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THE LETTER OF SHERIRA GAON

Translated by

Isaac Neuman

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
requirements for the Master of Hebrew  
Letters Degree and Ordination

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

Cincinnati June, 1959

Referee,

Professor - Alexander Guttman

## Content of Letter

1. How was the Mishnah written?
2. What criteria was used in arranging the chronological order of the tractates as we now have them?
  - 2b. Why is the tractate of Sukka arranged before Betsa and both of these before Rosh Ha-Shana.
3. When was the Tosefta written? After the Mishnah was completed or simultaneously with it?
  - 3b. Why did not Rabbi Juda Hanassi include these Mishnot of his colleagues with his Mishnah?
4. How were the Baraithot written?
5. How was the Talmud written? (The Gemara)
6. What is the order of the Sabureans after Rabbina and who reigned after the Sabureans and how many years did they reign from that day on until now?

Sherira's reply is very systematic and orderly. In the first half of his reply he explains the method of the oral law and why it was not necessary for the "Men of the Great Synod" to write it down. Eventually however as time went on various oral traditions and interpretations developed. As persecutions started during the end of the second Temple and immediately after the destruction the regular methods of study were interrupted. Students did not study as well as they should have. The Rabbis too were dispersed and learning diminished. It was after that time that Rabbi came along and a period of tranquility ensued.

Rabbi then took it upon himself to arrange the Mishnah. Rabbi accepted the version he learned from Rabbi Meir because his version was by far superior to all the others in existence for it had clarity and brevity. Rabbi did include some material that was discussed in his own day and left out some countroversies which he did not consider important enough to be included. These later formed the basis for the Baraithot and Tosefta. It is Sherira's opinion that nothing was written down until the days of Rabbi.

Concerning the question of the order of the Tractates, Sherira is of the opinion that there may or may not have been a specific order, but that it does not really matter in what sequence one studies. Though Sherira attempts to justify at least some of the order of Moed he really admits that it is not certain that Rabbi studied it in the same sequence.

Sherira explains the reason why Rabbi did not include the Toseftan and other Baraithot; because he wanted to be as brief and as precise as possible. He does however explain the system of the Sifra, Sifrei and Baraitha and enumerates most of the hermeneutic rules and principles used in Talmud. He also clarifies what to do when a Baraitha contradicts a Mishnah.

As for the question of how the Gemara was written Sherira explains how the thirteen principles were already used by the very early masters and how the Mishnah itself

became subject to difficulties and questions until these problems were finally solved and eventually written down in the Gemara.

Sherira then goes on to explain the function of the Sabureans and gives examples of what they did.

In the second part of the letter Sherira gives an exact account of the Tanāfim, Amoraim, Sabureans and Gaonim. It is the second part which is of inestimable value to us for in the most cases we have no other information outside of "The Letter". It is only regrettable that there are two versions to the letter and that sometimes they even contradict each other. Perhaps a careful study of all the material related to the Gaonate could restore a text which would be accurate without being either Sefardi nor Zarphati.

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## INTRODUCTION

The letter of Sherira Gaon is undoubtedly the most important document which emerged from the period of Babylonian Jewry. It is thus not at all surprising to find that almost all Jewish historians dealing with this particular period quote Sherira extensively.

The Geonic period began in the year 589 and Mar Chanah of Ischia was the first Gaon of Pumbedita. Sherira, however, makes mention that even in the year 540 Rab Ravia was a Gaon.<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, the Babylonian Gaonate was an extremely important institution in Judaism for several centuries. It may be attributed to the efforts of the Geonim that the Talmud became the "constitutional law" of all Jewry and that the academies in Surah and Pumbedita became the seats of the authorized interpreters of the law. The Gaonim who headed these academies were the highest authorities in Jewry and, at times, even ventured to disagree with the Talmud. Thus, for example, Sherira did not hesitate to nullify an oath or vow taken in cases where family harmony or peace in the community would be affected. (Tykocinski, p. 148ff). According to Talmudic law, however, this could only be done if the oath was invalid to begin with; otherwise, it could not be nullified at all. On occasion he even disagrees with his own father. Such is the case of Chananya's ordinance to lift the Ketuba in case of a male descendant (Tykocinski, p. 106). It is significant that Sherira quotes (Levin, 67ff) the passage in Hullin (6 b)<sup>2</sup> to prove that changes and modifications in the law are not only possible, but were deliberately provided for by the early masters so their successors could adjust to new requirements of the age and to changing circumstances.

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1 See below p. 175 opus 99

2 See below p. 51 1/4 opus 67

✓  
Considering the age in which Sherira lived, one might even venture to say that Sherira was somewhat of a rationalist, inasmuch as he questions the authorship of the Shiur Koma, which was held in great esteem and was attributed to Rabbi Ishmael. He even goes as far as to suggest that the "Four who entered the Pardess" did so by having an inner experience rather than a real one. Although Sherira is aware of mystic powers, he cautions people not to become ~~pre~~occupied with such things, as he considers them very dangerous. "One may lose his mind by such speculations," he warns.

Though Sherira did not intend to write a historical treatise, he was nevertheless conscious of the significance of his epistle. Like any conscientious historian, he fully distinguishes between documentary evidence, which was available to him in the Archives of the Academy, (<sup>W. J. J. J.</sup> Levin, pp. 97ff) and legendary material (<sup>W. J. J. J.</sup> Levin, pp. 100). Even when dealing with Talmudic source material he clearly distinguishes the aggadic material from the rest. (<sup>W. J. J. J.</sup> Levin, p. 19)

Sherira was well advanced in years when he wrote the epistle. He followed in the tradition of his family, which produced many outstanding leaders of Babylonian Jewry, among whom, were several Gaonim and exilarchs of note. Before he became Gaon he was Ab Beth Din under Nehemiah Gaon, ✓  
Despite Sherira's opposition to Nehemiah's appointment, he nevertheless refused to be anti-Gaon, as his followers had suggested to him. Sherira knew the history of the Gaonate only too well to accept such a risky proposal.

