TEXTS OF TORAH (LAW)

(in order of composition)

Torah: The first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the primary source for Torah. Also called Pentateuch.

Tanak (Tanakh): An acronym for the three parts of the Hebrew Bible: Torah [Law] + Neviim [Prophets] + Ketuvim [Writings]. Commonly called the Hebrew Bible or simply the Bible (= Christian "Old Testament").

Mishnah: (lit., "repetition"). The primary collection of oral Torah, complementing the written Torah of the Tanak. Compiled around 200 C.E. from older traditions.

Talmud: (lit., "study"). The Mishnah combined with commentary (called the *gemara*) comprises the Talmud. Two versions were compiled: one in Palestine, called the Jerusalem Talmud (300s C.E.); the other (more influential) in Babylon (400s C.E.). Medieval commentaries are incorporated into present texts of the Talmud. Those by Rashi (1040-1105) and Maimonides (1135-1204) are particularly influential.

Responsa: Collections of written replies from rabbis to questions about the Torah, after the completion of the Talmud. There are over 1,000 volumes of responsa.

Shulchan Aruch: (lit., "The Prepared Table"). Originally a Sephardic work from the 1500s, it was annotated in the same century with Ashkenazi alternative practices. It is the most used guidebook for Torah observance among observant Jews.

LEADERS (BIBLICAL)

Abraham: The father of the Hebrews, who with his son Isaac, his grandson Jacob (also called Israel), and Jacob's twelve sons are counted as the Patriarchs.

Moses: Law-giver who presented the Torah and covenant to Israel and founded the nation.

David: (900s B.C.E.). The idealized king, whose dynasty is featured as one of the key elements in the restoration of Israel.

LEADERS (MEDIEVAL)

Maimonides: (1138-1204). A Spanish Jewish philosopher and commentator on the Talmud, he formulated thirteen principles of Judaism.

Rashi: (1040-1105). French rabbinic commentator on the Bible and the Talmud.

LEADERS (MODERN)

Moses Mendelssohn: (1729-1786). German philosopher; leader of the Jewish Enlightenment.

Abraham Geiger: (1810-1874). German rabbi; founder of the Reform movement.

Samson R. Hirsch: (1808-1888). German rabbi; leader of the neo-Orthodox movement, which challenged Reform innovations.

Zacharias Frankel: (1801-1875). German rabbi; founder of the positivist-historical school, which influenced Conservative Judaism in North America.

Theodor Herzl: (1860-1904). Austrian journalist; founder of World Zionist Organization; sought to create a Jewish state.

Mordecai Kaplan: (1881-1983). American rabbi and founder of Reconstructionist Judaism.

ANCIENT GROUPS

The following groups (except for the Samaritans) arose in the Maccabean period. Most were wiped out by the Jewish revolts against Rome in the first and second centuries C.E.

Maccabees: The nickname of the Hasmoneans, a priestly family who led the revolt against the Seleucid Greeks, and liberated Palestine for a few decades before the Roman conquest of the East.

Essenes: Often identified with an apocalyptic sect, discontent with life under the Maccabees, who formed an isolated ascetic, scribal, and priestly community near the Dead Sea at Qumran. The Dead Sea Scrolls were part of their library.

Pharisees: A non-priestly group, whose concern about religious purity and the study of Torah and oral traditions gave them popular influence in the society. Their traditions influence rabbinic Judaism.

Sadducees: The religious elite, controlling the Jerusalem temple and its economy. They rejected the oral Torah and some of the newer ideas in Judaism.

Samaritans: A group in central Palestine, with obscure Jewish ancestry. They used the Pentateuch and expected a prophet-like messianic figure.

Zealots: A collection of diverse discontents and apocalyptic militants, who led the revolt against Rome.

MEDIEVAL GROUPS

Karaite: A group of Babylonian Jews in the 700s, who rejected the authority of the Talmud and the Rabbinic tradition. They emphasized a more literal approach to Hebrew scripture.

