A Lecture Notes by
G. Prasad Rao
April 2000

The Green Tree
Bangalore, India

The following notes was prepared and taught to the students of Asia Evangelical College & Seminary of B.Th degree in the year 2000.
THE PENTATEUCH

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. The Title and Authorship.

1. The Title.

The first division of the OT is generally designated as Torah (Heb). Torah is a noun which came from YARAH (To throw as to shoot). Educationally the term means "direction, instruction or Law". The Greek term "Pentateuch" is also used as a designation to the first division of the Bible. "Penta" means five and "teuchos" means Volume of Book; thus it can be name as "A five-volume Book". Bible Scholars like Josephus, Philo and Ieevernic believe that the five-fold divisions were made by the translations of the LXX (Septuagent).

Jesus in describing the witness of the OT scriptures to Himself summarizes them in terms of "the Law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms" (Lk 24:44). Thus, as the time of the Lords earthly ministry, the Jews recognized a three-fold division of the scriptures.

2. Authorship.

The human authors of the pentateuch was Moses, the great Lawgiver of Israel. It is true that there is no introduction or expression claim that the work in its whole is from Moses. Nevertheless, there is convincing testimonies both external & internal to support the position that Moses wrote the Pentateuch:


2. The Testimony of the reminder of CT. (Josh1:8; 11:15; 22:9; Judg3:4; 1Ki2:3; 2Ki 14:6; Ezr26:16; Neh 13:1; 2Chr 34:14).

3. The testimony of the NT. (Mt 19:8; Mk10:5; Lk5:14; Jn: 47; Acts3:22; Rom10:5; 1Cor9:9; 2Cor3:15; Rev15:3).

What is meant by Mosaic Authorship?

When we affirm that Moses wrote or that he was the author of the Pentateuch, we donot mean that he himself necessarily wrote every word of it. OT insist upon this would be unreasonable. Hammurabi was the author of the famous Code, but he certainly did not engrave it by himself upon the stele. Our Lord was the author of the Sermon on the mount, but He did not write it Himself. So was Milton was the author of the "Paradise Lost", but he did not writes it at all out by hand.

The witness of sacred Scripture leads us to believe that Moses was the Foundamental or real author of the Pentateuch. In composing it he may indeed, have employed parts.
of previous written documents. Also under the divine inspiration, there may have been minor additions and even revisions. Though it may have been revised and edited by later reductors, substantially and essentially it is the product of Moses. (Jn 1:17).

We cannot say how much of Genesis is based upon trustworthy ancient traditions and records which Moses had knowledge of; and how much is a matter of direct inspiration. On the other hand, the account of Creation must be a matter of revelation.

B. The Unity of the Pentateuch.

All four books which follow Genesis relate to Moses and his times. Exodus deals with the period from the oppression in Egypt and the Birth of Moses to the erection of the Tabernacle. Leviticus, the manual of the priest, is closely connected with Exodus by the account which it gives of the consecration of Aaron and his sons on the eighth day after the erection of the Tabernacle (Lev 8:1).

Numbers deals with the events of the year after the erection of the Tabernacle up to the refusal of the people to go up to possess the land and their sentence to perish in the wilderness (14); the period of wandering is passed over briefly (15–16); then concludes with the Commandments given by Moses to Israel in the plains of Moab (20–26).

Deuteronomy consists mainly of 3 addresses delivered by Moses in the plains of Moab and concludes with a brief appendix of describing his death.

Such a brief survey indicates that these four books, except Genesis, record a sequence of events all of which took place during the lifetime of Moses. It is eminently proper, therefore, to call these 5 books "The Books of Moses".

C. The Pentateuch and its Theology.

The Pentateuch, like the rest of the scripture, is the records of God's acts and words. The most common names for Deity "Lord" (YHWH) and 'God' (ELohim) occurs more than two thousands times. The Pentateuch records God's wonders of Old. Any attempt to minimize the miraculous runs directly counter to the whole spirit of the Pentateuch. It is not ordinary history; it is extraordinary history.

1. The Pentateuch is a Human History.

Being the records of God's dealing with man, the Pentateuch gives a most faithful picture of man in the light of God's plan of redemption. And not only so, but also the pentateuch exprose of the fact the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.
2. The Pentateuch is Catastrophic and Redemptive History.

The fall is the first catastrophe and Gen:3:15 is the first promise of redemption; the history which follows may be summarized in terms of blessings, disobedience, punishment, repentance, forgiveness, restoration, a cycle which repeats itself again and again. It is the story of divine mercy which overcomes human depravity and sin.

D. The Pentateuch and It's Religion.

Till the confusion of the tongues there was only one race as a human race. It is the call of Abraham that brings two distinct races into face. The generation of Abraham is called Jewish or Hebrews, whereas the rest of all others scattered families are considered as gentiles of races.

The very first verse of Genesis strikes the keynote of monotheism. In the days of the early patriarchs, the father was the priest for the whole family, and this honour and responsibility of excising the priesthood usually was bestowed upon the first born son upon the death of the father. This practice continued until the Day of Passover transferred this right to the tribe of Levi, which tribe then furnished the priest to Israel as a nation.

