

What Is the Torah?

The Torah is composed of two parts: the Written Law and the Oral Law. The written [Torah](#) contains the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets and the Writings. Together with the Written Torah, Moses was also given the Oral Law, which explains and clarifies the Written Law. It was transmitted orally from generation to generation, and eventually transcribed in the Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, and the entire corpus of Torah literature that was developed over the millennia.

The word *Torah* means “instruction” or “guide.” The Torah guides our every step and move through its [613 mitzvahs](#). The word *mitzvah* means both “commandment” and “connection.” Through the study of Torah and fulfillment of mitzvahs, we connect ourselves and our environment to G-d. [G-d](#)’s purpose in creating the world is that we sanctify all of creation, imbuing it with holiness and spirituality.

The Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses)

Moses wrote all the [Five Books of the Torah](#); as dictated to him by G-d.

The Torah relates how G-d created the universe, how the human race came into being from Adam and Eve, how our Fathers — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — fared, and how the Jewish people became a nation, chosen by G-d to be a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" through receiving and observing the Torah.

Read: [17 Facts About the Five Books of Moses](#)

The 613 Commandments

The Torah contains 613 commandments, of which 248 are positive (what to do) and 365 are negative (what not to do). The precepts and commandments cover every phase of a Jew's life, both the duties to one's fellow man and the way to worship G-d, in order to attain the highest moral standards.

Read: [What Is a Mitzvah?](#)

The *Massorah* (Tradition)

In addition to the precepts, commandments and prohibitions written in the Torah, G-d taught Moses many more laws, and many explanations of the laws written in the Torah, which he was to memorize and orally convey to his successors, who in turn were to uphold this tradition from generation to generation. Many laws and customs have thus been practiced by us traditionally, as if they were actually written in the Torah. [Click here to learn more about the Oral Tradition](#)

The Prophets

The books of the Prophets include: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Tre-Assar (the 12 books of the Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi).

Read: [Prophecy in Judaism](#)

The Holy Writings

These include the books of Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Esther, Ezra and Chronicles. All these books were written by one or another of our prophets by divine inspiration ("*Ruach Hakodesh*").

The books of Samuel, Kings, Ezra and Chronicles are (artificially) subdivided into: Samuel I and Samuel II; Kings I and Kings II; Ezra and Nehemiah; Chronicles I and Chronicles II.

In all we had 48 prophets and 7 prophetesses whose prophecies were recorded for their everlasting importance. In addition to them there have been prophets in Israel in every generation, but because of the fact that their prophecies were relevant to their times alone, they were not recorded.