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**JLI FLAGSHIP
LESSON 1
—WINTER 5783**

Key Points

1. **Two Meanings of Torah.** The term “Torah” has two primary meanings. In its more specific sense, it refers to the Five Books of Moses (the “*Chumash*”) inscribed in the Torah scroll. In the broader sense of the term, “the Torah” is the entire body of Jewish teaching, consisting of numerous “genres”—Bible, Midrash, Talmud, Halachah (Torah law), Musar (ethics and self-improvement), Chakirah (philosophy), Kabbalah, etc.—composed by many thousands of authors over a period of more than 3,300 years. The two “Torahs” are two faces of the same coin, two articulations of the same truths.
2. **The Written Torah and the Oral Torah.** The Torah comes in two forms: written and oral. Jewish tradition insists that the “Written Torah” be treated as an inviolable text—every word and letter is significant and must be meticulously preserved. In contrast, the “Oral Torah” must be preserved as an ongoing oral communication from teacher to disciple; for many centuries, it was even forbidden that it be officially transcribed. This duality is integral to the nature of Torah.
3. **The Jewish Bible.** The twenty-four books of the Written Torah (also known as “the Jewish Bible”) are divided into three categories—“Torah,” “Prophets,” and “Writings”—representing three different levels of Divine revelation. All 613 *mitzvot* (Divine commandments) are in the “Torah” section, while the books in the “Prophets” and “Writings” sections

are the source for many of the historical, philosophical, moral, and inspirational teachings of the Torah.

4. ***The Divine and the Human in Torah.*** G-d desired that the Torah should embody a partnership between Him and us. The Torah therefore incorporates both Divine and human elements, involving a collaboration of Divine revelation and human intellectual toil. In the Written Torah, the Divine side of the partnership dominates, and is expressed in the precise wording of the text. In the Oral Torah, the human contribution is more pronounced, and finds expression in our analysis, exposition, and application of its content.
5. ***The Source Code.*** The letters and words of the Written Torah are the “source code” for the entire body of Jewish teaching. Thus, every subject, teaching, or law in the Oral Torah has its source in the Written Torah.