Kabbalist: A general term for a Jewish mystic, who sought the hidden meaning behind the external realities and the coded meaning of texts. Kabbalism did much to revitalize Judaism from the 1200s, at a time when European expulsion of Jews was beginning.

Ashkenazi: Jews of German background, including most east European Jews. Yiddish was their language, and Christianity the dominant culture under which they took their shape.

Sephardic: Jews largely of Spanish background, who migrated to the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and the Netherlands, when they were deported from Spain. Ladino was their language, and Islam the dominant culture under which they took their shape.

(see pp 76-78)

MODERN GROUPS

Hasidic: A mystical movement founded by Baal Shem Tov (1700-1760) in Poland. Particularly important to eastern European Jews. It emphasized devotion and joy of the common Jew over the learning of the rabbis as a means of harmony with God.

Reform: Founded in 1800s; emphasizes an ethical monotheism rather than ritual, law, and messianic expectations. Such change allowed Jews to identify more easily with western enlightenment society. They view Judaism as always needing a reforming spirit in order to be authentic.

Conservative or **Positive-Historical:** Founded in 1800s as reaction to Reform Judaism's radical discarding of tradition; stands mid-way between the Reformed and Orthodox. Judaism is to be reformed, but not on rationalist principles. Historical scholarship is the tool used to determine the non-binding elements in Judaism practice.

Orthodox: Also called "neo-orthodox"; maintains traditional practices and beliefs, making it the most loyal group to rabbinic Judaism. Judaism is eternal and divinely given, thus not subject to change.

Reconstructionist: Founded on the principle of Judaism as an evolving religious culture, subject to change. Views Judaism as a human construct, as Reform Judaism does.

Abraham Kaplan

FESTIVALS

Rosh Hashanah: (lit., "beginning of the year"). Jewish New Year, in September or October. Begins a 10-day solemn period of repentance and self-examination, which ends on Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur: (lit., "Day of Atonement"). The holiest day of the Jewish calendar, marked by fasting, prayer, and repentance.

Sukkot: "Tabernacles" or "Booths." A seven-day harvest festival, linked to the wandering of the Hebrew exiles in the desert after their escape from Egypt.

Pesach: (lit., "to pass over"). Commonly known as Passover. Celebrates the escape of the ancient Hebrews from Egyptian slavery (Exodus). A special meal (the *seder*) with various foods, including unleaven bread (*matzah*), is the highlight.

Hanukkah: "Dedication." Celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over Syrian Greek overlords, who had outlawed Judaism. The name makes reference to the light from a miraculous eight-day burning of holy oil. A special eight-branch candlestick is used.

Purim: "Lots." Recalls the Queen Esther story in which Persian Jews were saved when the drawing of lots exposed a plot to kill them. Costumes and boisterous plays are featured.

Shavuot: "Weeks." Commonly known as Pentecost (lit., "fifty"), celebrated fifty days after Passover. Commemorates the giving of Torah.

Sabbath: Seventh day of the week, designated for rest and pious reflection. Connected to both the creation of the world and the giving of Torah.

High Holy D.

OFFICES

Cantor: (lit., "singer"). Leader of music and prayer in synagogue services. The duties vary from congregation to congregation. The office was established in the Middle Ages, when more complex music became the fashion.

Exilarch: Political head of the Jewish community in Babylonia until the thirteenth century, when the Muslim empire there fell.

Gaon: (lit., "eminence"). Originally used as a title of respect for the head of Babylonian academies for Torah study. Now widely used for a rabbi expert in Torah.

High Priest: An office during the temple period. The chief priest was to be a descendent of Aaron, the first high priest.

Mohel: A person trained in the procedure of circumcision.

Levite: An assistant to the priest, with various temple duties. After the destruction of the temple, they lost a role in Judaism, although their identity as Levites has been maintained.

