

Lenten Bible Study Part 1

Torah תּוֹרָה

- The Torah (תּוֹרָה – Hebrew) literally means “teaching” – it refers to the first five books of the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
- While “Torah” specifically indicates the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (i.e. “The Written Torah”), it can more broadly denote the narrative from Genesis to the end of Chronicles, and can even refer to all Jewish teaching, culture and practice (i.e. “The Oral Torah”)
- Most generally, the Torah describes the origins of the Jewish people: their creation by God, their hardships and their covenant with God
- The first five books of the Bible are also be called the “Pentateuch” or the “Books of Moses” – however, while Moses may have written parts of these books, he probably did not write all of them (in fact, scholars, in many cases, don’t know the authorship of portions of these books and attribute them to scribes, priests prophets) Some scholars think the books were written during the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century BCE, although these were based on earlier oral tradition

Study Questions:

1. As a Jewish man, Jesus would have been very familiar with the first five books of the Bible. Can you think of any of Jesus’ teaching or parables based on these books?
2. There are stories in the Torah that some don’t take literally (e.g. the Flood/Noah’s Ark – Genesis chapters 6-9 and The Parting of the Red Sea – Exodus Chapter 14). Can you think of other stories purporting miracles from the Torah? Do you think these happened as described? If so, why? If not (if they should be taken metaphorically or symbolically), is it because they describe miraculous events – or – is it because they describe things God would not do with God’s miraculous power? How do the miracles in the Torah differ from the miracles in the Gospels?



3. In Exodus 7: 3-4, God “hardens Pharaoh’s heart”. Who was Pharaoh? What was he doing to the Israelites in Egypt? What exactly did God do to Pharaoh (did God take his free will?) How does all this connect to the general narrative of Exodus and the Torah?