

Judaism

History, Belief and Practice

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CHAPTER 18

Rebellion Against Rome

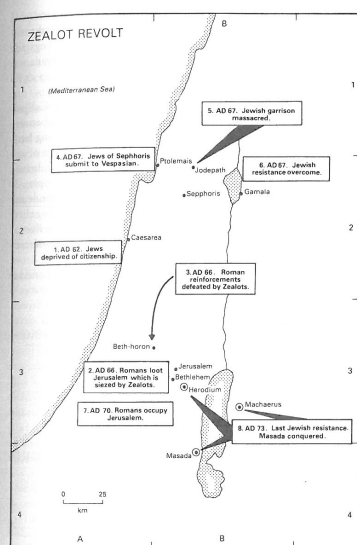
Timeline:

4 BCE Division of Herod's kingdom between Herod's three sons	c. 30 Crucifixion of Jesus
6 CE Roman government rules over Judaea	37–41 Caligula Roman emperor
Early first century CE Death of Hillel and Shammai	41–54 Claudius Roman emperor
c. 20 BCE–c. 50 CE Philo	66–70 Jewish revolt against Rome
14–37 Tiberius Roman emperor	74 Fall of Masada
26–36 Pontius Pilate Roman governor of Judaea	70s Sanhedrin established in Yavneh

After Herod's death, Augustus divided Judaea between three of Herod's sons: Archelaus as *tetrarch* (4 BCE to 6 CE) was to rule the central region of Judaea including Samaria; Herod Antipas as *tetrarch* (4 BCE to 39 CE) was given Galilee and Peraea; Philip also as *tetrarch* (4 BCE to 34 CE) was to reign over the newly acquired lands in Southern Syria. Archelaus' rule lasted only ten years; he was deposed and exiled by Augustus after he received complaints from Jews and Samaritans about his high-handedness. Judaea thereby became a small-scale Roman province administered by governors with the title of prefect (later called procurator). When the Romans instituted a census of the population, they provoked Jewish resentment since census-taking was contrary to Jewish law. Under the leadership of Judas the Galilean, a resistance movement (the Zealots) became active. At the same time there appeared a number of messianic aspirants who were regarded with suspicion by the authorities. The Sadducees, however, collaborated with the Romans who continued to appoint high priests from their ranks. Under the prefects, the Sanhedrin was resuscitated (in place of Herod's advisory body) and played an important role in the administration of the country.

Following his accession in 14 CE, the emperor Tiberius relied more and more on the advice of Sejanus, the commander of his bodyguard. Sejanus appears to have been ill-disposed to the Jewish population since two Jews – Hasinai and Hanilai – had set up an autonomous community at Nehardea in Parthian Babylonia. Sejanus feared that such aspirations might spread to Judaea. The fourth prefect of Judaea, Pontius Pilate (25–36 CE) experienced a number of difficulties with the Jewish community. They regarded his military standards bearing medallions of the emperor as idolatrous. Following demonstrations in Jerusalem, protesters encamped in front of Pilate's official residence at Caesarea Maritima and then in the stadium. Pilate also caused considerable consternation when he used a Jewish religious fund to pay for an aqueduct, and again when he set up gilded shields inscribed with both his and the emperor's names in the former palace of Herod.

Under Tiberius' nephew and successor Caligula (37–41 CE), the Jews of Alexandria became embroiled in a conflict with the Roman authorities. These Jews had put forward a claim for full citizenship rights, thereby evoking a violent reaction from the gentile



Map 25 Zealot revolt

Greek community. Mobs broke into synagogues and set up statues of the emperor. The Roman governor of Egypt, Aulus Avilius Flaccus, ordered thirty-eight members of the Jewish council to be flogged in the theatre while Jewish women were forced to eat pork. To calm the situation Agrippa I – the grandson of Herod who had been appointed king after the death of Philip and the disgrace of Herod Antipas – secured the recall of Avilius Flaccus.