Priest: A descendent of Aaron. A few roles continue, although the temple has not existed for 2,000 years.

Prophet: The Israelites had both official and unofficial prophets, who supported or challenged temple and palace. One section of the Hebrew Bible incorporates the messages of some of these prophets.

Rabbi: A teacher of Torah, and spiritual advisor and leader in the synagogue. Primary Jewish leader after the destruction of the temple.

SITES

Temple: The first, called Solomon's temple, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.; the second temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Synagogue: A community center in which numerous activities take place, the most important of which is the weekly Sabbath services. Reform Jews call their synagogues "temples," implying that synagogues serve fully the religious needs of the Jews.

Zion: The hill on which the temple was situated. Considered the center of the cosmos, God's holy hill. Muslim Dome of the Rock stands there now.

Mount Sinai: The mountain in the Sinai Desert where, according to tradition, Moses received the Ten Commandments and Yahweh made a covenant with the Israelites.

Diaspora: (lit., "dispersion"). A term used for the areas outside of Israel in which Jews resided. Until modern times, this often meant a resident-alien status.

Israel: Land and independence were especially cherished by people whose beginnings were that of nomadic strangers. Jews called Israel the "Promised Land." In 1948, Israel became an independent Jewish nation, for the first time in almost 2,000 years.

Western Wall (Wailing Wall): The western wall of the Second Temple complex. With the temple destroyed, Jews throughout the centuries came to this location to pray for the restoration of Israel.

DIVINE NAMES

As monotheists, the Jews did not have a pantheon of gods; however, various names were used for their god. In particular, Jews sought ways to avoid pronouncing the name YHWH, using various circumlocutions.

YHWH: The Tetragrammaton. Often seen with the vowels (Yahweh). It is the personal name of the Hebrew god, which was revealed to Moses. The word "Jehovah" is an artificial Christian construct based on these consonants, with "J" used instead of "Y" (under German influence). The omission of the vowels is intended to protect against pronouncing the name of God. Often the English word "God" is written without a vowel ("G-d").

Adonai: Hebrew, meaning "Lord." This word is often pronounced wherever the letters YHWH occur in the Bible.

Elohim: A generic name for god in Semitic languages. Often used for God in the Hebrew scriptures, and its abbreviated form "El" was often used in compounds (e.g., El-Shaddai–"God Almighty").

Ein Sof: ("the Unlimited"). The name given to the unknowable and limitedless God of kabbalistic speculation.

Ha-Shem: (lit., "the Name"). Another common circumlocution for the name of God.

RITES/RITUALS

Circumcision (Bris): As a sign of the covenant, Jewish baby boys have the foreskin of the penis removed in a ceremony when they are eight days old. They are named at this time too. Male converts are also required to undergo this procedure. A *mohel* performs the surgery.

Bar Mitzvah: (lit., "son of the commandment"). The ceremony that declares a Jewish boy of age thirteen to be a full member of the community. The event is celebrated in the synagogue, with the boy reading from the Torah.

Bat Mitzvah: (lit., "daughter of the commandment"). A ceremony for girls on parallel with the Bar Mitzvah ceremony, found in all forms of Judaism except the Orthodox.

Sitting Shivah: A seven-day period of mourning after the death of a close relative. The family restricts its activities and friends visit. Mourners sit on low stools or on the floor.

The Passover *Seder*: A highly ritualized meal, in which Jews recall the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. Specific foods are used to illustrate aspects of the story.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

(1) I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage:
(2) You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them. . . .
(3) You shall not swear falsely by the name of the LORD your God; for the LORD will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.
(4) Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work–you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.
(5) Honor your father and your mother, that you may long endure on the land which the LORD your God is giving you.
(6) You shall not murder.
(7) You shall not commit adultery.
(8) You shall not steal.
(9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
(10) You shall not covet your neighbor's house: You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

Exodus 20:2-14 (*Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*, © Jewish Publication Society, 1985)

CREED

Jews have no formal creed, although some Jewish scholars have drawn up lists of primary articles of faith. A popular list is Maimonides' "Thirteen Principles," from the 1200s. The most popular form is the hymn Yigdal (lit., "May He be magnified"), found in Jewish prayer books.

