

# What is Torah

**Torah definition:** Torah means instruction.

“Torah is G'd's wisdom, as He considers Himself, as He considers us and as He considers His world. It contains the wisdom with which He creates the world and manages it.”

Rabbi Tzvi Freeman

“The Torah is the revelation of the Almighty's Will, the Torah can be described as a user's manual for life, revealing to those who study it the manufacturer's operating instructions.”

*Kabbalah and Meditation For the Nations*, Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsberg

## History of Torah:

### Our Sages say that Torah existed before Creation

- “G'd looked into Torah and created the world” Zohar, Tr. Shabbos 88b
- *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* Vol. 1, Chapter 3
- *Selected Portions of Nachmanides Commentary on the Torah*, Vol. 1 pg. 5

### Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob all knew Torah.

• *Mishnah Torah; Laws of Kings*, Rambam chapter 9, pg 172

### “Six precepts were commanded to Adam

- [the prohibition against] worship of false gods;
- [the prohibition against] cursing G'd;
- [the prohibition against] murder;
- [the prohibition against] incest and adultery;
- [the prohibition against] theft;
- [the command to establish] laws and courts of justice.

Even though we have received all of these commands from Moses and, [furthermore, they are concepts] which the intellect itself leans to, from an overview of the Torah's words, it appears that [Adam] was commanded concerning them.

- To Noah [G'd] added [the prohibition against eating] flesh from a living animal, as [Genesis 9:4] states: “Nevertheless, you may not eat flesh with its life, which is its blood.” Thus, there are Seven Mitzvot.
- These matters remained the same throughout the world until Abraham. When Abraham Came, he was commanded regarding circumcision in addition to these. He also [ordained] the morning prayers.
- Isaac separated tithes and ordained an additional prayer service in the afternoon. Jacob added [the prohibition against eating]the sciatic nerve. He also ordained the evening prayers. In Egypt, Amram was commanded regarding other mitzvot. Ultimately, Moses came and the Torah was completed by him.”
- Pirke Avot – *The Verses/Saying (Ethics) of the Fathers, Chapter 1*
- “Moses received the Torah from Sinai and passed it on to Joshua; Joshua to the Elders; the Elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets passed it on to the Men of the Great Assembly [Sanhedrin].”

<http://www.shechem.org/torah/avot.html>

## Written Torah

- First Five (5) Books of the Tanach [Bible]

**Tanakh** = Acronym for:

- Ta =Torah
- Na = Neviim [Prophets]
- Kh = Ketuvim [Sacred writings]
- Includes 24 Books

Together these compile the teachings all the way back to Adam and of the Prophets in context with Israel's history and the Ultimate plan of G'd for mankind.

## **The Talmud**

The Oral Torah or "Talmud" is made up of two parts, the "Mishnah" and the "Gemara".

The Mishnah which means "repetition" is the main text of the Talmud, the Gemara is the discussions, rabbinical insights and comments on the Mishnah.

- Although some Oral Torah existed prior to Sinai, it was at Sinai that G'd gave to Moses the details and the precise way by which they were to be applied.
- Example: Deut. 12:21
- Originally passed from teacher to student orally, it was codified during the Second Century C.E. by Rabbi Yehuda haNasi who feared it might be forgotten.

## **Mishnah: The Six Orders**

Mishnah - [repetition] is what was passed down from Sinai. Consists of six orders [Sederim] each containing seven to twelve tractates:

- \* Zeraim ("Seeds"), dealing with prayer and blessings, tithes and agricultural laws (11 tractates)
  - \* Moed ("Festival"), pertaining to the laws of the Sabbath and the Festivals (12 tractates)
  - \* Nashim ("Women"), concerning marriage and divorce, some forms of oaths and the laws of the nazirite (7 tractates)
  - \* Nezikin ("Damages"), dealing with civil and criminal law, the functioning of the courts and oaths (10 tractates)
  - \* Kodashim ("Holy things"), regarding sacrificial rites, the Temple, and the dietary laws (11 tractates)
  - \* Tohorot ("Purities"), pertaining to the laws of purity and impurity, including the impurity of the dead, the laws of food purity and bodily purity (12 tractates).
- Gemara is the commentary, discussions, legal debates etc... of the Sages
  - Mishnah + Gemara = Talmud [commonly referred to the "Shas"]

## **What does it mean to “study” Torah and how does it apply to us?**

- The term “study” has caused many a problem between us and some rabbis in the past due to a differing terminology. We are not allowed to study with the same depth as Israel concerning the Laws that were given to Israel. When Israel “studies” they are in fact studying as if intimate to “Know Hashem” The sages equate it with the idea of a husband and wife “knowing” each other. That type of study was given only to Israel. We can however, study in great depth [“delving into them”]the Laws that apply to us and are in fact obligated to do so. *The Divine Code, Chapter 5*, Rabbi Moshe Weiner
- “Delving into” means learning in depth and trying to arrive at inner explanations of the text.
- Includes Written and Oral Torah ONLY as it applies to us.
- We are allowed to learn about the rest of the Torah that does not apply to us in order to understand, but not in a way that is in-depth or penetrating investigative learning (pilpul) which is the Jewish style of learning.
- Also includes the rabbinic legislation and interpretation based on Torah that has developed through the centuries. Deut. 17:10-11
- For more in-depth explanations see *The Divine Code*, Chapter 5, Rabbi Moshe Weiner