Sherira was a man instilled with patience and a willingness to wait. At long last, he became Gaon and immediately took it upon himself to restore the Academy of Pumbedita to its ancient glory. To accomplish such



a feat was no easy task.<sup>3</sup> New schools in the meanwhile, sprang up elsewhere in the diaspora.


Indeed, those very centers of Jewry which once supported the academies financially now had schools of their own with scholars whose reputations assumed increased stature from day to day. To mention but a few; Rabbi Moshe bar Chanoch<sup>4</sup> of Cordova, Rabbenu Gershom, Meor Hagolah, and Jacob bar Nissim of Kairowan. The latter is the one who asked the questions. Sherira himself was in a very awkward position, for not too long ago he himself was opposed to the Gaon Nehemiah, his predecessor. This inevitably produced ill feelings, as a result of which Sherira was slandered abroad and threatened with, or actually was, ex-communicated.


"One can well imagine how hard it must have been for Sherira, when after the death of Nehemiah he was elected to fill his place, in the face of such attacks by his predecessor and to get the same to recognize his authority and send their contributions to him." 5

It is in this light that Sherira's letter can best be understood; namely, that Sherira was more concerned with re-establishing the centrality of Babylon, than with the Karaite heresy. <sup>W</sup>Leyin and other scholars maintain that the reasons for the letter were the annoying questions and arguments concerning the oral law which were presented by the Karaites of Kairowan. The evidence for this theory is:

- 1) Why, of all places, was it the community of Kairowan that asked the questions?
- 2) Why, in the name of the holy congregation of Kairowan, instead of the usual procedure of one Rabbi asking another Rabbi?

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3 Alexander Marx, Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy, 

4 The latter did not even bother to answer Sherira's letters.  
See S. Asaf. (?) Book, p. 

5 A Marx 

2. These two main points and the passage in the letter wherein Sherira states that he does not recognize other Baraitha are the bases of the theory that the letter is directed against the Karaites. Further evidence is supplied from the fact that in Kairowan the Karaites had a Baraitha of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, which seemed to support their arguments. Thus, they turned to the highest authority, who was Sherira, for a definite answer.<sup>6</sup>

After carefully studying the letter, it seems to me that Sherira saw in the questions an opportunity to deal not only with a Karaite heresy, which may have been of concern to Kairowan, but with the far more serious problem of the challenge to the centrality of Babylonian Academies. This becomes quite obvious from the letter itself, for Sherira seizes every available opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of Babylon over the other parts of the diaspora and does so with the finality of a Gaon of Davidic line. Thus, we understand by his statement that he is not of questionable lineage, i.e., of the Bostonai family who had married a Persian princess. Sherira, who normally explicitly answers questions directed to him does not confine himself to the questions, but instead deliberately seeks to explain the history of the Tanaim and Amoraim, without ever having been asked about this. He apologizes for digressing from his subject and explains that he does so because "there is an error in that matter"; but nowhere does he tell us what that error is. Sherira reaches all the way back to the Zuror and casually adds that most of them came from Babylon. (?)<sup>7</sup> He further mentions the famous passage from

6 See Levin, Prolegomena, pp. 13ff

7 See below. p. 157 opus 73

Sanhedrin (5 a)<sup>8</sup>

לפי יסוד של מנהג ומוסד מדין כדל...  
 כלל, הנהגה של מנהגים, והנהגה של מנהגים...  
 וזוהי הנהגה של מנהגים

to prove that Babylonian scholarship and authority were ~~always~~ superior to that of <sup>any</sup> other Jewish community, including Palestine. Sherira even implies that it was all predestined and that Babylon was selected for that mission even before Jerusalem was destroyed, and he quotes Gittin (58 a) to prove that the synagogue at Shef-Veyativ was built of the stones of the Holy Temple (See below) in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> This evidence leads me to the hypothesis that Sherira, who revered Babylon, the place where so many of his ancestors held highest posts of exilic Jewry, was more concerned with the restoration of the Babylonian Academies to their former glory, than with a heretic movement that was not consequential anymore, least of all, in his own land.

✓ 8 See below. p.

9 Levin, p. 72

see below p. 56

✓ 59, opus cit. 76  
 opus cit.

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  - 2a. Why is the tractate of Sukka arranged before Betsa and both of these before Rosh ha-Shana?
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6. What is the order of the Sabaraim after Rabbina and who reigned after the Sabareans<sup>g-a-rim</sup> and how many years did they reign from that day on until now?

Sherira's reply is very systematic and orderly. In the first half of his reply he explains the method of the oral law and why it was not necessary for the "Men of the Great Synod" to write it down. Eventually however, as time went on, various oral traditions and interpretations developed. As persecutions started during the end of the second Temple and immediately after the destruction of Academies, the regular methods of study were interrupted and students did not study as well as they should have. The Rabbis too, were dispersed and learning diminished. It was after that time that Rabbi came along and a period of tranquility ensued. Rabbi then took it upon himself to arrange the Mishnah. Rabbi accepted the version he learned from Rabbi Meir because his version was far superior to all the others in existence, for it had clarity

and brevity. Rabbi did include some material that was discussed in his own day and omitted some controversies which he did not consider important enough to be included. These formed the basis for the Baraithot and Tosefta. It is Sherira's opinion that nothing was written down until the days of Rabbi.