In 40 CE both the Greek and Jewish communities sent delegations to Rome to plead their cases before Caligula. According to an account written by the leader of the Jewish group, the neo-Platonic philosopher Philo from Alexandria, Caligula regarded the Jews' failure to recognize his divinity as lunacy. Meanwhile, at Jamnia on the coast of Judaea, the Greek community erected an altar in honour of Caligula. The Jewish community of Jamnia regarded this act as a deliberate

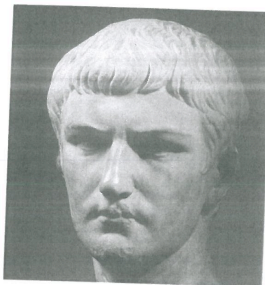


Figure 18 Portrait of Caligula, 12–41 AD, marble bust. Copyright The Art Archive/Museo Capitolino Rome/Dagli Orti.

provocation, and destroyed it. As a consequence, the emperor and his advisers decided to revive the policy of Antiochus IV Epiphanes: the Temple and all synagogues were to be transformed into shrines of the imperial cult. Orders were given to the governor of Syria, Publius Petronius, to construct a large statue of Caligula in the guise of Jupiter to be set up in Jerusalem. The governor decided he would need two

legions to perform this task, but Agrippa I persuaded him not to carry out his plans on the condition that the Jews would cease trying to stop gentiles from engaging in imperial worship. A short time later Caligula was murdered, and the Jews celebrated this day as a joyful feast.

Claudius (41–54 CE) who succeeded Caligula immediately had to deal with renewed conflict between Jews and Greeks in Alexandria. In his surviving letter to both groups, he urged them to be tolerant of one another; specifically he urged the Jews not to behave with contempt towards the gods of other peoples. In Judaea itself Claudius abolished direct Roman rule and allowed the country the status of a self-governing client kingdom. Agrippa I was permitted to add the Roman province of Judaea to the territories he had already been given where he reigned as king.

But Agrippa I's death in 44 CE ended this period of relative tranquillity as Judaea reverted to the status of a Roman province. Under the governors that followed, various problems became apparent: tensions developed between the rich and the poor; rebels, self-styled prophets and holy men roamed the country; and insurrections occurred in many localities. The procurator Tiberius Julius Alexander (46–48 CE) had to deal with an extensive famine; Ventidius Cumanus (48–52 CE) witnessed riots, a massacre at the Temple and conflict between Samaritans and Galileans; and Antonius Felix (52–60 CE) was confronted by bands of freedom fighters and miracle workers who preached a message of nationalism and messianic expectation.

SOURCES

Philo

The Alexandrian philosopher Philo (c. 20 BCE–50 CE) attempted to combine Jewish and Hellenistic thought in presenting his interpretation of Scripture.

For God, not wishing to come down to the external senses, sends his own words (*logoi*) or angels in order to give assistance to those who love virtue. They attend like physicians to the diseases of the soul, apply themselves to heal them, offer sacred recommendations like sacred laws, and invite humans to practise the duties inculcated by them.

Like the trainers of wrestlers, they implant in their pupils strength and power and irresistible vigour. Very properly therefore, when he (Jacob) arrived at the external sense, he was represented no longer as meeting God, but only the divine word.

(Philo, *On Dreams*, 1:12, in JM, p. 56–57)

For Philo angels are representative of God among human beings. Using this theoretical framework, he expounded the meaning of Scripture where God is depicted as acting in the world:

These men pray to be nourished by the word (*logos*) of God. However, Jacob, raising his head above the word, says that he is nourished by God himself. His words are as follows: 'The God in whom my father Abraham and Isaac were well pleased, the God who has nourished me from my youth to this day; the angel who delivered me from all my evils, bless these children.' Being a symbol of a perfect disposition, he now thinks God himself his nourisher, and not the word; he speaks of the angel, which is the word, as the physician of his evils, thereby speaking most naturally. The good things which he has previously mentioned are pleasing to him, in as much as the living and true God gave them to him face to face. However, the secondary good things

have been given to him by the angels and by the word of God. On this account I think that God alone gives men pure good health which is not preceded by any disease in the body; but that health which is an escape from disease, he gives through the medium of skill and medical science. It is attributed to science, and whoever can apply it skilfully even though in truth it is God himself who heals both by these means, and without these means. The same is the case with regard to the soul – the good things, namely, food, he gives to men by his power alone, but those which contain in them a deliverance from evil he gives by means of his angels and his word.

