Torah

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  (Redirected from [Pentateuch](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Pentateuch&redirect=no))



[Sefer Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_Torah) at old [Glockengasse Synagogue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glockengasse_Synagogue) (reconstruction), [Cologne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cologne)

Silver Torah Case, Empire Museum

The **Torah** ([/ˈtɔːrəˌˈtoʊrə/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA_for_English); [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): תּוֹרָה‎, "instruction, teaching") is the central reference of [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism). It has a range of meanings. It can most specifically mean the first five books (*Pentateuch*) of the twenty-four books of the [Tanakh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanakh), and it usually includes the rabbinic commentaries ([*perushim*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_literature#Meforshim)). The term "Torah" means instruction and offers a way of life for those who follow it; it can mean the continued narrative from [Book of Genesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Genesis) to the end of the Tanakh, and it can even mean the totality of Jewish teaching, culture and practice. Common to all these meanings, Torah consists of the origin of Jewish peoplehood: their call into being by [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_in_Judaism), their trials and tribulations, and [their covenant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_covenant) with their God, which involves following a way of life embodied in a set of moral and religious obligations and civil laws ([*halakha*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha)).

In [rabbinic literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_literature) the word "Torah" denotes both the five books ([Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): תורה שבכתב‎‎ "Torah that is written") and the [Oral Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_Torah) (תורה שבעל פה, "Torah that is spoken"). The Oral Torah consists of interpretations and amplifications which according to rabbinic tradition have been handed down from generation to generation and are now embodied in the [Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) and [Midrash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash). According to rabbinic tradition, all of the teachings found in the Torah, both written and oral, were given by God through the prophet [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses), some at Mount and others at the [Tabernacle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabernacle), and all the teachings were [written down by Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_authorship), which resulted in the Torah that exists today. According to the [Midrash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash), the Torah was created prior to the [creation of the world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genesis_creation_narrative), and was used as the blueprint for Creation.

The majority of [Biblical scholars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_studies) believe that the written books were a product of the [Babylonian captivity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_captivity) (c. 600 BCE), based on earlier written and oral traditions, which could only have arisen from separate communities within ancient Israel, and that it was completed by the period of [Achaemenid rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yehud_Medinata) (c. 400 BCE). The 1979 discovery of fragments of the Hebrew Bible ([Priestly Blessing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priestly_Blessing) from the [Book of Numbers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Numbers)) at [Ketef Hinnom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketef_Hinnom) dating to the late 7th century BC, and thus to before the Babylonian captivity, is the oldest evidence of elements of the Torah which were current before the Babylonian exile.

Traditionally, the words of the Torah are written on a [scroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scroll) by a scribe ([*sofer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sofer)) in Hebrew. A [Torah portion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weekly_Torah_portion) is read publicly at least once every three days in the presence of a congregation. Reading the Torah publicly is one of the bases for Jewish communal life.

Meaning and names



Reading of the Torah

The word "Torah" in [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Hebrew) is derived from the root ירה, which in the [*hif'il*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hif%27il) [conjugation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grammatical_conjugation) means "to guide/teach" (cf. [Lev 10:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Lev+10%3A11&version=NRSV)). The meaning of the word is therefore "teaching", "doctrine", or "instruction"; the commonly accepted "law" gives a wrong impression. Other translational contexts in the English language include [custom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tradition), [theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory), [guidance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guide), or [system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/System).

The term "Torah" is used in the general sense to include both [Rabbinic Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbinic_Judaism)'s written law and [Oral Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_Torah), serving to encompass the entire spectrum of authoritative Jewish religious teachings throughout history, including the [Mishnah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah), the Talmud, the Midrash and more, and the inaccurate rendering of "Torah" as "Law" may be an obstacle to understanding the ideal that is summed up in the term *Talmud torah* (תלמוד תורה, "study of Torah").

