The Role of the Bible in the Formation and Development of Judaism: How did it all begin?

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専攻は（旧約）聖書学および中世ユダヤ教の聖書注解。特に，第二神殿時代初期（ペルシア時代）のユダヤ教文化・思想研究の世界的権威の１人。1973年，歴代誌研究の新機軸を拓く博士論文により，エルサレム・ヘブライ大学より博士号を取得。以後，ユダヤ学研究所所長他，大学要職を次々と歴任。現在，エルサレム学派を代表するエゼキエル・カウフマン聖書学教授ポストの保持者。彼女の歴代誌注解は，欧米圏で絶大な評価を受けている。

'The' classical literature of Judaism and the people of Israel is the Bible, the 'Holy Scriptures'.[1] Its position within Judaism is such that a common designation of the people of Israel is 'the people of the book', that is, the people of one book, a specific, concrete book, the Bible. One may trace the entire spiritual and intellectual history of Judaism from the perspective of the interpretation of and attitude to the Bible. This unusual, perhaps unique, phenomenon may be elucidated, I believe, by the particular self-understanding of Israel and by its particular history; a concise presentation of this matter is the purpose of my lecture today. I will develop my thesis along the following five headings:

1. What is 'The Book'? What does it contain?
2. How did this book come into being? How was it created?
3. Why did it come into being? What were the motives that led to its creation?
4. What is the place of the Bible in post-biblical Judaism? How did its formation influence the essence and development of Judaism?
5. What are the implications of the creation and function of the Bible in the Jewish culture for the topic of the conference in terms of 'Classical Literatures and their Values'?

1. What is 'the Book'?

We are accustomed to see the Bible in one volume, and commonly define it 'a book'. In fact, however, it is not one book but a collection of works, traditionally presented as twenty-four.[2] The actual number of the works included in the Bible is higher that 24, even according to the most orthodox counting. One of the books in this collection, 'the Minor Prophets,' also called 'the Twelve,' contains 12 separate books, attributed to twelve different prophets.

Several other biblical books have been recognized by scholarship as compound, containing two or more independent works.[3] Moreover, as is well established by biblical scholarship, many of the biblical books are composite works, the end-product of lengthy processes of composition, compilation, and redaction.[4] What appears to us now as 'a book' is in fact a rather extensive library, a collection of about 40 composite works of different literary genres — narrative, history, law, poetry, prophecy, wisdom sayings, etc.. They represent in their entirety a selection of the literature of ancient Israel from a period of over a thousand years.[5] Through quite a prolonged historical process — the details of which are not fully clear — they were all brought together and 'sealed', that is, established as a closed canon, to which nothing can be added and in which nothing can be changed. They were also sanctified — declared to be 'Holy Writings.[6]

A more correct definition of the Bible, then, would be

'a canonized, sanctified library', the end product of two different intellectual processes, both diachronic and synchronic: composition and canonization. The composition of the individual works was very often an extended process of authorship and redaction, while the canonization of the works — the establishment of a 'holy canon' — was a process of selection, inclusion and exclusion: certain books were accepted and canonized, while others were excluded and left out. The works included in the canon reflect the output of intensive intellectual activity of the broadest dimensions over a period of about 1000 years, and the final canon may be seen as a sample, a representation of an entire culture, the 'classical literature' of Israel and of Judaism in the most profound sense of the word.

What is included in this 'classical, canonized library'? The Hebrew canon consists of three parts:[7]

I. The Torah (English translation: 'the Instruction, the Teaching' [NJPS], or the 'Law' [the common English rendering]), very often presented as 'the five books' — the Pentateuch. It contains two principal elements, into which other materials of various genres are incorporated:[8]

(a) A narrative, an account of Israel's history from its very beginning to the eve of the entrance into the land of Canaan. In the most general outlines, after an introduction of the primordial history (Genesis 1 – 11), the narrative tells the story of the three patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the story of Joseph (Genesis 12 – 50); the oppression in Egypt and the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 1 – 18); God's revelation at Sinai and the giving of the Law (Exodus 19 – 34); The building of the Tabernacle and the arrangements around it (Exodus 35 – 40; Numbers 1 – 8); and the wandering in the wilderness for forty years, until the death of Moses on the eve of entering the land (Numbers 9 – 36; Deuteronomy 31 – 34).

