IS THERE A PATTERN TO THE
FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES?

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The text of the Pentateuch presents an enigma: there is no apparent sign of an overall pattern. This lack of a meaningful organizing principle is most keenly sensed in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, where historical narrative is interspersed with law, with no perceptible connection between the two. Furthermore, the instructions for and building of the Tabernacle in Exodus seem to fit better in Leviticus with the sacrifices and other priestly duties. And though Genesis consists almost entirely of narrative in chronological order, the choice of events sometimes seems arbitrary. Finally, while Deuteronomy (with its primary content of Moses' final addresses) stands naturally as a separate Book, it is unclear why the prior text is split into precisely four Books.

While the adjoining of selected pairs of seemingly unrelated topics in the text is often plausibly explained by traditional commentary,[1] these explanations are too disparate for a general approach. For Jews and Christians with the most steadfast belief, the lack of such an approach merely reflects the limit of our intellect in recognizing a Divinely-guided pattern. But, for many others, the absence of a unifying structure is more troubling and has fostered the popular theory that the Torah was compiled from various documents over time without Divine authorship.[2]

At the heart of this situation lies the inability of traditionalists to promote an overall organizing principle for the Pentateuch. Of course, such a principle would not by itself establish Divine authorship or inspiration of the text. Yet, when traditionalists tacitly concede the absence of a recognizable pattern, they are left on the defensive in popular discourse.

But there is no need for continued concession. Honigwachs, in *The Unity of Torah*,[3] proposed such a pattern, using five shared principles in the Ten Commandments that I call the Shared Principles. He focused on a progression of each whole book through the Shared Principles, and on this progression iteratively within Genesis. *The Unity of Torah* was directed to-

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ward Orthodox Jewry, which would be less troubled by the apparent randomness in the text. As a result, 15 years after the publication of this book, the Shared Principles are not widely known. I offer here a popular account of the Shared Principles in Units I – III as outlined below.

I. The Ten Commandments, as two sets of five Commandments side-by-side, give rise to five Shared Principles: between the First and Sixth Commandments, between the Second and Seventh, and so forth.

II. The context of each whole book aligns in order with the Shared Principles. Deuteronomy, reflecting transgressions by the Israelite people in Numbers, differs from the other books.

III. Each book can be divided into five parts, whose context and dominant themes align with the Shared Principles. Most parts can be subdivided in the same way into five sections.

While rooted firmly in Honigwachs's work, this account offers some new ideas in motivating and describing the Shared Principles and in tying them to variations between the two versions of the Ten Commandments. There are also a few differences in analyzing specific pieces of text in Unit III, where I have concentrated on examples from Genesis and Exodus.

THE FIVE SHARED PRINCIPLES OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In seeking an organizing principle for any document, one must look for relationships among easily recognizable sub-units of the text. For English documents, those recognizable sub-units would generally be paragraphs, whose beginning points are often indicated by indenting the first line on the left-side margin. For Torah text, a similar convention delineates the counterpart of paragraphs, known in Hebrew as *parshiyot*. (We must distinguish this meaning of *parshiyot* from the colloquial usage referring to the 54 weekly Torah portions read on the Sabbath. Each of those portions, known more precisely as *sidrot*, generally contains many *parshiyot*.) Text on a Torah scroll appears in columns justified on the left and right margins, with ends of *parshiyot* marked by a blank space extending to the left edge of the column. Such spaces [*petuhot*] may vary in length up to the entire width of the column but must be open on the left. Many *parshiyot* are divided into subparagraphs by uniformly short blank spaces, called *setumot*, in the middle of lines. In the printed Torah, *petuhot* and *setumot* are symbolized by a "פ" and

"ס" respectively. Because a single *parshah* is generally either all law[4] or all narrative, our initial sense of a lack of pattern comes from disparities between consecutive *parshiyot*. (There are some questions raised by topics within paragraphs, but such internal connections are generally more transparent.) Thus, any pattern must provide a framework through which *parshiyot* proceed one to another. We find, in fact, a midrashic source (ca. 500) on Song of Songs hinting strongly at such a framework. *Midrash Rabbah* 5,14 speaks as follows of the Ten Commandments: "From Commandment to Commandment, the Torah's *parshiyot* and syntax were written."[5] We can read this midrash to say the order of *parshiyot* involves the Ten Commandments.