The earliest name for the first part of the Bible seems to have been "The Torah of Moses". This title, however, is found neither in the Torah itself, nor in the works of the [pre-Exilic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_Exile) literary [prophets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevi%27im). It appears in [Joshua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Joshua) (8:31–32; 23:6) and [Kings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Books_of_Kings) (I Kings 2:3; II Kings 14:6; 23:25), but it cannot be said to refer there to the entire corpus (according to academic Bible criticism). In contrast, there is every likelihood that its use in the post-Exilic works (Mal. 3:22; Dan. 9:11, 13; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh. 8:1; II Chron. 23:18; 30:16) was intended to be comprehensive. Other early titles were "The Book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; II Chron. 35:12; 25:4; cf. II Kings 14:6) and "The Book of the Torah" (Neh. 8:3), which seems to be a contraction of a fuller name, "The Book of the Torah of God" (Neh. 8:8, 18; 10:29–30; cf. 9:3).

**Alternative names**

Christian scholars usually refer to the first five books of the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) as the "[Pentateuch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament#Table)" ([Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): πεντάτευχος, "five scrolls"), a term first used in the [Hellenistic Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_Judaism) of [Alexandria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandria), meaning five books, or as the Law.

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| |  | | --- | | ***Torah***(Instruction) | | [***Nevi'im***(Prophets)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevi%27im) | | [***Ketuvim***(Writings)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketuvim) | |
| [**Old Testament**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament)**(Christianity)** |
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| **Torah** | |
| **Information** | |
| **Religion** | Judaism |
| **Author** | Multiple |
| **Language** | [Tiberian Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberian_Hebrew) |
| **Chapters** | 187 |
| **Verses** | 5,852 |

The Torah starts from the beginning of God's creating the world, through the beginnings of the people of Israel, their descent into Egypt, and the giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai. It ends with the death of Moses, just before the people of Israel cross to the promised land of Canaan. Interspersed in the narrative are the specific teachings (religious obligations and civil laws) given explicitly (i.e. [Ten Commandments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Commandments)) or implicitly embedded in the narrative (as in Exodus 12 and 13 laws of the celebration of Passover).

In Hebrew, the five books of the Torah are identified by the [incipits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incipit) in each book; and the common English names for the books are derived from the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint) and reflect the essential theme of each book:

* Bereshit (בְּרֵאשִׁית, literally "In the beginning")—[Genesis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Genesis)
* Shemot (שִׁמוֹת, literally "Names")—[Exodus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Exodus)
* Vayikra (ויקרא, literally "And He called")—[Leviticus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leviticus)
* Bəmidbar (במדבר, literally "In the desert [of]")—[Numbers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Numbers)
* Devarim (דברים, literally "Things" or "Words")—[Deuteronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomy)

**Bereshit/Genesis**

*Genesis* begins with the so-called "[primeval history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primeval_history)" (Genesis 1–11), the story of the world's beginnings and the descent from Adam. This is followed by the story of the three [patriarchs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarchs_(Bible)) ([Abraham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham), [Isaac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac) and [Jacob](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob)), [Joseph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_(patriarch)) (Genesis 12–50) and the four matriarchs ([Sarah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah), [Rebekah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebecca), [Leah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leah) and [Rachel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rachel)). God gives to the patriarchs a promise of the land of [Canaan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canaan), but at the end of Genesis the sons of Jacob end up leaving Canaan for Egypt due to a regional famine. They had heard that there was a grain storage and distribution facility in Egypt.

**Shemot/Exodus**

Exodus begins the story of God's revelation to his people of Israel through Moses, who leads them out of Egypt (Exodus 1–18) to Mount Sinai. There the people accept the covenant with God, agreeing to be his people and abide by his holy Law, in return for his agreeing to be their God, and protect and defend them from their enemies, and provide for and prosper them . Moses receives the Torah from God, and teaches His laws and Covenant (Exodus 19–24) to the people of Israel. It also talks about the first violation of the covenant when the Golden Calf was constructed (Exodus 32–34). Exodus includes the instructions on building the Tabernacle and concludes with its actual construction (Exodus 25–31; 35–40).

