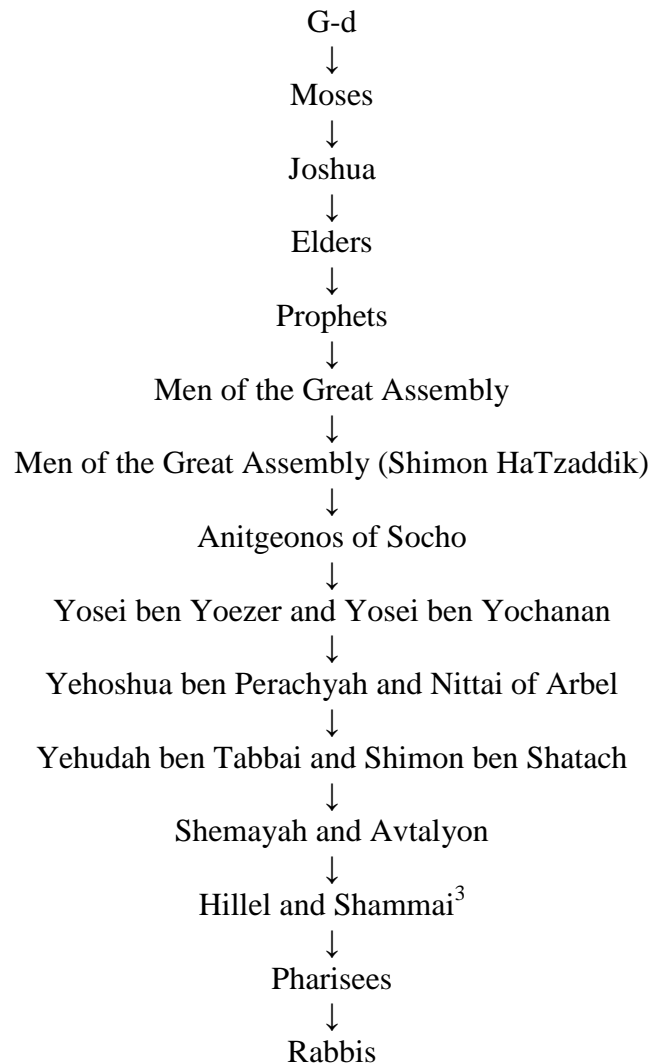


Welcome to 10 Minute Topics

This week's topic is: Torah

The Torah (the Books of Moses) (תורה) contains five books that were given to Moshe Rabbenu (Moses our Teacher) directly from G-d shortly after the Exodus from Mitzraim (Egypt) around 1230BCE. The Written and Oral Torahs (Mishnah) were handed down unchanged through the successive generations from the time of Moses. "The Torah is the Jew's Life Manual."¹

Moses received the Torah at Sinai from G-d and conveyed it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly "... Shimon HaTzaddik was one of the remnants of the Great Assembly. He used to say, 'The world stands on three things: on the Torah; on the service of God, and upon acts of loving-kindness...' (Ethics of the Fathers, 1:1)"² The Men of the Great Assembly conveyed the Torah to the Pharisees who conveyed the Torah to the Rabbis.



The Torah includes the time from the creation of the earth and the first humans, the Great Flood and the covenant with the gentiles, the enslavement and Exodus of the Hebrews from Mitzraim, giving of the Torah (Written and Oral), renewal of Covenant given to Avraham, establishment of the festivals, wandering through the desert, the Tabernacle Ark and Priestly duties, and the death of Moshe Rabbenu. The Torah is broken down into parts (parsha). Each Parsha is usually named after one of the first words of that section of the Torah. The Parsha is divided into 7 sections. Each section is called an aliyah since one person "goes up" to make a bracha (blessing) on the Torah Reading. There is also an additional eighth section called the Maftir. The Maftir is either a repetition of the last few verses from the seventh aliyah or a special reading on special Shabbats. The Torah is read every year according to a Torah reading schedule. The Babylonian Jewish community divided the Torah into 54 portions which allowed for the complete reading of the Torah in one year. The Egyptian and Palestinian Jewish communities divided the Torah into 154 divisions allowing for the complete reading of the Torah in three-year cycles (triennial cycle).

Bereishit [בְּרֵאשִׁית] (Genesis) means "In the Beginning" and is the first book of the Torah.

