



Midrash

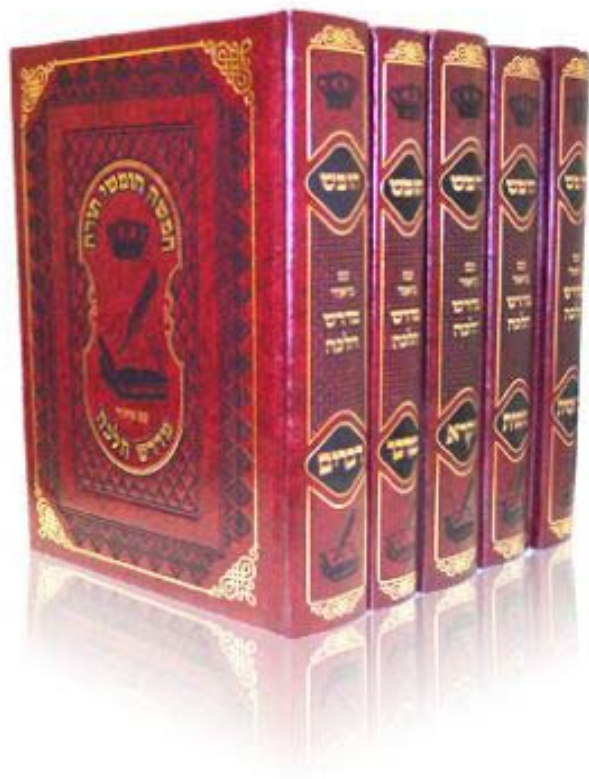
(Hebrew: מדרש; plural *midrashim*) is a Hebrew word referring to a method of exegesis of a Biblical text; it is primarily used by Jewish scholars.

The term "midrash" also can refer to a compilation of Midrashic teachings.

In general the Midrash is focused on either Halakhic (legal) or Aggadic (non-legal and chiefly homiletical) subject matter. Both kinds of Midrashim were at first preserved only orally; but their writing down commenced in the 2nd century, and they now exist in the shape chiefly of exegetical or homiletical commentaries on the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible).

Midrashic literature is worthwhile reading not only for its insights into Judaism and the history of Jewish thought, but also for the more incidental data it provides to historians, philologists, philosophers, and scholars of either historical-critical Bible study or comparative religion.

Midrash Rabbah. Widely studied are the *Rabboth* (great commentaries), a collection of ten midrashim on different books of the Bible. However, despite the similarity in their names, *these are not a cohesive work*. They were written by different authors, in different locales, in different historical eras. The ones on Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are chiefly made up of homilies on the Scripture sections for the Sabbath or festival, while the others are of an exegetical nature.



- [Bereshith Rabba](#), *Genesis Rabbah*. (6th century)
- [Shemot Rabba](#), *Exodus Rabbah* (11th & 12th centuries)
- [Vayyiqra Rabba](#), *Leviticus Rabba* (middle 7th century)
- [Bamidbar Rabba](#), *Numbers Rabba* (12th century)
- [Devarim Rabba](#), *Deuteronomy Rabba* (10th century)
- [Shir Hashirim Rabba](#), *Song of Songs Rabbah* (probably before the middle of 9th century)
- [Ruth Rabba](#), (same date as the previous)
- [Eicha Rabba](#), *Lamentations Rabbah* (7th century).

According to Rabbi Iscah Waldman:

Midrash is commonly defined as the process of interpretation by which the rabbis filled in "gaps" found in the Torah. It is a literature that seeks to ask the questions that lie on the tips of our tongues, and to answer them even before we have posed them.

Professor Peter Pitzele describes midrash:

Open the Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, it doesn't matter. What do you see? Black letters on white pages. Letters, words that can be read, defined and analyzed. In Jewish tradition, ancient rabbis spoke of the Bible as having been written in black fire and white fire. Black fire is the words you see on the pages. White fire is the spaces between the letters and the words.