**Vayikra/Leviticus**

*Leviticus* begins with instructions to the Israelites on how to use the Tabernacle, which they had just built (Leviticus 1–10). This is followed by rules of [clean and unclean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumah_and_taharah)(Leviticus 11–15), which includes the laws of slaughter and animals permissible to eat (see also: [Kashrut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashrut)), the [Day of Atonement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yom_Kippur) (Leviticus 16), and various moral and ritual laws sometimes called the [Holiness Code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holiness_Code) (Leviticus 17–26). Leviticus 26 provides a detailed list of rewards for following God's commandments and a detailed list of punishments for not following them.

**Bamidbar/Numbers**

*Numbers* tells how Israel consolidated itself as a community at Sinai (Numbers 1–9), set out from Sinai to move towards Canaan and spied out the land (Numbers 10–13). Because of unbelief at various points, but especially at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 14), the Israelites were condemned to wander for forty years in the desert in the vicinity of Kadesh instead of immediately entering the Promised Land. Even Moses sins and is told he would not live to enter the land (Numbers 20). At the end of Numbers (Numbers 26–35) Israel moves from Kadesh to the plains of Moab opposite [Jericho](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jericho), ready to enter the Promised Land.

**D'varim/Deuteronomy**

*Deuteronomy* is a series of speeches by [Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses) on the plains of Moab opposite Jericho. Also referred to as Mishneh Torah in Hebrew (a repeat of the Torah) the essential gist of the entire book is a rebuke to the Children of Israel to not worship idolatry, to not follow in the ways of Canaan, and to cleave to God. Moses proclaims the Law (Deuteronomy 12–26), gives instruction concerning covenant renewal at Shechem (Deuteronomy 27–28) and gives Israel new laws (the "[Deuteronomic Code](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomic_Code)"). At the end of the book (Deuteronomy 34) Moses is allowed to see the promised land from a mountain, and then dies. The text emphasizes that no one knows where Moses was finally buried (34:6). Knowing that he was nearing the end of his life, Moses had appointed [Joshua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joshua) his successor, bequeathing to him the mantle of leadership. Soon afterwards Israel begins the conquest of Canaan.

Authorship

*Main articles:*[*Mosaic authorship*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_authorship)*and*[*Documentary hypothesis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis)

The [Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) holds that the Torah was written by Moses, with the exception of the last eight verses of [Deuteronomy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuteronomy), describing his death and burial, being written by [Joshua](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joshua). Alternatively, [Rashi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashi) quotes from the Talmud that "God spoke them, and Moses wrote them with tears." The [Mishnah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah) includes the divine origin of the Torah as an essential tenet of Judaism.

The [modern scholarly consensus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Documentary_hypothesis) is that the Torah has multiple authors and that its composition took place over centuries. This contemporary common hypothesis among biblical scholars states that the first major comprehensive draft of the Pentateuch was composed in the late 7th or the 6th century BC (the [Jahwist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jahwist) source), and that this was later expanded by the addition of various narratives and laws (the [Priestly source](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priestly_source)) into a work very like the one existing today.

"The consensus of scholarship is that the stories are taken from four different written sources and that these were brought together over the course of time to form the first five books of the Bible as a composite work. The sources are known as J, the Jahwist source (from the German transliteration of the Hebrew YHWH), E, the Elohist source, P, the priestly source, and D, the Deuteronomist source. ... Thus the Pentateuch (or Torah, as it is known by Jews) comprises material taken from six centuries of human history, which has been put together to give a comprehensive picture of the creation of the world and of God's dealings with his peoples, specifically with the people of Israel." (Professor John Riches of the [University of Glasgow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Glasgow)).

