



Jewish History 7

Rabbi Daniel Levine

DLevine21@gmail.com

Timeline of the Rabbis

- Exilic and Second Temple Decentralization + Oral Torah
- Pharisees (Anshi Knesset Hagedolah)
- Zugot
- Temple Destroyed
- Tanaim (Mishna)
- Rabbi Judah the Prince (200 CE)
- Amoraim (Gemara) (200 - 500 CE)
- Rav Ashi and Revina
- Sevoraim/Stammim (500-700 CE)

Mishna Avot 1:1

Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua



to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly.

Tanna debei Eliyahu Zuta

They told a parable, to what can it be compared, to a flesh and blood king who had two servants, and he had great love for them, and he gave each one a kab of wheat, and to each a bundle of flax. The wise one took the flax and wove a nice tablecloth, and took the wheat and ground it, sifted it, kneaded it, baked it, and set it on the table, and put the fine tablecloth on it, and left it until the king should come. The foolish one did nothing. After a time, the king came and said to his 2 servants- my sons, bring me what I gave you. One of them took out the bread of fine flour with a fine tablecloth, and one of them took out the wheat in a box and the bundle of flax. Woe for such shame, woe for such embarrassment. Which one was more beloved? I would say, the one who took out the bread on the table with the fine tablecloth...

So too, when God gave the Torah to Israel, he gave it only as wheat to make fine flour, and flax to make a cloth.

Talmud Temurah 14b

Those who write *halakhot* are considered like those who burn the Torah, and one who learns from written *halakhot* does not receive the reward of studying Torah

Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani, the disseminator for Reish Lakish, expounded as follows: One verse says: “Write you these words,” and one verse says, i.e., it states later in that same verse: “For by the mouth of these words” (Exodus 34:27). These phrases serve to say to you: Words that were taught orally you may not recite in writing, and words that are written you may not recite orally, i.e., by heart.

And they did so because they taught as follows: Since one cannot remember the Oral Law without writing it down, it is permitted to violate the *halakha*, as derived from the verse: “It is time to work for the Lord; they have made void your Torah” (Psalms 119:126). They said it is better to uproot a single *halakha* of the Torah, i.e., the prohibition of writing down the Oral Torah, and thereby ensure that the Torah is not forgotten from the Jewish people entirely.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

(18) If a man has a wayward and defiant son, who does not heed his father or mother and does not obey them even after they discipline him,

(19) his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the public place of his community.

(20) They shall say to the elders of his town, “This son of ours is disloyal and defiant; he does not heed us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.”

(21) Thereupon the men of his town shall stone him to death. Thus you will sweep out evil from your midst: all Israel will hear and be afraid

Talmud Sanhedrin 68B

Mishna: If his father desires [to have him punished], but not his mother; or the reverse, he is not treated as a 'stubborn a rebellious son', unless they both desire it. R. Judah said: if his mother is not fit for his father, he does not become a 'stubborn and rebellious son'.

GEMARA. What is meant by 'NOT FIT'? ... he means not physically like his father. It has been taught likewise: R. Judah said: If his mother is not like his father in voice, appearance and stature, he does not become a rebellious son. Why so? — The Torah says, he will not obey our voice, and since they must be alike in voice, they must be also in appearance and stature.

There never has been a 'stubborn and rebellious son', and never will be. Why then was the law written? That you may study it and receive reward.

Baba Metziah 84a

One day, Rabbi Yoḥanan was bathing in the Jordan River. Reish Lakish saw him and jumped into the Jordan, pursuing him. At that time, Reish Lakish was the leader of a band of marauders.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Reish Lakish: Your strength is fit for Torah study. Reish Lakish said to him: Your beauty is fit for women. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: If you return to the pursuit of Torah, I will give you my sister in marriage, who is more beautiful than I am. Reish Lakish accepted upon himself to study Torah. Subsequently, Reish Lakish wanted to jump back out of the river to bring back his clothes, but he was unable to return, as he had lost his physical strength as soon as he accepted the responsibility to study Torah upon himself.

