

The Torah or the Pentateuch: Theology and Harmony

Dear parishioners, I am delighted to continue walking with you on our biblical journey. In this article, I will examine the second part of the Pentateuch: “The Pentateuch: Theology and Harmony.” The aim of this article is not to provide every detail but to introduce you to some of the major themes in each book, thereby facilitating your personal reading.

I- The Pentateuch

Definition: The Pentateuch (from the Greek “*pentateuchos*,” meaning “five books”) refers to the first five books of the Bible—also known as the Torah in the Jewish tradition.

II- Some Major Themes in Each Book

Genesis

In terms of the biblical canon, the first book of the Pentateuch is “Genesis.” The word “Genesis” derives from the Hebrew word *Bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית), which means “In the beginning.”

God is the Creator. The Book of Genesis recounts the origins of all things: the creation of the world and humanity, the entry of sin into the world, the election of Israel, and the promise of salvation. As we read this book, we encounter figures such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. What is truly extraordinary is that God creates everything out of love: “God saw all that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:1, 26–31). Although sin enters the world, God immediately promises salvation. Thus, sin never nullifies God's promise (Genesis 3:15).

Exodus

The word “Exodus” derives from the Hebrew word *Shemot* (שְׁמוֹת), meaning “Names” (referring to the names of the sons of Israel). The main themes developed in this book include slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1:8–14), liberation, the revelation of God's name (Exodus 3:14), the Covenant at Sinai (Exodus 24:3–8), and the Law. God is therefore the Liberator: “I have seen the misery of my people... I have come down to deliver them” (Exodus 3:7–8).

Leviticus

The word “Leviticus” derives from the Hebrew word *Vayikra* (וַיִּקְרָא), which means “He called.” The subject “He” refers to God (God called). Alternatively, God called Moses.

Some of the major themes developed in this book include cultic laws, sacrifices—specifically the sin offering (Leviticus 4:1–12) and the communion offering (Leviticus 7:11–15)—holiness, and the priests' role. The Book of Leviticus serves as a code of holiness. God calls us to holiness: “Be holy, for I am holy” (Leviticus 19:2). However, we must not forget that a relationship with God is established through worship, purification, and obedience.

Numbers

The word “Numbers” derives from the Hebrew word *Bamidbar* (בְּמִדְבָּר), which literally means “In the desert.”

The themes developed in this book include Israel's journey through the wilderness, marked by trials and grumbling (Numbers 11:1–6), and God's faithfulness. The people of Israel grumbled in the wilderness, yet the wilderness is a place of spiritual formation. There, God demonstrated His faithfulness to them (Numbers 23:19).

Deuteronomy

The word “Deuteronomy” derives from the Hebrew word *Devarim* (דְּבָרִים), meaning “words” (Law). These are the words—or speeches—of Moses. In this book, Moses's speeches delivered before entering the Promised Land—along with a restatement of the Law and the Covenant—constitute the primary themes. The Law is, therefore, a pedagogy of love: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

III- The Perfect Harmony of the Torah, or the Pentateuch

In my first article on this subject, I referred to the Greek term for the Torah: the Pentateuch. After reading that article, some of you may have wondered why I cited the Hebrew terms at the beginning of each book.

Dear friends, theologians trace concepts back to the original languages—Hebrew, Greek, and Latin—not to confuse you, but to help you uncover the Bible's spiritual depth.

By combining the names of the books of the Pentateuch, you will be delighted to discover this perfect harmony.

1. **Genesis** derives from the Hebrew word *Bereshit* (בְּרֵאשִׁית). Its literal meaning is “In the beginning.”
2. **Exodus** derives from the Hebrew word *Shemot* (שְׁמוֹת). Its literal meaning is “Names” (the names of the sons of Israel).
3. **Leviticus** derives from the Hebrew word *Vayikra* (וַיִּקְרָא). Literal meaning: “He called” (God calls Moses).
4. **Numbers** comes from the Hebrew word *Bamidbar* (בְּמִדְבָּר). Literal meaning: “In the desert.”
5. **Deuteronomy** derives from the Hebrew word *Devarim* (דְּבָרִים). Literal meaning: “Law,” “words,” or “discourses” (Moses' discourses).

Succinctly put, these five books convey the message: **“In the beginning, God called them into the desert to receive His words—or His Law.”**

Thank you to each of you who took the time to read the parish bulletin. I look forward to seeing you in another article on a biblical journey.

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