

The Books in the Old Testament (I): The Torah

Passages: Genesis—Deuteronomy

Memory Verse

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
1. Learn an overview of the key teachings in the Torah. 2. Understand the importance of the Torah, and how the covenants in the Old Testament form the foundation for the New Testament covenant.	1. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 2. God is faithful. 3. God’s promises are true.	Develop a personal relationship with God by growing in our knowledge, love, and trust in Him.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. Overview of the Torah
 - 1. The Testaments
 - 2. The Torah
- B. God’s Covenants with Mankind
 - 1. The Mosaic Laws
 - 2. God’s Covenants Today
- C. The Lasting Covenants

Life Application: My Relationship with God

Memory Verse

Conclusion: The Torah contains a foundation for the covenant that we have been blessed with today: as long as we obey God, He will bless us. As Abraham’s spiritual descendants, we have been granted the same covenant today.

A. Overview of the Torah

1. The Testaments

We often separate the Old and the New Testaments when we study the Bible, but it is important to remember that the Bible is comprised of both testaments, not just one of them. They are both connected to the theme of salvation, which is the purpose of God's word. While the Old Testament records the promise and preparation of salvation, the New Testament records the fulfillment and completion of it. In this way, the Old is the foundation of the New, and it serves as a shadow of salvation that comes to fruition in Jesus' time (Jn 1:17).

2. The Torah

The word *Torah* is Hebrew, meaning "law." The Torah consists of the first five books in the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The books are sometimes referred to as the Mosaic Laws, or the Books of Moses, in reference to their author. Later, they were also named the *Pentateuch*, which means "the five scrolls" in Greek.

The Torah is incredibly important because it forms the foundation of all Judaic teachings. The kings of Israel repeatedly referred to the laws contained in these books, and even Jesus Christ quoted from them while teaching His followers. When asked the greatest of commandments, He quoted from Deuteronomy: "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37). As Jesus said, He came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17), and these laws are what we strive to follow in our daily lives.

Let's take a brief look at the themes and key events of the Torah.

Genesis (Heb. *Bresheet*)

- Greek: "origin" or "beginning"
- Theme: God is our Creator.

Genesis covers the period from the creation of all things to Joseph's death and burial—mankind's sin, Noah's ark and God's subsequent promise, the Tower of Babel, and the lives of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), including God's covenant with Abraham. The book explains the consequences of sin when we disobey God, but also demonstrates His love in His establishment of these covenants with us. The only way that we can enjoy God's blessings is to obey Him and live a godly life.

Exodus (Heb. *Shemot*)

- Greek: "exit of large group"; Hebrew: "these are the names"
- Theme: God is our deliverer and Savior.

Exodus covers the period of slavery in Egypt until the completion of the tabernacle in the wilderness. It includes the birth of Moses, the plagues, and the Israelites' exodus from Egypt—from the crossing of the Red Sea to God's covenant given to the people at Mount Sinai. Through these events, the Book of Exodus explains how God rescued the Israelites from bondage and death. He also used Moses to lead His people and to illustrate His trustworthiness and faithfulness to His covenants. Through the Ten Commandments, He sought to teach His people how to live a life of holiness.

Leviticus (Heb. *Viyikra*)

- Greek: "relating to the Levites"; Hebrew: "called out," as in "the Lord called out"
- Theme: God is holy.

Leviticus covers the five offerings, the establishment of the priesthood, the seven feasts, and laws regarding food, hygiene, and purity. Through these laws, the book offers guidelines on how to worship God and live a holy life. In particular, through the sacrifices and offerings, we can learn of the purity and holiness of God, showing us that we need to devote every area of our lives to God in full obedience and devotion.

Numbers (Heb. *Bamidbar*)

- A translation of the Greek word *Arithmoi*. The name is derived from the book's many numbers, statistics, and censuses. But its Hebrew name, *Bamidbar*, from the first sentence of the book, means "in the wilderness."
- Theme: God is just and faithful.

