

## Ancient Scriptures & Commentaries

### **Masoretic Text** (abbreviated MT)

- The Masoretes (lit. transmitters of tradition) were Jewish scholars (c. 500-1000 AD) responsible to preserving the text of the Hebrew Bible and creating a system of vowel signs to provide a pronunciation guide for the consonantal text of Hebrew scripture
- They relied on older received manuscripts.
- The Masoretic text is the product of that effort.

### **Megilloth**

- *Megilla* - scroll; from *galal* - to roll up
- The five megilloth are Ruth, Canticles (Song of Solomon), *Ecclesiastes*, Lamentations and Esther.

### **Midrash**

- Heb. - *midras*, "to seek, examine, investigate"
- Refers both to a method of exposition and application of the Torah as well as a collection of these expositions and applications.
- Ezra practiced this style as he studied & applied the Torah
- *Haggadah midras* - a distillation of principles from the Torah; interpretations of non-legal materials in an ethical and expository style
- *Halakah midras* - applied the general principles of OT laws to specific situations; an application of the Torah in a kind of 'case law' format.
- Midrash material was preserved orally for a long time
- AD 100's the halakic midrashim were written down
  - Mekilta - treatise to Exodus
  - Sifra - treatise to Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy
- AD 200's the haggadic midrashim were written down
  - Treatise on Genesis followed later by Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as well as the Megilloth
  - These were known as the Midrash Rabbah

### **Mishnah**

- From Hebrew *shana*, "to repeat"
- Refers both to a teaching technique emphasizing memory work through continuous repetition and a commentary on the Torah that contained few direct references to the Torah.
- Developed by the scribal school of the Hasidim
- Midrash study was not supplanted by the Mishnah approach...both were used for halakic and haggadic areas
- The Mishnah is a sort of collection of the works of Soph<sup>o</sup>rim, Hasidim, Zugot and Tannaim periods assembled and written down by Judah HaNasi c. AD 200. Although, Judah HaNasi did not put all the available Mishnah or Midrash material into the document called the Mishnah
- Subsequent scholars pulled together the unpublished Mishnah and Midrash material with their own commentaries in a document called the **Gemara** (Aramaic *g<sup>e</sup>marā* meaning "completion") which serves as a commentary on the Judah HaNasi Mishnah
- The Gemara and Mishnah is together called the Targum or Talmud

### **Scribes**

- *sopherim* - scribal tradition running from Ezra (c.450 BC to 180 BC) which produced the Midrashim
- *hasidim* - scribal tradition running through the Maccabean age which produced the Mishnah
- through the period of the hasidim, there were 5 pairs of leaders known as the *Zugot* who developed instructional methods w/o direct reference to the Law

### **Septuagint** (abbreviated LXX meaning 'of the seventy')

- The name derives from the apocryphal story found in a 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC letter, *Letter of Aristeas*, who claimed it was the work of 72 scholars, 6 from each tribe of Israel.
- A Greek translation of the Torah prepared 3 centuries before the birth of Christ

### **Talmud**

- From *lamad*, "to study," "to learn"
- An interpretation of the Law and a collection of wise sayings;
- Developed in Alexandria after Babylon and Jerusalem were no longer Jewish intellectual centers; comprised of the Jerusalem and Babylonian Targum with additional commentaries
- Talmud is sometimes used interchangeably with Targum
- Circa 450 BC to AD 500
- See the notes on Mishnah, Midrash and Targum

### **Targum**

- from *targumim*, interpretations
- Interpretations or paraphrases of the Pentateuch
- The Gemara and Mishnah is together called the Targum or Talmud
- There are two versions of the Targum: the Jerusalem (aka Jonathan, AD 425) and the Babylonian (AD 500); the latter is 3x as long