

Congregation Toras Chaim

Talmud for Beginners

בבא מציעא, אלו מציאות

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THE TALMUD: FACTS AND FIGURES

- Gemara: the Aramaic name for the Talmud and its elucidations
- In Eretz Yisroel, the Sages of the Talmud are called Rebbe; in Babylon, Rav or Mar
- For 1,000 years, Babylon was the center of Jewish life and Torah study, beginning with destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and continuing until the end of the Geonic period.
- There are sixty-three tractates in the Mishnah, thirty-seven tractates in the Talmud Bavli, and 533 chapters in Shas.
- The Tanna'im, "Teachers," Sages of the Mishnah, were active for five generations, from 3448-3980.
- The Amora'im, "Explainers," Sages of the Gemara, were active for seven generations, from 3980-4260.
- There are 4,000 Greek and Latin words in the Talmud.
- There were 276 Tanna'im.
- There were 1,932 Amora'im. (Some say that there were as many as 3,400 or as few as 773, depending whether every name appearing in the Talmud is an individual Amora, or various names for the same person.)
- The compilation of the Talmud took 300 years.
- There are fourteen sefarim that deal with the al tekrei in the Talmud.
- Eighty sefarim had been published before the Holocaust, dealing with the historical order of the Tanna'im and Amora'im.
- There are eighty sefarim devoted to the aggadas Raba bar Bar Chana (in Maseches Bava Basra) and Sabi DaVei Atuna (in Maseches Bechoros).
- 700 sefarim had appeared before the Holocaust explaining the aggados of the Talmud.
- 1,300 commentaries on Shas had appeared before the Holocaust.
- The Talmud comprises: a) explanations of the Mishnah; b) halachic rulings according to the Mishnah; c) gezeiros and takkanos; d) derashos.
- In 4235/475, the Talmud was sealed. A thousand years later, in 5235/1475, the first masechta was printed. In 5242/1482, the Talmud's printing was begun in Spain. In 5280/1520, the Gemara received its current layout, with Rashi's commentary on the right of the Gemara, and Tosafos on the left. This format was the brainchild of Christian printer Daniel Bomberg.
- In 5640/1880, the Vilna Shas appeared; its typeface became the most popular.
- More than 100 editions of the Talmud have been printed.
- Other partial versions of the Talmud have been discovered. These were printed before the Soncino edition, but are not complete. The first tractate to be printed was Brachos, in Soncino, Northern Italy, in 5244 (gematria for Gemara) by Rav Yehoshua Shlomo ben Rav Yisrael Natan. His family members were the famous Soncino printers, who published many other sefarim, the most famous of whom was Gershom Soncino. In 5280, Pope Leo X (better known as Giovanni de Medici) allowed the printing of the Talmud. Daniel Bomberg immediately began to publish Shas. Only then did Gershom Soncino begin printing individual tractates, and other sefarim. In Kislev 5283, Bomberg concluded printing Shas.

The Talmud was redacted during the sixty years that the Amora, Rav Ashi, was head of the yeshivah in Mechasya, Babylonia. Starting with the sixty masechtos of Mishnayos, the yeshivah would learn two masechtos each year, completing a cycle after thirty years. During those years, Rav Ashi actually arranged two sets of Gemaros: one from each thirty-year study cycle. His first version was still extant in the times of the Geonim. These sets are referred to in Bava Basra (157): "The original version of Rav Ashi said...The second version of Rav Ashi says...And the halachah is like the second version."

Rav Sherira Gaon confirms the existence of a "Daf Yomi cycle," writing in his well-known letter: "The rabbis established that they would study approximately two masechtos every year, so that they would review the entire

Talmud in thirty years. Being that Rav Ashi reigned as rosh yeshivah for nearly sixty years, there were therefore two writings of the Talmud.”

The Rashbam in Bava Basra, quotes Rav Chai Gaon and Rabbeinu Chananel, who in describing the months of the Yarchei Kallah, also indicated that Rav Ashi would review all of Shas after thirty years.