Numbers records the Israelites' forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It includes the first census, Korah's rebellion, Miriam and Aaron's criticism of Moses, and the incident of Balaam's curses turned to blessings. In addition, it details the roles of the Levites, the Israelites' war against Midian, and the second numbering of the nations as they approached the promised land. Overall, the book outlines how the Israelites' prepared themselves to enter the promised land, but also includes details on their complaints, rebellion, and sins against God. We can see from this book how God judges sins because He is holy. His punishments are often severe, but He also offers forgiveness and restoration when our lives are sanctified.

Deuteronomy (Heb. *Devarim*)

- Greek: "second law"; Hebrew: "these are the words"
- Theme: God is love.

Deuteronomy is a reiteration of the law towards those who would enter the promised land, as well as a reminder of events that occurred in the wilderness. It includes Moses' death and the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua. The events that the book details teach us about God's mighty acts and reminds us of His faithfulness. Knowing this, we should return His faith with our own love, and live out His covenant by keeping His commandments. Like the Israelites, these are lessons that we must learn as part of our preparation to enter the promised land.

B. God's Covenants with Mankind

If you closely examine the Torah, you will find that there are many covenants from God, but covenants are a two-way promise and require obedience on the part of mankind. The covenants that we can find in the Torah eventually shape the entire Bible, and are the root of the covenant of salvation that God offers us today.

1. The Mosaic Laws (Deut 6:1–3; 8:19–20)

Along with the Ten Commandments that He wrote on the two stone tablets, the Mosaic laws that God passed to the Israelites through Moses were part of a conditional covenant that He made with His people (Deut 5:2–5, 22, 28–33). If they listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds (Deut 29:25–28).

While under God-fearing leaders such as Moses, Joshua, and King David, the Israelites were obedient to God's commands and received His blessings as a result. But more often than not, they strayed, unable to fully keep His laws. Their failure to return to God and repent of their ways eventually led to their exile from the promised land and years of captivity, under the rule of a foreign nation. Obeying the laws was difficult to do, but fortunately, God understood

mankind’s weaknesses and sent down His only Son to complete the covenant. As a result, we are now under a better covenant, one where the laws are written on our hearts instead of tablets of stone (2 Cor 3:3).

2. God’s Covenants Today

Let’s read Hebrews 6:17–18. Having nothing greater to swear by, God made this oath upon Himself as an assurance towards us. We are studying these covenants because we know that God cannot lie, and that His words carry both truth and power. Knowing this, we can take comfort in the fact that His covenants have persisted until today. So, if these covenants are still in place today, how do they affect us, we who are not physical descendants of Abraham?

Let’s read Galatians 3:29. “And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Like the Israelites, as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and through Jesus Christ, God’s promises to Abraham have extended to any willing to believe in His name.

C. The Lasting Covenants

Although there are many different elements of the Torah, studying the covenants can help us to understand more of the New Testament. Throughout history, God has consistently sought to rescue His people from sin and death by offering a way for them to be saved. He offered these paths to salvation through various covenants with mankind. When we study them more closely, we can see that God’s plan for our salvation began from the moment mankind was created, from the covenant He made with Adam and Eve, up until the new covenant that was established through the blood of Jesus Christ. But how exactly are these covenants related to each other?

Although the covenants recorded in the Torah seem vastly different from the new covenant that affects us today, it is still important to study the Old Testament, as the covenants recorded within offer a foundation upon which the new covenant was built (Lk 22:20; Heb 9:12–15).

