

The role of the Hebrew Bible in Judaism:

The Hebrew Bible is the scholarly name for the collection of books more commonly known to most as the “Old Testament” In the Jewish communities , it is known as the “Tanakh”, an acronym referring to the division of the Bible. Torah-the teaching, the five books of Moses and the Jewish Laws, Nevi’im-prophets, eight books from prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel and Ketuvim-writings, a variety of religious expression-poetry, temple ritual and wisdom. The term “Old Testament” is a Christian name for the ancient Jewish scriptures and New Testament for the writings after the life and death of Jesus Christ. The term “Law” encourages the reader to look at stories from prominent figures like Abraham and his son Isaac, not as stories but vessel’s of instructions about how To live your life as a Jew.

Because you obey the Lord your God by keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in his eyes-Deuteronomy 13:18



The Jewish scriptures span a history for a community, where the people had potentially been slaves, to some extent, in Egypt, conquered by The Assyrian empire and survived exile and imprisonment in the Babylonian empire, by mass deportation. They survived the fall of Israel and Solomon’s Temple and were allowed to go home when the Persians invaded to build able to build their second temple.

The Torah told the Jews with great clarity that the Lord their God wished to be worshipped and how he wanted to be worshipped. God wanted sacrifices of animals, with food and with drink he was to be worshipped. God wanted unblemished animals at least eight days old, the sacrifice was called Korbanot. The sacrifice was atonement for sins, to inspire and to repent. It was all laid out with some precision in the ancient texts. These were to be followed. Such offerings could be brought by individuals, giving thanks or in search of forgiveness. The priests could bring offerings on behalf of the whole community. These acts were physical and carried sacred prayers to accompany them. This was a link between Israel and God as outlined across the scriptures. The animal's throat was cut, believed to be quick and painless, this process is known as Shechita. The sacrifice of animals and the way the Jews worship changed with the fall of the second temple, now the Jewish community worships through prayer, study, festivals and observing the Shabbat.

“ The Biblical books were composed by many different authors over a long period of time”- Martin Goodman

The ancient texts provide guidance for Jews to shape their worship in public and in private and for them to structure their relationships within society in accordance with their God.

By the fourth century CE, rabbinic Jews had agreed on the special status of the twenty-four books comprising the Hebrew Bible. Which is still in use today. The Bible was defined as Ketuvim (‘Writings’). The acronym Tanakh (Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim) was used to refer to the Bible as a whole.

I am the lord your God
No other Gods but me
Don’t take Gods name in vain
Observe the Shabbat
Honor your parents
Do not kill
Do not commit adultery
Do not steal
Do not bear false witness
Do not desire another’s possessions.



[bible-character-Moses.jpg \(1200x675\)](#)
[BIBLE, Genesis, in Hebrew, manuscript on vellum \[near East, 9th or 10th century\] | Christie's](#)

Amy L. Balogh. 2020. 'Sinai Past' , in *The Visual Commentary Of Scripture* ed. by Ben Quash. (London: The Visual Commentary on Scripture Foundation). [Accessed 28.6.2025] <https://thevcs.org/sinai-calling#sinai-past>