The redactors of the Talmud, in taking on the monumental task of writing down the Talmud, had to break with tradition in order to preserve the tradition. In the generations before the Gemara was put into written format, all Gemara study was done orally, based on the mishnayos which the Tanna Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi (Rebbe) had put into writing. Rebbe had written in a very concise manner, so that it would be easier for scholars to memorize and remember the discussions of the Tanna'im. This oral method continued for approximately three centuries. The length of the exile, however, had taken its toll, and the hearts of the students weren't as open as they once had been. Rav Ashi, who was among the latter Amora'im, recognized that the students weren't remembering the vast amount of information that the Talmud contained, and decided to set down the words of the Talmud in writing. He, together with his colleague Rav Avina—or as he is more usually known, Ravina—wrote down the Talmud, so that the chain of Torah could continue for the future generations.

Rav Ashi and Ravina amassed the many questions, answers, and chiddushim on the Mishnah that the Amora'im had posed. They studied with analytical depth until they arrived at conclusions on every subject. They verified the correct wording of the Mishnayos and they followed the teachings of the previous Amora'im on how they understood the Mishnah. They would seek out, from which pasuk the halachos of each Mishnah could be derived. They would also expound on the words of the Mishnah, based on the words of other Tanna'im found in the Tosefta and Beraisa, collected by Rav Chiya and Rav Osheya, students of Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi and from the Tosefta that was collected by Rabbi Nechemya and his students. The Beraisa and the Tosefta bring the same ideas that are discussed in the Mishnah, but in greater detail that aids to the understanding of the Mishnah. In a sense, the Beraisa and the Tosefta were for the Amora'im what the Gemara is for us.

Rabbi Shmuel HaNaggid writes in his sefer Mevo HaTalmud: “Our rabbis the Amora'im greatly needed the Beraisos, because from them were derived, based on the rules of the Talmud, all of the deep knowledge to which the Mishnah alludes. Because Rebbe wrote only the main laws and didn't include all the many possible similar cases and their rulings.” Those can be found in the Beraisa.

The redaction of the Talmud didn't quite end with the death of Rav Ashi. His talmidim added certain short sections. After Rav Ashi's death, his students subsequently led the yeshivah, one after the other, during the following forty-seven years. Maremar, the student of Ravina led the yeshiva for five years, followed by Rav Idi bar Avin, who was among the older scholars and had even merited to learn by Rav Papa (a scholar from the previous generation); he led the yeshivah for twenty years. Rav Nachman bar Rav Huna led the yeshivah for three years, Rav Tuvyami, or his more popular name, Mar bar Rav Ashi, who replaced his father's position, for fifteen years. Following him was Raba Tosfoa, who was rosh yeshivah for six years. The final Amora was Ravina (not the same Ravina who was colleague of Rav Ashi). He was the rosh yeshivah in Sura for twenty-six years, during which time he finalized the Talmud. Ravina died in 4260/500 and that ended the Talmudic scribal era. The roshei yeshivos of the following generation were referred to and are known today as the Sabora'im.

The First Generation

The generations of the Amora'im stretched between 250 to 300 years. The first Amora, perhaps, was Rav Aba bar Ayvu, known throughout the Talmud simply as Rav. He was referred to with this name because he was the leader and rabbi of all the Jews in the Diaspora. He founded the yeshivah in Sura, that continued to exist throughout the days of all the Amora'im and even extended into the days of the Geonim. The succession of Torah study in this yeshivah continued for 800 years.

Rav was from Bavel, but traveled to Eretz Yisrael to learn Torah from Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi. When Rav returned to Bavel in 3979/219 he brought with him the Mishnah that Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi had redacted, to teach it to the Jews of Bavel.

Rav was so very great in Torah that, although he was an Amora, The Chachamim considered him to on the level of the Tanna'im, as the Gemara brings in Eiruvim (50): "Rav is a Tanna and has the right to argue with the Mishnayos."

Rav's colleague Shmuel, who also traveled to Eretz Yisrael, studied under Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, and returned to Bavel with the newly composed Mishnayos, to teach it to the Jews of Bavel. He particularly wanted to teach the Jews of Nehardea, where he opened his yeshivah.