Honigwachs views the Commandments in the familiar format of two tablets, the first relating Man to God and the other relating Man to Man. Then, he derives a common principle for each commandment on the first tablet and its neighbor on the second; that is, the First and the Sixth Commandments, the Second and Seventh, and so on, as rephrased below.[6]

TABLET 1 – MAN TO GOD	TABLET 2 – MAN TO MAN	SHARED PRINCIPLE
1. To believe in God	6. Not to murder	A. Respecting Creation
2. Not to believe in other gods	7. Not to commit adultery	B. Loyalty to primary relation-ship
3. Not to take God's tual Name in vain	8. Not to steal	C. Proscribed access to spiritual and physical resources
4. To remember the Sabbath	9. Not to bear false witness	D. Duties of testimony [*edut*]
5. To honor parents (with promise of future benefit)	10. Not to covet	E. Accepting one's place

Honigwachs sees parallel progressions in the first five Commandments (increasing sensitivity to God) and in the second five (increasing sensitivity to Man). In the second progression, forgoing adultery (Commandment Seven) reflects greater sensitivity than forgoing murder (Six); forgoing stealing (Eight) reflects a higher level than forgoing adultery (Seven); and so on. This insight especially applies to Commandment Nine: *Lo taaneh b'reacha ed shaker* [Do not testify against your associate as a false witness]. In the prior commandments, no extra-familial connection between persons is cited. Yet, here, the word *rea* [associate] implies a community beyond one's family.[7]

Thus, Shared Principle D extends to "Duties of Testimony/Community." The word *edut* [testimony] also shares the same root as *edah* [congregation], a communal form.

ALIGNMENT OF THE SHARED PRINCIPLES WITH THE FIVE BOOKS

At the outset, this article cited several features of the Torah that have prompted the questioning of its authorship. The last of these is its division into Five Books, when only the last seems, on its face, to have an obvious rationale to stand separately. Now, however, the Shared Principles can be seen below to align in order with the context of each whole book.

A. Respecting Creation: context of Genesis via Creation and violence before the Flood

B. Loyalty to relationship: context of Exodus via enslavement (with master other than God)

C. Proscribed access to resources/sanctity: context of Leviticus via offerings, priestly service

D. Duties of testimony/community: context of Numbers via preparations for conquest

E. Accepting one's place: context of Deuteronomy via Moses' addresses to the Israelite people before entering Canaan to fulfill their destiny

In the first four books, the dominant themes (not just the initial contexts) also align with their respective Shared Principles. Take Genesis, that not only opens with the context of Creation and murder (aligning with Shared Principle A= Respecting Creation), but also exhibits Shared Principle A over the entire Book. We see that murder or planned murder recurs throughout Genesis even after the Flood, occupying a central role, for example, in the life of Joseph and his brothers who sought to kill him. Or take Numbers, which not only begins with a census that aligns with Shared Principle D=Duties of testimony/community, but also repeatedly treats communal issues and practices of the Israelite people in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy does not follow this pattern of alignment of a dominant theme with the respective Shared Principle – in this case, Shared Principle E = Accepting one's place. Instead, Deuteronomy ranges over much of the previous Torah legislation without having a true dominant theme. Honigwachs attributes this disparity in Deuteronomy (relative to the other books) to

the Israelite people's failure, through transgressions in the Book of Numbers, to meet the rising expectations of sensitivity in the Shared Principles. In light of this arrested development in progressing through the Shared Principles, Deuteronomy provides more guidance through additional laws and through more details and more explanation for laws given earlier.

Specifically, the Israelite people met the expectations linked to the first three books (i.e., Shared Principles A-C), to the extent that duties of testimony/community (Shared Principle D) would be the expectation and dominant theme of Numbers. However, as recounted in the text, the Incident of the Spies (Numbers 13-14) displayed, through improper testimony, failure to fulfill that Shared Principle. This testimony then led to massive apprehension over the conquest of Canaan and a further failure to exercise communal responsibility to wage war as expected.

These failures proved more damaging than the sin of the Golden Calf in Exodus, where a limited group was involved and where forgiveness came almost immediately through repentance and completion of the Tabernacle. The Incident of the Spies led to 39 more years of wandering, with the death of most men of that generation. Also, in the wake of that improper testimony, the rebellion of Korah in Numbers 16 marked the refusal to accept exclusion from the priesthood, a failure under Shared Principle E. A plague growing out of the rebellion took many lives. As the Book of Numbers ends, the Israelite people had fulfilled neither Shared Principle D nor E.[8]