(Philo, *Allegories of Sacred Laws*, 3.62, in JM, p. 57)

DISCUSSION

1. What was the nature of the Jewish revolt against Roman rule?
2. How did the creation of the academy at Jamnia succeed in preserving the Jewish faith?

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CHAPTER 20

Roman Jewish War and Aftermath

Timeline:

66–70 Jewish revolt against Rome	70s Sanhedrin assemblies at Yavneh (Jabneh)
69–79 Vespasian Roman emperor	79–81 Titus Roman emperor
74 Fall of Masada	

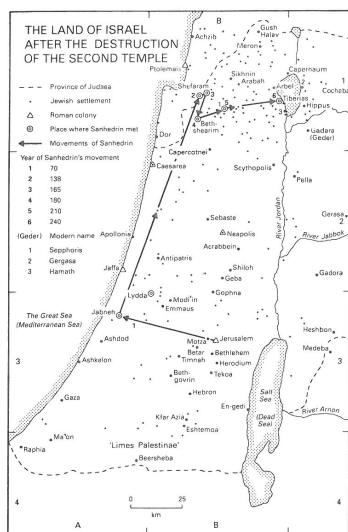
Two decades of procurators after the death of Agrippa I marked a period of constant friction between Roman rulers and the Jewish population. Under the procurator Florus (64–66 CE), fighting took place between Greeks and Jews in Caesarea Maritima. The procurator adopted an anti-Jewish stance and allowed his troops to riot in Jerusalem and execute a number of eminent Jews. After Florus returned to Caesarea, pro-Roman Jews as well as a small Roman legion in Judaea were killed by Jewish rebels and sacrifices on behalf of the Roman people and the emperor were stopped. To quell this revolt, the governor of Syria and an army marched to Jerusalem. He began a siege of the Temple, but was met with resistance and retreated to the sea coast.

This success drove out the Roman military presence in Judaea and in its place a provisional government was established. To pacify the country the general Vespasian, acting under the emperor Nero's orders, assembled an army in the north in 67 CE. Sepphoris in Galilee refused to join in the revolt, and the Jewish rebels were unable to stand against the Roman legions. Though the fortress of Jotapata held out for forty-seven days, it eventually fell and the Romans slaughtered most of the population. During the winter of 67–68 CE the Zealots overthrew the moderate government in Jerusalem. Those suspected of aiding the Romans were arrested or killed, and anti-Roman groups occupied the city. But in March 67 CE, Vespasian marched against the Jewish population. He subjugated Transjordan, western Judaea, Idumea,

Samaria and Jericho. The only parts of the country remaining in Jewish hands were Jerusalem and several Herodian fortresses in other parts of the country. When Nero committed suicide in 68 CE the Roman military effort ceased.

During the next year Roman armies in different parts of the empire elevated three generals to the throne; in July 69 CE the eastern provinces proclaimed Vespasian. Before long Vespasian put his son Titus in charge of the Judaeae campaign. Just before Passover in April 70 CE, Titus encamped outside the walls of Jerusalem. In late May the Romans occupied the newer part of Jerusalem, north of the Temple. By the end of July they took the citadel adjacent to the Temple; on 6 August the sacrifices were suspended. A week later the porticos surrounding the Temple courtyards were burned, and on 28 August the Temple went up in flames during the fighting. After another month the Romans captured the upper city west of the Temple, and thus the entire city was taken although with considerable effort. All resistance ceased, and Titus ordered that Jerusalem be devastated except for the towers of Herod's palace.

For the rest of the year Titus held celebrations in various cities of the Near East during which Jewish prisoners were thrown to wild animals or were forced to fight with gladiators. In 71 CE, Titus and Vespasian held a triumphal procession in which ritual objects and rebel leaders were exhibited; the surviving Arch of Titus in Rome depicts the *menorah* and other objects



Map 26 The land of Israel after the destruction of the Second Temple

that were taken from the Temple. Over the next few years the Romans captured the remaining fortresses including Masada which fell in April 74 CE when its defenders committed suicide rather than surrender to the Romans. The historian Josephus describes the end of the rebels in vivid detail, and the tale has been an inspiration to Jews struggling against oppression ever since. Archaeologists have excavated the site and have learned a great deal both about King Herod's original fortress and the day-to-day existence of the revolutionaries.

