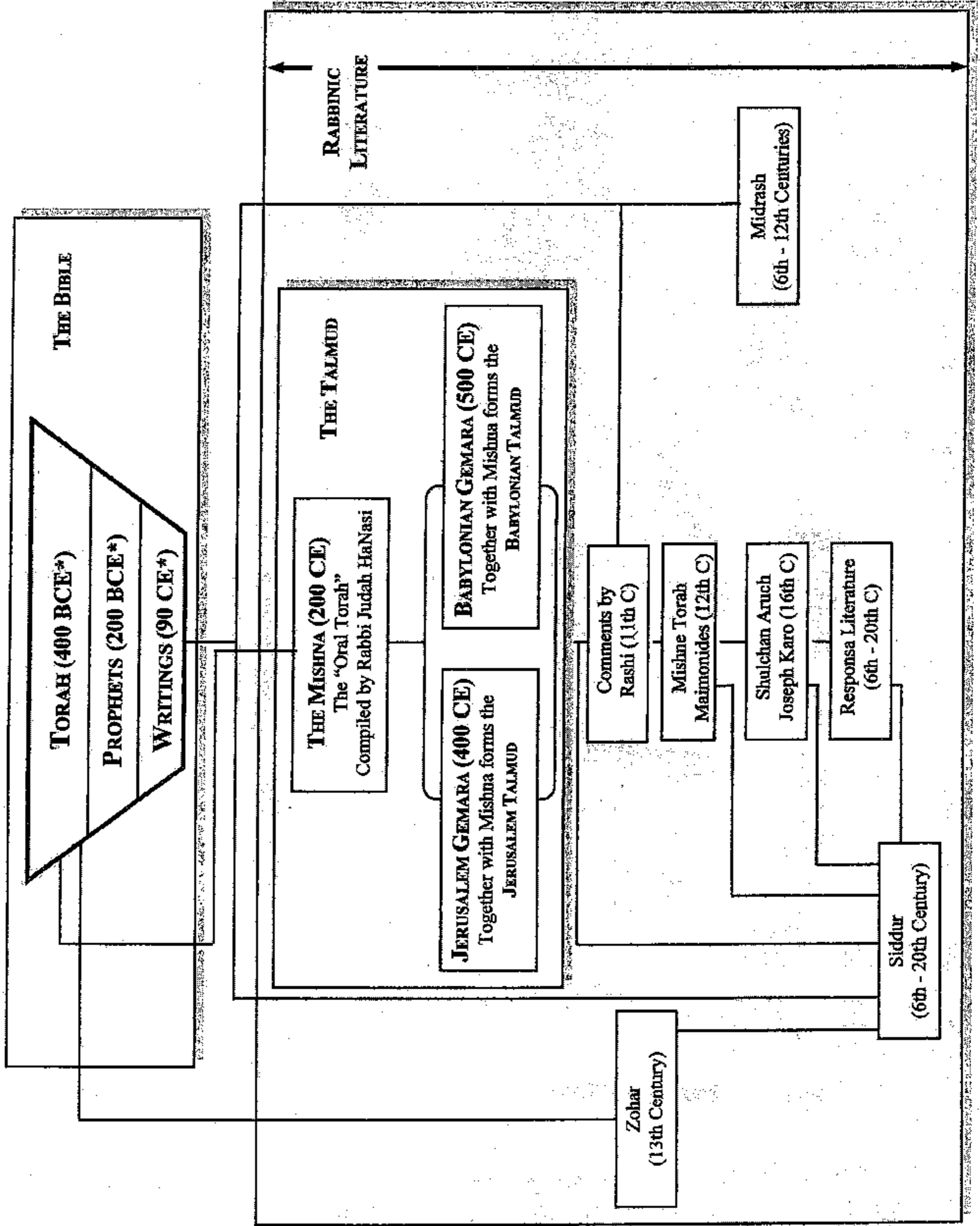


JEWISH SACRED LITERATURE



* Approximate Dates of Canonization

THE SABBATH IN THE TORAH

Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

20:9 Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:

20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

THE SABBATH IN THE MISHNAH (Shabbat 2:2)

The primary labours are forty less one, [viz.:] Sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, selecting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, bleaching, hackling, dyeing, spinning, stretching the threads, the making of two meshes, weaving two threads, dividing two threads, tying [knotting] and untying, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, capturing a deer, slaughtering, or flaying, or salting it, curing its hide, scraping it [of its hair], cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters [over the erasure], building, pulling down, extinguishing, kindling, striking with a hammer, [and] carrying out from one domain to another: these are the forty primary labours less one.