Rabbi Yoḥanan taught Reish Lakish Bible, and taught him Mishna, and turned him into a great man. Eventually, Reish Lakish became one of the outstanding Torah scholars of his generation.

One day the Sages of the study hall were engaging in a dispute concerning the following *baraita*: With regard to the sword, the knife, the dagger, the spear, a hand sickle, and a harvest sickle, from when are they susceptible to ritual impurity? The *baraita* answers: It is from

the time of the completion of their manufacture, which is the *halakha* with regard to metal vessels in general.

These Sages inquired: And when is the completion of their manufacture? Rabbi Yoḥanan says: It is from when one fires these items in the furnace. Reish Lakish said: It is from when one scours them in water, after they have been fired in the furnace.

Rabbi Yoḥanan said to Reish Lakish: A bandit knows about his banditry, i.e., you are an expert in weaponry because you were a bandit in your youth. Reish Lakish said to Rabbi Yoḥanan: What benefit did you provide me by bringing me close to Torah? There, among the bandits, they called me: Leader of the bandits, and here, too, they call me: Leader of the bandits. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: I provided benefit to you, as I brought you close to God, under the wings of the Divine Presence.

As a result of the quarrel, Rabbi Yoḥanan was offended, which in turn affected Reish Lakish, who fell ill. Rabbi Yoḥanan's sister, who was Reish Lakish's wife, came crying to Rabbi Yoḥanan, begging that he pray for Reish Lakish's recovery. She said to him: Do this for the sake of my children, so that they should have a father. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to her the verse: "Leave your fatherless children, I will rear them" (Jeremiah 49:11), i.e., I will take care of them. She said to him: Do so for the sake of my widowhood. He said to her the rest of the verse: "And let your widows trust in Me."

Ultimately, Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, Reish Lakish, died. Rabbi Yoḥanan was sorely pained over losing him. The Rabbis said: Who will go to calm Rabbi Yoḥanan's mind and comfort him over his loss? They said: Let

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat go, as his statements are sharp, i.e., he is clever and will be able to serve as a substitute for Reish Lakish.

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat went and sat before Rabbi Yoḥanan. With regard to every matter that Rabbi Yoḥanan would say, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat would say to him: There is a ruling which is taught in a *baraita* that supports your opinion. Rabbi Yoḥanan said to him: Are you comparable to the son of Lakish? In my discussions with the son of Lakish, when I would state a matter, he would raise twenty-four difficulties against me in an attempt to disprove my claim, and I would answer him with twenty-four answers, and the *halakha* by itself would become broadened and clarified. And yet you say to me: There is a ruling which is taught in a *baraita* that supports your opinion. Do I not know that what I say is good? Being rebutted by Reish Lakish served a purpose; your bringing proof to my statements does not.

Rabbi Yoḥanan went around, rending his clothing, weeping and saying: Where are you, son of Lakish? Where are you, son of Lakish? Rabbi Yoḥanan screamed until his mind was taken from him, i.e., he went insane. The Rabbis prayed and requested for God to have mercy on him and take his soul, and Rabbi Yoḥanan died.

Chagigah 3b

Torah scholars sit in many groups and engage in Torah study. There are often debates among these groups, as some of these Sages render an object or person ritually impure and these render it pure; these prohibit

an action and these permit it; these deem an item invalid and these deem it valid.

Lest a person say: Now, how can I study Torah when it contains so many different opinions? The verse states that they are all “given from one shepherd.” One God gave them; one leader, i.e., Moses, said them from the mouth of the Master of all creation, Blessed be He, as it is written: “And God spoke all these words” (Exodus 20:1)

So too you, the student, make your ears like a funnel and acquire for yourself an understanding heart to hear both the statements of those who render objects ritually impure and the statements of those who render them pure; the statements of those who prohibit actions and the statements of those who permit them; the statements of those who deem items invalid and the statements of those who deem them valid.