The question concerning the order of the Tractates brings us to Sherira's opinion that there may or may not have been a specific order but that it is of little consequence in what sequence one studies. Though Sherira attempts to justify at least some of the order of Moed, he really admits that it is not certain that Rabbi studied it in the same sequence.

Sherira explains the reason why Rabbi did not include the Tosefta and other Baraithot by saying that he wanted to be as brief and as precise as possible. He ~~does~~<sup>does not</sup> however, explain the system of the Sifra, Sifrei and Baraitha and enumerates most of the hermeneutic rules and principles used in Talmud. He also clarifies the position to be taken when a Baraitha contradicts a Mishnah.

To establish how the Gemara was written, Sherira explains how the thirteen principles were already used by the early masters and how the Mishnah itself became subject to difficulties and questions until these problems were finally solved and eventually written down in the Gemara.

Sherira then goes on to explain the function of the Saboraim and gives examples of what they did.

In the second part of the letter Sherira gives an exact account of the Tannaim, Amoraim, Saboraim and Geonim. It is the second part which is of inestimable value to us, for in most cases we have no other information outside of "The Letter". It is regrettable though, that there are two versions of the letter and that sometimes they even contradict each other.

Perhaps a careful study of all the material related to the Gaonate could restore a text which would be accurate without being either Sefardi or Zarphati.

The answer to the question of the Gaon Rab Sherira, the head of the Academy, the Gaon of Jacob (~~Gaon~~) and to Rab Hai, the head of the Academy<sup>1</sup> the Gaon of Jacob.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Not accurate, he was merely the Ab-Beth-Din at this time.

2 The Oxford manuscript has more details and gives the name of the questioner - Rab Jacob bar Nissim bar Josiah who asked in the name of the Holy congregation of Kairowan. It also gives the date of the Selucidian year 1298 which is 987 C.E. Dates mentioned in the original always refer to the Selucidian calendar which starts according to many scholars in the year 311 B.C.

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3 (Page 3) (London Manuscript of the British Museum.) The rabbis of Kairowan asked at the gate of the Academy of the court of our teacher Rabbi Sherira, the son of Rabbi Hananya, the son of Rabbi Judah. And these questions were brought to the court of our master and Rabbi Hai, the head of the court, who was the son of our Rabbi and master Sherira, the head of the Academy.

4 (Page 4) (Manuscript of Aram Tsova.) In the Name of the Lord God of the Universe.

How was the Mishnah written? Essay by the Hon. Great and Holy Master and Teacher, Sherira, the Great Gaon, the head of the Academy of the Diaspora; May the memory of the righteous be blessed. The answer to this question:

What our master Rabbi Jacob, the son of Rabbi Nissim, the son of Rabbi Josiah asked our lord and our Gaon, our master Rabbi Sherira, the head of the Academy of the exile, in the name of the Holy Congregation of

the community of Kairowan. And he ordered to write their answers in the year 1299.

These questions which our beloved brethren have asked, and before us went forth to the gate of the Academy of the court of our master and Rabbi Sherira, the head of the Academy, the son of our master Rabbi Chanina, the head of the Academy, the son of our master, Rabbi Judah, the head of the Academy, and to the court of our master and Rabbi Hai, the chief Judge, the son of our master, our Rabbi Sherira, the head of the Academy. And we ordered and it was read before us and before the rabbis of the Academy. We considered these carefully and we discussed all that is written in them. We ordered and they wrote their replies in accordance with what they showed us from heaven.



SHERIRA GACN

As to your question:- "How was the Mishnah written? Did the men of the Great Synagogue begin to write it, and was part of it written by the Sages of each generation until Rabbi came and completed it? But is it not true that most of it is anonymous, and anonymous Mishnahs are attributed to Rabbi Meir?"

Furthermore, most of the Sages of the Talmud<sup>1</sup> whose names are explicitly mentioned in the Mishnah:-Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Jose, Rabbi Simeon-----all were the disciples of Rabbi Akiba.

And the general principles which our masters wrote for us in the Talmud i.e.: "The Halacha is always in agreement with Rabbi Akiba when he differs from a colleague of his; with Rabbi Jose even when he differs from several of his colleagues, (and with Rabbi, when he differs from a colleague of his)." Erubin (46b). And all of them lived towards the end of the Second Temple. So, -What is the reason that our early masters left the majority of the Mishnah to later generation, particularly if nothing was written of the Mishnah until the last days of Rabbi?

(Page 6) Furthermore, if the order of the "divisions" is arranged as it should be, why are the individual "Tractates" in this particular order? Why did the Tractate dealing with Yom Kippur precede the one Sh'Kalim and the Tractate of Sukkos come before Yom Tov, and why are both of these before Rosh ha-Shana? The same applies to every Tractate which is not arranged according to subject matter. of

Furthermore, concerning the Tosefta; we heard that Rabbi Hiyya wrote it---- Was it written after the Mishnah was completed or at the same time? And, -What caused Rabbi Hiyya to write it?

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<sup>1</sup> Talmud here means Mishnah.

Did he add any words to it which explain the subjects of the Mishnah? If so, why did Rabbi leave them out and not write them down? Are they not quoted in the names of Sages of the Mishnah?

And what about the Baraithot---How were they written?

And also the Talmud---How was it written?

And as to the Saboraim---What is their order after Rabbina and who reigned after them, and how many years did they reign from that day until now?

(Page 7) The answer as I see it, is that the six Tractates of the Mishnah were certainly arranged by Rabbenu Hakadosh as we read them, one Mishnah after another, and nothing could be added to or subtracted from them. And thus, we read in Yebamoth (64. b):- "Who compiled your Mishnah? Rabbi, of course."