(b) The 'Law' — numerous documents of varying length and nature, containing laws and instructions given to Israel during their sojourn in the wilderness and incorporated into the narrative. (The larger bodies of laws and instructions are found in Exodus 20 – 23; 25 – 31; Leviticus 1 – 27; Numbers 5 – 6; 18 – 19; 27 – 30; 35 – 36; Deuteronomy 12 – 26). These laws were to regulate the life of Israel — of the individual and the community alike — from this point onward.

II. The Prophets, consists of two subsections:

(a) The Former Prophets: Four books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings), which tell the history of the people of Israel in their land during a period of about 700 years, from the conquest of the land of Canaan, through the establishment of the states of Israel and Judah and their institutions, until the destruction of the states, the termination of the monarchy, the physical destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the exile of groups of the people to foreign countries.

(b) The Later Prophets: fifteen books (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve Minor Prophets), which contain prophetical speeches delivered by the prophets during a period of about 400 years, as well as narratives about these prophets and their lives.

III. The Hagiographa: eleven books of miscellaneous genres: religious and national poetry (Psalms; Lamentations), Wisdom literature (Proverbs, Job, Qoheleth), history books (Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles), historical narratives (Ruth, Esther, Daniel) and lyrical poetry (Song of Songs).

This general outline of the 'biblical library' should demonstrate its multifaceted nature, from every perspective. Each of its three parts is already a collection, a 'library' in its own right, of works written during an extended period. Although they are defined as 'Sacred Scriptures', some of the works do not deserve this designation, their inclusion in the canon extending the concept of sanctity to broad spheres of human creativity.

2. How did the Bible come into being?

Very little is known so far about the process of canonization, by which the separate works have been brought together and 'sealed', and much is left to the reasoning and speculation of modern scholarship.[9] Rather than going into the debated details, I will dedicate some words to two points along this process, the beginning and the end. These points will shed light on the question of 'why' — the motives behind and meaning of the creation of the Bible.

The beginning of the canonization process is connected with the activity of Ezra the Scribe in the 5th century BCE, that is, in the period known as the Period of the Restoration under the Persian rule (538 – 332 BCE),

which followed the destruction of Judah by the Babylonian empire in 587 BCE.

The destruction of Judah marked the end of the political entity of Israel, formed around the 12th century BCE and established as a monarchy most likely at the beginning of the 10th century BCE: the country was conquered, the holy city of Jerusalem and its temple were burned down, many people were exiled, the territory of Judah became a marginal province in the huge Babylonian empire, and it seemed, as in many similar cases in the ancient Near East, that the end of Israel had come. However, the small community that remained in the land of Judah survived somehow for several generations, and was eventually strengthened by Jews who returned from Babylon after the Persians had replaced the Babylonians as the world power (538 BCE). Permissions issued by the Persian emperors allowed the Jews to restore the ruined temple and establish some kind of autonomy in Judah and Jerusalem — in accord with the imperial Persian policy.[10]

At this junction in their history, the community of the small province of Judah faced a major problem of self-definition: politically they were a province on the borders of the Persian empire; ethnically they represented a fraction of the people of Israel, the other parts of which were at that time scattered throughout the world. Even in the land of Israel there were at that time other communities that claimed to be Israel.[11] They themselves were a mixture: some of them were the offspring of autochtonic Judeans who did not go into exile, some were returned exiles, and others were of varied origin, designated as 'foreigners' or 'mixed'. They possessed a hybrid of traditions, followed different practices, and were perhaps not clearly distinguished from the peoples around them. With the stimulus of people returning from Babylon and Persia, they found themselves obliged to establish the framework of their identity: who they were, how they were to live, what rule or religion they should follow, and consequently, how they were to view their future.

The way by which the community in Judah and Jerusalem chose to define its identity was religious affiliation, formulated by literature: they adopted the 'Torah', 'The Book of Moses', as the foundation of their existence. The decision of the community is presented in the book of Nehemiah as a ceremonial event, in which the people pledged their alliance to the 'Law of Moses'. It is described in Nehemiah 8 – 10, in five stages:[12]

(a) Ceremonial reading of the law, in the presence of 'the entire people... as one man' (Neh 8:1), with explanations by the experts (v. 4): 'they read from the scroll of the Teaching of God, translating it and giving the sense; so they understood the reading' (Neh 8:8). This was followed by a popular celebration: 'Then all the people went to eat and drink and send portions and make great merriment' (8:12).

