



Introduction into the Rabbinical Literature

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Historical Background
3. Written and Oral Torah
4. Definitions
5. Attachment: Qumran manuscripts, Tiberias from a rabbinical view
6. Bibliography

Introduction into Rabbinical Literature

- ▶ In the broadest sense, all rabbinical writings from the origin (70 AD) of rabbinic Judaism to around 1040 AD.
- ▶ However, the term is usually used according to the Hebrew expression (ספרות חז"ל = the testimonies of our wise men, blessed memory), which refers to the classical epoch of traditional Jewish literature (time of the Mishnah and the Talmud)



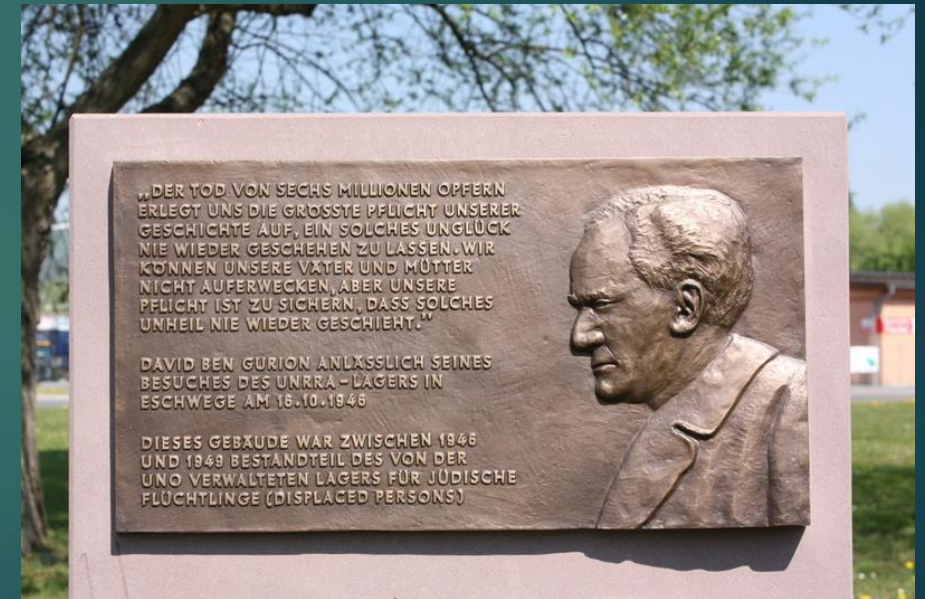
David Ben Gurion (1. Prime Minister of the State of Israel) on the Talmud:

"But Jews as Jews made only one positive contribution. They created through the Talmud and through their traditions a sort of portable homeland that kept them together through two thousand years of wandering and eventually enabled them to return to the very land held by their ancestors."

Ben-Gurion, D., & Bransten, T. R. (1970). *Memoirs: David Ben-Gurion* (1st ed.). World Publishing Co.



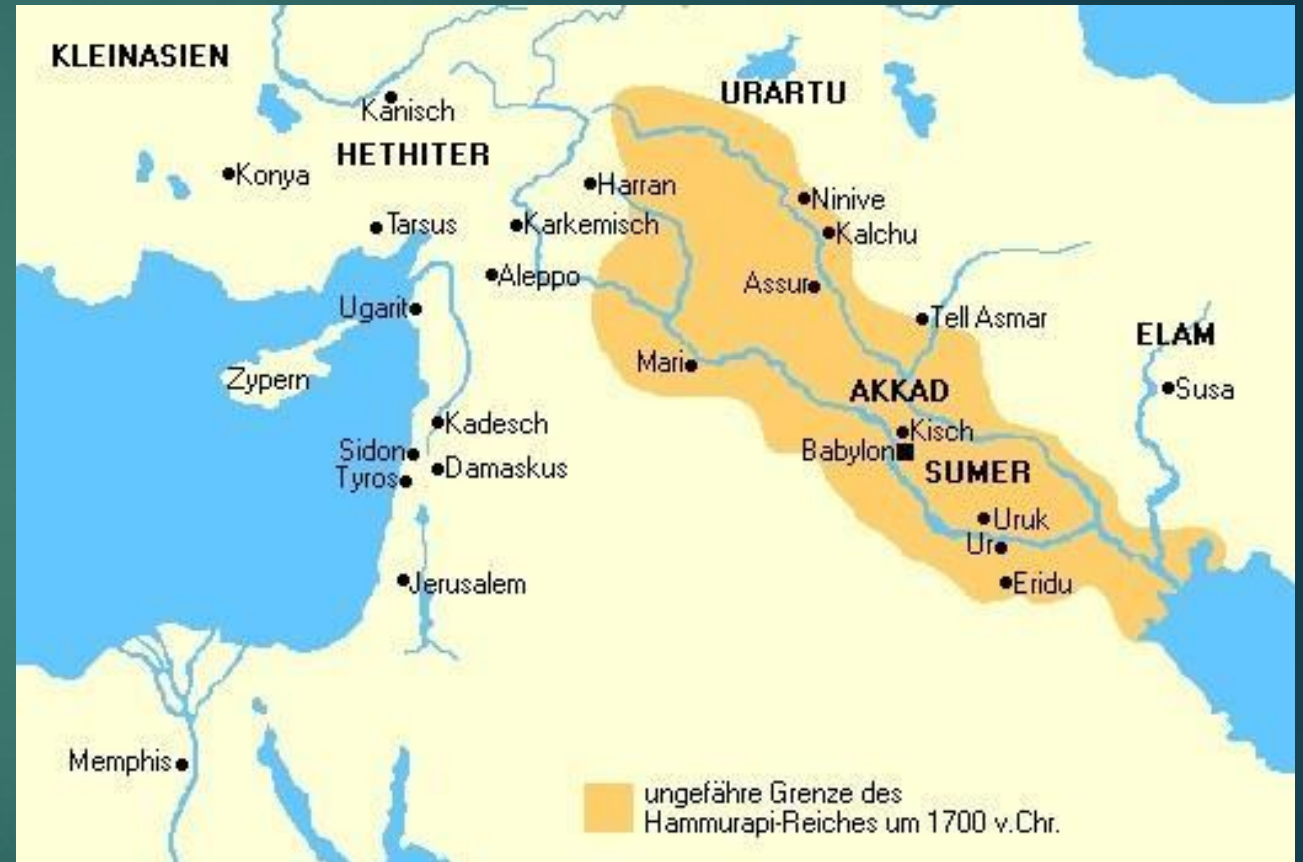
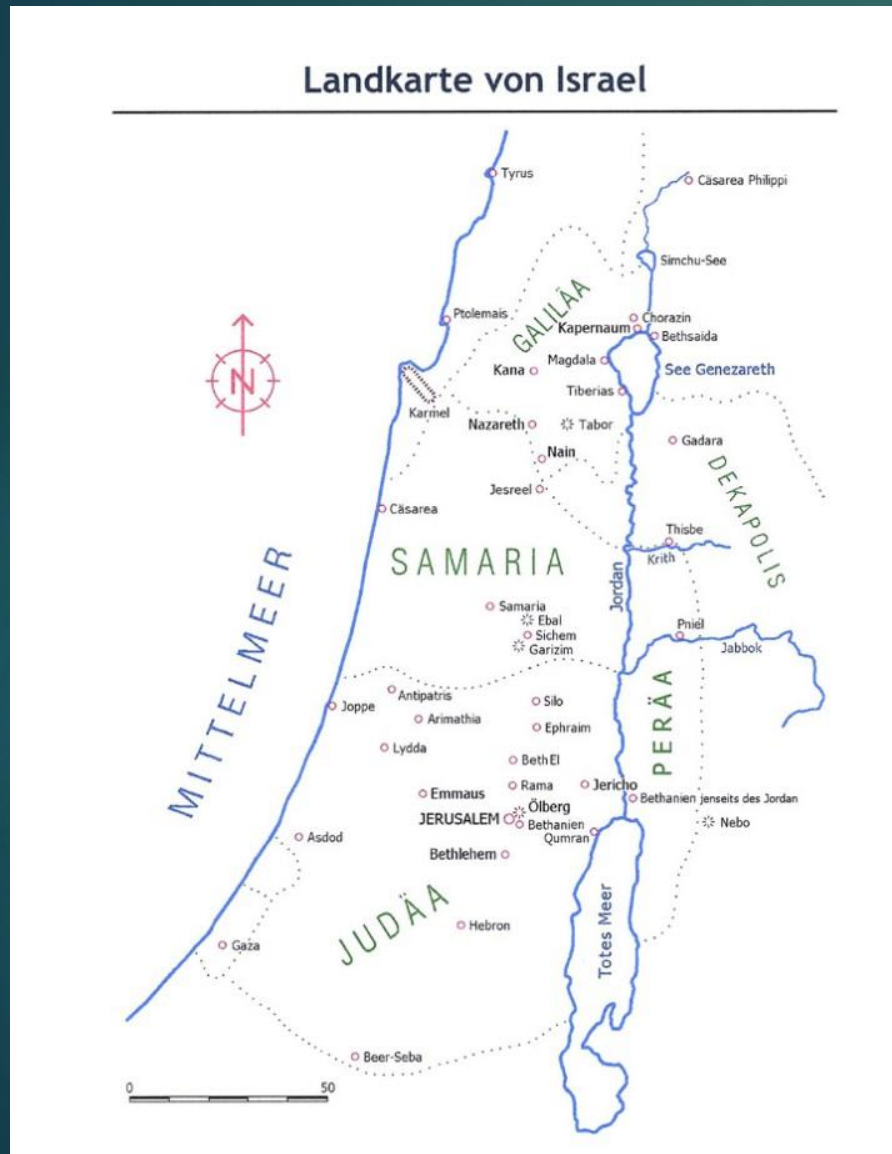
The tomb of Paula and David Ben-Gurion in [Midreschet Ben Gurion](#) (close to Sde Boker)