The Roman conquest of Judaea brought about enormous destruction and the enslavement of thousands of Jews. Nevertheless, reconstruction began immediately and the Jews continued as the largest population in the country. Though the Romans heavily taxed the Jewish community, they recognized Judaism as a lawful religion, and exempted Jews from emperor worship and other religious duties. During this period it appears that the Sadducees and Essenes disappeared. In their place the Pharisees became the dominant religious group led by Rabbai Johanan ben

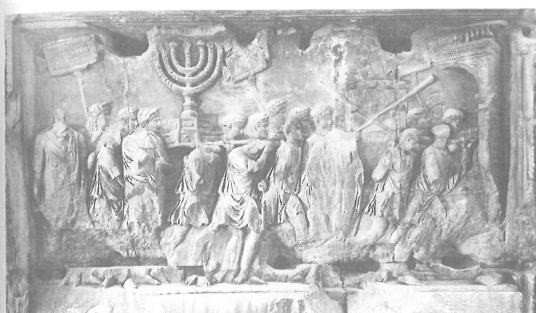


Figure 20 Arch of Titus – the triumphal arch on the Roman Forum built 81 CE in honour of Titus's victory over the Jews in 70 CE. Detail shows a triumphal procession with the seven-branched candelabrum of the Temple of Solomon. Copyright AKG, London.

Zakkai, who escaped from Jerusalem during the siege. In the town of Yavneh near the Judaeen sea coast he assembled a group of distinguished Pharisaic scholars (known as *Tannaim*). There these sages engaged in the development of the legal tradition. Under Johanan ben Zakkai and later in the century under Rabban Gamaliel II, the rabbinic assembly (Sanhedrin) summarized the teachings of the earlier schools of Hillel and Shammai. In addition, they determined the canon of Scripture, organized the daily prayers, and transferred to the synagogue some of the observances of the Temple such as the rituals associated with the pilgrim festivals, the Passover *seder* and the blowing of the ram's horn at the New Year. They also instituted a procedure of rabbinic ordination (*semikhah*).

Though this body was presided over by a head (*nasi*), the rabbis collectively reached decisions which were binding on the populace. Its members were drawn from all sectors of society and they attracted numerous students to hear their oral teachings. The first generation of sages (including such figures as R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, R. Elazar ben Azaria and R. Joshua ben Haninah) was followed by a second generation of eminent scholars such as R. Hananiah ben Taradion, R. Tarphon and R. Ishmael ben Elisha. The most prominent scholar of the first decades of the second century was R. Akiva ben Joseph (50–135 CE) who was an exegete, mystic and legal systematizer as well as a pioneer of a method of Scriptural interpretation based on the view that no word in Scripture is redundant.

SOURCES

Josephus

Josephus served as a commander of the Jewish army which rebelled against Rome in the first century CE. Later he composed a history of the Roman War. The following is a speech which Josephus puts into the mouth of one of the Jewish commanders in this struggle:

And as for those who have died in the war, we should deem them blessed, for they are dead in defending, and not in betraying, their liberty; but as to the multitude of those that have submitted to the Romans, who would not pity their condition? And who would not make haste to die before he would suffer the same miseries? Where is now that great city, the metropolis of the Jewish nation, which was fortified by so many walls round about, which had so many fortresses and large towers to defend it, which could hardly contain the instruments prepared for war, and

which had so many myriads of men to fight for it? Where is this city that God Himself inhabited? It is now demolished to the very foundations; and has nothing but that monument of it preserved, I mean the camp of those that have destroyed it, which still dwells upon its ruins. Some unfortunate old men also lie upon the ashes of the Temple, and a few women are there preserved alive by the enemy for our bitter shame and reproach.

Josephus, *War of the Jews*, 7:8, in WI, p. 13.

DISCUSSION

1. What effect did the destruction of the Second Temple have on Jewish life?
2. Discuss the process whereby the *Tannaim* expanded Biblical law.