Torah and Judaism

*Presentation of The Torah* (1860) –[Museum of Jewish Art and History](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mus%C3%A9e_d%27Art_et_d%27Histoire_du_Juda%C3%AFsme)

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| Part of [a series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Outline_of_Judaism) on |
| [**Judaism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism) |
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| [**Law**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha) |
| [**Holy cities**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Holy_Cities)**/**[**places**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_holy_places) |
| [**Important figures**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_leadership) |
| [**Religious roles**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Jewish_religious_occupations) |
| [**Culture**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_culture)**and**[**education**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_education) |
| **Ritual objects** |
| [**Prayers**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_prayer) |
| [**Major holidays**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_holidays) |
| [**Other religions**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Judaism_and_other_religions) |
| **Related topics** |

[Rabbinic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi) writings indicate that the [Oral Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_Torah) was given to Moses at [Mount Sinai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_Mount_Sinai), which, according to the tradition of [Orthodox Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodox_Judaism), occurred in 1312 BC. The Orthodox rabbinic tradition holds that the [Written Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Written_Torah) was recorded during the following forty years, though many non-Orthodox Jewish scholars affirm the modern scholarly consensus that the Written Torah has multiple authors and was written over centuries.

The [Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) ([Gittin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gittin) 60a) presents two opinions as to how exactly the Torah was written down by Moses. One opinion holds that it was written by Moses gradually as it was dictated to him, and finished it close to his death, and the other opinion holds that Moses wrote the complete Torah in one writing close to his death, based on what was dictated to him over the years.

The Talmud ([Menachot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menachot) 30a) says that the last eight verses of the Torah that discuss the death and burial of Moses could not have been written by Moses, as writing it would have been a lie, and that they were written after his death by Joshua. [Abraham ibn Ezra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_ibn_Ezra) and [Joseph Bonfils](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bonfils) observed that phrases in those verses present information that people should only have known after the time of Moses. Ibn Ezra hinted, and Bonfils explicitly stated, that Joshua wrote these verses many years after the death of Moses. Other commentators do not accept this position and maintain that although Moses did not write those eight verses it was nonetheless dictated to him and that Joshua wrote it based on instructions left by Moses, and that the Torah often describes future events, some of which have yet to occur.

All classical rabbinic views hold that the Torah was entirely Mosaic and of divine origin. Present-day [Reform and Liberal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) Jewish movements all reject Mosaic authorship, as well as most shades of [Conservative Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism).

**Ritual use**



Torahs in [Ashkenazi Synagogue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_Synagogue) (Istanbul, Turkey)

*Main article:*[*Torah reading*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_reading)

Torah reading ([Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language): קריאת התורה, *K'riat HaTorah*; "Reading [of] the Torah") is a Jewish religious [ritual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual) that involves the public reading of a set of passages from a [Torah scroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_Torah). The term often refers to the entire ceremony of removing the [Torah scroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_scroll) (or scrolls) from the [ark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ark_(synagogue)), chanting the appropriate excerpt with traditional [cantillation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantillation), and returning the scroll(s) to the ark. It is distinct from academic [Torah study](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_study).

Regular public reading of the Torah was introduced by [Ezra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ezra) the Scribe after the return of the Jewish people from the [Babylonian captivity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonian_captivity) (c. 537 BCE), as described in the [Book of Nehemiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Nehemiah). In the modern era, adherents of Orthodox Judaism practice Torah reading according to a set procedure they believe has remained unchanged in the two thousand years since the destruction of the [Temple in Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_in_Jerusalem) (70 CE). In the 19th and 20th centuries CE, new movements such as [Reform Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) and [Conservative Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism) have made adaptations to the practice of Torah reading, but the basic pattern of Torah reading has usually remained the same:

As a part of the morning prayer services on certain days of the week, fast days and holidays, as well as part of the afternoon prayer services of Shabbat, Yom Kippur and fast days, a section of the Pentateuch is read from a Torah scroll. On [Shabbat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat) (Saturday) mornings, a weekly section ("[*parasha*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parasha)") is read, selected so that the entire Pentateuch is read consecutively each year. The division of *parashot* found in the modern-day Torah scrolls of all Jewish communities (Ashkenazic, Sephardic, and Yemenite) is based upon the systematic list provided by Maimonides in [Mishneh Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishneh_Torah), *Laws of Tefillin, Mezuzah and Torah Scrolls*, chapter 8. Maimonides based his division of the *parashot* for the Torah on the [Aleppo Codex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleppo_Codex). [Conservative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism) and [Reform](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) synagogues may read *parashot* on a triennial rather than annual schedule, On Saturday afternoons, Mondays, and Thursdays, the beginning of the following Saturday's portion is read. On [Jewish holidays](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_holiday), the beginnings of each month, and [fast days](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ta%27anit), special sections connected to the day are read.