THE SABBATH IN THE GEMARA (Shabbat 73b) Why state the number? — Said R. Johanan: [To teach] that if one performs them all in one state of unawareness, he is liable on account of each separately.

From the Shulchan Aruch

CHAPTER LXXX.

Some of the Works Forbidden to be Done on the Sabbath.

1. It is forbidden to perform work which requires some concentration of mind before a candle light; the Rabbis have prohibited this lest he forgets and incline the light in order to bring the wick nearer the oil, and he will then be guilty of the violation termed "kindling." Two persons, however, are permitted to read one subject out of one book, because if one will be about to incline it, the other one will remind him. It is, however, the prevailing custom to permit it with our modern candles in which the tallow or the wax is wound around the wick. But it is necessary that one make a certain mark so that it should not occur to him to clip off the tip of the wick which turned into soot. According to the view of Maimonides this act is prohibited by the Mosaic law, and it is forbidden to cut off the tip of the wick even through a non-Jew.

2. It is prohibited to open a door or a window opposite a burning candle which is near it, lest it be quenched on account of this, but one may close such window or door. It is forbidden either to open or to close the door of an oven in which there is fire, for by means of this he either kindles the fire or extinguishes it.

3. It is forbidden to pour boiling gravy on pieces of bread or *matzoth*, but one should first empty the gravy into the dish, and let it cool a little until it is fit to eat, and thereafter he should put the bread or the *matzoth* therein, but as long as the gravy is hot, even if it is already in the dish it is forbidden to put either bread or *matzoth* therein. It is likewise forbidden to put salt or spices into the gravy even if it is already in the dish, and certainly not into the pot, as long as it is boiling (hot), but he must wait until it cools off a little so that it be fit for eating. Some are more lenient with salt which was melted already through boiling; a blessing may come upon him who adheres to the stricter opinion even regarding this. It is likewise forbidden to pour hot coffee or tea into the vessel out of which one desires to drink, if there is sugar in such vessel. But one must first spill in the coffee or the tea, and thereafter put the sugar there. In cases of necessity one may be lenient about it.

4. It is forbidden to place fruit or water upon an oven after a fire was made therein, because the water may boil and the fruit may bake. Even if it be his intention only to warm it a little, nevertheless since it is possible that on this place it will boil or bake, it is forbidden to warm it there. Pudding which has fat in it should likewise not be placed opposite a

She'elab

Clearly, a Reform congregation would ordinarily encourage its members to help construct a needed facility for the poor in the community. But if this mitzvah were to be performed on Shabbat, would it be a violation of Torah law and therefore be wrong in the Reform view? Or could this activity on Shabbat be considered life saving (*piku'ach nefesh*) and reflect the true spirit of Judaism and its concern for the underprivileged, and therefore be permissible? (Rabbi Leo E. Turitz, Laguna Hills, CA)

Teshuvah

The very same question was submitted to Responsa Committee in 1986 and answered by R. Walter Jacob.¹ A copy of his *teshuvah* is enclosed.

We see no reason why we would override this decision; on the contrary, it is as badly needed today as it was then. We would add a few additional observations.

1. We commend those who care for the underprivileged and are prepared to do something about it. Reform Judaism has emphasized this concern as a vital aspect of our religious obligations. At the same time, Shabbat observance remains for us a vital part of our Jewish existence, however much it has been neglected.²
2. We therefore have two *mitzvot* at odds with each other. Which shall be given preference? The answer is not hard to fathom: The construction can be done on any day, Shabbat cannot be moved. The old principle comes also into play, that generally we do not perform a true *mitzvah* if it is done by transgressing another command.³
3. The one exception is *piku'ach nefesh*. If saving of a human life is at stake, then Shabbat laws may be overlooked. Is that the case here? Surely not; there is no indication that immediate action on Shabbat is necessary, lest there be loss of life.
4. We suspect that the congregation's members did not contemplate

doing the work on Sunday, because this might offend Christian sensibilities. But would no Jewish sensibilities be offended? The very *she'elab* reveals that, by some at least, the action was considered troublesome.

