

Hebrew and Yiddish Terms Glossary

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Acharei - "Afterward"; "later"; "latter"; "end" - root: "achar"

Acharit hayamim - "Latter days"; "end of days"

Akeida - "Binding" - The common reference is to the binding of Isaac on the altar by Abraham

Avinu, Malkeinu - "Our Father, Our King"

Avracham Avinu - Abraham our father (though there is an "h" sound in Abraham, the "ch" pronunciation is known as "yeshiva boker", a form of American Hebrew/Yiddish slang)

Baruch HaShem - "Bless G-d"

Beit Lechem - lit. "House of Bread" - Bethlehem

Bil'am - Balaam

B'reishis - "Genesis" - lit. "in the beginning" - the Hebrew Bible's name for the first book of the Bible

Calev - "as the heart"; "dog" - Caleb, the companion of Joshua who trusted G-d and inherited the Land

Chilion - lit. "longing after, pining" - Brother of Machlon, son of Elimelech and Naomi, husband to Orpah - died in the plains of Moab

Chumash - Book published with the weekly specified readings of the Torah, Prophets and the five Megillas: Ruth, Esther, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations

Davak - lit. "cleave; joined, welded together"

Derech - A pathway not heavily travelled, laid down by others before you.

Diaspora - Name given to the exile of Israel from the Land of Promise. Current diaspora has lasted 3,000 years.

D'variim - lit. "words" - the Hebrew Bible's name for Deuteronomy

Eikev - lit. "result"; "heel" - the root word for Yakov (Jacob)

Eishes Chayil - lit. "wife of valor; of accomplishment; of virtue" - Proverbs 31:10-31; Ruth 3:11

Elimelech - lit. "my G-d, the King" - husband of Naomi, father of Machlon and Chilion, died in plains of Moab

Ger - lit. "sojourner; proselyte" - former 'Gentile' now grafted into the nation of Israel - plural "gerim"

Goyim - lit. "nations" - in the Bible G-d uses the term to describe the lost, those outside of His redeemed people

Halacha - lit. "the way to walk"

HaMakom - lit. "the Place" - a frequently used colloquialism referring to Jerusalem, the Temple Mount, or even to the person of G-d Himself

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HaShem - "G-d" - lit. "the Name" [unpronounced name of G-d - There literally is no way to say this name and though some try, there is no "j" or "w" sound in Hebrew. Moreover, the One who had every right to pronounce it, did not do so. If we are His disciples, we need to do follow His example. That's what a disciple does.]

Kanaf - lit. "corner" - a term referring to the corners of a field, the corners of a garment - G-d uses this term to symbolize how one would gravitate toward and grasp the Torah (Numbers 15:37-41; Zechariah 8:23)

Kavod - lit. "glory"

Kohen - lit. "priest" - a descendant of Aaron, brother of Moses - a lineage set apart by G-d to be His intermediaries and facilitate the forgiveness of sins by means of a substitutionary sacrifice; plural "kohanim"

Korban - lit. "offering - sacrifice" - a substitution for sin by means of a blemishless animal; sin was imparted to the animal and the innocence and purity of the sinless one was passed back to the offerer.

Korov - lit. - "draw near" - root word of korban (above)

Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson - leader of Lubavitcher sect (evangelical Judaism - reaching out to secular Jews 1902 - 1994)

Machlon - lit. "sick" - Brother of Chilion, son of Elimelech and Naomi, first husband of Ruth - died in the plains of Moab

Malkosh - Spring rains - there is sometimes confusion about which is the "early" or "latter" rains, whether spring or fall, due to their timetable in the religious (starting with the Exodus) vs. initial civil (beginning of creation) calendar order.

Memra - Aramaic term for "word" - in the Targums (paraphrases of the Bible), "Memra" is personified as a supernatural male being who appears and is identified more than once as the "Servant of the L-rd"

Midrash - A style of teaching which takes certain liberties, asks the reader to see deeper than the text proclaims, to find alternate meaning to a literal passage. Example: the book of Ruth may also be seen as a prophecy about the non-Jew's relationship with the Jewish people through all of the ages.

Midrash Rabbah - Similar to stories which are told to bring a moral lesson, this 10 volume collection of legendary stories of biblical characters introduces conversations, events and activities which are not found in the biblical lesson. Often too fantastic to believe, the moral or final lesson which is told teaches a biblical truth. The reader may find themselves comparing the fantastic goings on in the Midrash with Aesop's tales of foxes, crows, and animals who have much to say with a moral at the end.

Mikrah - lit. "convocation, rehearsal; a set appointment" - root word: "kara" to proclaim aloud) - related to "yara" (to hit the mark")

Mikveh - lit. "gathering [of water]" - a place where immersion takes place for people to cleanse ritual impurity

Mitzvah - lit. "commandment" - plural "mitzvos" or "mitzvot"

Mo'av - Moab - Lot's son / grandson who became the father of a wicked idolatrous people. G-d commanded Israel not to seek the welfare of any Moabite male... ever. (Deut. 23:3-6) This would not apply to Ruth, who by marriage could become Israeli.

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Moshe - Moses - referred to as "Moshe Rabbeinu" - Moses our teacher

Moshiach - lit. "Anointed One" - transliterated, "Messiah" - Greek translation: "Christos" (the Christ)

Nachon - Correct, right

Nachri - lit. "foreigner, but one who was a 'G-d fearer'" - not a true proselyte yet, but not a goy any longer either, not an idol worshipper, but not a convert yet.