Jews observe an annual holiday, [Simchat Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simchat_Torah), to celebrate the completion and new start of the year's cycle of readings.

Torah scrolls are often dressed with a sash, a special Torah cover, various ornaments and a Keter (crown), although such customs vary among synagogues. Congregants traditionally stand in respect when the Torah is brought out of the ark to be read, while it is being carried, and lifted, and likewise while it is returned to the ark, although they may sit during the reading itself.

**Biblical law**

*See also:*[*Biblical law*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_law)

The Torah contains narratives, statements of law, and statements of ethics. Collectively these laws, usually called [biblical law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_law) or commandments, are sometimes referred to as the [Law of Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_Moses) (*Torat Moshe* תּוֹרַת־מֹשֶׁה‎), [Mosaic Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_Law), or [Sinaitic Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinaitic_covenant).

The Oral Torah

*See also:*[*Oral Torah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_Torah)

Rabbinic tradition holds that Moses learned the whole Torah while he lived on Mount Sinai for 40 days and nights and both the oral and the written Torah were transmitted in parallel with each other. Where the Torah leaves words and concepts undefined, and mentions procedures without explanation or instructions, the reader is required to seek out the missing details from supplemental sources known as the oral law or oral Torah. Some of the Torah's most prominent commandments needing further explanation are:

* [Tefillin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tefillin): As indicated in Deuteronomy 6:8 among other places, tefillin are to be placed on the arm and on the head between the eyes. However, there are no details provided regarding what tefillin are or how they are to be constructed.
* [Kashrut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashrut): As indicated in Exodus 23:19 among other places, a young goat may not be boiled in its mother's milk. In addition to numerous other problems with understanding the ambiguous nature of this law, there are no vowelization characters in the Torah; they are provided by the oral tradition. This is particularly relevant to this law, as the Hebrew word for *milk* (חלב) is identical to the word for *animal fat* when vowels are absent. Without the oral tradition, it is not known whether the violation is in mixing meat with milk or with fat.
* [Shabbat](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabbat) laws: With the severity of Sabbath violation, namely the death penalty, one would assume that direction would be provided as to how exactly such a serious and core commandment should be upheld. However, most information regarding the rules and traditions of Shabbat are dictated in the Talmud and other books deriving from Jewish oral law.

According to classical rabbinic texts this parallel set of material was originally transmitted to Moses at Sinai, and then from Moses to Israel. At that time it was forbidden to write and publish the oral law, as any writing would be incomplete and subject to misinterpretation and abuse.

However, after exile, dispersion and persecution, this tradition was lifted when it became apparent that in writing was the only way to ensure that the Oral Law could be preserved. After many years of effort by a great number of [tannaim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tannaim), the oral tradition was written down around 200 CE by Rabbi [Judah haNasi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judah_haNasi), who took up the compilation of a nominally written version of the Oral Law, the [Mishnah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah) ([Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew): משנה). Other oral traditions from the same time period not entered into the Mishnah were recorded as "Baraitot" (external teaching), and the [Tosefta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tosefta). Other traditions were written down as [Midrashim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrashim).

After continued persecution more of the oral law was committed to writing. A great many more lessons, lectures and traditions only alluded to in the few hundred pages of Mishnah, became the thousands of pages now called the [*Gemara*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gemara). Gemara is written in Aramaic, having been compiled in Babylon. The Mishnah and Gemara together are called the [Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud). The Rabbis in Israel also collected their traditions and compiled them into the [Jerusalem Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Talmud). Since the greater number of Rabbis lived in Babylon, the Babylonian Talmud has precedence should the two be in conflict.