David Ben-Gurion-Memorial in Eschwege

[File:David Ben-Gurion-Denkmal in Eschwege.jpg - Wikimedia Commons](#)

Historical Background



[Babylonien aus dem Lexikon - wissen.de](#)

[Karte Israel zur Zeit Jesu - Glaubenswege](#)

Jabne (יבְנֵיָהּ *javnæh*; rabbinisch auch יבנא; griech. *iámnia*)



Israel – Ju

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- ▶ There w
- ▶ 138.
- ▶ Most of t






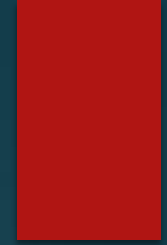
[Ancient Usha-2 - Usha \(city\) - Wikipedia](#)

Beit Shearim in der Zeit des Talmuds und der Mischnah





Coordinates:  $32^{\circ}44'44''\text{N}$ $35^{\circ}16'43''\text{E}$



Aerial view of Sefhoris, 2013





[Tiberias \(Tveriah\) - Israel \(chabad.org\)](http://chabad.org)

Tiberias, hugging the bank of Kinneret, as it was depicted in 1862.

Israel – Judaism – Historical Background

- ▶ Constitutio Antoniniana Carcallas (212 AD) granted Roman citizenship to almost all imperial residents, including Jews.
- ▶ Christianity became religio licita in the Roman Empire (313 AD)
- ▶ Julian's reign gave the Jews a brief break of distress (361-363 AD)
- ▶ In 380 AD Christianity became de facto the state religion through the Nicene Creed.
- ▶ Between AD 415 and AD 429, the institutions of the Jewish patriarchate were abolished
- ▶ 438 AD (Codex Theodosianus) and ultimately the 529 respectively 534 AD Codex Justinianus finally fixed the legal situation to the disadvantage of the Jewish population.

Babylonia - Judaism - Historical Background



[Babylonien aus dem Lexikon - wissen.de](http://www.wissen.de)

- ▶ Always residence of some Jews since the exile from 586-538 BC
- ▶ Because of the Bar-Kokhba-Revolt Babylonia became more significant to the Jewish people
- ▶ Many rabbis fled Israel to Babylonia and stayed.
- ▶ Around AD 226, the rulership of the Sanidian Persians (Zoroastrian belief as the state religion) brought problems for the Jewish population
- ▶ Around 250 AD they regained their autonomy under Shapur I.
- ▶ At the end of the 2nd century AD, the persecution of the Jews (at the same time as the persecution of Christians) reached a climax around AD 468: Jewish self-government was dissolved, synagogues were closed, and numerous rabbis killed.

Babylonia - Judaism - Historical Background

- ▶ Takeover by the Arabs around A.D. 640
- ▶ For the first time the two large Jewish centers were now under one common political administration: first Damascus under the Umayyads, so Israel was closer to the center of power. But, then from 740 AD the center shifted to Baghdad under the Abbassids, which led to a dominance of Babylonian Judaism.
- ▶ A.D. 1099 Crusaders conquered Jerusalem.

Written and Oral Torah

You are not
to do any
work on the
Sabbath.



