

Sources of Authority

Torah: ("teaching" or "instruction") = The *Pentateuch* or "Five Books" (of Moses). The collection of these text may have begun as early as 1020 BCE, but it was not completed until around 400 BCE. Contains--

Bereshit ("in the beginning") = *Genesis*: The genealogy (family tree) of mankind from Adam via Noah and his descendants after the Flood; God's covenant with Abraham to bring the people out of Egypt and give them the land of Canaan.

Shemot ("names") = *Exodus*: The period of bondage in Egypt and the Exodus ("coming out"); the giving of the Torah ("instruction") including the Decalogue or Ten Commandments given to Moses.

Vayiqra' ("and he called") = *Leviticus*: Called "the Torah of the Priests" (Levite = Priest) this book includes the laws of worship, sacrifice, ritual purity ("kosher"), sexual relations, and of festivals and times sacred to the Jews.

Bemidbar ("in the wilderness") = *Numbers*: The history of the wanderings in the desert after the flight from Egypt; some legal and ritual regulations.

Devarim ("words") = *Deuteronomy*: Contains speeches attributed to Moses shortly before his death which summarize the history of Israel and give ethical teachings. The emphasis is on the concentration of worship in one place, the Temple in Jerusalem.

Tanach: The Old Testament containing the five books of **Torah** and:

Nevi'im = *The Prophets*: Contains materials relating to the entry into Canaan (i.e. relating to events as early as c. 1200 BCE). The collection of the texts of the Nevi'im was not completed until around 200 BCE. Contains the following books—

Yehoshua (Joshua), Shoftim (Judges), Shmuel (I & II Samuel), Melakhim (I & II Kings), Yeshayah (Isaiah), Yirmyah (Jeremiah), Yechezqel (Ezekiel), and The Twelve (Treated as one book): Hoshea (Hosea), Yoel (Joel), Amos, Ovadyah (Obadiah), Yonah (Jonah), Mikhah (Micah), Nachum, Chavaqquq (Habbakkuk), Tzefanyah (Zephaniah), Chaggai, Zekharyah (Zechariah), Malakhi

Ketuvim = *The Writings*: Contains the following books—

Tehillim (Psalms), Mishlei (Proverbs), Iyov (Job), Shir Ha-Shirim (Song of Songs), Ruth, Eikhah (Lamentations), Qoheleth (the author's name, Ecclesiastes), Esther, Daniel, Ezra & Nechemyah (Nehemiah) (treated as one book), Divrei Ha-Yamim (The words of the days) (I & II Chronicles)

Talmud: In addition to the written scriptures there is the "Oral Torah," a tradition explaining what the scriptures mean and how to interpret them and apply the Laws. Orthodox Jews believe God taught the Oral Torah to Moses, and he taught it to others, down to the present day. This tradition was maintained only in oral form until about the 2nd century C.E., when the oral law was compiled and written down in a document called the Mishnah.

Over the next few centuries, additional commentaries elaborating on the Mishnah were written down in Jerusalem and Babylon. These additional commentaries are known as the Gemara. The Gemara and the Mishnah together are known as the Talmud. This was completed in the 5th century C.E.

Midrash: Midrash is a form of rabbinic literature. There are two types of midrash: midrash aggada and midrash halakha.

Midrash aggada can best be described as a form of storytelling that explores ethics and values in biblical texts. ("Aggada" literally means "story" or "telling" in Hebrew.) It can take any biblical word or verse and interpret it to answer a question or explain something in the text.

Whereas midrash aggada focuses on biblical characters as they pertain to values and ideas, midrash halakha focuses on Jewish law and practice.