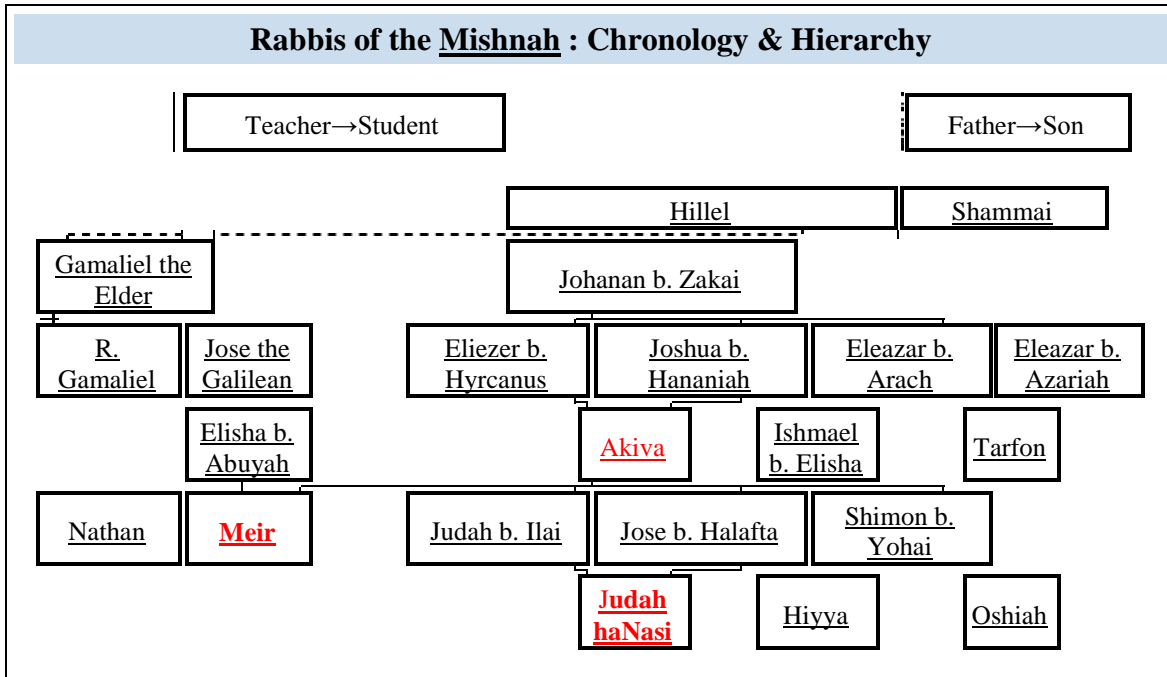


Source 1

Scholarly lineage of prominent *tannaim*



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tannaim>

Source 2

The Oral Torah was originally meant to be transmitted by word of mouth. It was transmitted from master to student in such a manner that if the student had any question, he would be able to ask, and thus avoid ambiguity. A written text, on the other hand, no matter how perfect, is always subject to misinterpretation....

If the entire Torah would have been given in writing, everyone would be able to interpret it as he desired. This would lead to division and discord among people who followed the Torah in different ways. The Oral Torah, on the other hand, would require a central authority to preserve it, thus assuring the unity of Israel.

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, Handbook of Jewish Thought, Moznaim 1979, p.179

Source 3

12 Our Holy Teacher wrote the Mishnah. From the time of Moshe to Our Holy Teacher, no one had written a work from which the Oral Law was publicly taught. Rather, in each generation, the head of the then existing court or the prophet of the time wrote down for his private use notes on the traditions he had heard from his teachers, and he taught in public from memory.

13 So too, everyone wrote down according to his ability parts of the explanation of the Torah and of its laws he heard, as well as the new matters that developed in each generation, which had not been received by oral tradition, but had been deduced by applying the Thirteen Principles for Interpreting the Torah, and had been agreed upon by the Great Rabbinical Court. Such had always been done, until the time of Our Holy Teacher.

14 He gathered together all the traditions, all the enactments, and all the explanations and interpretations that had been heard from Moshe Our Teacher or had been deduced by the courts of all the generations in all matters of the Torah; and he wrote the Book of the Mishnah from all of them. And he taught it in public, and it became known to all Israel; everyone wrote it down and taught it everywhere, so that the Oral Law would not be forgotten by Israel.

15 Why did Our Holy Teacher do so, and did not leave things as they were? Because he saw that the number of students was continuing to go down, calamities were continually happening, wicked government was extending its domain and increasing in power, and the Israelites were wandering and emigrating to remote places. He thus wrote a work to serve as a handbook for all, so that it could be rapidly studied and would not be forgotten ... and throughout his life, he and his court continued giving public instruction in the Mishnah.