5. We are certain that those who are ready to participate think that they are doing the right and religious thing, and we suspect none of them observes Shabbat as a day of rest in the accepted way. But as partners in this activity they perform the labor not as private persons; they act under the auspices of the synagogue. Jews may eat pork privately and find it both delectable and religiously acceptable, but the synagogue will refuse to serve it to them.

6. If no other day can be arranged for the building, then let the members contribute in some other manner. By doing so they will increase Gentile respect for exhibiting faithfulness to their religious tradition.

7. There is an opportunity for the Rabbi to study these *teshuvot* with the members and to explore how the sanctity of Shabbat may be strengthened in their lives. This presents an excellent opportunity for *talmud torah* and its application.⁴

NOTES

1 CARR (1987), n. 176, p.265 f.

2 See *Gates of Shabbat*, ed. Mark D. Shapiro (1991), pp.vii and passim.

3 See our responsum 5755.1, "Delayed Milah on Shabbat," in this volume.

4 We were informed later on that the congregation acted in the spirit of our *teshuvah* [ed note].

Source: *Teshuvot for the Nineties: Reform Judaism's Answers for Today's Dilemmas*, W. Gunther Palut and Mark Washofsky, CCAR Press, 1997.

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY

the laws of *ona'ah* do not apply to such a transaction, because during a war a person's very life depends on these items, and people are willing to pay considerably more than what they are really worth."

Thus Rabbi Yehudah ben Betera's opinion parallels Rabbi Yehudah's, as both Tannaim maintain that the laws of *ona'ah* do not apply if a buyer is willing to pay more than the ordinary market value of the merchandise.

MISHNAH קָשָׁם שְׂאוּנָאָה בְּמִקְחָא

²Having completed its discussion of the laws of fraud, the Mishnah now turns to laws governing human relationships. The connection between these two topics is the Hebrew word

ona'ah (אוֹנְאָה), which means not only fraud or overreaching but also the causing of anguish to others. The Mishnah declares: Just as there is a law prohibiting *ona'ah* — fraud in buying and selling — so too there is a law prohibiting verbal *ona'ah* (אוֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים), in which anguish is caused to other people by hurting their feelings.

³The Mishnah now shows how words may cause pain. The first example is related to the previous topic — buying and selling: A customer may not say to a merchant: "How much is this article" if he does not in fact wish to buy it, as this arouses false hopes in the seller, who will be upset if the questioner does not purchase the item.

⁴The Mishnah now considers examples totally unrelated to the previous discussion: If someone is a repentant sinner, other people must not remind him of his past by saying to him: "Remember your earlier deeds." ⁵Likewise, if someone is the son of converts, other people must not remind him of his origins by saying to him: "Remember the deeds of your fathers." In fact, there is a special prohibition against causing anguish to converts, ⁶for the verse (Exodus 22:20) says: "You shall not wrong (*tonu*, from the same Hebrew root as *ona'ah*) a stranger (i.e., a convert) nor shall you oppress him."

⁷The Mishnah now shows how words may cause pain. The first example is related to the previous topic — buying and selling: A customer may not say to a merchant: "How much is this article" if he does not in fact wish to buy it, as this arouses false hopes in the seller, who will be upset if the questioner does not purchase the item.

LITERAL TRANSLATION

ona'ah for them, ¹because life depends on (lit., "is in") them."

MISHNAH ²Just as there is *ona'ah* in buying and selling, so too there is *ona'ah* in words.

³One may not say to him [a merchant]: "How much is this object," if one does not wish to buy [it].

⁴If [someone] was a repentant [sinner], one may not say to him: "Remember your earlier deeds." ⁵If he is the son of converts, one may not say to him: "Remember the deeds of your fathers," ⁶for it is said: "You shall not wrong a stranger, nor shall you oppress him."

אָבוּתֵיךְ, שְׂנֵאָמֶר: "וְגַר לֹא תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ."

