

Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period

450 B.C.E. to 600 C.E.



VOLUME 1

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raised up for the priest; the first gift separated from produce, given to the priests, who are to eat it in a state of cultic cleanness; any amount permitted, a fiftieth is average

heave-offering of the tith *see* TITHE OF THE TITHE
Hebrew Bible (or Hebrew scriptures) terms coined by scholars to refer to the collection of texts that Jews call the Tanakh, Torah, or Bible, and Christians call the Old Testament. These terms refer to Jewish texts composed in Hebrew (except for a few passages written in Aramaic, e.g., Dan. 2:4–7:28; Ezra 4:8–6:18, 7:12–26) that are regarded as scripture by both Jews and Christians. The Hebrew Bible does not include the Jewish texts called the Apocrypha, which are included in certain Christian Bibles (e.g., the Roman Catholic Bible) but not in the Jewish canon. In referring to this collection as the Hebrew Bible or Hebrew scriptures, scholars are seeking to avoid the confessional overtones of its Jewish or Christian names.

→ **Hebrew language** primary language of the Jewish people throughout the ages; more specifically, a dialect of the Canaanite language, mutually intelligible with other dialects such as Phoenician, Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite. The oldest attested specimens of Hebrew date to around 1100 B.C.E.

Like all languages, Hebrew changed throughout the centuries. Scholars divide the Hebrew of the Bible into three main phases: (1) Archaic Biblical Hebrew (c. 1100–1000 B.C.E.), represented by various poems embedded in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets (Exod. 15, Num. 21:14–15, Judg. 5, etc.); (2) Standard Biblical Hebrew (c. 1000–550 B.C.E.), represented by the majority of the Bible (virtually the entire Pentateuch and Former Prophets, most of the Latter Prophets, most of Psalms, Proverbs, etc.); and (3) Late Biblical Hebrew (c. 550–200 B.C.E.), represented by the latter books of the Bible (Ezra, Neh., Chron., Esther, Dan., etc.), as well as the Book of Ben Sira. The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls, known also as Qumran Hebrew, is a continuation of Late Biblical Hebrew, and is attested c. 200 B.C.E.–c. 70 C.E.

Alongside the written Hebrew used to compose the aforementioned literary works, there existed a spoken variety of Hebrew throughout ancient times. Thus Hebrew is characterized by what scholars call diglossia, the coexistence of spoken and written varieties of the same language, each marked by separate morphological and syntactic (perhaps also phonological and lexical) traits.

The evidence for this spoken variety of ancient

Hebrew in the early period consists of departures from the grammatical norms of Biblical Hebrew that reflect colloquial development. Eventually, Jewish scholars began to compose works in this colloquial Hebrew. Thus collections such as the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and some early Midrashim (as well as the letters of Bar Kokhba and his comrades) are composed in the spoken dialect, known to scholars as Mishnaic Hebrew. Since these collections include material that was transmitted orally and/or record the discussions of the rabbis in their academies, it makes sense that the Mishnah and related works were written down in the colloquial dialect and not in the literary standard.

Hebrew died out as a living, spoken language in the third century C.E., when it was replaced by Aramaic as the language spoken by the Jews. Aramaic, the lingua franca of much of the Near East in late antiquity, had exerted influence over Hebrew for about 750 years. Thus it was only natural that eventually the Jews, like many others in the region, came to speak Aramaic.

But Hebrew, specifically a fossilized form of Mishnaic Hebrew, continued to be used for literary purposes for the next several centuries. Thus many later Midrashim and some portions of the Gemara were written in Hebrew, even though their authors now spoke Aramaic. With the passing of late antiquity, this phase of ancient Hebrew came to an end as well.

Early Hebrew was written in a twenty-two-letter alphabet derived from the Canaanite (Phoenician) alphabet. In c. 400 B.C.E. the Jews adopted the script of the Aramaic (or square) alphabet for writing the Hebrew language.

Except for the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bar Kokhba letters mentioned above, all the literary works referred to in this article (the Bible, Mishnah, etc.) are known from manuscripts copied centuries after the original compositions. We do, however, possess numerous inscriptions (most extremely short) from throughout the period of ancient Hebrew.

← G.A.R.
Hebrews term used in Greek writings as the national name for the people of Israel, usually referred to by outsiders in the postexilic period as Jews. It is used by Josephus for Jews in the biblical period. Paul uses it when he affirms the authenticity of his Jewish ancestry (2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:5). The term also refers to linguistic usage and groups. In the New Testament, words identified as “Hebrew” may be Hebrew (Rev. 9:11, 16:16) or Aramaic (John 19:17, 20:16), the common language of many Jews in the Near East. In Acts 6:1,