Köln, Tora und Innenansicht der ehemaligen Synagoge HOWI - Horsch, Willy -
eigenes Foto (Zeughaus) / CC BY-SA

Written and Oral Torah

Torah (“instruction“, “teaching“, or “law“)

- ▶ In the narrow understanding of the "Written Torah": the five books of Moses
- ▶ In the broader sense of the “Written Torah”: the Hebrew Bible as a whole
- ▶ In the broader sense of the “Oral Torah” everything that has been said, is said or will be said in the light of the interpretation of the Written Torah.
- ▶ In the narrow understanding of the "Oral Torah": the rabbinic writings (Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash).
- ▶ In rabbinic Judaism, the Scriptures cannot be understood without the oral Torah.

A photograph of a library bookshelf. The word "DEFINITION" is prominently displayed in the center, rendered in large, three-dimensional wooden letters mounted on a black rectangular background. The bookshelf is filled with various books, including technical manuals, textbooks, and reference works. Some visible titles include "MATHEMATICS", "PHYSICS", "CHEMISTRY", and "ENGINEERING". The books are arranged in neat rows on light-colored wooden shelves.

DEFINITION

Definitions

Mishnah (Heb.; [repetition of] teaching)

- ▶ Collection of most of the orally transmitted Jewish religious laws.
- ▶ The Mishnah was formulated in Israel, where the Tannaites, the teachers of the orally transmitted law, resided.
- ▶ The compilation in its present form was edited by the last Tannaite, Rabbi Jehuda Ha-Nasi ("the prince", in the second half of the 2nd century AD) in Tiberias.



Ruins of ancient Tiberias, 1862



Tomb of Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi in Beit Shearim in Israel

Timeline of the Tannaim

- blue text Nasi
- Student
- Parent-child
- Sibling
- Spouse

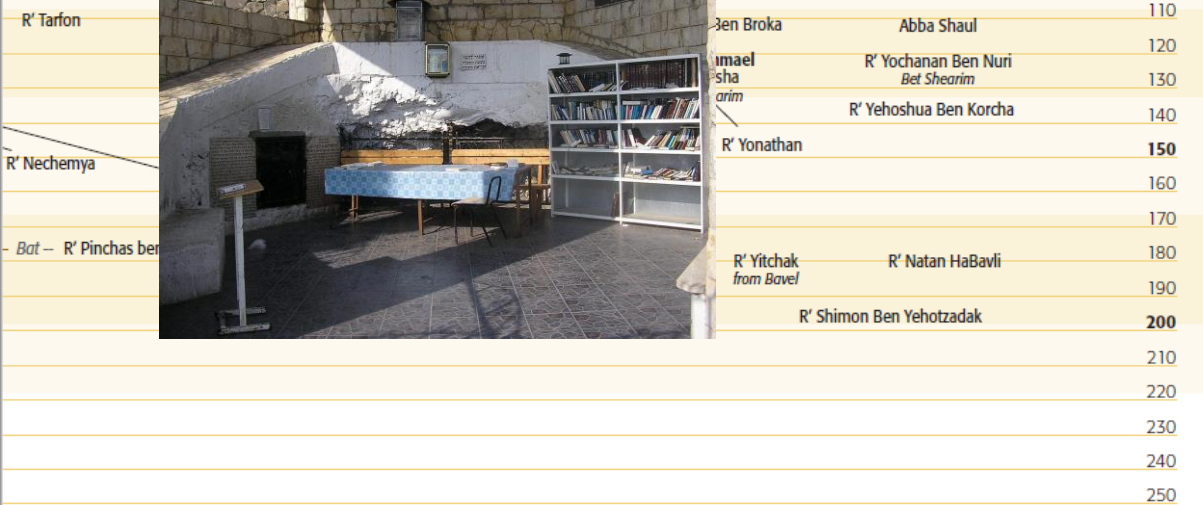
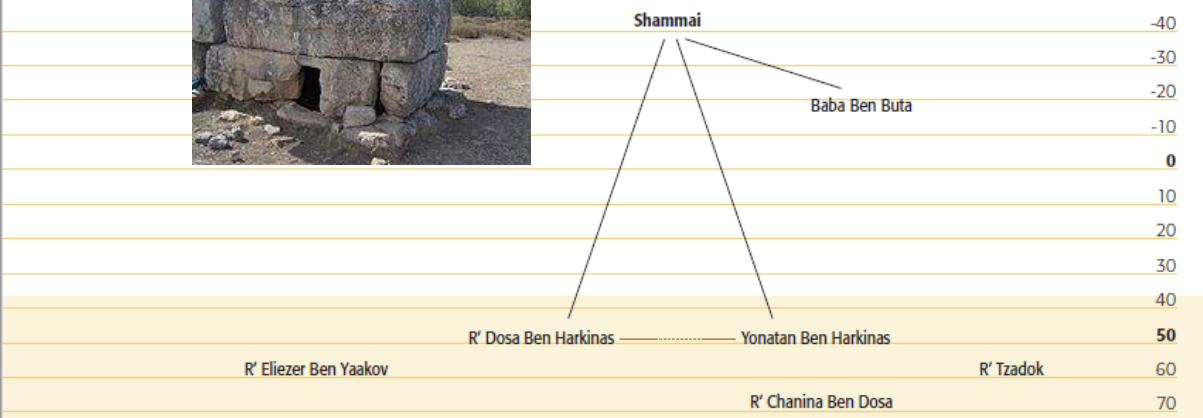
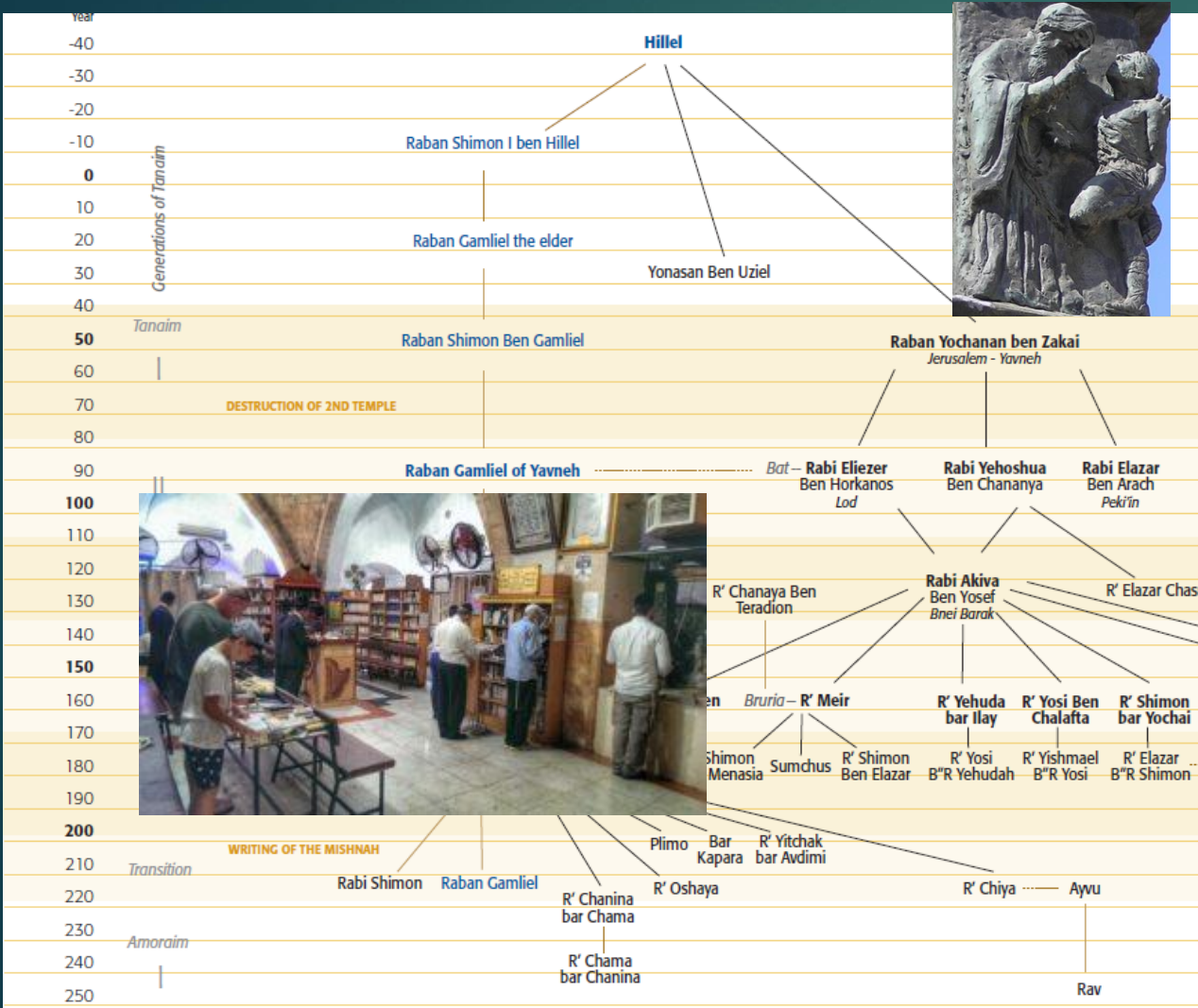