Orthodox and Conservative branches of Judaism accept these texts as the basis for all subsequent halakha and codes of Jewish law, which are held to be normative. Reform and Reconstructionist Judaism deny that these texts, or the Torah itself for that matter, may be used for determining normative law (laws accepted as binding) but accept them as the authentic and only Jewish version for understanding the Torah and its development throughout history. Humanistic Judaism holds that the Torah is a historical, political, and sociological text, but does not believe that every word of the Torah is true, or even morally correct. Humanistic Judaism is willing to question the Torah and to disagree with it, believing that the entire Jewish experience, not just the Torah, should be the source for Jewish behavior and ethics.

Divine significance of letters, Jewish mysticism

*Further information:*[*Kabbalah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah)

Kabbalists hold that not only do the words of Torah give a divine message, but they also indicate a far greater message that extends beyond them. Thus they hold that even as small a mark as a *kotzo shel yod* (קוצו של יוד), the [serif](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serif) of the Hebrew letter [*yod*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yodh) (י), the smallest letter, or decorative markings, or repeated words, were put there by God to teach scores of lessons. This is regardless of whether that yod appears in the phrase "I am the Lord thy God" (אָנֹכִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ‎, Exodus 20:2) or whether it appears in "And God spoke unto Moses saying" (וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, אֲנִי יְהוָה.‎ Exodus 6:2). In a similar vein, [Rabbi Akiva](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi_Akiva) (c. 50 – c. 135 CE), is said to have learned a new law from every *et* (את) in the Torah ([Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud), tractate Pesachim 22b); the word *et* is meaningless by itself, and serves only to mark the [direct object](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Object_(grammar)). In other words, the Orthodox belief is that even apparently contextual text "And God spoke unto Moses saying ..." is no less important than the actual statement.

One [kabbalistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabbalah) interpretation is that the Torah constitutes one long name of God, and that it was broken up into words so that human minds can understand it. While this is effective since it accords with our human reason, it is not the only way that the text can be broken up.

Production and use of a Torah scroll



Page pointer, or [yad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yad), for reading of the Torah

*Main article:*[*Sefer Torah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_Torah)

[Manuscript](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manuscript) Torah [scrolls](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scroll) are still used, and still scribed, for ritual purposes (i.e., [religious services](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_services)); this is called a [*Sefer Torah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sefer_Torah) ("Book [of] Torah"). They are written using a painstakingly careful methodology by highly qualified scribes. This has resulted in what is, according to B. Barry Levy, "The popular assumption that no changes were ever introduced into copies of the Bible during rabbinic times." However, he writes that this "simply does not accord with the facts." It is believed that every word, or marking, has divine meaning, and that not one part may be inadvertently changed lest it lead to error. The fidelity of the Hebrew text of the Tanakh, and the Torah in particular, is considered paramount, down to the last letter: translations or transcriptions are frowned upon for formal service use, and transcribing is done with painstaking care. An error of a single letter, ornamentation, or symbol of the 304,805 stylized letters that make up the Hebrew Torah text renders a Torah scroll unfit for use; hence a special skill is required and a scroll takes considerable time to write and check.

According to Jewish law, a *sefer Torah* (plural: *Sifrei Torah*) is a copy of the formal Hebrew text handwritten on [*gevil*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gevil) or [*qlaf*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qlaf) (forms of [parchment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parchment)) by using a [quill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quill) (or other permitted writing utensil) dipped in ink. Written entirely in [Hebrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_language), a *sefer Torah* contains 304,805 letters, all of which must be duplicated precisely by a trained [*sofer*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sofer_(scribe)) ("scribe"), an effort that may take as long as approximately one and a half years. Most modern Sifrei Torah are written with forty-two lines of text per column (Yemenite Jews use fifty), and very strict rules about the position and appearance of the [Hebrew letters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_alphabet) are observed. See for example the [Mishna Berura](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishna_Berura) on the subject. Any of several Hebrew scripts may be used, most of which are fairly ornate and exacting.