Maimonides, Introduction to Mishnah Torah

Source 4

And if a person wants to claim: “since the rabbis disagreed in several places, I cast doubt upon their statements”, you must rebuke him and explain to him ... that the sages never disagreed about the principles of the commandments, but only regarding the details of their application. The sages learned the principles from their rabbis, but neglected to inquire about some of the details...**For example, the sages did not disagree about whether one should light candles for Shabbat; they were only divided in respect to the type of substances to be used in those candles**

**Rabbi Avraham Ben David (Ravad I 1110-1180 CE)
Sefer HaKabbalah**

ואם לחשך אדם לומר מפני שנחלקו בכמה מקומות לכך אני מסופק בדבריהם אף אתה הקהה את שיניו והודיעהו ... ושלא נחלקו רז"ל לעולם בעיקר מצוה אלא בתולדותיה ששמעו עיקרה מרבותיהם ולא שאלום על תולדותיה...כיוצא בו לא נחלקו אם מדליקים נר בשבת או לא ועל מה נחלקו במה מדליקים ובמה אין מדליקים

Source 5

The Written Torah (תורה שבכתב) is to be to the (תורה שבעל פה) in the relation of short notes on a full and extensive lecture on any scientific subject. For the student who has heard the whole lecture, short notes are quite sufficient to bring back afresh to his mind at any time the whole subject of the lecture. For him, a word, an added mark of interrogation, or exclamation, a dot, the underlining of a word, etc., is often quite sufficient to recall to his mind a whole series of thoughts, a remark, etc.

For those who had not heard the lecture from the Master, such notes would be completely useless. If they were to try and reconstruct the scientific contents of the lecture literally from such notes they would of necessity make many errors. Words, marks, etc which serve to

those scholars who had heard the lecture as instructive guiding stars to the wisdom that had been taught and learnt, stare at the uninitiated as unmeaning sphinxes. The wisdom, the truths, which the initiated reproduce from them (but do not produce *out of them*) are sneered at by the uninitiated, as being merely a clever or witty play of words and empty dreams without any real foundation

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch Commentary on Exodus 21:2

Source 6

Our Rabbis taught: A certain heathen once came before Shammai and asked him, 'How many Torot (kinds of Torah) have you?'

'Two,' he replied: 'the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.' 'I believe you with respect to the Written, but not with respect to the Oral Torah; make me a proselyte on condition that you teach me the Written Torah [only].

[But] he scolded and repulsed him in anger.

When he went before Hillel, he accepted him as a proselyte. On the first day, he taught him, Alef, bet, gimmel, dalet (the first four letters of the Hebrew alphabet); the following day he reversed [them] to him.

'But yesterday you did not teach them to me thus,' he protested.

'Must you then not rely upon me? Then rely upon me with respect to the Oral [Torah] too.'

Talmud Shabbos 31a

ת"ר מעשה בנכרי אחד שבא לפני שמאי אמר לו כמה תורות יש לכם אמר לו שתיים תורה שבכתב ותורה שבעל פה א"ל שבכתב אני מאמינך ושבעל פה איני מאמינך גירני ע"מ שתלמדני תורה שבכתב גער בו והוציאו בנזיפה בא לפני הלל גירייה יומא קמא א"ל א"ב ג"ד למחר אפיך ליה א"ל והא אתמול לא אמרת לי הכי א"ל לאו עלי דידי קא סמכת דעל פה נמי סמוך עלי

Source 7

1 All the commandments that were given to Moshe at Sinai were given together with their interpretation, as it is written "and I will give thee the Tables of Stone, and the Law, and the Commandment" (Exodus 24,12). "Law" is the Written Law; and "Commandment" is its interpretation: We were commanded to fulfill the Law, according to the Commandment, which is called the Oral Law.

2 The whole of the Law was written down by Moshe Our Teacher before his death, in his own hand. He gave a scroll of the Law to each tribe; and he put another scroll in the Ark for a witness, as it is written "take this book of the Law, and put it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of

א כל המצוות שניתנו לו למשה בסיני-- בפירושן ניתנו, שנאמר "ואתנה לך את לוחות האבן, והתורה והמצוה" (שמות כד.יב): "תורה", זו תורה שבכתב; ו"מצוה", זה פירושה. וציוונו לעשות התורה, על פי המצוה. ומצוה זו, היא הנקראת תורה שבעל פה.

ב כל התורה--כתבה משה רבנו קודם שימות, בכתב ידו. ונתן ספר לכל שבט ושבט; וספר אחד--נתנהו בארון לעד, שנאמר "לקוח, את ספר התורה הזה, ושמתם אותו, מצד ארון ברית ה' אלוהיכם; והיה שם בכך,