And concerning the question which you asked: -Why the early Sages left the majority of it (of the Mishnah) to the later ones---The truth is, that the early Sages did not leave the majority of it to the later ones, but all of them related the words of the early Sages and taught their reasons. For Hillel the Elder, when B'nei Bethyra appointed him as the Nasi over them, "Said he to them: What caused it for you (p.8) (that I should come from Babylonia) to be a Nasi over you? It was your indolence, because you did not serve the two greatest men of the time ---Shemiah and Abtalyon," as it is stated in Pesachim (66 a).

And this is how it was: -The names of the early masters were not known, only the names of the Presidents and the Fathers of the Courts because there were no differences of opinion amongst them. They knew all the reasons of the Torah with absolute clarity, as well as the Oral Law; and they also knew the problems and minutiae in their study con-

cerning every single matter, as our Rabbis taught in a Baraitha in Baba Bathra (134 a): "Hillel, the Elder had eighty disciples. Thirty of them deserved that the Divine Presence shall rest upon them as (upon) Moses, our teacher. Thirty of them deserved that the sun shall stand (still) for them as (for) Joshua, the son of Nun. Twenty were of an average character. (Page 9) The greatest of them was Jonathan ben Uzziel; the least of them was Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai. It was said of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai that his studies included the Scriptures, the Mishnah, the Gemara, the Halachoth, the Aggadoth, the subtle points of the Torah and the minutiae of the Scribes; the inferences from minor to major and the (verbal) analogies; astronomy and grammar;<sup>2</sup> washer's proverbs and fox fables; the language of the demons, the whisper of the palms, the language of the ministering angels and the great matter and the small matter. The great matter is the manifestation of the (divine) chariot, and the small matter is the arguments of Abaye and Raba, to let you know that even the questions of Abaye and Raba were not things that they thought out of their own minds; but all of them were clear to the early masters."

As long as the Holy Temple was standing, each one of the great teachers would teach to his disciples the reasons of the Torah, the Mishnah and the Talmud, with the words (page 10) that they chose at that time; and they would teach to their disciples as they saw fit. Wisdom was great so it was not necessary to engage in lengthy explanations. There was only one difference of opinion amongst them, and that concerned Semicha. When Shammai and Hillel came along, they differed only on three matters, as <sup>is</sup> say in Shabbath (14 b and Shabbath 15 a). Rab Huna said:—"In three places Shammai and Hillel differed."

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2 See below.

And when the Temple was destroyed, they went to Betar, but then, Betar was also destroyed and the Sages were dispersed into every corner. Because of these tumultuous times, (page 11), persecutions and troubles prevailed during that period causing the disciples not to study properly and controversies to multiply. When Rabbon Johanan ben Zakkai passed away, Rabbon Gamaliel succeeded him, but Rabbi Dossa ben Harkinas and others of these early masters were also still on the scene. There was an argument between the House of Schammai and the House of Hillel, and even though the viewpoint of Schammai was rejected, and in all matters the law was established according to the House of Hillel, there was, nevertheless, an argument during the time of Rabbon Gamaliel which touched on several matters. The argument was between Rabbi Eliezer, who was a Shammuti<sup>3</sup> and Rabbi Joshua, who were disciples of Rabb-on Johanan ben Zakkai.

In that generation also lived Rabbi Jose, the Galilean, and Rabbi Eleazer ben Azariah, and Rabbi Jochanan ben Nuri, and Rabbi Jochanan ben Beairoka and Rabbi Hanina ben Teradjon, (page 12) and Rabbi Eleazer ben Tradion, and Rabbi Eleazar Hasmah, and Abba Halafta and Rabbi Jose ben Kismah. Judging in their presence were Simon ben Azai and Simon ben Zoma, and many other Sages who were living during that time.

Secondary to them were those who were their disciples and colleagues, their contemporaries, such as Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Elazar Hammodai, and Rabbi Judah ben Baba, and Rabbi Ismael. At the same time, there was Rabbi Judah (ben Bathyra) of Nezipin, and although Rabbi Judah of Nezipin lived during the time of the Second Temple, he continued to be there even after the destruction of the Temple.

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3 See Huca, Vol. XXVII. A. Guttman Hillelites and Shammaites.

This was an important time, for it was after they had rested from the destruction of the Temple. During that same period they sat down to establish their laws, for they were almost lost through the calamity of the destruction and the persecution, and through the controversies between the House of Schammai and the House of Hillel.

And there were many Sages during this time. Among them were some who had benches in the House of Study where they sat upon them, and amongst them were other Sages who sat in front of them; for regarding the day when Rabbi Eliezer ben Azarjah was appointed (Nasi), we say that on that day many benches were added in the House of Study.

Concerning this matter, Rabbi Johanan says—"There is a difference of opinion in this matter, between Abba Joseph ben Dostai and the Rabbis. One (authority) says that four hundred stools were added, and the other says seven hundred (page 13) as is stated in Bera'ot (28 b). And if that many were added, you can imagine how many were there to begin with."

After Rabbi Jose ben Kismah had passed away, Rabbi Akiba willingly accepted martyrdom; and Rabbi Hanina ben Teradjon was also executed. Wisdom diminished after them. And Rabbi Akiba established many disciples, but then there was a destructive plague upon the disciples of Rabbi Akiba. It was said that Rabbi Akiba had twelve thousand (pairs) of disciples, from Gabbatha to Antipatris, and all of them died at the same time (because they did not treat each other with respect). The world remained desolate until Rabbi Akiba came to our masters in the South and taught the Torah to them. These were:— Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Jose, Rabbi Simeon and Rabbi Eleazar ben Shamua; and it was they who revived the Torah at that time, as

is evident from Yebamoth (62 b). (A Tanna taught: all of them died between Passover and Pentecost.)

