

Did Moses write the bible and what did he use to write it?

The question of whether Moses wrote the entire Bible, and specifically the Pentateuch, is a complex one with different views from traditional religious belief and modern academic scholarship.

Traditional View:

Traditionally, both Jewish and Christian faiths have attributed the authorship of the Pentateuch (the first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) to Moses. This view is supported by various passages within the Pentateuch itself where Moses is commanded to write things down (e.g., Exodus 17:14; 34:27; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9). Later books in the Old and New Testaments also refer to "the Law of Moses" or "the book of Moses," reinforcing this tradition.

The idea is that Moses, guided by God, either wrote down these events as they happened (for the Exodus onwards) or compiled earlier oral traditions or written records (for Genesis, which predates his time).

Modern Academic Scholarship (Documentary Hypothesis):

Since the 17th century, and especially with the development of the Documentary Hypothesis in the 19th century (most famously by Julius Wellhausen), many modern biblical scholars have argued that the Pentateuch is a composite work. This hypothesis suggests that the Pentateuch was compiled over several centuries from at least four main sources, often referred to by their initials:

- **J (Yahwist):** Uses the divine name YHWH (Yahweh).
- **E (Elohist):** Uses the divine name Elohim.
- **D (Deuteronomist):** Primarily associated with the book of Deuteronomy.
- **P (Priestly):** Focuses on priestly matters, rituals, and genealogies.

These sources are believed to have been combined by later editors or redactors, likely during the time of the Babylonian exile or the Persian period (5th-4th century BCE). Scholars who hold to this view point to:

- **Anachronisms:** Passages that seem to refer to times after Moses' death (e.g., the mention of kings in Israel before there were kings, or place names that did not exist in Moses' time).
- **Doublets/Repetitions:** Instances where the same story or law appears to be told twice with variations.
- **Variations in Divine Names:** The use of different names for God (YHWH vs. Elohim) in different sections.
- **Differences in Style and Theology:** Distinct literary styles and theological perspectives evident in different parts of the text.
- **The account of Moses' death:** Deuteronomy 34 describes Moses' death and burial, which he obviously could not have written himself. Traditionalists might argue that Joshua or another later figure added this final chapter.

Conclusion on Authorship:

While the Bible itself strongly implies Moses' authorship of the Pentateuch, and traditional belief firmly holds to it, modern scholarship generally concludes that the Pentateuch as we have it today is the result of a long and complex process of compilation and editing involving multiple sources over centuries, even if Moses did write down significant portions.

What did he use to write it?

Assuming Moses did write, or at least dictated, portions of the Pentateuch during the period of the Exodus (around the Late Bronze Age), he would have used writing materials common in the ancient Near East at that time. These could include:

- **Stone tablets:** The most famous example being the Ten Commandments, which were written on stone tablets by the "finger of God" (Exodus 31:18). This method was used for important, permanent decrees.
- **Clay tablets:** Clay was a very common writing material in Mesopotamia, but less so in the Sinai region. However, knowledge of cuneiform (wedge-shaped writing on clay) was widespread.
- **Papyrus:** Made from the papyrus reed, common in Egypt. It was lighter and more portable than stone or clay.
- **Leather or parchment scrolls:** Animal skins, particularly sheep or goat skins, were prepared and sewn together to create scrolls. This was a durable and common material for longer texts, and it's thought the Torah was originally written on leather scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls, though much later, demonstrate the use of leather and parchment for sacred texts.
- **Wooden tablets:** Sometimes coated with wax for easy erasure and re-use, or carved directly.

For writing instruments, he would have likely used:

- **Chisels:** For carving into stone.
- **Stylus:** A pointed tool (made of metal, bone, or wood) for impressing marks on clay or wax tablets.
- **Reed pens or brushes:** For writing with ink on papyrus or leather. Ink was typically made from soot (lampblack) mixed with gum and water.

The ability to write was present in the ancient Near East well before Moses' time, and as someone raised in the Egyptian court, Moses would have been educated and literate in the writing systems of the day.