The idea of arrested development also finds support in how the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5 differ from those in Exodus 20. The main variations occur in the Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Tenth Commandments;[9] that is, in those involving Shared Principles D and E. In particular, the shift in Commandment Nine from *ed shaker* [false witness] to *ed shav* [vain witness] fits the Incident of the Spies. The Spies' testimony was not *shaker*, but rather *shav* in reporting how the inhabitants saw them, which could not be known. Similarly, the change in Commandment Ten from *lo tahmod* [not to covet] to *lo titaveh* [not to desire] fits the rebellion of Korah. Korah did not violate *lo tahmod* as he sought only a share in the priesthood, not an exclusive right. Other major changes in the Commandments can also be attributed to transgressions in Numbers.[10]

DIVISION OF A BOOK INTO FIVE PARTS AND A PART INTO FIVE SECTIONS

Just as the Torah's division into five books aligns with the Shared Principles, each Book can itself be divided accordingly into five Parts, each made up of consecutive *parshiyot*. That is, Part A links to Shared Principle A, Part B to Shared Principle B, et cetera. To track the following examples, the reader should use a Pentateuch that shows the spacing in the text.

The table below shows the division of Genesis into five Parts. Each Part is identified by its range of chapter and verse and by context/dominant themes aligned with its respective Shared Principle: (A) Respecting Creation; (B) Loyalty to primary relationship; (C) Proscribed access to resources/sanctity; (D) Duties of testimony/community; (E) Accepting one's place.

PARTS OF GENESIS ALIGNED WITH THE SHARED PRINCIPLES

A. 1:1-11:32: Universal History – Creation; violence before Flood

B. 12:1-21:34: Focus on Abraham – monotheism introduced; threats of Sarah's violation

C. 22:1-25:18: Focus on Isaac – the Binding (how to approach God); the mission of Abraham's servant (oath mentioning God and need for Rebecca's agreement – so as not to kidnap)

D. 25:19-35:22: Focus on Jacob – testimony for birthright and Laban's deceitful promises

E. 35:23-50:26: Focus on Tribes – brothers' early rejection of Joseph's primary role; Jacob's foretelling of future roles for his sons

An immediate objection arose for me: Not every major event in a given Part fits the designated Shared Principle. For example, the kidnapping of Lot takes place in Part B, but kidnapping fits Shared Principle C=Proscribed access to resources/sanctity, not B=Loyalty to primary relationship. Thus, it appeared at first that seeing the pattern depends on choosing only those features that fit. Yet, on further reflection, the matching of a part with a Shared Principle depends not on every major event in the part, but rather on the context or dominant theme. In fact, Lot's abduction (reflecting Shared Principle C) fits the subdivision of Part B into Sections BA, BB, BC, BD, and BE in line with the Shared Principles.

SECTIONS OF PART B OF GENESIS ALIGNED WITH THE SHARED PRINCIPLES

BA 12:1-12:9: Initial Divine revelation to Abraham (as Abram)

BB 12:10-13:18: Famine drives Abram and Sarai to Egypt where she is taken by Pharaoh, Lot parts ways with Abram

BC 14:1-17:27: Lot kidnapped but rescued by Abram, who refuses spoils; Covenant of the Pieces (animal sacrifice); Ishmael as habitual thief; change of names to Abraham and Sarah

BD 18:1-21:21: Angels promise birth *lamoed* [at witnessed time]; Abraham pleads for Sodom; destruction of inhospitable Sodom; Ishmael expelled from community after birth of Isaac

BE 21:22-21:34: Covenant with Abimelech for future

While the Shared Principles do comport with division of the other parts in Genesis, I was still skeptical of their application beyond that Book. I reasoned that Genesis, as almost wholly narrative, naturally splits into five stages (universal history, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the tribes). It is also no surprise that each stage begins with Divine intervention (reflecting Shared Principle A) and ends with a sense of family continuation or roles (reflecting Shared Principle E). In contrast, the other books include much law (not just narrative), are not normally split into five units each, and exhibit no obvious tendency toward any of the Shared Principles.

Apart from these differences, there is also the greater density of *petuhot* [open spacing] in the other books. Genesis has only 43 *petuhot* for 20,512 words, or about 1:480,[11] while Exodus has 69 for 16,723 (about 1:240); Leviticus 52 for 11,950 (about 1:230); and Numbers 92 for 16,368 (about 1:180). Thus, it would be less likely outside Genesis to get agreement with Honigwachs's points of division through an independent partition based on the Shared Principles. After setting *The Unity of Torah* aside for more than two years, I undertook just such a partition.