Rabbi Meir was more learned and witty and more ingenious than any of the other disciples, and Rabbi Akiba ordained him despite his youth. And after Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Judah ben Baba ordained the rest of the disciples, and (afterwards) (page 14) he ordained Rabbi Meir (once again), as is stated in Sanhedrin (13 b). Rabbi Judah says in the name of Rab: "May this man indeed be remembered for blessing -- His name is Rabbi Judah ben Baba. Were it not for him, the laws of Kenas would have been forgotten in Israel ... because once the wicked government (as an act of religious persecution) decreed that whoever performed an ordination should be put to death and whoever received ordination should be put to death, the city in which the ordination took place demolished, and the boundaries wherein it had been performed, uprooted. What did Rabbi Judah ben Baba do? He went and sat between two great mountains that lay between two large cities; between the Sabbath boundaries of the cities of Usha and Shefaram, and there ordained five elders, viz., Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Jose, Rabbi Simon and Rabbi Eleazar ben Shamua. Rab Avia added also, Rabbi Nehemiah. And we ask, as stated in Sanhedrin (14 1):- Did not Rabbah bar bar Hana say in the name of Rabbi Johanan, that whosoever says that Rabbi Meir was not ordained by Rabbi Akiba is erring. It is true that Rabbi Akiba ordained Rabbi Meir, but he was not approved for he was very young; but later, Rabbi Judah ben Baba ordained him once again, and then he was approved."

During that same generation, Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel (Nasi) was the patriarch and then Rabbi Nathan, the Babylonian, went to Israel and

he became the head of the Court as stated in Horayoth (13 b).- Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel said to Rabbi Nathan:-

"The honorable position of your  
father has indeed helped you to  
become Ab-Beth-Din. Shall we there-  
fore make you also Nasi?"

(Page 15). And Rabbi Meir was the Sage of the generation. As was stated, when Rabbi Nathan and Rabbi Meir entered the House of Study, the entire academy stood up before them.

There were also very great scholars in that generation who constantly disseminated the Torah; for example: Rabbi Ismael, the son of Rabbi Johanan ben Brokah and Rabbi Joshua ben Korha, and Rabbi Elazar ben Judah, and Rabbi Simon ben Judah, and Rabbi Eleazar, the son of Rabbi Simon (ben Judah), and Rabbi Jacob, the man of Kfar Hitia, and Rabbi Perida, and Rabbi Padeth I, and Rabbi Zaharia, the son of the butcher, and Rabbi Mathia ben Harasch, and Elazar ben Jeremiah and Hanan ben Pinhas, and Abba Hanan, and Palemo, and Summahus, and Rabbi Simon ben Elazar, and Rabbi Hanina ben Gamaliel, and Rabbi Judah ben Gamaliel, and Rabbi Elazar ben Taddai, and Rabbi Pinhas ben Jair, and Rabbi Akiba, (Jacob) ben Dosai, and Asai ben Judah (page 16) and Rabbi Hanina ben Hakinai, and Rabbi Yeshabab the scribe, and Rabbi Elazar Hakapar, and Rabbi Reuben, the Stroybylian, and the Sages with them.

Through all his days, Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel brought up Rabbaru Hakadosh, his son, for the study of Torah, as stated in Baba Metzia (84 b):

"When Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel  
and Rabbi Joshua ben Korha were

seated upon the benches, Rabbi and Rabbi Elazar, the son of Rabbi Simon were seated before them, and they were asking questions and giving answers. Said (Rabbi Simon ben Gamaliel and Rabbi Joshua ben Korha) -- 'We are drinking from their water and they are seated on the ground'?"

So they built benches for them and they placed them upon the benches.

Rabbi studied with the Sages as is stated in Sabbath (147 b):

"When we learnt Torah at Rabbi Simeon's (academy) in Tekoa, etc."

And he learned from them the law of the Mishnah, as we say in Yebamoth (84 a). Rabbi related -

"When I went to learn Torah at (the school of) Rabbi Eleazar ben Shamus, his disciples combined against me like cocks of Beth Bukya and did not let me learn more than this single thing in our Mishnah: (Rabbi Eliezer stated) - For copulation with an hermaphrodite the penalty of stoning is incurred as (if he were a male.)"



And when he reigned after his father, he was (page 17) with the sons of these Sages, such as---Rabbi Ismael, the son of Rabbi Jose, and Rabbi Jose, the son of Rabbi Judah, and Rabbi Jacob, the man of Hittia, and many other disciples like Rabbi Hiyya, who came up from Babylonia, and Rabbi Hanina bar Hama, and Rabbi Efes, and Rabbon Gamaliel, and Rabbi Simon, the son of Rabbenu Hakadosh, and Rabbi Yanai.. Together they disseminated the Torah a great deal.

Throughout these years, all those laws were clarified which had remained undecided in all the colleges on account of the great calamities which were caused by the destruction of the Temple. Because of the doubts which they had during these tumultuous times, and all the controversies which were conceived during those three generations (before Rabbi), the Halachah was then decided, and the opinions of the individual masters and the opinions of the majority became known to them. It was only after they discussed them a great deal and scrutinized them repeatedly and thoroughly examined all the traditions and all the Mishnot, that they established them. However, they did not add anything to the words of the first ones of the "Men of the Great Synagogue". But they worked a great deal and reviewed all the material thoroughly until (page 18) they could establish what the early masters had actually said, and what they did, so that all those doubts which they had were finally solved.

