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OT 720 OA  
Dr. Russell Mack  
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Homework #1

**Essay:** Each student will compose one essay of exactly 300-325 words in which (s)he discusses **why and how** the Pentateuch was written.

### *Pre-understanding*

As the foundational text to the Bible, the Pentateuch/Torah was written so that the people of Israel would remember and continue to keep their covenant with YHWH throughout generations. A review of this week's assigned readings in the Hebrew bible shows that while Moses wrote some of the contents in these books, it is likely that more than one person contributed to the writings that comprise the Pentateuch in its final form. As such, "writing" of "the law" (or God's instructions) was a communal task that was carried out by different members of the Israelite community.

According to Exodus 34:1; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; and 10:2, 4, Moses received the Ten Commandments from God/YHWH, who Himself wrote them on the tablets. (Although, it should be noted that Exodus 34:27-28 seem to suggest that Moses also wrote [something] on these tablets). Evidence from the biblical text that support multiple authorship include the third-person narratives used to convey God's direct spoken word to Moses (e.g. Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:1), among which are passages that identify specific writings that Moses authored (e.g. Exodus 34:27-28; Numbers 33:2; Deut. 31:9, 19, 22). Mosaic authorship, supported by biblical passages written in the first-person, are identified in Deut. 5:22 and 10:2, 4.

Moreover, the entire Israelite community seemed to have engaged in "writing" as a communal activity as part of everyday life. God/YHWH assigned "writing" to (1) priests to write (adultery) curses in scrolls (Num. 5:23); (2) the people of Israel to write the *shemas* (Deut. 6:4) and Moses's words conveying divine instructions on their doorposts and gates (Deut. 6:9; 11:20); and (3) Israel's kings to copy the law/instructions in scrolls (Deut. 17:18). Moreover, Moses and Israel's elders commanded the people to inscribe the law/instructions conveyed through Moses' speech/words on large stones in the Promised Land (Deut. 27:3, 8).

Copies of these writings could have been passed down through time, with later generations adding to and commenting on "previous texts."