Abb. 1: [Kneset Menorah P5200009 Hillel - Hillel - Wikipedia](#)

Abb. 2: [Shammai - Schammai - Wikipedia](#)

Abb. 3: [Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes Tomb Mark, Tiberias | Danny The Digger](#)

Abb. 4: [Akivakever - Rabbi Akiva - Wikipedia](#)

Der Talmud (Belehrung)

Mischna
(Wiederholung)

Gemara
(Vollendung)

Mündliche
Tora

Aussat & Ernte

Fest- & Fasttage

Familienrecht

Strafrecht

Opferriten

Reinheitsgebote

Kommentare
und Auslegungen
der Mischna

Weitere
Kommentare

Mishna

- ▶ Encompasses six main parts or "orders" (Heb. sedarim, plural of seder), containing a total of 63 tractates (Heb. massiktot, plural of massechet).
- ▶ The 63 tractates are divided into 525 chapters (Hebrew perakim, plural of perek), which are again divided into pericopes
- ▶ The Mishnah contains 4187 doctrines.
- ▶ The language of the Mishnah is Hebrew, with occasional Aramaic, Greek, or Latin loan words.

Mischnah

1. **Zera'im** (Seeds) – is concerned mainly with the agricultural aspects of the Torah.
2. **Mo'ed** (Appointed Time or Festival) – is concerned with the religious calendar. It deals with the different feasts, fasts and festivals of the Jewish religious calendar.
3. **Našim** (Women) – concerns marriage and divorce
4. **Neziqin** (Damages,) – is concerned mainly with civil and criminal law, and its administration.
5. **Qodašim** (Holinesses) – is concerned mainly with the Temple service.
6. **Tohorot** (Purities) – is concerned with ritual purity and impurity.

Tosefta (“supplement”)

- ▶ Collection of doctrines of orally transmitted Jewish religious law.
- ▶ Parallel work to the Mishnah, without having the same authority.
- ▶ Main authors: the Israelite teachers of the law (Tannaites) NEHEMIA and CHIJA BEN ABBA (beginning of the 3rd century A.D.), and the Amorean OSCHAJA (3rd century A.D.).
- ▶ Written in Hebrew
- ▶ More extensive than the MISHNAH
- ▶ Stands outside the canon and is considered only an "addendum"
- ▶ Gemara and all Jewish traditional literature cite the Tosefta as a thoroughly authentic source.

Talmud (“instruction“)

- ▶ The most important work of Jewish traditional literature (originated from many hundred years of oral tradition).



Der Talmud (Belehrung)

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Jerusalem Talmud vs. Babylonian Talmud

Jerusalem Talmud	Babylonian Talmud
Already completed around 370 AD	Edited until about 500 A.D.
5 generations of Amoreans	7 generations of Amoreans
Less comprehensive Gemara	
	20 volumes containing a total of almost 3000 slidesets
Aramaic (Western Aramaic), in parts Hebrew	Aramaic (Eastern Aramaic), in parts Hebrew
In accordance with the Mishnah, the Talmud is organized into six main parts or orders	
Some tractates contain both Gemara, some only Jerusalem Gemara, some only Babylonian Gemara, and some no Gemara at all.	

Midrash (hebr. research [in the Holy Scriptures])

- ▶ Provides a continuing commentary on particular portions of the Bible.
- ▶ Mostly anonymous editor of individual midrash works.
- ▶ Summary of views, anonymously passed down interpretations on verses of the Bible.
- ▶ Lacks the thoughtfulness and richness of the Talmudic discussions.
- ▶ All the midrashim combined are only a fraction of the size of the Babylonian Talmud.
- ▶ Differentiation between "halakhic" (law-interpreting) and "aggadic" (narrative) midrashim
- ▶ In Jewish worship, the Midrash serves no function. It is, nevertheless, studied and read by a large number of Jews, as is the Talmud.

Halakhah and Aggadah

- ▶ are the two basic categories into which rabbinic literature can be divided.



Halakhah (“going“ or “way“)

- ▶ Contains the summary of normative decisions that result from the discussions of the rabbis.
- ▶ Is not static and is subjected to continuous modifications over the course of history.
- ▶ Halakhic exegesis is more traditionally bound.
- ▶ The Halakhah must adjust to constantly changing circumstances through time - continuous adapting process.