And there was not one man among the early masters who wrote anything down until the last days of Rabbenu Hakadosh. They were also not all teaching in the same manner nor in one language, but their reasons were known to them, and there was only one opinion among them. There were no differences of opinion in their studies, and they knew

what was unanimous and where there were differences of opinion, and what was an individual's opinion, and what was the opinion of the majority. Thus, things were not established permanently nor was there a known Mishnah that everyone studied in the same style and in the same language, but all the reasons and the oral traditions that they knew were unanimously agreed upon by all the Sages. Each one of them taught it to his disciples in whatever composition he wanted and in whatever way he desired. There were some who preferred a short way as is stated in Yebamoth (49 a):-

"The teaching of Rabbi Elazar ben

Jacob were few but clear."

As we say in Hulin (63 b), "a man should always teach (page 19) his disciples in a brief manner." And there were those who taught general principles and others who were more specific. And there were some who expanded their teachings and explained with comparisons, and then compared further. And each one of our teachers taught it in the same order as his teacher taught it to him; one took up one topic first and another took it up later; one used brief language and another broadened it. Occasionally, someone heard an individual opinion from his master and he taught it anonymously, although it was well known to him that this was an individual opinion, as stated in Eduyoth (Chap. 13):-

"A man is supposed to teach in the

language of his master."

Occasionally, someone taught what appeared to him plausible; one thing according to one Tanna and another according to another Tanna. Therefore they explained in the Gemara - According to whose opinion is this? It is according to Rabbix's opinion. Or, we asked, "According to whose opinion is this which our master taught?"

And we answer, "It is according to this particular Tanna." And in many places we say, "One who has taught this Mishnah has not taught the other Mishnah.", until we carefully analyze every section of it and we establish the beginning according to one Tanna, and the ending according to another Tanna. And all these "Mishnot", which were not included in Rabbi's edition of the Mishnah are called "Baraitot".\*

The early masters said that there were thirteen different versions among our teachers of the Mishnah and Rabbi studied them all, as stated in Nedarim (41 a):- "Rabbi had studied his teachings in thirteen different (page 20) interpretations; he taught Rabbi Hiyya only seven of them. Eventually, Rabbi fell sick and forgot his learning. Thereupon, Rabbi Hiyya restored to him the seven versions which he had taught him, but the other six were lost. Now there was a certain fuller who had overheard Rabbi when he was studying them himself. So Rabbi Hiyya went and learned them from the fuller and then repeated these before Rabbi. When Rabbi met him, he said to him, 'Thou hast taught Hiyya and he has taught me'."

When Rabbi saw that there were so many changes in the study of our masters, although the reasons amounted to one and the same, he worried, lest they result in great damage on account of it. He saw that the heart was shrinking and the Well of Wisdom was being stopped, and the Torah was beginning to disappear. As Rabbi Johanan said in Erubin(53 a):-

"The hearts of (page 21) the ancients were like the door of the Ulam<sup>4</sup> but that of the last generation was like the door of the Hekal<sup>5</sup> (but ours is

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<sup>4</sup> Twenty cubits wide

<sup>5</sup> Ten cubits wide

Like the eye of a fine needle)".

Rabbi Akiba is classed among the ancients; Rabbi Eleazar ben Shammai among the last generations.

And they apportioned to Rabbi from heaven, both learning and greatness, and from all the various places they were subordinate to him for all those years, as we said in Gittin (59 a):- "Rabbah, the son of Raba, or as some say, Rabbi Hillel, the son of Rabbi Wallas also said: -'Between Moses and Rabbi, we do not find one who was supreme both in Torah and in worldly affairs'."

In the days of Rabbi, the Sages were at rest from all persecution because of the friendship that there was between Antoninos and Rabbi. And Rabbi agreed to edit the Halachot so that our masters would be able to teach in one version (page 22) and in one language instead of each teaching it in an individual manner. Since the early masters came before the destruction of the Temple, they had no need for a written version <sup>because</sup> it was intended to be an Oral Law. And the content was not stated with very definite words as was the written Law, but they knew and taught the content according to their hearts, and each one of them taught it to his disciples as a man who tells and teaches it to his friend in whatever language he wishes. When they gathered in the Hall of Hewn Stones and in the Houses of Study, they were prepared to recite immediately and they had the authority; there was no fear nor awe, and they were helped along by heaven until the reasons for the Torah were clear to them, as was the Law of Moses at Sinai. There was no variation and no differences of opinion, as stated in Sanhedrin (88 b):- Rabbi Jose said:

"Originally there were not many disputes in Israel, but one Beth-din of seventy-one

members sat in the Hall of Hewn Stones, and two courts of twenty-three sat, one at the entrance of the Temple Mount and one at the door of the (Temple) Court, and other courts of twenty-three sat in all Jewish cities. (If a matter of inquiry arose, the local Beth-din was consulted. If they had a tradition (thereon) they stated it; if not they went to the nearest Beth-din. If they had a tradition thereon, they stated it, if not they went to the Beth-din situated at the entrance to the Temple Mount; if they had a tradition, they stated it, if not they went to the one situated at the entrance of the Court, and he (who differed from his colleagues) declared, thus have I expounded and thus have my colleagues expounded; thus have I taught and thus, have they taught. If they had a tradition thereon, they stated it, and if not, they all proceeded to the Hall of Hewn Stones where they (ie., the Great Sanhedrin) sat from morning sacrifice to evening sacrifice; on Sabbaths and festivals, they sat within the Hekhal<sup>6</sup>. The question was then put before them; if they had a tradition

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6 Chamber within fortification of Temple

thereon they stated it; if not, they took a vote; if the majority voted "unclean", they ruled even so.) But when the disciples of Shammai and Hillel, who had insufficiently studied, increased (in number) disputes multiplied in Israel, and the Torah became as two Torahs."

And our masters, who appeared afterwards in the days of Hillel and Rabbon Simon, his son, were still arguing and debating and carrying on the controversies of the Tannaim with each other, and it was impossible for them to learn in one version and one language.