As a mathematician trained in pattern recognition, I fully expected wide disagreement with Honigwachs outside Genesis; not only for the reasons cited, but also because of a perceived inadequacy in the Shared Principles to parse the broad range of topics in the Torah. Some topics would likely not fit any of the Principles, while some would fit more than one. This would lead to an equally defensible but substantially divergent partition. Remarkably, however, very little disparity occurred, and there emerged a shared sense of

progression through the Shared Principles. This is shown below in the division of Exodus into Parts and of Part C into Sections.

PARTS OF EXODUS ALIGNED WITH THE SHARED PRINCIPLES
A. 1:1-6:30:[12] Egyptian affliction with infanticide; midwives' belief in God; revelation to Moses
B. 7:1[13]-18:27: God's unique power shown in plagues and splitting of the sea; Israelites' sacrificing of the pascal lamb, showing break with Egyptian beliefs
C. 19:1-24,18: Revelation to Israelite people and the giving of the Ten Commandments, followed by more detailed laws – most extensively related to property rights and obligations
D. 25:1-35:3: Orders for building/funding the Tabernacle (a communal task) with repeated mention of Sabbath and Tent of Meeting; sin of the Golden Calf
E. 35:4-50:26; Actual building of the Tabernacle by designated artisans, investiture of members of the Priesthood with defined responsibility – others must accept lesser roles

SECTIONS OF PART C OF EXODUS ALIGNED WITH THE SHARED PRINCIPLES
CA 19:1-20:14: Revelation in giving the Ten Commandments
CB 20:15-20:23: Ban on making images and altars revealing nakedness - likened to illicit union
CC 21:1-22:12: Laws involving damages to persons and to property
CD 22:13-23:19: Duty to support the poor; not to oppress the weak; not to take false testimony; holidays as testimonial observance [*moadim*] and as times to assemble
CE 23:20-24:18: Blessing of bread; promise of military victory; Moses' ascent without elders

   The reader should test the Shared Principles on his or her own in Leviticus and Numbers, for which my divisions into parts resemble those of Honigwachs as follows: Leviticus A 1:1-14:57; B 15:1-16:34; C 17:1-21:24; D 22:1-26:46;   E 27:1-27:34. Numbers A 1:1-10:36; B 11:1-18:32: C 19:1-19:22; D 20:1-25:19; E 26:1-36:13. Note that, in several cases above (for example, Part B of Leviticus), further subdivision is not possible because the Part contains fewer than five *parshiyot*.

CONCLUSION

The Shared Principles provide a recurrent pattern uniting the Five Books as a whole and rationalizing the progression of topics within each Book. This recurrent pattern does not, of course, resolve every textual anomaly. Neither does it prove that today's Torah scroll contains exactly the text given to Moses -- though one can still accept the sanctity of the present text without that belief.[14]

Yet, most biblical criticism assumes textual anomaly to be the product of different authors at different times, especially in the absence of an overall pattern. This assumption promotes uncritical regard of the Torah as but another ancient text without sanctity. The pattern of Shared Principles challenges the basis for this assumption, thus shifting the burden of proof in the debate over authorship. While one can still regard a unified text as mere human invention, the unity of the Torah demands recognition from those who have so routinely read God out of its origin.

NOTES

1. Cf. Rashi's comment on Leviticus 10:2 on adjoining the deaths of Aaron's sons with ban on intoxicants.

2. The so-called Documentary Hypothesis was popularized by J. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, tran. (from German) Black and Menzies, (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1885).

3. Y. Honigwachs, *The Unity of Torah* (New York: Feldheim, 1991).

4. Included within "law" are explanations/justifications and accounts of transmission/acceptance.

5. This source did not appear in *The Unity of Torah*.

6. The idea of paired relations appears in an early source, the *Mekhilta, Yitro, Parshah* 8, with elaboration of shared principles in the commentary *Akedat Yitzhak* (15th Century) on Exodus 20.

7. I added this idea to Honigwachs's observation about *edah* and *edut* two sentences later.

8. In a private communication, Honigwachs expressed the view that the later waging of war in Numbers indicates that Shared Principle D was partly attained by the end of that Book.

9. Differences in other Commandments are relatively minor outside those four. Specifically, the second version adds the prefix *vav* [and] in the Second, Seventh, and Eighth Commandment, as well as the Ninth and Tenth.

10. The focus on differences in the two versions is my idea, but it is based on Nahmanides' introduction to Deuteronomy, which links textual elaborations in that Book to transgressions in the Wilderness.

11. In fact, the parts corresponding to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob each have exactly five *parshiyot*, thus leaving no room for variance in the division of those parts into sections.

12. My point of division between Parts A and B differs from that in *The Unity of Torah*.