AGGADAH (also Haggadah, hebr. or aram.: “telling”)

- ▶ All non-legal subjects of the traditional rabbinical literature.
- ▶ Date of origin: Completion of the biblical canon into the 10th century AD.
- ▶ Language partially Hebrew, Aramaic and incorporates many loanwords derived from Latin, Greek and Persian.
- ▶ The Aggadah has no direct impact on the practical life and is not so strictly normed as the Halakhah.

AGGADAH SCHEL PESSACH

- ▶ A collection of the liturgical texts for the Jewish family holiday at the beginning of the eight-day passover.
- ▶ The most published Hebrew book since the invention of printing.
- ▶ More than 2500 editions since 1480 AD.



Darmstädter Haggadah, 15. Jh. fol. 37v

The Sarajevo Haggadah, the Oldest Sephardic Haggadah

Circa 1350 AD [History of Information](#)

Halakic Midrashim

- ▶ Refer to the legal portions of the Pentateuch.
- ▶ They have their own titles: Mekilta, Sifra and Sifre and a few other works

Aggadic Midrashim

- ▶ Collection of theological doctrines, legends, parables, sermons, and scriptural explanations (unless relating to the interpretation of the law).
- ▶ There are minor collections such as the midrash on the sayings of Solomon (midrash mishle), midrash on the Psalms (midrash tehilim), and pesitka.
- ▶ Midrash rabbah (the great midrash)

PESITKA (hebr. and aram.: “Section“)

- ▶ Jewish homilies on certain sections from the Prophets, which are recited in the synagogue on feast days and on certain Sabbaths, following the relevant Pentateuch passage.
- ▶ Two Pesitka Collections:
 - ▶ Pesitka de rab Kahana (Pesitka of Rabbi Kahana).
 - ▶ Pesitka rabbati (Great Pesitka)

Midrash Rabba (the great Midrash)

- ▶ Contains 10 parts, the first five of which deal with the Five Books of Moses and the rest with the five biblical books (megilot, scrolls): Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations of Jeremiah (Threni rabba or Eka rabba), Solomon and Esther.
- ▶ Edited at different times
- ▶ Diverse material (explanations, ethical principles, popular parables).
- ▶ Biblical accounts are often extended, thoughts are often added by particles (conjunctions and prepositions)

TARGUMIM (hebr.: [Bible] “Translation“)

- ▶ term for the Aramaic translations of the Old Testament written in antiquity and the early Middle Ages.
- ▶ 1. Targum Onkelos
- ▶ 2. Targum Yerushalmi (Jerusalem targum)
- ▶ 3. Targum Jonathan
- ▶ 4. Hagglographic Targumim

1. Onkolos Targum

Abraham's Pentateuch with Targum and Rashi's commentary (1325-1349 CE)

- ▶ Named after the author Onkelos (Hebrew form of the Greek name Akylas), identity not exactly clear
- ▶ probably 2nd/3rd century A.D. originated in Babylon
- ▶ Was recited in the synagogue until the Middle Ages every Sabbath after the original text of the respective Torah portion of the week.

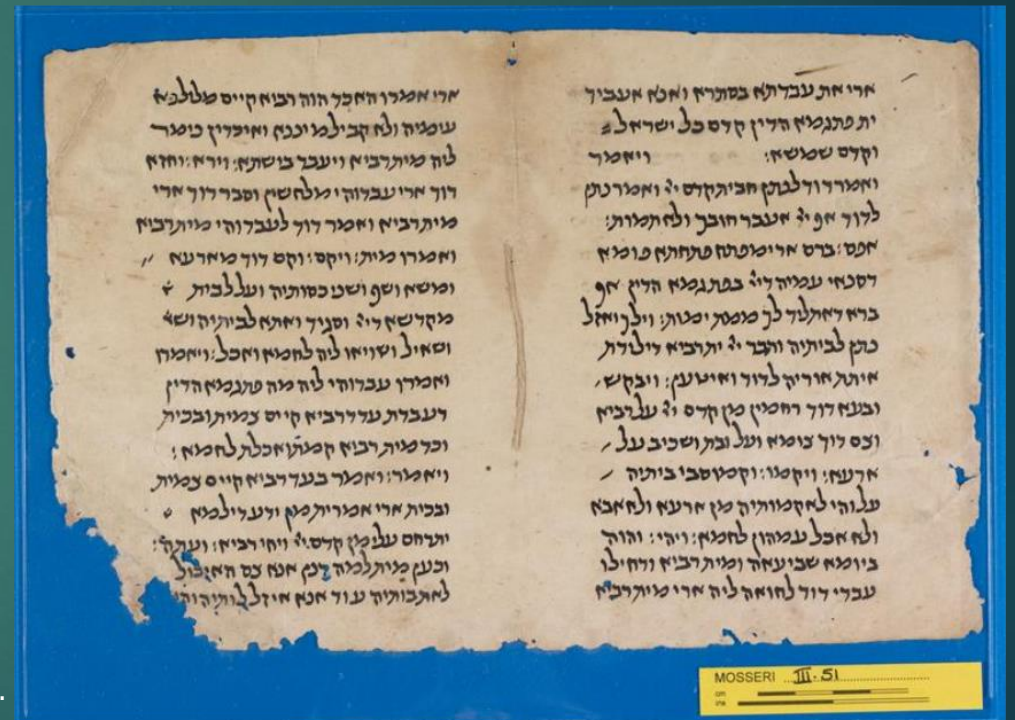


2. Targum Jeruschalmi (Jerusalem Talmud)

- ▶ Richer than the Targum Onkelos, since it is strongly paraphrased.
- ▶ There is another fragmentary Targum Yerushalmi II, which reached its final form in the 7th century AD.

3. Targum Jonathan

- ▶ Probably written in the 4th century A.D. Aramaic translation of the prophetic books of the Old Testament that originated in Babylonia.
- ▶ Author: Jonathan Ben Usiel



Targum Jonathan (Mosseri III.51)
Targum Jonathan, 2 Samuel 12:8-30.

Date of Creation: 6th-19th century

Collected 1909-1912 from Fustat, Egypt, by Jacques (Jack) Mosseri and given by the Mosseri family to Cambridge University Library on long-term loan in 2006; [Cairo Genizah](#) :

TargumJonathan.cam.ac.uk

4. Haglographic-Targumim

A) Targum to the books of Chronicles

originated between the 5th and the 10th century A.D.