Bereishit includes:

The Creation

Garden of Eden

Cain and Abel

Genealogy of Mankind

Noah and the Flood

Covenant with the Gentiles

Tower of Babel

Patriarchs and Matriarchs

Covenant with Abraham and His Descendants

Joseph and the Migration to Mitzraim

Shemot [שְׁמוֹת] (Exodus) means "Names" and is the second book of the Torah. Shemot includes:

Birth of Moses

Calling of Moses

Plagues and The Exodus

Amalek's Attack and the Eternal Decree

Jethro's Story

Civil Laws

Judicial Systems

Sabbaths of the Land

Three Pilgrimage Festivals (Sukkot, Shavuot, Pesach)

Giving of the Law (Torah)

Census

Golden Calf

Giving of the Second Tablets

Tabernacle and Priestly Duties/Laws

Vayikra [ויקרא] (Leviticus) means “And He called” and is the third book of the Torah. Vayikra includes:

- Tabernacle/Priestly Duties and Laws
- General Rules and Offerings
- Initiation of the Priestly Services
- Deaths of Nadab and Abihu
- Laws of Kashrut
- Laws of Human Contamination
- Forbidden Relationships
- Tzedakah (Charity) and Other Civil Laws
- Laws of the Kohanim (Priests)
- Shemittah (Sabbatical Year) and Yovel (Jubilee Year)
- Blessings and Curses

Bamidbar [במדבר] (Numbers) means “In the Wilderness” and is the fourth book of the Torah.

Bamidbar includes:

- Census in the Wilderness and the Formation of the Camp According to Tribes
- Purification of the Camp
- Legal Pronouncements
- The Menorah and the Consecration of the Levites
- Pesach (Passover) Offering
- Order to Break Camp
- Dissatisfaction with Manna and the Giving of Quail
- The Sanhedrin
- Miriam’s Quarantine
- Incident of the Spies
- Command of Tzitzits (Fringes)
- Rebellion of Dathan and Abiram
- The Red Cow
- Miriam’s Death
- Lack of Water and Moses’ Reaction
- Amalek Attacks
- Story of Balaam
- New Census
- Incident of Zelophehad’s Daughters and the Laws of Inheritance
- G-d shows Moses the Land
- Moses asks for a successor
- The Daily Offerings
- The Mussaf Offerings
- Battle Against Midian and the Division of the Spoils
- Summary of the journey
- Occupying the Land and The boundaries of Eretz Yisrael
- The leadership and Cities for the Levites
- Cities of refuge for Unintentional Murder
- Laws Regarding Intentional Murder, Unintentional Murder, and Tribal Intermarriage

Devarim [דברים] (Deuteronomy) means “Words” and is the fifth book of the Torah. Devarim includes:

Appointment of Judges

Mission of the Spies

Command to March Toward the Land and the Conquests of Sihon and Og

Inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and Half of Manasseh

Decree that Moses Will Not Enter the Land

Decrees and Ordinances

Command to Teach the Tradition (Torah) to the Children

Shema

Remembering the Exodus and the Journey

Aaron’s Death

Blessings and Curses

Principles of Observance

Prohibition of Copying the Canaanites

Determining a False Prophet

Reiteration of Laws

Moses’ Final Charge to the People

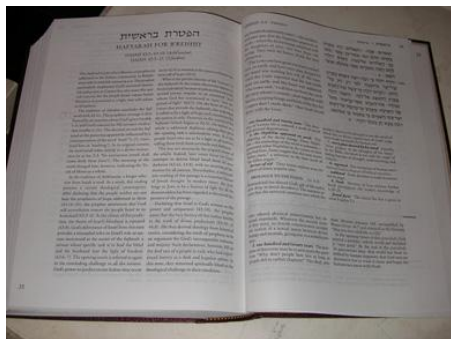
Renewal of the Covenant

Moses Leaves the People – Ascending Mount Nebo to be Shown the Promise Land

Joshua is the Successor and Leader

Death of Moses

There are two physical forms that the Torah takes in our lives.



The one form is the Chumash which is the Five Books of Moses in a book form. A chumash generally is the Five Books of Moses broken into the weekly readings (parshiyot) with the haftarah (weekly readings from the Prophets) inserted after each parsha. Sometimes the chumash is simply the Five Books of Moses without the haftarah. Sometimes the whole Tanach itself is called a chumash.



The other form is the Sefer Torah (Torah Scroll) which is read each Shabbat as well as on various Yomim Tovim (holidays). “The scroll is generally written in columns of 42 lines, with 245 columns. The writing is done with a quill, which the scribe cuts from the feather of a kosher bird. The whole Torah usually covers about sixty sheets of parchment, and each sheet is sewn to the next with special thread made from tendons. There are 304,805 letters, and since each letter has to be carefully formed, writing a complete sefer Torah takes, on average, about a year.”⁴

¹Ask Moses (<http://www.askmoses.com/en/article/543,108/What-is-Tanach.html>)

²Aish HaTorah

(http://www.aish.com/literacy/jewishhistory/Crash_Course_in_Jewish_History_26_-_The_Great_Assembly.asp)

³Pirkei Avot (1:1-4,6,8,10,12)

⁴Jen Taylor Friedman: Sifrei Torah (<http://www.hasoferet.com/ritual/sifreitorah.shtml>)

Photos:

Chumash – personal photo

Sefer Torah – Willy Horsch (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:K%C3%B6ln-Tora-und-Innenansicht-Synagoge-Glockengasse-040.JPG>)

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rachel-esther@becomingjewish.org