Rav was considered the expert in halachic issues, and the halacha follows his rulings. In monetary issues, the halachah follows the rulings of Shmuel. Shmuel was a scholar of medicine and astronomy as well, as he testified about himself: "The roads of Heaven are as familiar to me as the roads of Nehardea." Brochos (58)

The leaders of Torah in Eretz Yisrael at this time were the great Amora'im, Rabbi Yochanan, rosh yeshivah in Teveria, and his student Reish Lakish. Together they continued the chain of Torah and transmitted the Oral torah to the Jews in the Holy Land. Their teachings reached Bavel as well. There were Amora'im who would travel back and forth between Eretz Yisrael and Bavel, and they transported the ideas and chiddushim that were studied in each yeshivah. Ulla was an example of such an Amora. There were also Amora'im who originally lived in Eretz Yisrael and moved to Bavel and they repeated the Torah of Rabbi Yochanan and Reish Lakish. Examples of this are the scholars Rav Dimi and Rav Avin (usually referred to as Ravin).

Therefore we found many instances in Shas where the Talmud says, "When Rav Dimi came, he said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan" or "When Ravin came, he said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan." The intention was that when they arrived in Bavel they repeated the Torah that they had learned.

There were scholars, as well, who emigrated from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael and they transmitted the Babylonian Torah to the Jews of Eretz Yisrael. Examples are the Amora Rav Kahana, who emigrated to Eretz Yisrael to learn Torah from Rabbi Yochanan, and Rabbi Eleazar (ben Pedas) who also moved to Eretz Yisrael and was appointed as Rabbi Yochanan's replacement after his death. Rav Zeira, as well, emigrated to Eretz Yisrael.

The Second Generation

As mentioned before, the head of the yeshivah of Nehardea was Shmuel. After his death, Rav Nachman (bar Yaakov) was appointed to take his place as rosh yeshivah. The yeshivah didn't remain in Nehardea for long. King Papa bar Netzer completely destroyed the city of Nehardea. The students of the yeshivah fled to Mechuza, where they re-established the yeshivah.

Rav Yehuda was a devoted student of both Rav and Shmuel. There are many instances in Shas where he quotes the words of his teachers. Eventually Rav Yehuda opened his own yeshivah, the famous Pumbedisa yeshivah. This yeshivah also endured for a long time—800 years.

In Sura, where, as mentioned, Rav was rosh yeshivah, the yeshivah was taken over by Rav Huna, after Rav's death.

Rav Chisda and Rav Sheishes were among the great Amora'im of that generation, they taught Torah in the yeshivah in the city of Shilchi on the banks of the river Euphrates.

At that time, there were three large, central yeshivos: Sura, Pumbedisa, and Mechuza. From these yeshivos, together with the many other yeshivos spread across Bavel, the continuation of the Oral Torah was assured for future generations.

The Third Generation

After the death of Rav Yehuda, Rabba (Rabbi Abba bar Nachmani) became the rosh yeshivah of Pumpidisa. Together with him in the yeshivah was Rav Yoseif, who didn't want to accept the role of rosh yeshivah, as long as Rabba was living. After Rabba's death, Rav Yoseif reigned for two-and-a-half years, until his death. During their times, the Yarchei Kallah months reached record breaking numbers: 12,000 students. (See Bava Metzia 86)

The Fourth Generation

After Rabba's death, Rav Zeira, Rabba bar Masna, Abaye, and Rava gathered to decide who should take over. They decided that the scholar who could ask a question that no one could answer should be the rosh yeshivah. Abaye won the challenge (see Horiyos 14). After Abaye's death, Rava took over. The many Talmudic discussions between Abaye and Rava became almost synonymous with the Gemara itself, as the Gemara is referred to as the discussions of Abaye and Rava.

The Fifth Generation

Following Rava's death, small yeshivos began to open up all over Bavel. Rav Papa and Rav Huna were teaching in Narash. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchok became the leader of the Pumbedisa yeshivah for four years. Rav Kahana became the rosh yeshivah of Pum Nehara, and Rav Z'vid became the rosh yeshivah of Nehardea.

The Sixth Generation

As mentioned before, Rav Ashi became rosh yeshivah in Mechasya (which was near Sura). Rav Ashi was a disciple of many scholars from the previous generation: Rav Papa, Rav Huna, Ulla, Rav Papi, and others. His main teacher, however, was Rav Kahana.

R' YITZCHAK BEN YAAKOV ALFASI – RIF

Born: Kila Chamad, Algeria, 1013. | **Died:** Lucena, Spain, 1103.