(b) Ritual: celebrating the holidays, including daily readings in the Torah (8:13 – 18).

(c) Ceremonial setting of the boundaries of the community by expelling all 'foreigners' 'Those of the stock of Israel separated themselves from all foreigners' (9:2), together with the reading of the Torah (9:1 – 4).

(d) A public confession, including a recapitulation of the history of Israel, a blessing of the Lord and a prayer (Neh 9:4 – 37).

(e) The pledge: A public oath, expressing the commitment of the people 'to follow the Teaching of God, given through Moses the servant of God, and to observe carefully all the commandments of the Lord our God, His rules and laws' (Neh 10:1 – 40; the quote, verse 30).

From a superficial overview, this event may seem to have been of an exclusively religious character, and even more restrictedly, an implementation of a religious practice, according to the precepts and instructions of 'Law of Moses'. This superficial view, however, should be deepened in two directions. First, for Israel, and later for Judaism, the concept of 'religion' should be understood in the broadest possible sense. In addition to a broad belief-system (i.e. monotheism, the election of Israel, Israel's special relationship with God, God's justice and providence, etc.) and ritual (daily and annual, singular and cyclical, of the individual and the public), it included a comprehensive system of laws, which governed all spheres of life — social, criminal, civilian, etc. — and reflected profound moral positions.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, 'laws' constituted only one element of the 'Torah'. As I said earlier, the major part of the Torah is a narrative, which tells the history of Israel in its formative period.

One may say in general terms that History may serve as a common identifier for many societies,[13] but it is of

particular importance for Israel, for whom history was conceived as the arena in which God's providence was concretized and displayed.[14] By adopting the 'Torah', the people of Judah confirmed their identity as 'Israel', the heirs of the traditions expressed in this corpus, and actually established their 'constitution', defined in religious rather than political terms. Very particular for Israel, this religion was expressed in literature and received its form in books — of law, history, and prophetical words, the living words of God through the prophets.

The end of the canonization process is placed by a very general consensus towards the end of the first century of the common era, about one generation after the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans and the exile of the Jews to various parts of the Roman empire (70 CE).15 At that time, the canon of twenty-four books (or, according to another way of counting, 22 books) had become an established literary entity,[16] and pending questions regarding the canonical status of two books were finally settled by the assembly of Jewish spiritual leaders who remained in Judah after the destruction.[17] The explicit criterion for the establishment of the books' canonicity was their sanctity: the definition of the works as sacred, due to their either containing the words of God, or having been written by prophets under divine inspiration. The definition of 'prophets' in this context was rather broad, including King David (as the author of Psalms), King Solomon (as the author of Proverbs, Qoheleth, and the Song of Songs), and Ezra the Scribe (as the author of Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles).

This definition of sanctity was based on a specific view regarding the religious development of Israel: the postulate of the termination of prophecy. This view implied a major spiritual and institutional break in the history of Israel and a decisive periodization: 'until now' God communicated directly with his people through the mediation of the prophets; 'from now on', there were no more prophets, only the wisdom of the sages.[18] If the canon was to include only the words of God, or the words of prophets inspired by the holy spirit, its definition was absolute in both essence and chronology: since prophecy came to an end, nothing could be added to the canonical corpus and nothing could be changed within it. Thus, while canonization was formally a literary decision — a statement about the status of literature — it implied a major change in the spiritual leadership and source of authority for the people of Israel.

The chronology assumed by the Jewish sages is also of interest, as they placed the spiritual turning point in the history of Israel almost 500 years before their time, that is, in the Persian period, precisely when, from a historical perspective, the process of canonization actually began. The literary activity in Israel during this intermediate period (i.e., during the late Persian and Hellenistic period) was particularly proliferate, but only a few of these works, which made a claim to antiquity and succeeded in substantiating it, were eventually included in the canon. All the other works were excluded from the canon and regarded as 'apocrypha'.[19] As no new works could claim the authority of the 'words of God' until 'the end of days', the result of the canonization was a major transformation of Judaism, from a community guided by the holy spirit, to a society 'living by the book' (see further below).

