

Biblical Law and its Administration:
Some Aspects of Jewish Law

Introduction:

The foundation of Jewish Law is "The Torah" usually mistranslated as "The Law". The etymology of the term points to the Hebrew root word for "light", a connection which the ancient rabbis expressed by the maxim, "Torah is light." A more appropriate translation of the word Torah, therefore, would be "enlightenment", or "teaching".

The Torah, in Jewish tradition, is a composite of the "Written Torah", the Pentateuch, and the "Oral Torah" which was passed on from Moses and his generation to successive generations by word of mouth. It comprises the entire sequence of Hebrew Scriptures as well as the Mishnah and the Talmud (gemara). The Oral Torah also provided specific rules of exegesis by means of which statutory laws implicit in the written text of the Torah could be derived and established in consonance with the original intent of the Scriptures. If one were to look upon the written Torah as the Constitution of the Judean (Jewish) people one might consider the Rabbinical schools where the Torah was submitted to intrusive study, analysis and debate as a legislature from whose ranks members of the judiciary were appointed to sit on the highest Court, the Sanhedria.

The Torah is not confined to jurisprudence only, but contains substantial portions of Jewish History, Ethics,