

תּוֹרָה

TORAH

derived from the Hebrew *arah* = to instruct; thus Instruction, guidance, law). This is the Hebrew Designation for the "Five Books of Moses," or in Greek the *Pentateuch*.

This collection is also called in Hebrew *chamishah chumashey ha-torah* - the "Five Fifths of the Torah" or for short *chumash*. The term Torah is also used to designate the whole Bible (Hebrew: *TaNaKh*), and at times the whole gamut of Jewish religious texts.

מִשְׁנָה

MISHNAH

derived from the Hebrew *shanah* = repeat, teach by repetition. This is the first part of the Talmud, consisting of a collection of rabbinical rulings, compiled by R. Yehuda ha-Nasi, around the year 200 CE. The term also

Designates a particular teaching (a *mishna*) within this collection. In both the Talmud of the Land of Israel (the Jerusalem Talmud or the *yerushalmi*) and the Babylonian Talmud (the *Bavli*), the Mishna is the same. It is the *gemara* (see below) that differs. The sages/rabbis who are the contributors are called *tannaim* (sing. *tanna*). The letter *shin* (in Hebrew) often becomes *tav* in Aramaic, and so the Aramaic term *tanna* is related to *shanah* (see above).

גְּמָרָא

GEMARA

Derived from the Hebrew *gamar* = finish, complete. This is the second part of the Talmud. The sages/rabbis who are mentioned here are called *amoraim* (sing. *amora* from *amar* - to speak.) The Babylonian gemara combined with the mishna become the Babylonian Talmud (7th c. CE). The Palestinian gemara combined with the mishna become the Jerusalem Talmud (5th c. CE). Sometimes the gemara is called Talmud.

תַּלְמוּד

TALMUD

Derived from the Hebrew *lamad* = to learn, to study. The two Talmudim (plural of Talmud) each contain the Mishna and either the Palestinian or the Babylonian gemara. The Babylonian Talmud is significantly larger

Than the Palestinian one. It is also generally considered the more authoritative one.

תנ"ך

TANAKH

This is the Hebrew Bible. As an acronym it consists of the letters T - N - K (Hebr. *tav - nun - kaf*) standing for Torah - Neviim - Ketuvim. The "a" sounds that connect these letters are added to facilitate pronunciation.

The Tanak, just like all Hebrew documents, were for a long time written in consonantal form (I.e. without vowels). Today's synagogue scrolls, as well as modern Hebrew, is written without vowels. The Tanak vowel-system dates from ca. the 10th c. CE., and so also the punctuation marks, called trop, that provide us with the proper division of words and sentences as well as the proper musical cantillation of the texts. The Hebrew texts so equipped is called the "masoretic text" or MT. It was developed in Tiberias, Israel, by traditionists of which the Ben Asher family was one of the last. The Term "masoretic" derives from the Hebr. *masorah* or *mesoreth* = tradition. (*mesoreth* < *masar* = to hand down, deliver).

מדרש

MIDRASH

Derives from the Hebrew *darash* = to seek, search.

Midrash is a method of study and interpretation of the Bible and it is the name given to the literary works that emerge from that study, both its singular products as well as their collections. For something to be *midrash*, it must have a connection to a text. Midrashim (plural) are not philosophical treatises. They are commentary on individual verses and even words - attempts to clarify, to explain, to make pertinent to people's lives. Often to these are attached legends, sayings, parables, stories about the sages, etc. There are many *midrash* compilations whose dating is difficult.

There are *halakhic* midrashim that function as proof of a law's authenticity and authority, (*halakhah* - Jewish law). There are *aggadic* midrashim that interpret non-legal portions of the Hebrew Bible in a moralizing and edifying manner. Here are found famous saying of rabbis, philosophical and mystical discussions, etc.

NEW TESTAMENT (Greek: *EUANGELION* = “good message”)

This is the Christian Bible which contains the Tanak as its first part, followed by the New Testament.

The New Testament consists of five parts: the four gospels, the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (for short “Acts”), The Letters of the apostle Paul, the Pastoral Epistles, the Book of Revelation (also called the Apocalypse).

Gospel derives from the old English “godspell” or Good News. The New Testament was written during a time span of roughly sixty or seventy years.

The CHURCH FATHERS

These are the men who became the leaders of the church after the death of the disciples and apostles of Jesus of Nazareth. They hailed from Europe, Asia Minor and Africa. Their activity covers the time from ca. the 2nd to the 7th c. CE.

The Church Fathers were theologians, bishops, presbyters, deacons of the churches. It is no longer clear what these terms represented in the church fathers’ days.

The Church Fathers’ literary output is significant and much of it has been preserved. Their works can be divided into three categories: ante-Nicene, Nicene and post-Nicene.

It was the first Christian emperor of the Roman Empire, Constantine the Great (301-350 CE) who, in 325 CE, called together 318 bishops of the empire to the town of Nicaea, in order to hammer out a confession of faith that would unite the people of his empire in the Christian faith. The Church Fathers’ literary output is thus divided into those whose writings precede, are contemporary with and succeed, the work of this Council.

Many of the Church Fathers are responsible for the *adversos Judaeos* tradition.

THE QURAN

The term means “recitation.” The Prophet Muhammad (570 - 632 CE) received revelations from Allah (the Arabic term “Allah” means “the god”) through the angel Gabriel during a span of 22 years. Gabriel spoke to him and ordered Muhammad to recite what he had heard. When this material was committed to writing by Muhammad’s friends, this became the *Qur’an*.

The Quran makes it explicit that the revelations given to Muhammad were given in the Arabic language.

Thus Muhammad did never claim to preaching his own wisdom but only that which he was ordered to speak by Gabriel.

The Quran is in its importance equivalent to that which the Tanak holds for the Jews and to that which the Bible holds for Christians.

It is alleged that the Quran's first complete standardized copy was made by third Caliph (caliph = successor to Muhammad) Uthman (ruled 644-656 CE).

Those who accept the Quran's teachings for their lives are called Muslims. The religion they accept is "Islam." "Islam" means "submission, and those who submit to Allah and his teachings in the Quran are "Muslims."

HADITH

Sunnah or *hadith*, the practice and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, is the second source from which Islamic teachings are derived. In the original sense *sunnah* pertains to the doings, and *hadith* to the sayings of the prophet. But both cover the same ground. Often *hadith* is considered the narration and record of the *sunnah*.

There have survived six major collections of the sunnah of the prophet. The best and most authoritative ones are those by Bukhari and Muslim. Bukhari (810--870) took cognizance of 600,000 reports and knew 200,000 by heart. But his collection contains only 9,000 traditions. Bukhari was careful to include only those whose *isnad* (chain of tradition) was impeccable.

This work was completed roughly 200 years after the *hijra* (622 CE), i.e., ca. 850 CE.