The road that led from the first act of canonization in the 5th century BCE to the final canonization in the 1st century CE, in which two more sections — the Prophets and the Hagiographa (*Ketubim*) — were added to the initial Torah — is not very clear. A variety of motivations, of social, political and spiritual nature, should be taken into consideration in evaluating this complex process. However, by the end of the first century the transformation was complete: religion was defined by a corpus of literature!

3. Why was the canon created?

What drove the people to give up the option of direct communication with God and establish in the most categorical way a 'sacred canon'?

The answer seems to be included in what I have said so far. The two points in the process of canonization, the middle of the 5th century BCE and the end of the 1st century CE, were periods of severe crisis. A major change in the life and circumstances of the people had taken place after the destruction of their political frame of existence. The urgent need of both periods was to secure continuity through a strict definition of identity, and in both cases identity was defined in religious

terms, encompassing national identity as one of its components. This definition of religious identity assumed the form of a decision regarding 'classical literature' in the strictest sense of the term: a literature that was absolutely binding because of its sanctify as the word of God, and absolutely exclusive, because any literary work which was not canonized was defined as 'apocrypha', fell into oblivion and disappeared.

The Bible offered the people of Israel all necessary parameters of identity: the past — their history under the providence of God, which constituted the foundation of their collective identity; the present — the regulating of their lives by means of the laws of the Torah, and their moral and social values, as set down by the laws and the prophetic literature; and the vision of the future, of themselves as a nation and of the world at large, through history and prophecy. It even related to their personal needs in terms of religious poetry and the quest of knowledge through wisdom.

The Bible also set the boundaries of the collective entity, as it established a clear distinction between the 'Us' and the 'Others'. The 'Us' were those who belonged, who adopted this literature with its value-system; the 'Others' were those who did not belong, who either separated themselves from this entity, or were rejected by it. By its very definition, the canonization was a declaration of borders, admitting to the community the adherents of the canonical corpus, and leaving out of it a variety of social segments, ideologies and practices.[20]

4. What was the place of the Bible in post-biblical Judaism?

How did the formation of the canon influence the essence and development of Judaism?

It is difficult to overestimate the role of the Bible in the formation of post-biblical Judaism. On the most basic level, the Bible is the common heritage of all Jews; it formulated their unity and uniformity even when physically they were scattered throughout the world. It established the terms of their religious beliefs, practices, and even the common language, the holy language of the Bible. Then, from quite an early date, the Bible became part of the liturgy.

The weekly liturgy includes the reading of portions from the Torah and other biblical books, and the ritual of 'reading the Torah' is a significant part of the Sabbath prayer performed ceremoniously in the synagogue. There is even a special day in the festival calendar which is dedicated to the 'joy of the Torah' (*Simhat Torah*). Moreover, the book itself, in the form of the 'Torah scroll', became an object of ritual, sanctified and celebrated.[21]

However, perhaps to an even greater degree, the role of the Bible in the formation of Judaism was exerted by the influence of the specific concept of 'canon' on its spiritual development. The decision to circumscribe their identity by a closed body of literature, sanctioned as divine revelation of the past, implied that nothing new could be added or created; since the Bible applied to all aspects of life, the implication was sweeping. With this all-encompassing principle as a spiritual and social starting-point, Judaism faced the danger of stagnation and deterioration, of becoming completely incapable of coping with changing situations and new realities; of becoming a social and spiritual fossil. Judaism met this challenge and escaped the impending danger by reverting to the one path that remained open to it and broadened it to its extreme width — the path of interpretation. All intellectual effort was invested in a continuous process of interpretation, the task of which was to keep the canonized literature alive and relevant. The whole Jewish traditional culture, for over two thousands years, may be defined as a 'culture of interpretation', placing itself in relationship to the binding literature of the canon.[22] Every spiritual development and every change of practice, presented themselves as interpretation of Scriptures. Homiletics, Philosophy, Mysticism (to mention only a few) were all clad in the garment of 'Interpretation', both in their spiritual presuppositions and in their literary genres.[23] Even the secondary, originally interpretative literature, which eventually became dated, was saved the fate of becoming fossilized and obsolete by becoming itself the object of interpretation. Judaism may be viewed as a continuous, unfailing chain, connecting the new to the old by means of interpretation.

