

## Who Wrote Genesis?

“The idea that the Pentateuch could be composed of several sources was provoked mainly by the existence of two creation stories in Genesis 1–3.” (*Anchor Bible Dictionary*) It was noted that Genesis 1 used the name *Elohim* for God while Genesis 2 used mainly YHWH or Yahweh. Critical scholars suggested that this was because two different authors or even groups of authors had written two different accounts of creation and someone later tried to put these two different stories together to form the books of “Moses”. They eventually believed that there were four major sources for the books of “Moses”. These were called **E** for the author(s) primarily using the name *Elohim*, **J** for the author(s) using JHWH or YHWH or Yahweh, **P** for the “priestly” portions, and finally **D** for the deuteronomist or second giving of the law.

Much of the original thinking that went into these ideas has been discredited, but many scholars still believe in these different sources for the books of Moses. It is sometimes referred to as the multiple document theory or the “Graf Wellhausen System” for two of its main contributors.

“Although Genesis is anonymous, the Pentateuch was considered essentially one book in Jewish tradition, and its authorship as a whole attributed to Moses. Mosaic authorship was the established view of the church, as well as of Jewish tradition, until the mid-eighteenth century. At that time, critical scholars began reconsidering the character of the Pentateuch’s literary features and concluded that it reflected a composite picture of literary sources that had been pieced together in stages over many centuries by a series of unknown editors. The final edition, as it exists today, was thought to be the work of Ezra (fifth century B.C.). Although modifications of this source theory have been made, many modern scholars still operate under some version of it. It fails, however, to give adequate attention to the internal evidence that the Pentateuch is a unified work, rather than a hodgepodge of sources. The theme of Israel’s blessing and covenant, as well as the unity of the historical narrative from Abraham’s election to Israel’s origins, shows that the books are better interpreted as a cohesive whole.

“Scholars who have not adopted the source theory believe that the Pentateuch was composed by Moses for many of the same reasons that the Jews originally so concluded. **First**, the individual books of the Pentateuch contain specific references to Moses as the author of various sections (Exodus 17:14; 24:4–8; 34:27; Numbers 33:1, 2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 22). **Second**, there are forty allusions in the Old Testament to Moses as the author of the “Law” or “Book” of Moses: (1) “the Law” (Joshua 8:34; 2 Chronicles 14:4; 31:21; 33:8; Ezra 10:3; Nehemiah 8:2, 7, 14; 10:34, 36; 12:44; 13:3); (2) “the Book of the Law” (Joshua 1:8; 8:34; 2 Kings 22:8; Nehemiah 8:3); (3) “the Book of the Law of Moses” (Joshua 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; Nehemiah 8:1; cf. Daniel 11:13); (4) “the Book of Moses” (2 Chronicles 25:4; 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1); (5) “the Law of the LORD” (1 Chronicles 16:40; 2 Chronicles 31:3; 35:26; Ezra 7:10); (6) “the Law of God” (Nehemiah 10:28); (7) “the Book of the Law of God” (Joshua 24:26; Nehemiah 8:18); (8) “the Book of the Law of the LORD” (2 Chronicles 17:9; 34:14); (9) “the Book of the Law of the LORD their God” (Nehemiah 9:3); and (10) “the Law of Moses the servant of God” (Daniel 9:11; cf. Malachi 4:4). **Third**, Moses is the prominent figure in the Books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, and therefore he may reasonably be considered the most qualified person to have authored these books. The specific geographical, topographical, and historical details given in these books require the

author to have had a firsthand knowledge of the events described. Also, conservative Christian scholars point to New Testament evidence that the early church followed the Jewish tradition: (1) “the book of the law” (Galatians 3:10); (2) “the book of Moses” (Mark 12:26); (3) “the law” (Matthew 12:5; Luke 16:16; John 7:19); (4) “the law of Moses” (Luke 2:22; John 7:23); and (5) “the law of the Lord” (Luke 2:23, 24).

**“DATE:** c.1460 B.C.

“One of the most careful evaluations of the Biblical and archaeological evidence suggests that the exodus from Egypt may have occurred about 1445 B.C. If this is the case Genesis was probably written a short time before that during the time when Moses was tending sheep. The book of Job may have been written about the same time by Moses.” (*Believer’s Study Bible*)

In the light of the above arguments, it is clear that to suggest that Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible known as the “Law” or the “Torah” or the “Pentateuch” (which means five books in Greek) is to reject the testimony of most of the rest of Scripture, even the testimony of Jesus Himself. While we may recognize that there are legitimate differences in style in different parts of these books, there is no way a person can reject the Mosaic authorship and still hold that the rest of the Bible is reliable.

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Last Modified: May 30, 2001  
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