**Glossary:**

**Mishnah** – (literally *study by repetition* in Hebrew) the main compendium of the Oral Law. The Mishnah is divided into six orders (*Shas* - acronym), which are in turn subdivided into tractates. The Mishnah is transmitted in the name of the Tannaim. The tradition holds that its putting in writing and its redaction were initiated and supervised by Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi (135? C.E. – 220? C.E.) sometime toward the end of the 2nd century C.E.

**Tosefta** - (literally *addition* in Aramaic) a compendium of the Oral Law which follows the same pattern as the Mishnah and belongs to the same historical period. Most of the modern scholars see it as complementary to the Mishnah. However, some scholars believe that the Tosefta chronologically precedes the Mishnah and represents an authentic version of the Oral Law.

**Talmud/Gemara –** the main halakhic book of Judaism. The Talmud follows the same structural pattern as the Mishna. Both the Jerusalem Talmud (sealed in the 4th cent.) and the Babylonian Talmud (sealed in the 6th cent.) reflect the process of studying the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the midrash by the Amoraim.

**Tannaim** (singular *tanna*, literally *teacher* in Aramaic) - the sages in whose name the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and the midrash are transmitted. The Tannaim were active between the 1st cent. B.C.E. and the end of the 2nd cent. C.E, mostly in the Land of Israel. They are usually divided into six generations. The period of the Tannaim was preceded by the period of the Zugot (Pairs) and followed by that of the Amoraim**.**

**Amoraim** (singular amora, literally *translator* in Aramaic) – the sages of the Talmud. The period of the Amoraim extended from the 3rd cent. to the 6th cent. The Amoraim lived in the Land of Israel and in Babylon and were preceded by the Tannaim and followed by the Savoraim.

**Geonim** (singular *gaon* in Hebrew) – the heads of the two great halakhic Academies in Babylon. The period of the Geonim extended between the 7th cent. and the 11th cent. It was preceded by the period of the Savoraim and followed by that of the Rishonim.

**Rishonim** )singular *rishon* *– first* in Hebrew) the halakhic scholars active between the 11th and 15th centuries. Rashi, the Tosafists, Maimonides - all belong to the period of the Rishonim.

**Tosafists** (in Hebrew *Ba'alei HaTosafot*) – a general name indicating a great number of halakhinc scholars who wrote commentaries to the Talmud between the 11th and the 13th centuries. Classic editions of the Talmud contain Rashi's commentary on the internal margins of the main text, while the Tosafists' commentary is printed on the external margins. One of the more famous Tosafists was Rashi's grandson Rabbenu Tam (12th century).

**mishnah** - (with a lower case *m*, *mishnayot* plural) - a short halakhic saying in the Mishnah. Each tractate of the Mishnah is divided into chapters, which are in turn divided into mishnayot.

**beraita** (literally *external* in Aramaic, *beraitot* plural) – a short halakhic saying that was not included in the Mishnah. Beraitot are found in the Tosefta, the midrashic compilations and the Talmud.

**midrash** – is a distinct exegetical tool used by the ancient sages to interpret the Tanach. The midrash can be either halakhic or homiletic.

**Negative precepts/commandments** – precepts that contain a prohibition. Many negative precepts deal with ethical matters. Both women and men are obligated by negative precepts.

**Positive precepts/commandments not limited to time** – precepts that prescribe certain actions that are not limited to special days or festivals. For example, the precept to fix a mezuzah on the door of a house is a positive precept not limited to time. Both women and men are obligated by those precepts.

**Positive precepts/commandments limited to time** – precepts that are performed during certain periods of the year, usually during festivals and festive days. The sages give a small number of examples of the positive precepts limited to time: sitting in the sukkah, saying blessing over the lulav, circumcision etc. Women are exempt from positive precepts limited to time.

In reality, the distinction between the above two kinds of precepts is not clear cut: women are commanded to perform some positive precepts limited to time (for example, fasting on Yom Kippur), but exempt from some precepts not limited to time (wearing the tallit).