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CHAPTER 21

Jews in the Roman Empire

Timeline:

114–117 Revolt of Jews in Egypt, Cyrene, Cyprus	235–283 Political and economic disorder of Roman empire
117–138 Hadrian Roman emperor	284–305 Diocletian Roman emperor establishes order. Persecution of Christians
132–135 Jewish revolt in Judaea under Simeon Bar Kochba	306–337 Constantine Roman emperor makes Christianity the legal religion of the Roman empire
135 Beginning of anti-Jewish persecutions in Palestine	Early 4th century First restrictions on Jewish legal rights
140s or 150s End of anti-Jewish persecutions. Sanhedrin reassembles in Galilee	Middle 4th century Redaction of the Palestinian <i>Talmud</i> begins in Galilee
c. 170–217 Judah I is <i>nasi</i> . <i>Mishnah</i> compiled	527–565 Justinian Roman emperor conquers western Mediterranean. Justinian Code
193–235 Severian dynasty of Roman emperors	
225–255 Sanhedrin reassembles in Tiberius	

Despite the devastating victory of the Romans, Jewish revolts continued into the second century CE. When the emperor Trajan (98–117 CE) invaded the east up to the Persian coast, uprisings among Babylonian Jews took place. Moreover, riots occurred in many parts of the Roman diaspora. Between 114 and 117 CE Jewish centres in Alexandria, Cyrenaica, Egypt and Cyprus were decimated. After Trajan's death his successor Hadrian (117–138 CE) abandoned the effort to extend the empire eastwards, leaving the Jewish diaspora in Babylonia free from Roman domination.

In Judaea a messianic revolt was led in 132 CE by Simeon Bar Kochba which appears to have been aided by Rabbi Akiva and other scholars from Yavneh and touched off by Hadrian's programme of Hellenization. This Jewish revolt was inspired by the conviction that God would empower the Jews to regain control of their country and rebuild the Temple. Yet despite the valiant efforts on the part of the rebels, the Romans crushed this uprising. In addition to archaeological evidence –

including coins issued by Bar Kochba's government as well as letters sent to him by deputies – the third-century historian Dio Cassius provides information about this period. According to his account, hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed and Judaea was almost completely devastated. In 135 CE the rebellion came to an end with the fall of Bethar, south-west of Jerusalem. According to tradition, this event occurred on the 9th of *Av*, the same day as the destruction of the First and Second Temples, later commemorated by *Tisha B'Av*. During the course of the campaign Bar Kochba was killed in battle, and Rabbi Akiva was later flayed alive.

Following the Bar Kochba war, Hadrian outlawed Judaism throughout the land, but after his death in 138 CE prohibitions against the religion were rescinded. As far as the Jews were concerned, their defeat under Bar Kochba initiated a conciliatory policy towards the Roman authorities resulting in the flourishing of rabbinic learning. The centre of Jewish life was

transferred to Galilee, and under the disciples of Rabbi Akiva, the Sanhedrin reassembled at Usha. The outstanding scholars of this period included Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel II (who served as *nasi*), R. Elazar ben Shammua, R. Jose ben Halafai, R. Judah bar Illai, R. Simeon bar Yohai and R. Meir. Under these sages, the Sanhedrin emerged as the decisive force in Jewish life; through its deliberations the legal decisions of previous generations were systematized and disseminated.

By the third century economic conditions in Galilee had improved and the Jewish population attained a harmonious relationship with the Roman administration. The Severan dynasty of Roman emperors entrusted the *nasi* with the authority to appoint judges for Jewish courts, collect taxes and send messengers to diaspora communities. The most important *nasi* of this epoch was Judah ha-Nasi whose main achievement was the redaction of the *Mishnah*. This volume consisted of the discussions and rulings of scholars whose teachings had been transmitted orally. The *Mishnah* itself is almost entirely halachic in content, consisting of six sections (or orders) comprising a series of chapters (known as tractates) on specific subjects.

The first order (Seeds) begins with a discussion of benedictions and prayers and continues with the other tractates dealing with various matters (such as the tithes of the harvest to be given to priests, Levites and the poor). The second order (Set Feasts) contains twelve tractates dealing with the Sabbath, Passover, the Day of Atonement and other festivals as well as shekel dues and the proclamation of the New Year. In the third section (Women) seven tractates consider matters affecting women (such as betrothal, marriage contracts and divorce). The fourth section (Damages) contains ten tractates concerning civil law: property rights, legal procedures, compensation for damage, ownership of lost objects, treatment of employees, sale and purchase of land, Jewish courts, punishments, criminal proceedings, etc. In addition a tractate of rabbinic moral maxims (*Sayings of the Fathers*) is included in this order. In the fifth section (Holy Things) there are eleven tractates on sacrificial offerings and other temple matters. The final section (Purifications) treats in twelve tractates the various types of ritual uncleanness and methods of purification. According to some scholars this comprehensive collection of

Jewish law based on Scriptural precedent was indirectly influenced by a similar codification of Roman law undertaken by Latin jurists in the reign of Hadrian.