LANGUAGE

אוֹנְאָה Fraud, wrongdoing, overreaching. This word, generally translated "fraud" (i.e., overcharging and underpaying, financial dishonesty), is derived from the root נָנָה or אָנָה, whose basic meaning in Biblical Hebrew is "to cause distress." The primary meaning of this root also plays a part in Mishnaic Hebrew, as we see from our Mishnah where we read: "Just as there is *ona'ah* in buying and selling, so too there is *ona'ah* (i.e., causing distress, or hurting other people's feelings) in words."

BACKGROUND

אוֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים Verbal *ona'ah*. As the Mishnah indicates, verbal *ona'ah* includes a wide variety of activities, from intentionally disappointing others (by pretending that one wants to buy something when one in fact does not), to insulting them outright. Verbal *ona'ah* of this sort is not grounds for lawsuits to be adjudicated in court, although it is considered an extremely grave offense which is punishable at the hands of Heaven.

אִם הָיָה בְּעַל תְּשׁוּבָה If someone was a repentant sinner... If a person sincerely and completely repents for his misdeeds, they are forgiven, and he must thereafter be treated as a righteous man. Hence, it is considered a gratuitous insult to remind a penitent of his past.

NOTES

שֵׁישׁ בְּהֵן חַיִּי Because life depends on them. It is not clear whether Rabbi Yehudah ben Betera's view is accepted or not. On the one hand, no one disputes this opinion, so it would appear that it should be accepted. On the other hand, the Gemara implies elsewhere (see, for example, *Yevamot* 106a and the commentators there) that a person who overcharges for objects or services necessary for survival is only entitled to the true value of the object or service he provided. Following this reasoning, it would appear that the prohibition against *ona'ah* should apply to military implements in wartime, contrary to the viewpoint of Rabbi Yehudah ben Betera (*Remakh*).

אוֹנְאָת דְּבָרִים Verbal *ona'ah*. Verbal *ona'ah* means insulting others, hurting their feelings, or putting them to shame (compare, for example, Isaiah 49:26, "I shall feed them that oppress you with their own flesh," where the same Hebrew root is used). *Meiri* suggests that two types of transgression are subsumed under the category of verbal *ona'ah*: (1) causing a person financial loss through one's words, and (2) putting another person to shame. Indeed, both types of

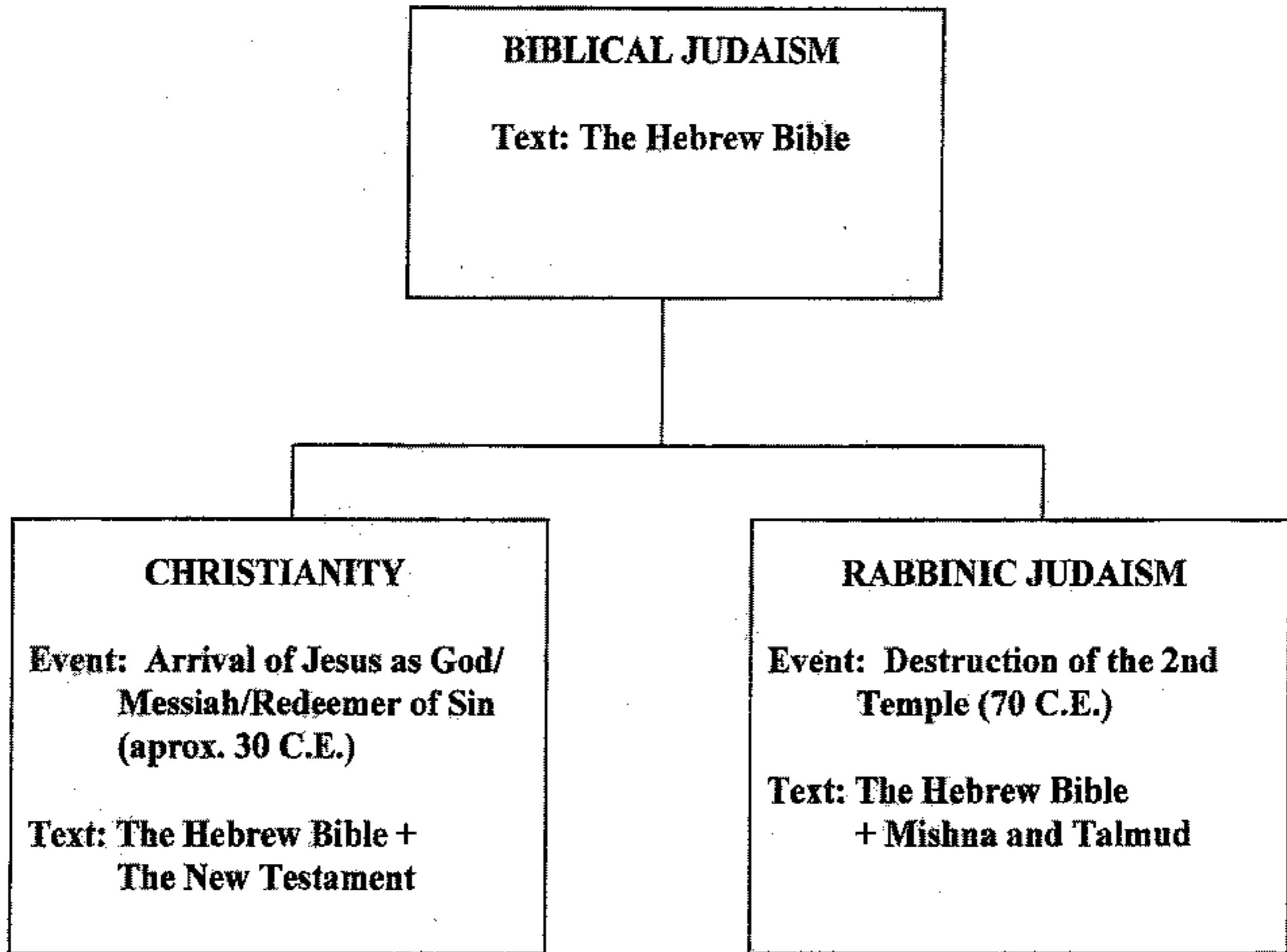
offense are discussed in the Mishnah. In the first case, the seller thinks the buyer did not buy the merchandise because he felt it was overpriced (and not because he did not want to buy it in the first place); hence the seller is likely to cut prices. Thus, the buyer's conduct is liable to cause the seller an unnecessary financial loss. And the next two cases in the Mishnah (where one reminds a penitent or descendant of proselytes of their origins) constitute verbal *ona'ah* because they involve putting others to shame.