Nefesh - lit. "soul" - comprised of mind, will, emotion

Neshama - lit. "to breathe" - similar to soul, but connected with the spiritual

Nu? - "So?" This is a yiddish expression, not Hebrew. Yiddish is a combination of Hebrew, German, Polish and Russian - spoken by European Jewry and has largely faded from use.

Ohr HaTorah - lit. "Light of Torah" - 48 volumes on Chabad Chasidic thought by the Tzemach Tzedek, (see below)

Parsha - Section of study, portion

Pesach - lit. "hover over; protect" - has been translated "passover". Also is the name given to the slain lamb

Rabbi Sha'ul - Paul (of Tarsus) - writer of the epistles of the New Testament and shaliach (emissary - apostle)

Rashi - Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki - 1040 - 1105 CE - Quintessential Jewish commentator

Rechavam - Son of Solomon - King who presided over the fracture of the northern and southern kingdoms

Ruach - lit. "spirit" - often coupled together with "haKodesh" (Ruach haKodesh) - "Holy Spirit"

Second Temple Period - 2000 years ago, referring to the time from the return of Judean captives from Babylon until the destruction of Herod's Temple in the year 70 CE. Includes the time of Y'shua (Jesus) on earth.

Senacheriv - King of Assyria - known for extremely sadistic treatment of Israel - carried the northern tribes of Israel captive and began the 3,000 year old diaspora which continues to this day. Attempted to capture the southern kingdom of Judah - was prevented by G-d, who killed 185,000 men in one night without a single weapon or human being used in conflict.

Shabbos - lit. "refrain; cease; relating to seven" - Day which G-d set aside "forever, as an everlasting covenant, an eternal decree" (Ex. 31:16,17;

Shechinah - The dwelling presence of G-d - often referred to as His visible glory (pillar of cloud, fire, presence on top of the ark of the covenant)

Shittim wood - Acacia wood - An extremely resilient wood, resistant to decay - all wooden Tabernacle implements were constructed with this.

Shomron - Samaria (made the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, after it split from the southern kingdom of Judah and no longer wanted its populace traveling to Jerusalem to worship G-d for fear that it would divide their loyalties.)

Sifri - Volumes on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy designed to teach how to live; uses a midrashic (see above) teaching style

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Talmid - lit. "disciple" - A disciple is one who becomes fully like his rabbi in every way. (Luke 6:40) Paul said, "Be imitators of me, as I imitate the Messiah" (1 Corinthians 11:1) Plural "talmidim"

Talmud - Comprehensive term for both the Mishnah (oral tradition said to have originated at Mt. Sinai) and Gemara (case law studies of the Mishnah - tests and discussions about application) as compiled in two works, approximately 100 years apart, known as the Jerusalem Talmud (5th century CE) and the Babylonian Talmud (6th century CE)

Targums - Aramaic paraphrases of certain books in the Hebrew Bible

Tishrei - The name given to the month at the beginning of creation; the first of the year in anniversary of the world. Though it came first, later G-d would command His people to reckon months according to our release from slavery in Egypt... a "spiritual" re-birthday of a sort. That month (Nisan - in "aviv" - springtime) would become the first in the religious calendar year.

Torah - lit. "instruction, teaching" - this word has been mistakenly translated as "law". There is nothing in this word which speaks about legal issues. Tragically, the translation has rendered the concept of Torah in people's thinking as a heavy handed club with which G-d beat the people and made them suffer, rather than seeing Torah as a work of grace, beauty and love, a priceless treasure given by a Husband to his beloved bride as a wedding gift... a Gift which speaks of His faithfulness, protection, provision, instruction, love and mercy when she failed in her covenantal responsibilities. Root word, "yara" - to hit the mark. Torah then, simply put, is G-d's teaching (about Himself) which hits the mark. Messiah is referred to as the Living Torah - the perfect illustration of perfection, righteousness, justice and mercy.

Tzara'as affliction - A supernatural skin affliction which was not healed by medicine or doctors, but by waiting on G-d alone. Often mistakenly referred to as "leprosy" (Hanson's Disease), it bears none of the symptoms of that degenerative nerve disease. It had as a consequence, the effect of keeping a person away from the camp of Israel and farther away from the tabernacle / temple. It's cause and cure are found throughout the pages of Torah. Incidentally, depictions of leprosy portrayed in Ben Hur and other films / books are grossly inaccurate when it comes to demonstrating the tzara'as affliction. It was never a deadly disease, not communicable, except by way of imparting ritual impurity. G-d's intent by inflicting this state on an individual was to create a teaching which is unbelievably beautiful and portrays Messiah's work in vivid detail.

Tzemach Tzedek - The third Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel - 1789 - 1866 - Author of the work, "Ohr haTorah" (see above) - He is the namesake of the most famous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (see above).

Tzion - Zion (the holy city Jerusalem); the mountain of G-d upon which the Temple stood and will again stand

Yehoshua - Joshua, protege of Moses

Yirmiyahu - Jeremiah the prophet

Yitro - Jethro (father in law of Moses) - ancestor of the Kenites, who would later ally with and then merge with the nation of Israel.

Yitzchak - Isaac, son of Abraham

Yochanan the Immerser - John the Baptist

Yom Kippur - lit. "Day of Atonement"

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- Yor'eh - Fall rains - there is sometimes confusion about which is the "early" or "latter" rains, whether spring or fall, due to their timetable in the religious (starting with the Exodus) vs. initial civil (beginning of creation) calendar order.
- Y'shua - lit. "G-d's Salvation" or "G-d will save", the Hebrew name which has been transliterated (not translated) into the more commonly used, "Jesus"
- Zechariah - lit. "G-d remembers" - later prophet toward the beginning of the Second Temple period; prophesied mostly about the end of days