The Sanhedrin which had been so fundamental in the compilation of this work met in several cities in Galilee, but later settled in the Roman district of Tiberias. The *nasi* remained the head of the Sanhedrin but other scholars established their own schools in other parts of the country where they applied the *Mishnah* to everyday life together with old rabbinic teachings (*beraitot*) which had not been incorporated in the *Mishnah*.

By the 230s, the Roman empire was encountering numerous difficulties including inflation, population decline and a lack of technological development to support the army. In the next few decades rival generals struggled against one another for power and the government became increasingly inefficient. During this time of upheaval, the Jewish community underwent a parallel decline as a result of famine, epidemics and plunder.

At the end of the third century CE, the emperor Diocletian (284–305 CE) inaugurated reforms that strengthened the empire. Under his reign the republican veneer of Roman rule was replaced by an absolutist structure. An elaborate system of prices, offices and occupations was introduced to halt economic decline. In addition, Diocletian introduced measures to repress the spread of Christianity which had become a serious challenge to the official religion of the empire. Diocletian's successor, Constantine the Great (306–337 CE), reversed his predecessor's hostile stance and extended official toleration to Christians in 313. By this stage Christianity had succeeded in gaining a substantial number of adherents among the urban population; eventually Constantine became more involved in Church affairs, and just before his death he himself was baptized. The Christianization of the empire continued throughout the century and by the early 400s, Christianity was fully established as the state religion. This merger of the Roman government and the Church did not affect the legal rights of the Jews, but it did provide an important channel for anti-Jewish hostility.

By the first half of the fourth century, Jewish scholars in Israel had collected together the teachings of generations of rabbis in the academies of Tiberias,



Figure 21 Declaration of loyalty by the 'Parnas' of a synagogue, who also served as the municipal customs director for the Roman empire. Inscription on stone found in Dunauvaros, Pannonia, third century. Pannonia was a province in the Roman empire corresponding to present-day western Hungary, parts of eastern Austria, Slovenia and north Yugoslavia. Copyright Bath Hitefutooth Photo Archive.

Caesarea and Sepphoris. These extended discussions of the *Mishnah* became the Palestinian *Talmud*. The text of this multi-volume work covered four sections of the *Mishnah* (Seeds, Set Feasts, Women and Damages) but here and there various tractates were missing. No doubt the discussions in these academies included matters in these missing tractates, but it is not known how far the recording, editing and arrangement of these sections had progressed before they were lost. The views of these Palestinian teachers (*Amoraim*) had an important influence on scholars in Babylonia, though this work never attained the same prominence as that of the Babylonian *Talmud*.

Although Jewish scholarship prospered during this time, the Jews were facing new legal handicaps.

When Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman empire, Judaism was relegated to a position of legal inferiority. Imperial laws of the middle of the fourth century prohibited conversion to Judaism as well as intermarriage between Jews and Christians. At the beginning of the fifth century Jews were formally barred from government positions, and this attitude continued throughout the rest of the century and was reinforced by the emperor Justinian's (525–565 CE) decrees. The official stance of the Church was to attempt to bring Jews to the true faith. Judaism was allowed to continue because the existence of the Jewish people was seen as a testimony to the truth of Scripture. According to Church teaching, the Jews would eventually recognize Jesus' messiahship and sovereignty.