B) Targum sheni (hebr.: second Targum [to the book of Esther])

- ▶ completed around 1200 A.D.
- ▶ can be considered as a collection of legends on the Esther story, approximately parallel to the Midrash Esther

The style of rabbinic writings

- ▶ Style of a debate rather than a proclamation
- ▶ Protocols of oral discussions among several personalities in the academies and also in the court.
- ▶ Each quoted post is originally from an oral context (the court or a discussion).
- ▶ MIDDOT (Rules)
- ▶ The seven rules of Hillel
- ▶ The thirteen rules of Yishmael
- ▶ The 32 rules of R. Eleiezer
- ▶ In principle, a distinction must be made between halakhah and aggadah.

SEFER YETZIRAH

- ▶ The most difficult work to interpret in Hebrew literature.
- ▶ Numerous authors, and not only Kabbalists, have written commentaries on this work:
 - ▶ Sa'adja Gaon (892-942), Sabbatai Donnolo (Italy, 913-982), Jehuda Ben Barsilai (b. 1070 in Barcelona), and others.

Title Page of Sefer Yetzirah, Mantua, Italy, 1562



Hekhalot literature

- ▶ Collective name for a number of anonymous writings dealing with the heavenly halls and palaces (hechalot).
- ▶ The most ancient texts of Jewish mysticism
- ▶ Originated in the Talmudic era (2nd - 6th AD) in Israel
- ▶ Also known as Merkawa mysticism
- ▶ The heroes that appear as speakers in the various depictions are Mishnah teachers, especially Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Ishmael and their students.
- ▶ There are many different Hechalot writings such as Hechalot sutreti (The Small Hechalot), Hechalot rabbi (The Great Hechalot), Pirkej Shira (Love Sections), etc.

Take Home Message

- ▶ In rabbinic Judaism, the scriptures cannot be understood without the oral Torah.
- ▶ Rabbinic Judaism must be understood in its historical context.
- ▶ In general, a distinction must be made between Halakha and Haggadah in rabbinical literature.





Q and A

WITH CHRISTIANE JURIK

Questions

1. why would a Christian want to study rabbinic literature? Why is it important?
2. What role played the Pharisees and the Sadduzes for rabbinical Judaism?





Attachement

Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran Crave Scrolls)

- ▶ Term for the leather and papyrus scrolls written in Hebrew (to a lesser extent also in Aramaic and Greek) that have been found in earthen jars in the caves of Wadi Qumran (at the northwest end of the Dead Sea) since 1947.
- ▶ Ca. 300 BC - 100 AD.
- ▶ Writings of a Jewish community or sect that led a hermit-like life



1. The Great Isaiah Scroll

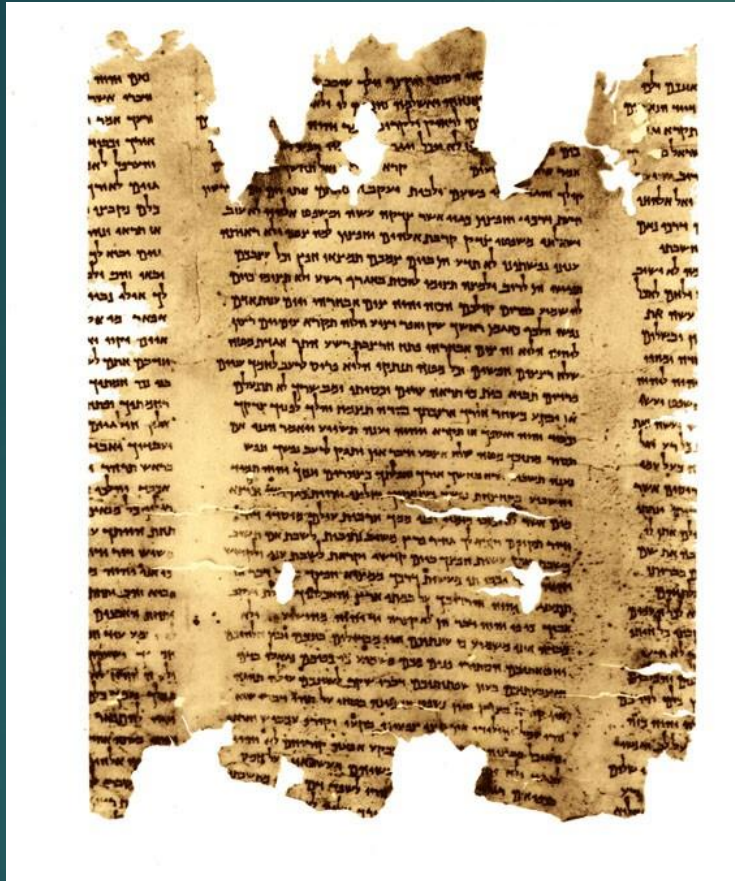


Column 32 and 33 from the great Isaiah scroll of Qumran (1QJesA / 2nd century BC). The photo shows the text of Isaiah chapter 39,8 - 40,1 (right column) and chapter 40, 2-28 (left column).

[Schrein des Buches \(israelmagazin.de\)](http://israelmagazin.de)

[Schrein des Buches \(israelmagazin.de\)](http://israelmagazin.de)

2. Isaiah Scroll



[1QIsa b - Kleine Jesajarolle – Wikipedia](#)

3. Rules of Community Scroll



- ▶ Rule of Community Scroll (1QS) • Qumran, Cave 1 • 1st century BCE • Parchment • H: 24, L: 250 cm • Government of Israel • Accession number: 96.83/208A-B