The role of the Bible as the most important formative factor in Judaism is illustrated also in modern times, as for example in the political movement of Zionism, the return of the Jews to the land of Israel. Zionism charac-

terized itself spiritually as a 'return to the sources'; it aspired to form a direct contact with the Bible itself — in language, philosophy, and morality — by ignoring the long chain of traditional interpretation. It called for a rediscovery the Bible and a renewal of life in conformity with it. We may thus go back to the beginning of my lecture and affirm the designation of Judaism as 'the religion of the Book', and of Israel as 'the people of the book', most importantly of all, in their self-understanding and identity.

5. What are the implications of what I have said so far to the topic of the conference in terms of 'Classical Literatures and their Values'?

I should emphasize at the outset that 'canon' and 'classical literature' are not, by any definition, synonymous concepts. Not all corpora of classical literature enjoy the status of canon within their communities, as is the case with the Bible within Judaism, and not all 'canons' are by definition 'sacred'. Nevertheless, a positive answer to the question posed above seems to me self-evident. As have been demonstrated in this conference and those that preceded it, the exposure to 'classical literatures' has many benefits and values, the most important of which — in my view — is inseparably connected with what I discussed above. From among the benefits of 'classical literatures' I would mention three:

1) From a more limited perspective — which was amply demonstrated by the paper of Michael Witzel in the conference of last year — each great culture has its own value-system; a modern society might benefit from and be enriched by the adoption of various values which it finds worthwhile.[24] This adoption seems to be less a matter of 'rational decision' or 'free choice', but rather an unconscious process, tied with complex sociological, psychological and political trends and currents, in which universities play only a minor role.

2) The second value, which I regard as more important, is that the study of other cultures is the gate to a disposition of openness, which may lead one day to reconciliation and peace. It promotes the recognition of the varieties of the human spirit, not merely in individual literary works but in comprehensive structures. The study of these cultures provides legitimization of the 'other' and 'otherness', broadening our own understanding and leading to a more tolerant world.

3) What I see as the most important value of the 'Reconstitution of Classical Studies' however, is in the terms which I discussed above, the terms of self-understanding and identity. Each 'classical literature', whether Greek, Roman, Jewish, Indian, Japanese, or other, actually marks the boundaries of affiliation: those who adopt it 'belong', those who do not adopt it, are outsiders. From this perspective, there is indeed no essential difference between 'classical' and 'canonical'. The wish to institute a center for all 'classical literatures' is in effect a declaration of identity: the adoption of all the world's best as part of one own's identity. The attempt to make these 'classical literatures' a part of our own curriculum is like saying that all the world's spiritual and intellectual creation is part of our own culture.

Without loosing one's own identity, without assimilating into a formless 'universal culture' or drowning in the 'global village' in its pejorative, assimilatory sense, the adoption and study of 'classical literature' is the means to establish one's identity as a citizen of the largest community, the world of humanity.

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1 The origin of the term 'Bible' is the Hebrew designation of the Holy Scriptures as simply 'The Books'. The term was translated by Greek speaking Jews into *ta biblia* and through its Latin form entered European languages. In our context it applies to the original biblical canon, known in Christian terminology as 'The Old Testament'. (See, N. M. Sarna, "Bible," *Encyclopedia Judaica* 4, Jerusalem 1971, p. 816).

2 Indeed, in some ancient sources the Bible is sometimes called 'the twenty-four books'. See, among others, *Qoheleth Rabbah*, 12:12 – 13.

3 The best known are the books of the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah, each of which contains the words of at least two different prophets, and probably more. For all these matters see any Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, e.g. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament — An Introduction* (English translation), Oxford 1965, pp. 304, 440.

4 Although there is a scholarly consensus about the general phenomenon, there is no agreement about the details; intensive research into these matters is still going on and many of its aspects are still debated in biblical scholarship. For all these matters one may consult the Introductions to the Literature of the Old Testament (such as Eiss-

feldt mentioned in note 3), Encyclopedic entries, and specialized studies.

5 According to the traditional view, the first works were written by Moses (before 1200 BCE) and the last in the Persian period, in the fifth century BCE (See *Babylonian Talmud*, Bava Bathra, 14:b – 15:a). Biblical scholarship would lower the date for the last biblical works to the 2 nd century BCE, and in the last decades doubts have been expressed regarding the historical beginnings of biblical literature. However, even according to the minimalist view, the span of time from the composition of the earliest works to that of the latest, would be at least 600 years.