The completion of the sefer Torah is a cause for great celebration, and it is a [Mitzvah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitzvah) for every Jew to either write or have written for him a Sefer Torah. Torah scrolls are stored in the [holiest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy) part of the [synagogue](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue) in the [Ark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ark_(synagogue)) known as the "Holy Ark" (אֲרוֹן הקֹדשׁ‎ *aron hakodesh* in Hebrew.) *Aron* in Hebrew means "cupboard" or "closet", and kodesh is derived from "kadosh", or "holy".

Torah translations

**Aramaic**

*Main article:*[*Targum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum)

The [Book of Ezra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Ezra) refers to translations and commentaries of the Hebrew text into [Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic), the more commonly understood language of the time. These translations would seem to date to the 6th century BCE. The Aramaic term for *translation* is *Targum*. The [Encyclopedia Judaica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Encyclopedia_Judaica) has:

At an early period, it was customary to translate the Hebrew text into the vernacular at the time of the reading (e.g., in Palestine and Babylon the translation was into Aramaic). The targum ("translation") was done by a special synagogue official, called the meturgeman ... Eventually, the practice of translating into the vernacular was discontinued.

However, there is no suggestion that these translations had been written down as early as this. There are suggestions that the Targum was written down at an early date, although for private use only.

The official recognition of a written Targum and the final redaction of its text, however, belong to the post-Talmudic period, thus not earlier than the fifth century C.E.

**Greek**

*Main article:*[*Septuagint*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint)

One of the earliest known translations of the first five books of Moses from the Hebrew into Greek was the [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint). This is a [Koine Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koine_Greek) version of the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible) that was used by Greek speakers. The Greek version's name in Latin is the [Septuagint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint): Latin *septem* meaning seven, plus *-gintā* meaning "times ten". It was named *Septuagint* from the traditional number of its translators. This Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures dates from the 3rd century BCE, originally associated with [Hellenistic Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic_Judaism). It contains both a translation of the Hebrew and additional and variant material.

Later translations into Greek include seven or more other versions. These do not survive, except as fragments, and include those by [Aquila](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquila_of_Sinope), [Symmachus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symmachus_the_Ebionite), and [Theodotion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodotion).

**Latin**

Early translations into Latin—the [Vetus Latina](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vetus_Latina)—were ad hoc conversions of parts of the Septuagint. With [St Jerome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Jerome) in the 4th century AD came the [Vulgate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulgate) Latin translation of the [Hebrew Bible](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_Bible).

**Arabic**

From the eighth century AD, the cultural language of Jews living under Islamic rule became [Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic) rather than Aramaic. "Around that time, both scholars and lay people started producing translations of the Bible into [Judeo-Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Arabic) using the Hebrew alphabet." Later, by the 10th century, it became essential for a standard version of the Bible in Judeo-Arabic. The best known was produced by [Saadiah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saadiah), and continues to be in use today, "in particular among Yemenite Jewry."

**Modern languages**

**Jewish translations**

The Torah has been translated by Jewish scholars into most of the major European languages, including English, German, Russian, French, Spanish and others. The most well-known German-language translation was produced by [Samson Raphael Hirsch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samson_Raphael_Hirsch). A number of [Jewish English Bible translations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_English_Bible_translations) have been published.

**Christian translations**

As a part of the Christian Biblical canon, the Torah has been translated into [hundreds of languages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Bible_translations_by_language).

In other religions

*See also:*[*Biblical law in Christianity*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biblical_law_in_Christianity)*,*[*Islam and Judaism*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_and_Judaism)*, and*[*Tawrat*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawrat)

While [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity) includes the five books of Moses (the *Pentateuch*) among their sacred texts in its [Old Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Testament), [Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam) states that only the original Torah was sent by God. In neither religion does the Torah retain the religious legal significance that it does in Orthodox Judaism.