1. The Altar.

The religion in the early days largely centered about an altar upon which animal sacrifices were offered unto God. Thus when Abraham came into the land God pitched his tent in Bethel. The Scripture says that "he built an altar for the Lord..." (Gen 12:7,8). Later on it records that he built an altar at Beer-sheba (Gen 21:33). It is said that Jacob built one at Shechem (Gen 33:19-20) and at Bethel, like his grandfather (Gen 28:3).

The first altar, as a sign of perfect redemption of the wandering through it, was built by God Himself, when He killed an animal to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve with the skin of it. Even Adam's two sons (Cain and Abel) followed their father's step. Noah built an altar after coming out of the Ark. Job, who is to be believed as ancient patriarchs sacrificed offerings or heif of his sons on the altar (Gen 3:21; 9:20, Job 1:5).

The Altar in the home of those early days helped to produce a sense of sin, a realization of God's holiness, and a knowledge that the way of approach to God was through a sacrifice.
2. The Teraphim.

In the land of Pehlavia, from which Abraham had originally come, there was family worship of household gods, and the home had its own altar along with the clay figurines of these gods, which are called "Teraphim". These families gods served as guardian angels of the home. At the death of the father, these household gods would often be left to the oldest son, with the understanding that others of the family would have the right to worship them.

When Jacob left the home of Laban in Haran, Rachel his wife stole the teraphim that were her father's (Gen 31:19). And we see then Laban was very much agitated over this theft, but why was Laban was so concern about discovering those lost teraphim? It is because Rachel must have stolen her brothers' teraphim right then she took her father's teraphim. For those household gods the possession conferred to the privilege and responsibility the oldest son, after the death of father. And she was thereby seeking to make Jacob the legal heir to the wealth of Laban.

3. The Tabernacle.

The religion of Israel has a different source, as illustrated by the building of the Tabernacle. Moses was undoubtably familiar with the religious practices of the Egyptian among whom he spent the first forty years of life. He may have visited some of their magnificent temples. But when he was on Mt. Sinai with God he received the command to build it not according to his own pattern of Egypt, but according to all that He showed him (Ex 25:9), and Moses did so. Thus the Tabernacle was essentially distinct from other religious patterns. It was a revelation of God, no matter whatever points the religion of Israel had in common with others.

E. The Pentateuch and Archeology.

Exploration and excavation in the Near East have opened up vistas which were closed for centuries or shrouded in myth and legend. Some of this discoveries have an important bearing upon the Pentateuch. They have been both helpful and disappointing. The ancient writings like "Hieroglyphic and Cuneiform, Code of Hammurabi and Pyramid Text"—which were invented more than a thousand year before the time of Abraham have thrown much light upon the Pentateuch. It has been shown that the language in which the writings were of was Semitic dialect—very similar to Hebrew-spoken in the days of Moses and much earlier. In Palestine, great cities such as Geshur, Megiddo, Hazor, Gezer, Shechem, Dothan and Jericho have been excavated more or less extensively. Thus we cannot simply avoid the confirmation which Archeology has made on the Bible records.
A discovery which solves one problem may raise several others. In such cases, the Christian should trust the Scripture, rather than the inconclusive evidences of Archeology. While we eagerly look to research for the confirmation of the Pentateuch resulting from such research, it is also well to remember that our confidence does not rest on such discoveries but on the witness of the Holy Spirit to its claim to be the very Word of God.

P. The Pentateuch and Science.

The Bible does not profess to be a textbook on science. It's aim is to teach not scientific but spiritual. Certain scientific facts may be discovered by intelligence and industrious men, and hence need no revelation. The Bible is not a treatise on geology or astronomy. You don't go to it to master the science of numbers, or the principles of the graphic art. The Bible does not intend for a cyclogémin in which you may find every ascertainable fact, nor for a university where you may traverse every department of science. The Bible must be judged by its primary purpose, which is to teach spiritual truth, not science.

We are well aware that the sun is the center of the solar system, and that the earth revolves around it; yet we speak of the dew as descending from heaven, while the real fact is that the atmosphere gives up its vapor to the touch of a colder surface, as a pitcher of ice water collects and condenses the moisture from the air.

When, therefore, the writers of scripture made use of expressions which fit appearances and not realities, which agree more with popular impression than with scientific accuracy, this no means involves any real discrepancy or contradiction.

G. The Significance of Pentateuch.

1. Religious Significance.

The Pentateuch is the foundation of all subsequent divine Revelation. Both Christianity and Judaism rest on the inspired revelation of the Pentateuch books. The Pentateuch describes the beginning of the cosmic Universe, of man, of human sin, of human civilization, of the nations of God's redemptive programme in type and prophecy (Gen 3:15,21).

The three primary names of the deity—Jehovah, Elohim & Adonai. This volume initiates the programme of progressive self-revelation of God culminating in Christ. Christ is the central theme of the Pentateuch.

2. Historical Significance.

The Pentateuch is history and more than a history. It is history wedded to prophecy. It is the Messiah centered history combining with a Messiah centered prophecy. The Pentateuch catalogs the events concerning the origin of the Israelite people and their constitution as a theocratic nation.

3. Cosmic Significance.

The pentateuchal account of the Creation of the world and man stands unique in all ancient literature. The Bible only discloses that the universe exists because God made it and has a definite redemptive purpose in it.

© G. Prasad Rao www.thegreentree.weebly.com ot/pentateuch