<p>the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" (Deuteronomy 31,26).</p> <p>3 But the Commandment, which is the interpretation of the Law--he did not write it down, but gave orders concerning it to the elders, to Yehoshua, and to all the rest of Israel, as it is written For this reason, it is called the Oral Law.</p> <p>4 Although the Oral Law was not written down, Moshe Our Teacher taught all of it in his court to the 70 elders; and El'azar, Pinehas, and Yehoshua, all three received it from Moshe. And to his student Yehoshua, Moshe passed on the Oral Law and ordered him concerning it. And so Yehoshua throughout his life taught it orally.</p> <p>5 Many elders received it from Yehoshua, and Eli received it from the elders and from Pinehas; Shmuel received it from Eli and his court, and David received it from Shmuel and his court ...Maimonides, Intro to Mishnah Torah</p>	<p>לעד" (דברים לא,כו).</p> <p>ג והמצוה, שהיא פירוש התורה--לא כתבה; אלא ציווה בה לזקנים וליהושוע ולשאר כל ישראל, שנאמר "את כל הדבר, אשר אנוכי מצווה אתכם--אותו תשמרו, לעשות . . ." (דברים יג,א). ומפני זה נקראת תורה שבעל פה.</p> <p>ד אף על פי שלא נכתבה תורה שבעל פה, לימדה משה רבנו כולה בבית דינו לשבעים זקנים; ואלעזר ופינחס ויהושוע, שלושתן קיבלו ממשה. וליהושוע שהוא תלמידו של משה רבנו, מסר תורה שבעל פה וציווהו עליה; וכן יהושוע, כל ימי חייו לימד על פה.</p> <p>ה וזקנים רבים קיבלו מיהושוע, וקיבל עלי מן הזקנים ומפינחס; ושמואל קיבל מעלי ובית דינו, ודויד קיבל משמואל ובית דינו</p> <p>משנה תורה להרמב"ם הקדמה</p>
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Source 8

TALMUD

By Rabbi Berel Wein

Date: Dec 09 2005

Topic: Jerusalem Post

In its simplest form of definition, the Talmud is the record of centuries of discussion expounding the Oral Law of Judaism as it took place in the great Torah academies of the Land of Israel and Babylonia long ago. The Mishna, which is the basis of all talmudic discussions, was completed and edited at the beginning of the third century CE by Rabi Yehuda HaNassi in Tzipori in the Galilee. The Talmud was developed in two separate works: Talmud Yerushalmi (the Talmud of the Land of Israel) and Talmud Bavli (the Talmud of Babylonia.) The Talmud Yerushalmi was completed c.350CE when the Jewish community in the Land of Israel began to suffer genocidal persecution from the newly empowered Byzantine Christians. The demise of a vibrant Jewish community in the Land of Israel forced many of the Torah scholars living there to flee to Babylonia where Christian dominance did not hold sway. The Babylonian Talmud was not completed until the middle/end of the sixth century CE and became the definitive Talmud. Even though the Babylonian Talmud describes itself as being created in "darkness (of exile)" it remains the definitive Talmud. Rabbi Yitzchak Alfasi, the great eleventh century codifier of Jewish law, explained that we follow the opinions of the Babylonian Talmud over those of the Talmud Yerushalmi because the Babylonian Talmud, which was edited two centuries later than the Talmud Yerushalmi, already took into consideration the opinions of the Talmud Yerushalmi

when reaching its own stated halachic opinions and conclusions. Thus the Babylonian Talmud became and remains the main source for the definitive tradition of the Oral Law from Sinai.

Throughout Jewish history, the Jewish people in all of their lands of dispersion, basically lived a talmudic way of life, differing little from the way of the lives of their ancestors in Babylonia during the period of the compilation and editing of the Talmud. It was the Talmud, naturally based upon the sanctity and integrity of the Torah, the Written Law, that bound world Jewry together in spite of the enormous distances of space and society that exile imposed upon it. The names of the great men of the Talmud – Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai, Rabi Akiva, Rabi Yehuda HaNassi, Rav, Mar Shmuel, Rabah, Abayei, Ravah, Ravina, Rav Ashi, Mar bar Rav Ashi, etc. – were all household names and familiar “guests” in Jewish homes the world over. Even though the vast majority of Jews were hardly talmudic scholars – this field was pretty much reserved for the rabbis and judges of Israel – almost all Jews were aware of the Talmud, its values, messages, decisions and stories. It was the guiding book in their lives, not only in matters of ritual and law, but also in terms of personal behavior, societal goals and vision of the Jewish future. It was almost as through a process of osmosis that Jews absorbed within themselves an appreciation and respect for the Talmud. Eventually it could be said that the book referred to in the phrase “people of the book” was the Talmud.

It is no surprise therefore that the Talmud became the target and flash point of opposition to Judaism, its values and practices as well as its practitioners. The burning of the Talmud was a regular part of Christian persecution of Jews throughout Europe from the time of Louis IX in the thirteenth century to Nazi Germany in the twentieth century. Again, all those dissident Jews who rejected the traditions of the Oral Law and sought to create “new” forms of Jewish life also attacked the Talmud bitterly and discredited its ideas and formulations. From the Karaites in the seventh century to the Yevsektzia (the Jewish section of the Bolshevik party that Stalin would later purge) in the twentieth century, the Talmud was vilified and its pages torn and destroyed by Jews who were bitterly opposed to its teachings and who recognized that no “new” form of Judaism could ever take hold as long as the Talmud was still studied, respected and loved within the Jewish world. Nevertheless, the Talmud, like the Jewish people that it protects, has weathered all storms. It is the main text and topic of study in all yeshivot throughout the Jewish world. Competence in its study is the first requirement for all rabbis and teachers who maintain and defend the veracity of Jewish tradition from Sinai until our day. The Talmud is old but it remains fresh and vital. Its study is complex, challenging, but it is a labor of love. For understanding the Talmud is the way to understanding the Jewish soul – the Jew that is within us all – and thus is our true connection to our past and our destiny.