Among [early centers of Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_centers_of_Christianity) the Septuagint was used by Greek speakers, while [Aramaic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_of_Jesus) [Targums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targums) were used by Aramaic speakers such as the [Syriac Orthodox Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac_Orthodox_Church). It was regarded as the standard form of the Old Testament in the early Greek Christian Church and is still considered canonical in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Though different [Christian denominations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_denominations) have slightly [different versions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_Old_Testament_canon) of the Old Testament in their Bibles, the Torah as the "Five Books of Moses" (or "the [Mosaic Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosaic_Law)") is common among them all.

The [Quran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quran) refers heavily to Moses to outline the truth of his existence and the religious guidelines that God had revealed to the Children of Israel. According to the Qur'an, Allah says "It is He Who has sent down the Book (the Qur'an) to you with truth, confirming what came before it. And He sent down the Taurat (Torah) and the Injeel (Gospel)." [3:3]

Muslims call the Torah the [*Tawrat*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tawrat) and consider it the word of God given to Moses. However, Muslims also believe that this original revelation was corrupted ([*tahrif*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tahrif)) (or simply altered by the passage of time and human fallibility) over time by Jewish scribes and hence do not revere the present "Jewish version" Torah as much. [7:144–144](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2002.02.0006%3Asura%3D7%3Averse%3D144) The Torah in the Quran is always mentioned with respect in Islam. The Muslims' belief in the Torah, as well as the prophethood of Moses, is one of the [fundamental tenets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_articles_of_belief) of Islam.

The Bahá’í position on the Torah was composed in 1906 by its official interpreter on all matters religious, Sir ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’ Abbas K.B.E.

"The Torah, held to be the most ancient of histories, existed today in three separate versions: the Hebrew, considered authentic by the Jews and the Protestant clergy; the Greek Septuagint, which was used as authoritative in the Greek and other eastern churches; and the Samaritan Torah, the standard authority for that people. These three versions differ greatly, one from another, even with regard to the lifetimes of the most celebrated figures. In the Hebrew Torah, it is recorded that from Noah's flood until the birth of Abraham there was an interval of two hundred and ninety-two years. In the Greek, that time span is given as one thousand and seventy-two years, while the Samaritan, the recorded span is nine hundred and forty-two years.

Refer to the commentary by Henry Westcott for tables are supplied therein which show the discrepancies among the three Torahs as to the birth dates of a number of the descendants of Shem, and thou wilt see how greatly the versions differ from one another. Moreover, according to the text of the Hebrew Torah, from the creation of Adam until Noah's flood the elapsed time is recorded as one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years, while in the Greek Torah the interval is given as two thousand two hundred and sixty-two years, and in the Samaritan text, the same period is said to have lasted one thousand three hundred and seven years. Reflect now over the discrepancies among these three Torahs. The case is indeed surprising. The Jews and Protestants belittle the Greek Torah, while to the Greeks the Hebrew version is spurious, and the Samaritans deny both the Hebrew and the Greek versions."

‘Abdu’l Bahá’s elucidations above in 1906 are found in his letter to [Ethel Jenner Rosenberg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethel_Jenner_Rosenberg) (1858–1930, without issue and no relation to the famous spies, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg) <http://bahai-library.com/abdulbaha_tablet_wisdom_questions>

See also

* [Book of Moses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Moses)
* [Christianity and Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity_and_Judaism)
* [Heptateuch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heptateuch)
* [Hexapla](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hexapla)
* [Ketuvim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketuvim)
* [Nevi'im](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nevi%27im)
* [Jewish Publication Society (JPS)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_Publication_Society_(JPS))
* [JPS Tanakh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JPS_Tanakh)
* [Judeo-Christian tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judeo-Christian_tradition)
* [Ketef Hinnom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ketef_Hinnom)
* [Moses in rabbinic literature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_in_rabbinic_literature)
* [Samaritan Pentateuch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaritan_Pentateuch)
* [Tanakh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanakh)
* [Ten Commandments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Commandments)
* [Torah redactor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_redactor)
* [Torah scroll (Yemenite)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_scroll_(Yemenite))
* [Torah study](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah_study)

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