The Old Testament Covenant	The New Testament Covenant
The Covenant’s Purpose	
<p style="text-align: center;">Reveals our sins (Ex 19:3–7)</p> <p>Mankind was born into sin and lived in a world surrounded by sin, making righteousness a seemingly impossible goal. The purpose of the laws was to make the people aware of sin, and to show them the methods necessary to keep themselves holy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Saves us from sin (Heb 9:14–15)</p> <p>Through Jesus’ death, He has redeemed us from all of our transgressions. The Spirit is now our interceder who helps us to change ourselves.</p>
Conditions and Characteristics of the Covenant	
<p style="text-align: center;">Written on hearts of stone (Ezek 36:26–27)</p> <p>Aside from the physical tablets of stone, the Mosaic laws required strict obedience.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Written on hearts of flesh (Heb 8:10–11)</p> <p>The new covenant requires a change of heart instead of strict obedience to the letter of the law.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Indirect communication through priests</p> <p>The Israelites had to rely on priests to mediate between them and God, and only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies. Those</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Direct communication through Christ</p> <p>Jesus Christ became the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb 12:24), allowing us to approach the throne of grace and communicate directly</p>

outside of the priesthood had no way of communicating directly with God.	with God (4:16), who now dwells in our hearts as the Holy Spirit (8:10).
<p style="text-align: center;">Offered to Israelites</p> <p>Through circumcision, only the Israelites were considered a part of God’s chosen nation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Offered to all</p> <p>Now, even Gentiles can approach God directly and become a part of His nation through repentance, belief, and baptism (Eph 3:6).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Taught through priests</p> <p>The Israelites received instruction in the law from priests and scribes of their time. They had to rely entirely on teachers of the law to learn how to act and what to do. However, if there were no teachers, or if the teachers themselves were incorrect, then the Israelites would have been easily led astray.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Taught by the Holy Spirit</p> <p>We are now taught God’s word by the Holy Spirit, who reveals to us the mysteries of Christ, and helps us to understand how to act in accordance with God’s will (Gal 5:16–18; 1 Jn 2:27)</p>
Fulfillment of the Covenant	
<p style="text-align: center;">Incomplete covenant</p> <p>The old covenant was incomplete, requiring daily and special sacrifices in order to atone for sins. Ultimately, we could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Complete covenant</p> <p>The new covenant only required one sacrifice. The blood of Christ was greater than bulls or goats (Heb 9:14–15), so He therefore only needed to give Himself up once to cover the sins of all. As a result, “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom 10:4). With His life on earth and His sacrifice, Christ thus fulfilled the law of Moses (Mt 5:17).</p>

The Old that Led to the New

The covenants are just one example of why it is important to study the Old Testament. While it seems as if the Old Testament books are irrelevant, the Torah still contains a “shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1) and serves as a “tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal 3:24–25). The covenants that we studied today are just a small portion of the Torah, but when we study all of the books, we can find that all of it is just a part of God’s preparation for our salvation.

By studying the history of God’s chosen people—and by extension, our own history as His new chosen people—we can learn more of God’s unchanging nature, His eternal promises, and how we might obtain these same blessings.

Check for Understanding

- 1. Why is it important to study the Torah?** It is incredibly important because it forms the foundation of all Judaic teachings. The kings of Israel repeatedly referred to the laws contained in these books, and even Jesus Christ quoted from them while teaching His followers. As Jesus had said, He came not to abolish the law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17).
- 2. What were the conditions for the covenant contained in the Mosaic laws?** If the Israelites listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds.
- 3. What makes the new covenant a better covenant compared to the Mosaic laws?** God understood mankind’s weaknesses and sent down His only Son to complete the covenant. As a result, we are

now under a better covenant, one where the laws are written on our hearts instead of tablets of stone (2 Cor 3:3).

- 4. How do the covenants of the Old Testament affect our lives today?** God's covenants have persisted until today, because we are now also heirs of the same promise that He gave to Abraham. Like the Israelites, as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and through Jesus Christ, God's promises, originally made to Abraham, have now extended to any willing to believe in His name.
- 5. Describe two characteristics of the Old Testament covenant and explain how each differs in the New Testament covenant.** See the chart in *Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C*.

Life Application

My Relationship with God

Through studying the overview of the Torah, we can gain a better understanding about God's relationship with mankind. Though God remained faithful, His chosen people forgot about Him and were unable to remain faithful to the covenants that they made. Today, we are blessed to be in the New Covenant where God is accessible to us, and we are able to be in His presence. However, we do not always treasure this precious relationship that we have with God, and it is often difficult to find ways to draw closer to Him, especially because it is a relationship built upon our faith. So, what are a few ways we can build up our relationship with Him?