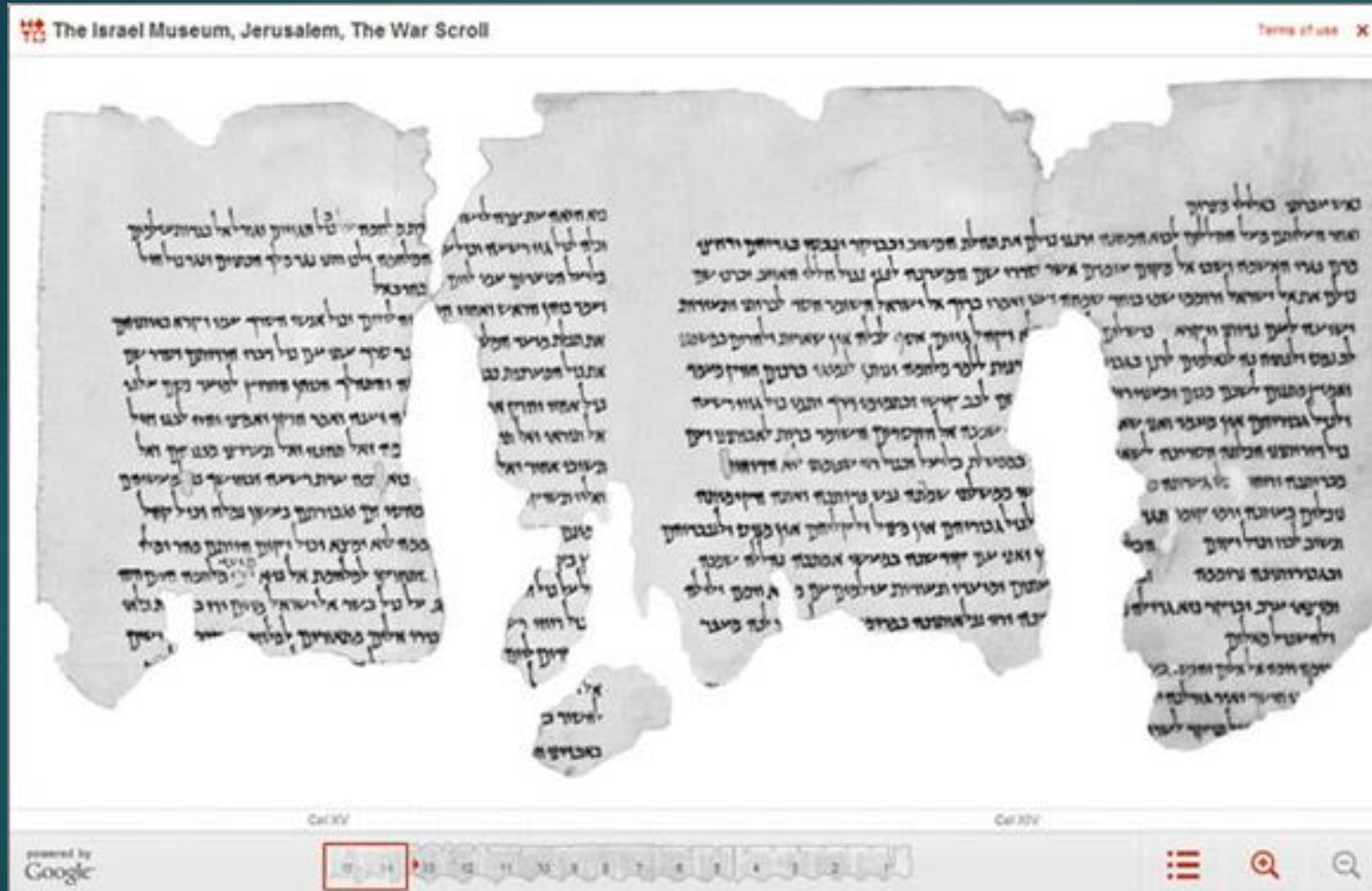
4. The commentary on Habakuk Scroll

► A scroll with the text of the prophet Habakkuk (1QpHab) from the 1st century BC was also discovered in the 1st cave. It is a verse-by-verse commentary of the first two chapters of this small prophetic book.



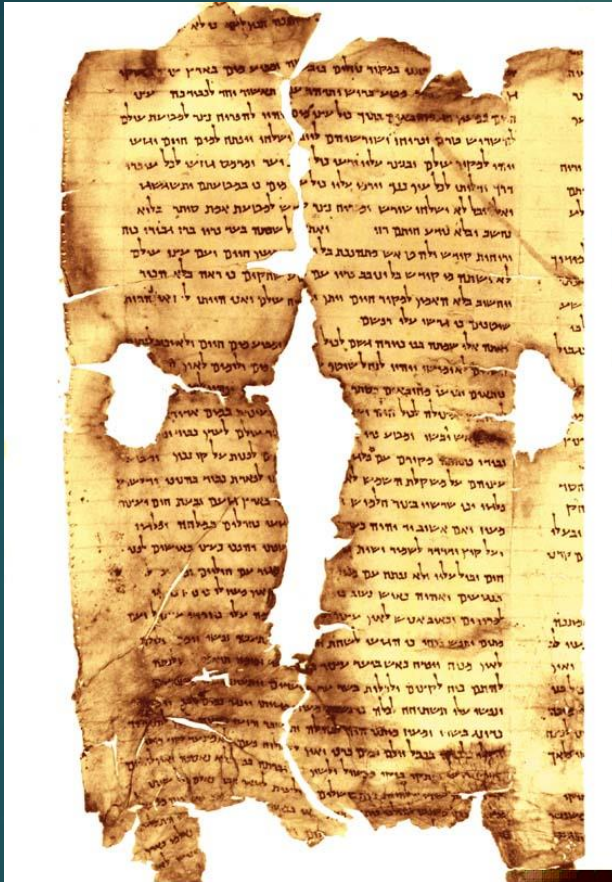
[Habakkuk Peshar - Habakkuk Commentary - Wikipedia](#)

5. The War Scroll



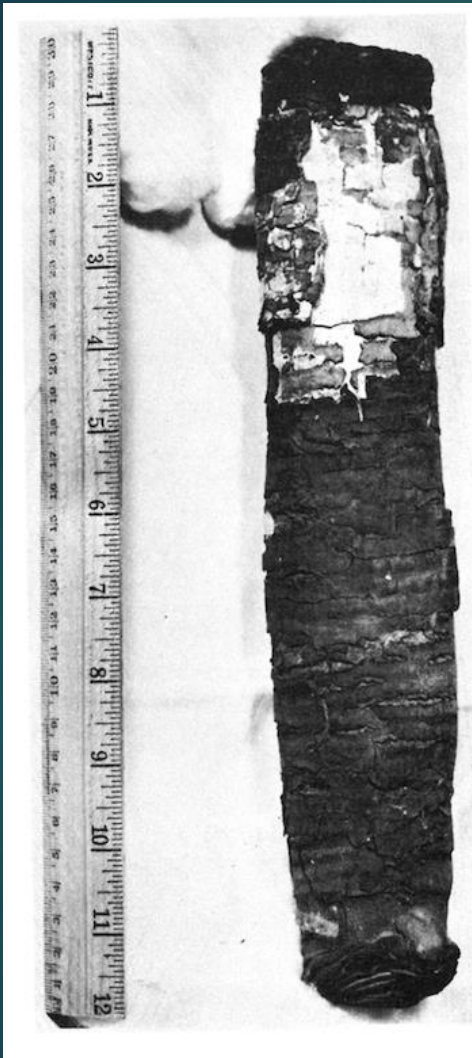
The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness Scroll (1QM) • Qumran, Cave 1 • 1st century BCE - 1st century CE • Parchment • H: 15-16; L: 279 cm • [The Hebrew University of Jerusalem](#) • Accession number: 96.84/210