Thirteen Principles:
(1) God exists.
(2) There is only one god; there is no other.
(3) God does not have physical form, nor is he subject to physical needs.
(4) God is eternal–the first and the last.
(5) Prayer is to be directed to God alone. No other is worthy of such acts.
(6) God communicates with humans through prophets.
(7) Moses is the primary prophet.
(8) The Torah was given by God to Moses.
(9) There will be no other Torah.
(10) God observes all deeds and thoughts of humans.
(11) God rewards those who keep his commandments and punishes those who violate his commandments.
(12) The Messiah will come. One is to wait daily, no matter how long until Messiah comes.
(13) The dead will be resurrected, when God pleases.

SYMBOLS

Star of David: (more correctly: *Magen* ["shield"] of David). The most common symbol of modern Judaism, featured on the flag of Israel. Gained popularity as a symbol for Judaism after Zionism adopted it in 1897.

Menorah: A seven-branched candlestick, found in the temple; represents the seven days of creation. It has been the most recognizable symbol of Judaism from ancient times. A special eight-branched *menorah* is used for Hanukkah.

Tetragrammaton / Tetragram: (lit., "four letters"). The four consonants in the Hebrew word "Yahweh," the personal name of the Jewish God.

Yarmulke / Kippah: A skull cap worn by Jewish men. Orthodox Jews cover their heads in all public places; Conservative Jews (and some Reform) when at prayer.

Kosher: Many symbols indicate *kosher* foods, depending on which of various Jewish agencies supervised the procedure.

Tallit: Prayer shawl, with four corners and fringes on each corner. A smaller one is worn by Orthodox Jews, somewhat as an undershirt.

Tefillin/Phylactery: Small leather boxes containing portions of the Torah, bound to the forehead and right arm during prayer.

Mezuzah: (lit., "doorpost"). Portions of Torah in a small container attached to the doorposts of a Jewish home.

Jhwh

(NOT Jehovah)

PRAYER

The Eighteen Benedictions (Blessings): also called Amidah (lit., "standing"), Tephillah (lit., "prayer"), or Shemoneh Esrei (lit., "eighteen"). The principal prayer in the Jewish liturgy, going back 2000 years, made up of nineteen blessings, the twelfth having been added to the original eighteen sometime in the early period. The following is a brief summary of the main features of the blessings and petitions.

1. God's greatness as God of the fathers/patriarchs
2. God's power in a variety of situations
3. God's holinesss
4. God's gift of knowledge
5. God's gift of repentance
6. God's gift of pardon and forgiveness from sin
7. God's redemption of Israel from its struggles
8. God's healing of the sick
9. God's blessings of the various produce of the ground
10. God's gathering of the dispersed of Israel
11. God's restoration of righteousness and justice
12. God's punishment of the wicked and heretics
13. God's reward of the pious
14. God's rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem
15. God's restoration of the royal house of David
16. God's acceptance and response to prayers
17. God's restoration of worship at the Temple in Jerusalem
18. Extensive thanks and blessings to God
19. God's pea[illegible]n Israel.

TERMINOLOGY

Matrilineal: In Judaism, only those born to a Jewish mother were considered Jewish by birth.

Parve (pareve): (lit., "neutral"). This word, or an abbreviation "P" appears on *kosher* labeling for products that may be eaten either with meat or dairy dishes.

Yeshiva: (lit., "sitting"). The academy for study of the Torah leading to ordination as a rabbi.

Yiddish: The term is an English form of the German word *jüdisch* ("Jewish"). Yiddish is a dialect of German spoken by Ashkenazi Jews. Most of the vocabulary is German; the script uses the Hebrew alphabet.