Notes: Talmudist and Halachic codifier. Student of R' Chananel in Kairouan, active in Fez, North Africa until age 75, when he fled to Spain. He was instrumental in bring Jewish knowledge into Spain as he was the first major Rabbi there. Author of hundreds of Responsa in Arabic, author of **Hilchos HaRif**, a Talmudic code representing the early rulings on the discussions of the Talmud and which was a primary source for the Rambam and the focus of great rabbinic studies in the following centuries. Composed on Seder Moed, Nashim, and Nezikin and tractates Brachot and Niddah

R' SHLOMO YITZCHAKI OF TROYES – RASHI

Born: Troyes, France, 1040. | **Died:** Troyes, France, 1105.

Notes: Traced his ancestry all the way to King David through Hillel the Elder and other Tanaim. Studied in Worms, Germany and settled in Troyes as a respected scholar at age 25. He set out to write a commentary on the Bible focusing on the plain and exact meaning of the text. His lucid and terse commentaries on the Talmud end with Makkot 19b. His work made France at the time the land of the Bible and Talmud while Spain was the land of Jewish poetry and Philosophy. He wrote his commentaries and taught while earning his livelihood as a wine merchant. Arguably, the greatest Biblical commentator of all times. Rabbeinu Tam, his grandson said, that the commentaries on Chumash were nothing short of ruach hakodesh.

R' MOSHE BEN MAIMON--RAMBAM

Born: Cordova, Spain, 1135. | **Died:** Cairo, Egypt, 1204.

Notes: Also known as Maimonides. Great Talmudic commentator, Halachic codifier and philosopher. Born in Spain, lived most of life in Egypt. A physician to the Caliph. Author of **Peirush HaMishnayos**, commentary on the Mishna, **Sefer HaMitzvot**, an enumeration of the 613 commandments and an introduction to **Mishneh Torah**, a monumental and original code of Jewish Law also known as **Yad Chazakah**, Yad having the numerical value of 14 the number of parts in this work, and **Moreh Nevuchim**, a philosophical treatise. Possibly the most important halachic authority among Rishonim. His epithet reads "From Moses to Moses there is no one like Moses", the first Moses referring to Moses Rabbeinu.

R' ASHER BEN YECHIEL –ROSH

Born: Germany, c. 1250. | **Died:** Toledo, Spain, 1327.

Notes: Talmudist and Halachist. Descendent of the Meor HaGolah. Leading student of the

Maharam MRotenburg he was regarded as the leader of Germany after his death. Left Germany in 1303 and was welcomed by the Rashba in Barcelona. Became Rav of Toledo in 1305 where he introduced the methods of the Tosefists and Ashkenazic minhagim. Opposed any attempt to give precedence to secular learning having prohibited such studies under 25 year of age. Author of **Peirush HaRosh**, commentary on the Talmud patterned after the Rif, **Hilchos HaRosh**, compilation of halachas which is the basis for subsequent compilation including the Tur, **Tosefot HaRosh**, where he clarifies the Tosefot, and **Orchot Chaim**, on Ethics.

R' YOSSEF KARO - BEIS YOSSEF

Born: Toledo, Spain, 1488 | **Died:** Safed, Israel, 1575

Notes: Also known as the Mechaber (the Author). One of the most authoritative Talmudists and codifier of Halacha whose decisions have been accepted as binding in Jewish Law. Author of **Kesef Mishneh**, a commentary on the Rambam's Mishneh Torah, **Beis Yossef**, a commentary on the Tur, **Bedek HaBeis**, Rabbi Karo's own proofreading of Beis Yossef, **Shulchan Aruch**, first published in 1569, contains the halachic decisions derived from longer discussion of the Beis Yossef.

בבא מציעא, אלו מציאות

RASHI SCRIPT

ט-ע In certain typefaces, these letters look very similar; they can be distinguished, however, by the fact that the ע has a projection on the outward facing left-hand side.

ל-צ The similarity between these two letters is apt to be particularly confusing, as there is no similarity whatsoever between ל and צ in regular Hebrew script (or print). Note, therefore, that the upper part of the ל in Rashi script points straight up, whereas the upper part of the צ is tilted to the right.

ט-ם These two letters are similar not only in Rashi script, but in printed texts as well. The difference between ם and ט in Ashkenazi cursive writing is the opposite of the difference between these letters in Rashi script. Note, therefore, that the ם in Rashi script is round and smooth at the bottom, while ט has a small projection on the lower left side.