But during the days of Rabbi, the son of Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel, the laws were successfully arranged and he wrote them down in order until the words of the Mishnah became as authoritative as if they were spoken by Moses in the name of God. They became like a sign, and a wonder. Yet he did not compose them from his own heart, but used those very things which the early masters studied before him. And how do we know this ... It is stated in the Mishnah - Sanhedrin (Chap. 5.2) Ben Zakkai once tested the evidence even to the inquiring about the stalks of figs. And the Gemara explains that it is obvious that it was just someone called Ben Zakkai (page 24). Reason implies that the reference is to some other Ben Zakkai, for were Rabbon Jochanan ben Zakkai meant, would Rabbi have called him merely Ben Zakkai? Yet, has it not been taught: It once happened that Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai examined (witnesses) as to the stalks and the figs? He must therefore have been a disciple sitting before his master when he made this statement, the

reasoning of which was so acceptable to them, (the rabbis) that they established it in his name. (Thus, while he was yet a student, he was called Ben Zakkai, as is customary for a disciple sitting before his master, and when later he was a teacher, he was called Rabbon Jochanan ben Zakkai. Hence, when he is referred to as Ben Zakkai, it is in accordance with his earlier status, but when he is called Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, it is in accordance with his status at the time (that the Baraita was taught). It is thus evident that from the time of Hillel and Shammai, when our masters taught, "Ben Zakkai once tested the evidence even to the inquiring about the stalks of figs"; Rabbi taught it the same way in the Mishnah and did not change it.

Furthermore, when it was taught in Erubin (5.1):- "How can the confines of a town be extended?" Rabbi requested, Erubin (53 b): "Is there anyone who would inquire of the Judeans, who are precise in their language, whether we learned *וְהוּא*. He who learned *וְהוּא* explains it as adding a wing, and he who learned *וְהוּא* explains it in the same sense as that of (page 25) a pregnant woman. Thus we understand that in such a language it was recited before Rabbi. Some taught it one way and some taught it another way.

And also the tractates were established before the time of Rabbi, as is evident from what Rabbi Meir said to Rabbi Nathan—"Start him out with Ukatzin for this he does not know." "And it happened once upon a time that Rabbi Jacob ben Karhai went and sat down near the window of the attic where Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel was sitting; and he studied and repeated Ukatzin. He continued to study and to repeat. Said Rabbon Simon ben Gamaliel:

'What would happen if someone asks  
a question concerning Ukatzin?'

So he put his mind to it and studied it."

There are places that Rabbi added comments like the one that we were taught in the Mishnah - Shabbath (6.9):

"Sons may go out with bindings and  
the sons of kings with little bells."

Thus the Mishnah was according to the early masters, and Rabbi added to it and commented upon it, "and so may anyone". But the Sages spoke only of actual custom. An exception are those things which were taught during his days and thereafter, as we said - "This was (the ruling) of the first Mishnah; a later Mishnah (ruled differently)." And thus the Tractate of Eduyoth was formulated on that (p. 26) day when Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah was appointed, as we said in Eduyoth (28 a). Also, Eduyoth was formulated on that day and we were taught that wherever the expression, "on that day" is used, it refers to that day when Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah was appointed as head of the academy.

Rabbi taught us afterwards things which were taught in the days of his father. For example, Rabbi Jose says:-

"In six instances, the House of  
Shammai was lenient and the House  
of Hillel was strict."

Or in another case Rabbi Judah said:-

"God forbid (to say) that Akabia ben  
Mahaleel was ex-communicated, for the  
Temple Court was never closed in the  
face of any man in Israel who was  
equal to Akabia ben Mahaleel in wis-  
dom and the fear of sin."



Although the content for the other Tractates were taught by our early masters, it was Rabbi who arranged the Halachot and taught some of them in the first person and some of them, however he liked.

An anonymous Mishnah is authored by Rabbi Meir, but he did not make it up from his own mind but set it down in the same way that his teacher taught it. So Rabbi Meir too, studied it and in the same way (page 27) that Rabbi Meir taught it to his disciples, Rabbi accepted it in that same way and established that it be taught the same way to the entire world. And Rabbi Meir held on to the method of his studies received from his master, Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Akiba received it from his early masters, as we said in Sanhedrin (86 a). Rabbi Johanan said:

"(The author of) an anonymous Mishnah  
is Rabbi Meir; of an anonymous  
Tosefta, Rabbi Nehemiah; of an anonymous  
(dictum in the) Sifra, Rabbi  
Judah; in the Sifre, Rabbi Simeon<sup>7</sup>,  
and all are taught according to the  
views of Rabbi Akiba."

And these Baraitha of Tosefta, Sifra and Sifre were all taught by the early masters. Then Rabbi Judah, Rabbi Nehemiah and Rabbi Simeon came and each collected his own-- Sifra----Rabbi Judah, Tosefta-- Rabbi Nehemiah, Sifre----Rabbi Simeon, and Mishnah----Rabbi Meir. All of them were according to Rabbi Akiba, for all of them were disciples of Rabbi Akiba.

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7 See Soncino Sanhedrin, p. 567 Note I

But as for the other Baraithot we are not concerned with them because those were collected and composed by the choicest of our rabbis and they were the important disciples of Rabbi Akiba. So too, Rabbi Simeon said (page 28) to his disciples, Gittin (67 a):

"My sons learn my rules since my  
rules are the cream of the cream  
of Rabbi Akiba's."

And we already said in Erubin (53 a):

"The hearts of the ancients were like  
the door of the Ulam but that of the  
last generation was like the door of  
the Hekal, but (ours is like the eye  
of a fine needle)."

And it is explained there, the early masters are like Rabbi Akiba.

