (Deut. 1:3). Thus the time Numbers covers is about 39 years.

DEUTERONOMY

The Jewish title gives a strong clue to the literary character of Deuteronomy. "Deuteronomy" means "second law" in Greek.⁶

Deuteronomy is similar to Leviticus in that both books contain a record of instructions and speeches almost exclusively. Deuteronomy is not so much a book of history, as Genesis, Exodus,

⁴ The English title comes to us from the Vulgate (Latin version), which called this book *Liber Leviticus*. The Vulgate title came from the Septuagint (Greek version), which had as the title *Leuitikon*, meaning "relating to the Levites."

⁵ The English title "Numbers" is a translation of the Greek title *Arithmoi*.

⁶ The English title comes from the Septuagint (Greek) translation

and Numbers are, as it is a book of law. In contrast to Leviticus, however, Moses addressed Deuteronomy to all the Israelites more than to the priests and Levites.

The scope of history covered in Deuteronomy is very brief. All the events recorded took place on the plains of Moab probably within a few weeks just before Israel's entrance into Canaan.

The book of Deuteronomy is the document prepared by Moses as a witness to the dynastic (or dynamic) covenant, which the Lord gave to Israel in the plains of Moab (31:26).