- 1. Grow in our knowledge of God (Col 1:10)**

We must grow in our knowledge of the Lord and the best way to do that is to be familiar with what He teaches us through His word. In any relationship, it can only grow when we learn about the likes and dislikes of a person and learn more about their personality. In the same way, what do we know about what God likes and dislikes? What are the key characteristics of our God in heaven? Through growing in our knowledge of God, we can deepen our relationship with God and make sure that we live a life that is pleasing in His eyes.

- 2. Grow in our love towards God (Deut 6:5)**

We can grow in our love towards God every day through seeing the love that we have already received from the Lord. God has provided for our daily necessities, but even more importantly, God demonstrates His love for us through sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins. When we truly see the extent of how much God loves us and have felt the love of God, we will be compelled by His love to want to repay the love that we have received. In addition, when we personally experience the love of God, the things of this world will not be able to compare, and we will find our hearts to be full.

- 3. Grow in our trust in God (Isa 12:2)**

The God that we worship is a faithful God. He is worthy of our trust and with Him by our side, there is nothing that we need to fear. This means that we can go to Him with our worries and fears, and He will be there to give us comfort and peace. The best way for us to see whether we trust the Lord is by seeing who we go to in our time of need. When we encounter a difficulty, do we bring it before God in prayer? Or do we try to solve our problems by our own power?

(Teachers: A worksheet with the following activity has been added to the end of the lesson for you to print out and hand to the students. Please also note that the activity sheet is referred to in question #6 of the homework assignment.)

Activity: My Relationship with God

How would you describe your current relationship with God? Take a moment and consider: do you enjoy spending time with Him? Do you actively seek out His presence, or instinctively turn to Him when you are in trouble?

1. Evaluate your relationship with God and give it a score out of fifty (fifty meaning you have an excellent relationship with God). Write down your score: ____/50
2. Next, consider the following questions and rate yourself from 1 to 5, 1 being “not at all,” and 5 being “all the time.”

1. Do you prioritize God’s work in your life, and do your best to serve Him both inside and outside of church?	
2. When you are in trouble, do you immediately say a silent prayer asking God for help?	
3. When you or a family member is sick or not feeling well, do you set aside time to pray for them or for yourself?	
4. When you struggle to understand anything, whether a Bible verse or something you are learning at school, do you ask God for help?	
5. Do you recognize God’s blessings in your life and remember to thank Him for them?	
6. Does your conscience sting you when you are faced with a decision between God’s will and your own desires?	
7. Do you frequently communicate your situation and feelings to God, as much as you would to your friends or family?	
8. At times when you realize that you have sinned, do you feel regretful towards God and try to change your ways?	
9. Do your prayers feel focused and fulfilling?	
10. Do you look forward to spending time with God on Sabbath days, and pay close attention to His words during sermons or RE classes?	
Total Score:	(/50)

3. Add up your score. How did you rate overall? Was your score better or worse than your initial rating of your relationship with God?

No matter what your score was, there are always ways to improve our relationship with God. What are obstacles that may be hindering your relationship with God?

There may be many things that are stopping us from drawing closer to Him, but there are also a lot of different ways we can grow our relationship with God. It is always easier to take steps when we find specific areas to improve upon. Once we have found an area to focus on, we can break it down into more manageable goals. *(Teachers: Step #5 can be done individually, in groups, or as a class. Help the students to brainstorm ways to grow their relationship with God.)*

4. Now go back to the chart and do the following:
 - a. Add a **check** next to the statement that you feel most closely describes your relationship with God.
 - b. Add a **star** next to the statement that you need to work on the most.

5. Based on the statement that you added a star to, brainstorm different ways to nurture your relationship with God. For example, think of ways to rearrange your schedule, methods to help you prioritize how you use your time, or where you can find help in dealing with temptations that interfere with your relationship with God.