6 For the terms 'Holy Writings' and 'Holy Books' in ancient sources, see Sarna (above note 1), p. 816.

7 The acronym of these parts is the common name of the Bible in Hebrew: *'TaNaCh' — Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim.*

8 These materials include myths, poems, genealogies, geographical lists, descriptions of ceremonies, speeches, prayers, and more.

9 Much have been written on these matters, and the topic gained in importance and was placed at the focus of scholarly attention after the discovery and publication of the Dead Sea scrolls. Since the scholarly views on these matters vary considerably, I will limit my statements to the general aspects of the subject, which are less controversial. For outlines of the topic see Eissfeldt (above note 1), pp. 559 – 571; Sarna (above note 1), pp. 816 – 832; 5. S. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*, New Haven, Conn.,1991

10 For a concise presentation of the Restoration Period, see, among others, L. L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, vol 1, Minneapolis 1992, pp. 119 – 146.

11 See S. Japhet, "People and Land in the Restoration Period," in: G. Strecker (ed.), *Das Land Israel*, Göttingen 1983, pp. 103 – 125.

12 For the interpretation of these chapters, see H. G. M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Word Biblical Commentary), Waco, Texas, 1985, pp. 275 – 340; J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Old Testament Library), Philadelphia, 1988, pp. 278 – 319.

13 See J. Appelby, L Hunt, M. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, New York 1994, p. 235 and *passim*.

14 See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (English translation), Edinburgh 1962, vol 1, pp. 105 – 354; G. E. Wright, R. H. Fuller, *The Book of the Acts of God*, New York, 1957, pp. 7 – 14.

15 On the history of this period, see G. Vermes, F, Millar, M. Black, M. Goodman (eds.), E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175 BC – 135 AD) [revised edition], vols. 1 – 3, Edinburgh, 1973 – 1987.

16 Twenty four, according to the straightforward evidence of IV Ezra (known also as the Ezra Apocalypse) 14:18 – 48, and twenty two according to Josephus, *Contra Apionem* I, 8 (§§ 38 – 42).

17 The center of these sages was in Jabneh (Yamnia), a small town in Judah, and the 'Synod of Jamnia', around 100 CE, received much attention in scholarship. Their role in the actual formation of the canon is debated. See S. Z. Leiman (above, note 10).

18 As expressed by the saying: 'until now the prophet were prophesying under the holy spirit; from now on, lend your ear to listen to the words of the sages' (*Seder Olam Rabbah*, 30). Also: 'After the last prophets, Haggai Zechariah and Malachi passed away, the holy spirit departed from Israel' (*Babylonian Talmud*, Yoma, 9b). See also the explanations of Josephus (above, note 16).

19 Most of these works were not preserved in later Judaism. A certain part of them was preserved in translation, in the Greek Bible and other ancient versions, while other works, like those of the community of Qumran (commonly misnamed 'the Essenes'), were relegated to complete oblivion. They are now partially reclaimed, through the discoveries in the Judean Desert and through translations into Hebrew from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. For the scope of this literature, see R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1913; J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I – II, New York 1983 – 1985; and the volumes of the series: *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (DJD), 1955 – 2002.

20 See now R. Elior, *Temple and Chariot, Priests and Angels, Sanctuary and Heavenly Sanctuaries in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Jerusalem 2002 (in Hebrew).

21 See the relevant respective entries in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 15, 1246 – 1258; 14: 1571 – 2; 1100 – 1104.

22 The greatest effort was put into the interpretation of the legal literature, which determined the way of life and the daily practices of the individual and the community. Among the most famous corpora are the legal homiletical literature (*Midrash Halacha*), the Mishnah, the Talmud, and more. For a survey of this literature, see M. Elon, *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles*, 4 vols.; Philadelphia and Jerusalem, 1994.

23 Thus, for example, the greatest Jewish philosophical work 'The Guide of the Perplexed' by Maimonides (the 12th century), is written as a commentary on the 'parables of the Bible'; the greatest mystical work, 'The Book of Splendor' (Hebrew: *Zohar*), of the 13th century, assumes the form of a commentary on the weekly readings of the Torah, and many more.

24 Many of the values of Judaism were adopted by western civilization through the channel of Christianity; not only is the Hebrew Bible included in the Christian Bible as 'the Old Testament', but much of Christianity itself, in concepts and values, is based on Judaism. Nevertheless, this is only a partial and reformulated representation of Judaism and much could be added.