SOURCES

Chain of Tradition

Johanan ben Zakkai managed to escape from Jerusalem during the siege. He settled in the town of Yavneh and gathered around him a group of scholars (*Tannaim*):

Moses received the Torah on Mount Sinai and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders and the elders to the prophets and the prophets to the men of the Great Assembly . . . Simon the righteous was one of the last members of the Great Assembly . . . Antigonus of Solcho received the Torah from Simon the Righteous . . . Yose ben Yoezer of Zeredah and Yose ben Yohanan of Jerusalem received the Torah from them . . . Joshua ben Perahyah and Nittai the Arbelite received the Torah from them . . . Judah ben

Tabbai and Simeon ben Shetah received the Torah from them . . . Shemayah and Avtalyon received the Torah from them . . . Hillel and Shammai received the Torah from them . . . Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai received the Torah from Hillel and Shammai; he used to say, 'If you have learned much Torah, do not give yourself any credit, for this was the purpose of your creation.' (*Mishnah, Sayings of the Fathers*, 1:1 in SRJ, p. 63)

Rabbi Eliezer

In their debates about the meaning of law, scholars relied on argument rather than appealing to miraculous events.

On that day Rabbi Eliezer brought forward all the arguments in the world to support his view, but they refused to accept them. He said to them: 'If the *halakhah* agrees with me, let this carob tree prove it'. The carob tree was uprooted and hurled from its place a hundred cubits. . . . 'No proof can be brought from a carob tree', they said to him. Again, he said to them: 'If the *halakhah* agrees with me, let this stream of water prove it'. The stream flowed backwards. 'No proof can be brought from a stream of water', said they. Again he said to them: 'If the *halakhah* agrees with me, let the walls of the school house prove it'. The walls started to lean as if about to fall. Rabbi Joshua rebuked them and said: 'When the pupils of the Sages are disputing about *halakhah* what business have you to interfere?' The walls did

not fall, for the sake of Rabbi Joshua's honour, nor did they resume the upright for the sake of Rabbi Eliezer's honour . . . Again Rabbi Eliezer said: 'If the *halakhah* agrees with me, let it be proved from heaven'. A *bat kol* (voice from heaven) went forth and said: 'Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in every case the *halakhah* agrees with him?' But Rabbi Joshua stood up and exclaimed: 'It is not from heaven!' (Deut. 30:12) What did he mean by this? Rabbi Jeremiah said: 'He meant: The Torah has already been given on Mount Sinai, so we pay no attention to a *bat kol*, since you long ago wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai: "You must follow the majority opinion"' (Exod. 23:2).

(*Talmud, Baba Mezia*, 59a-b in TSSJ, pp. 60-61)

Judah Ha-Nasi

The *Mishnah* was compiled by Judah Ha-Nasi who is generally referred to as Rabbi. His learning and sanctity were undisputed:

At the time of his dying, Rabbi raised ten fingers to Heaven and said, 'Lord of the Universe, you know and it has been revealed to you that I have laboured in the study of the Torah with my ten fingers and that I did not enjoy any worldly advantage even with my little finger. May there be peace in my resting place, according to your will.' A voice from Heaven echoed, saying, 'He shall enter into peace.'

(*Talmud, Ketuvot*, CIV, in SRJ, p. 68)

Mishnah

The *Mishnah* was compiled in the second century CE by Judah ha-Nasi. It contains a wide range of oral law formulated by early sages:

These are the ways in which the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel differ in the conduct of a meal. The School of Shammai first say the benediction of the day and then the benediction for the wine, whereas the School of Hillel first say the benediction for the wine and then the one for the day.

The School of Shammai say: First wash the hands and then mix the cup.

The School of Hillel say: First mix the cup and then wash the hands.

The School of Shammai say: A man wipes his hands with a napkin and then lays it on the table, but the School of Hillel say: He lays it on a cushion.

(*Mishnah, Berakot*, VIII, SRJ, p. 66)

In the *Mishnah* the usual format is that the minority opinion is placed first followed by the accepted view:

If a man divorces his wife because of her bad reputation, he may not take her back; and if because of a vow, he may not take her back. R. Judah says: If he divorced her because of a vow that many people know about, he may not take her back, but if only a few people know about it, then he may take her back. R. Meir says: He may not take her back if the vow needed the opinion of a sage to revoke, but for any vow that he could revoke himself, he could take her back . . . R. Jose b. R. Judah said: Once in Sidon a man said to his wife, 'I will give everything away if I do not divorce you!' and he disgraced her. But the sages allowed him to take her back as a precaution for the good of everyone. If a man divorces his wife because she is barren, R. Judah says: He may not take her back. But the sages say: He may take her back.

(*Mishnah, Gittin*, IV, SRJ, p. 66)