6. The Thanksgiving Scroll

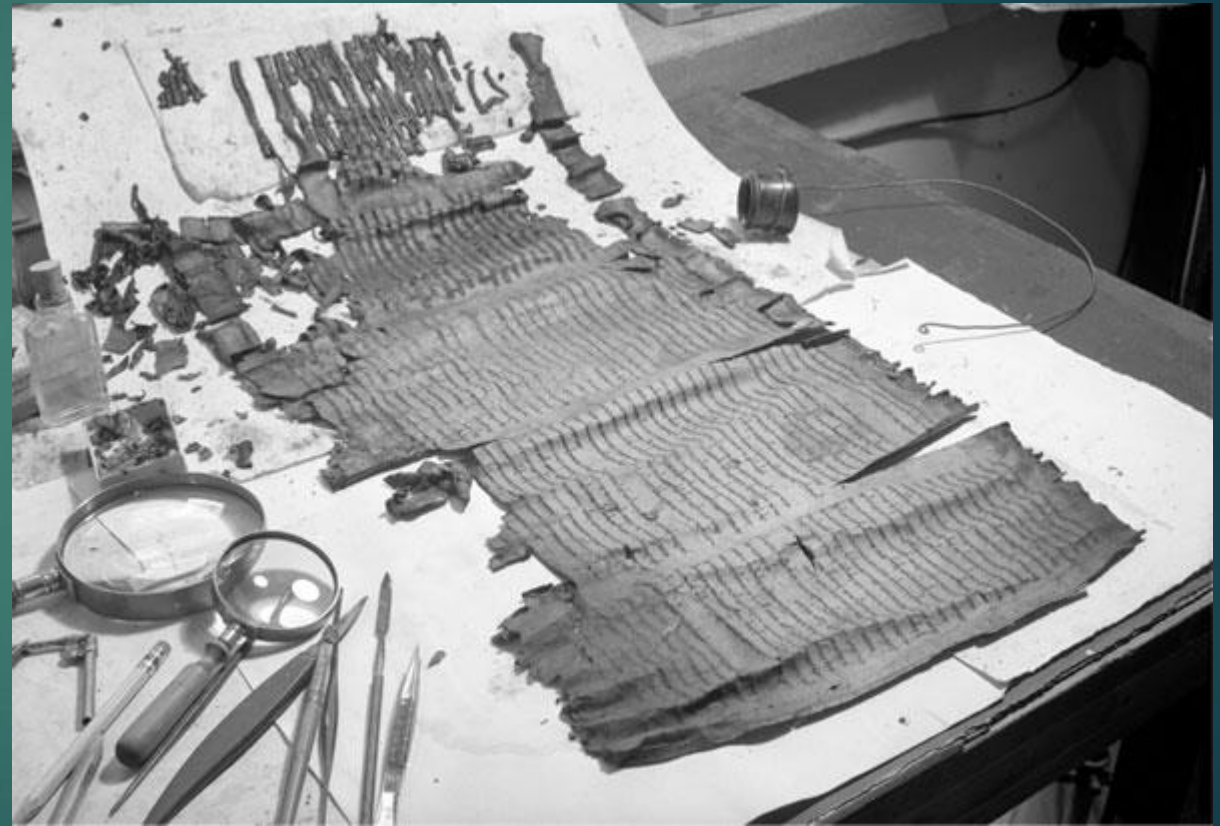


1QH^a Col.VIII (Sukenik) = Col.XVI (Puech). Note the sewing margin and the similar shape of the tears in the adjacent columns. The blank space at the end of the line divides between separate thanksgiving hymns, each of which opened with the formula: "I thank you, Lord."

7. The Genesis-Apocryphon

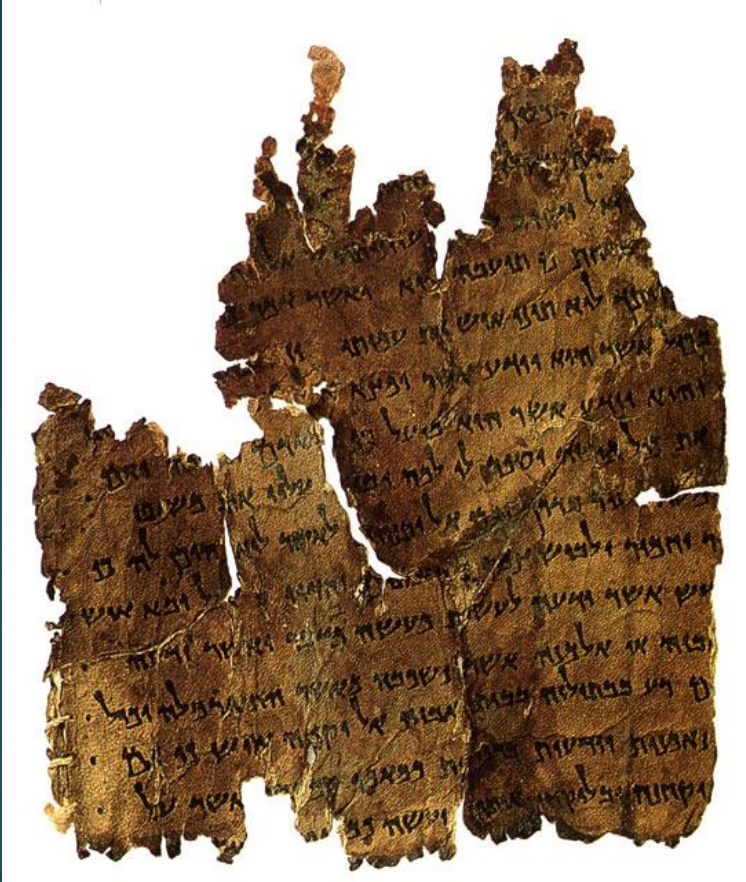


Genesis Apocryphon. 13 inches in length; 2.75 inches in width; widest point in the middle.



Genesis Apocryphon before unrolling; image source: Athanasius Yeshue Samuel, *Treasure of Qumran: My Story of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1968), p. 165

8. The Damascus Document Scroll



The Damascus Document Scroll 4Q271 (4QD^f)
[damasc-b.jpg \(543×640\) \(loc.gov\)](#)

Attachment II

Visiting the Treasury of the Israel Museum with Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Shrine of the Book (Scroll Museum in Jerusalem) and Irene Levit. See the original and world famous Great Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll (1QJesA) in the otherwise inaccessible vault.



Tiberias from a rabbinical view

- ▶ [Tiberias \(Tveriah\) - Israel \(chabad.org\)](http://chabad.org): Tiberias from the Jewish point of view (rabbinic history)

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