קָשָׁם שְׂאוּנָאָה בְּמִקְחָא Just as there is *ona'ah* in buying and selling, so too there is *ona'ah* in words. *Bah* explains that the Mishnah had to teach us that verbal *ona'ah* is prohibited, because we might not otherwise have inferred this from the Biblical text, which ostensibly refers to financial fraud and not to verbal wrongdoing.

לֹא יֹאמֶר לוֹ בְּכַמָּה חֲפָץ One may not say: "How much is this object?" This is forbidden because it causes the seller distress, since he mistakenly thinks that he will be able to conclude the sale. Moreover, such behavior may even cause the seller financial loss (see *Rashbam*, *Pesahim* 112b).



Relationship Between Christianity & Modern Judaism



A Christian's Guide to Judaism by Michael Lotker, Paulist Press, 2004
www.lotker.com

Why Don't Jews Accept Jesus As Messiah?

The Word Messiah

- English "Messiah" is a translation of the Hebrew "*Mashiach*" [משיח]
- *Mashiach* means "anointed."
 - Kings of Israel were anointed by pouring holy oil on their heads.
- When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (about 200 BCE), the Hebrew *Mashiach* became the Greek "*Christos*" [Χριστός].
- The Greek *Christos* gives rise to the English "Christ."

The Jewish Understanding of the Messiah

- Fully Human and Only Human
- A Political and/or Military Ruler like King David
- Not God in any sense
- Not the son of God in any sense beyond the idea that we are all children of God
- Not connected with redemption of sin
- Only we can atone for our sins
- Prophecies include:
 - Peace on earth
 - All the world comes to know the one God
 - Details unresolved
- Messiah not at the heart of Judaism

Why Don't Jews Accept Jesus As Messiah?

- No world peace, no Messiah
- The Second Coming not a Jewish idea
- But the larger issue is whether Jesus is God
 - The idea of God taking human form, suffering with us and dying for our sins is
 - Beautiful and inspiring
 - But not Jewish!
- This is why I can have great respect for Christianity but less sympathy for "Jews for Jesus" and "Messianic Jews"