ט	ע	י	י	א	א
פ	פ	כ	כ	ב	ב
ף	ף	ך	ך	ג	ג
צ	צ	ל	ל	ד	ד
ץ	ץ	מ	מ	ה	ה
ק	ק	ם	ם	ו	ו
ר	ר	נ	נ	ז	ז
ש	ש	ן	ן	ח	ח
ת	ת	ס	ס	ט	ט

בבא מציעא, אלו מציאות

משנה כ"א

1. מציאות – Finds
2. להכריז – Announce
3. מפוזרים – Scattered
4. רשות הרבים – Public Domain
5. עיגולי דבילה – Round cakes of pressed figs
6. נחתום – Baker
7. גיזי צמר – Sheerings of wool
8. אניצי פשתן – Bundles of flax
9. לשונות של ארגמן – Tongues of purple wool
10. שינוי – Change or unusual
11. כיצד – How so?
12. חרס – Pottery shard

גמרא כ"א

1. כמה – How much...?
2. קב – A measure of volume. (Between 1.5 – 2.65 quarts.)
3. היכי דמי – What are the circumstances...?
4. נפילה – Fallen
5. אפילו טובא נמי – Even more also
6. הינוח – Placed
7. אפילו בציר מהכי נמי לא – Even less than this also not
8. עסקינן – Dealing with
9. נפיש טרחייהו – Great effort is needed
10. איניש – Person
11. לא הדר אתי ושקיל להו – and does not return to take them

בבא מציעא, אלו מציאות

גמרא כ"א:

1. איתמר – It has been stated [by Amoraim]
2. יאוש שלא מדעת – Abandonment without awareness
3. סימן – Identifying mark
4. כולי עלמא לא פליגי – There is no argument
5. אף על גב – Even though
6. דכי אתא לידיה – Because when it came into [the finder's] hand
7. מימר אמר – he says
8. יהבנא – I will give
9. שקילנא – Take it
10. זוטו של ים – By the tides of the sea
11. בשלוליתו של נהר – By the surge of a river
12. רחמנא שרייה – The Merciful One permitted it
13. כדבעינן למימר לקמן – As we intend to explain below
14. מהשתא – From now
15. יאוש – Despair or Abandonment: Refers to the owner's despair of recovering an article that was lost or stolen. A lost article whose owner has given up hope of its recovery is considered ownerless (הפקר) and may be acquired by the finder. If an article is lost in a natural disaster, e.g., a flood, it is considered as if the owner despaired of its recovery immediately. With reference to stolen property, the owner's despair of the article's return removes his ownership over the property and allows it to be acquired by the person to whom it is given or sold by the thief. In such a case, the article itself need not be returned to its original owner. However, the thief himself is required to return the object if he has it, or to reimburse the owner for its value.
16. יאוש שלא מדעת - Abandonment without awareness or Unknowing despair. The Sages debated whether an article lost by a person, which he could never hope to recover, is immediately considered as ownerless (הפקר) even though the owner has not yet become aware of his loss. Some Sages maintain that as soon as the article is lost, it may be acquired by another person. The halacha, however, is that until the owner discovers (and despairs of) his loss, the article remains his property.
17. מאימתי – From when
18. לקט – Gleanings refers to the one or two stalks that fall from the reaper's hand while he cuts the grain. The Torah prohibits him to retrieve these and decrees that they be left for the poor.
19. משילכו – From when they go through
20. הנמושות – The rummagers
21. סבי דאזלי אתיגרא – The elderly poor who walk with a cane
22. לקוטא בתר לקוטי – Those who glean after the gleaners
23. ואמאי – And why?
24. איכא עניים בדוכתא אחריתא – There are the poor in other places
25. הכא – here

בבא מציעא, אלו מציאות

26. מעיקרא – from the very beginning
27. קציעות – Cut figs
28. נוטה – lean
29. תחתיה – beneath it
30. בשלמא – Now, it is understandable
31. נתרא – drop
32. הואיל – since
33. חזותו – its appearance

גמרא כ"ב

34. לסטים מזויין – Armed Robber
35. תרי גווני גזלן – Two kinds of robbers
36. שטף נהר – River washed away
37. קוריו עציו ואבניו – Beams, wood, or stones
38. טעמא – The reason
39. מבעלים – The owner
40. הכא במאי עסקינן – With what case are we dealing here
41. להציל – To save
42. מרדפין – Chasing
43. על ידי הדחק – with difficulty