Even if we are unable to see Him with our physical eyes, God is waiting for us to know Him more. But like any relationship, our relationship with God is two-directional, meaning we cannot simply wait for God to take action in our lives—we need to contribute our own efforts to grow closer to Him. This means constantly evaluating our relationship with Him, taking steps to improve ourselves, and always seeking ways to increase our faith so that we can fulfill our end of the covenant that He has given to us through Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments.” (Deuteronomy 7:9)

Meaning

Although we often separate the Old and the New Testaments, it is important to understand that the God who made a lasting covenant with Abraham and the Israelites is the same God today. This means that His promise of blessing and an inheritance apply to us today, as we are Abraham’s spiritual descendants. After studying the Torah, we can find reassurance in God’s faithfulness to His promises and find comfort in the fact that He will always care for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Conclusion

We continue to study the Old Testament today because, although our lives as New Testament believers look significantly different from the lives of Old Testament believers, God’s nature and promises remain the same. The Torah contains a foundation for the covenant that we have been blessed with today: as long as we obey God, He will bless us, and as Abraham’s spiritual descendants, we have been granted the same covenant today.

Lesson 4 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why is it important to understand God's faithfulness to His covenants?
Because when we understand God's faithfulness, we can be assured that the same promise of blessing and an inheritance applies to us today, as we are Abraham's spiritual descendants. We can find comfort in the fact that He will always care for those who love Him and keep His commandments.
2. Pick one book from the Torah. Explain the meaning of its name and summarize its key events.
See Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section A.
3. Explain the conditions of the covenant that God gave to the Israelites through Moses at Mount Sinai.
If they listened to God, obeyed Him, and followed Him, He would bless them. If they did not, then He would judge them by their deeds.
4. "Therefore the _____ was our tutor to bring us to _____, that we might be _____ by _____. But after _____ has come, we are no longer under a tutor."
(Galatians 3:24–25)
law, Christ, justified, faith, faith
5. Describe one characteristic of the Old Testament covenant and compare it to the new covenant.
See the chart in Events and Spiritual Teachings, Section C.
6. If you were unable to finish the activity sheet during class, do so now. What did you decide to do for step #5 on the activity sheet? Write it down and come back next week to see if you did it. If you didn't, try rethinking what you can do and write that down instead.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Lesson 4 Activity: My Relationship with God

How would you describe your current relationship with God? Take a moment and consider: do you enjoy spending time with Him? Do you actively seek out His presence, or instinctively turn to Him when you are in trouble?

1. Evaluate your relationship with God and give it a score out of fifty (fifty meaning you have an excellent relationship with God). Write down your score: ____/50
2. Next, consider the following questions and rate yourself from 1 to 5, 1 being “not at all,” and 5 being “all the time.”

1. Do you prioritize God’s work in your life, and do your best to serve Him both inside and outside of church?	
2. When you are in trouble, do you immediately say a silent prayer asking God for help?	
3. When you or a family member is sick or not feeling well, do you set aside time to pray for them or for yourself?	
4. When you struggle to understand anything, whether a Bible verse or something you are learning at school, do you ask God for help?	
5. Do you recognize God’s blessings in your life and remember to thank Him for them?	
6. Does your conscience sting you when you are faced with a decision between God’s will and your own desires?	
7. Do you frequently communicate your situation and feelings to God, as much as you would your friends or family?	
8. At times when you realize that you have sinned, do you feel regretful towards God and try to change your ways?	
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10. Do you look forward to spending time with God on Sabbath days, and pay close attention to His words during sermons or RE classes?	
Total Score:	(/50)

3. Add up your score. How did you rate overall? Was your score better or worse than your initial rating of your relationship with God?

No matter what your score was, there are always ways to improve our relationship with God. What are obstacles that may be hindering your relationship with God?

There may be many things that are stopping us from drawing closer to Him, but there are also a lot of different ways we can grow our relationship with God. It is always easier to take steps when we find specific areas to improve upon. Once we have found an area to focus on, we can break it down into more manageable goals.

4. Now go back to the chart and do the following:
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