And our teacher comments in Sanhedrin (3 b) that even the first man rejoiced in the wisdom of Rabbi Akiba at the time when the Holy One, Blessed Be He, showed to Adam each generation and its Sages. Also Rabbi Dossa ben Harchinas said to Rabbi Akiba:-

"Are you Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph  
whose name resounds from one end of the  
world unto the other end?" Yebamoth (16 a).

The greatest of all the disciples of Rabbi Akiba was Rabbi Meir, as we said in Erubin (13 b):- Rabbi Aha ben Hanina said, "It is revealed and known before him who spoke and the world came into existence, that in the generation of Rabbi Meir, there was none equal to him; then why was not the Halachah fixed in agreement with his views? Because his colleagues could not fathom the depths of his mind for he would

declare the ritually unclean to be clean, and supply plausible proof, and the ritually clean to be unclean, and also supply plausible proof." Therefore, he was beloved to Rabbi Akiba and he ordained him while he was still young.

Rabbi held on with the Halachot in the way of Rabbi Meir and this was also the way of Rabbi Akiba because Rabbi saw (page 29) that the system of Rabbi Meir was brief and easy to learn. Its subject matter was organized in a beautiful composition, each subject with one that was similar to it, and his words were more precise than those of all the other Tannaim as there is no redundancy in them; also, each word is brought up in good taste without flowery words that are unnecessary. He neither diminished nor added anything except in few places, and this only in a very brief way. In general, every single word he wrote was great and wonderful. And not everyone who is wise knows how to compose so well, as is written in Scripture (Prov. 16.1):-

"The preparations of the heart are  
man's but the answer of the tongue  
is from the Lord."

Even though all our Mishnahs were alike in content because Rabbi Akiba was big-hearted and Rabbi Meir, his disciple, was also big-hearted, their arrangement is nicer and better than those of all the other Tannaim. Therefore, Rabbi selected them and added to them whatever there was of his own generation. He arranged them in the proper order and he also commented on all the essentials and content of our Mishnah and controversies, since some of our masters had heard from the Great Ones that they had differences of opinion

(page 30), or even from individuals that they differed, and yet they taught their words anonymously. Therefore, if an individual would hear them (without knowing that it is controversial), he would come to an error but, if it is explained that this is how it was (that there was a controversy), then the doubt disappears, as is taught in the Mishnah of Eduyoth (1.6) - Rabbi Judah said: "(If so), why do they record the opinion of a single person among the many to set it aside? So that if a man shall say, 'Thus have I learnt the tradition,' it may be said to him, 'According to the (refuted) opinion of that individual did you hear it'."

And when the whole world saw the geschtalt and the order of our Mishnah, and the truth of its subject matter and the accuracy of the words, they left all the other Mishnahs which they were studying; and "these laws" spread in all the lands of Israel. The other laws were completely forsaken and they became like extraneous: Mishnah, and whosoever studied them, it was as if he were studying commentaries or wide explanations. But Israel relied upon these laws and Israel accepted them when they saw their truth, and there was no one that disagreed with them.

(Page 31) In this method did Rabbi arrange the six divisions of the Mishnah. And not that the early masters left the majority of it to the later ones, for the early ones did not need any compositions and words which would be studied orally. They and every one of our masters knew them from tradition and they did not need to write them down nor to compose them until the Holy Temple was destroyed. Then the disciples of those early masters who did not know as much as they, needed notebooks, for Rabbi Elazar ben Harchi-

nas, who was the head of all the disciples of Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai, when they asked of them these things which are explained in Yoma (66 b)<sup>8</sup> *אלה הן, ואלה הן, ואלה הן* 9 he did not reply anything to them; but he was evasive, and we were taught thereupon; (his evasion was due) not to his desire to divert them with words (counter questions) but because he never said anything that he did not hear from his teacher.

Therefore, Rabbi had to compose and to arrange the six divisions of the Mishnah after the world had rested two generations from the persecution of the destruction of the Temple.

(Page 32) As for the subject of the Tractates, you have noticed that there is one that comes first and one that comes later. The truth is that when Rabbi arranged the Mishnah, he did not arrange them into individual Tractates, one after another, but he taught each one separately by itself. Whosoever prefers to study one first, he studies the one first, and whosoever prefers to study it later, he studies it later; but we do not know which one Rabbi taught first. But the Halachot and the individual chapters of each one of the Tractates, were very definitely arranged by Rabbi one after another, as Rab Huna said: Baba Kamma (102 a) - "We never say that there is no precise order in the (teaching of) the Mishnah in one and the same Tractate, whereas, in the case of two Tractates, we might indeed say so. It is possible, perhaps, that Rabbi taught each one of them first, and whenever we find one Mishnah that appears, anonymous, and after-

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8 suggests the reading of *אלה* . A wise woman asked ...

9 See Soncino Yoma, page 311, note 6

wards we see a controversy in the same masecta, then we say that the law is not like the anonymous Mishnah. But wherever we find a controversy, and afterwards we find an anonymous Mishnah in another masecta, then we say that the law remains as it is in the anonymous Mishnah; but in two masecta, we do not say so, because there is no definite order to individual masecta. Rab Joseph however, considered the whole of Nezikim to form only one Tractate. (Page 33)

As to what you said, -Why did they preceed the Tractate of Yom Kippur before Shekalim? Our masters taught us this way: - first Shekalim and afterwards Kippurim, but certainly Sukkah belongs before Yom Tov. And we studied it this way and afterwards there certainly is Rosh ha-Shana. It is possible that you have studied it in reverse, but we might say that one ought to preceed the Tractate dealing with the Sabbath first, because the Sabbath is very important. Afterwards should come the Tractate of Erubin, because they are similar and their subject matter is one. Afterwards follows the Tractate Pesachim, for Passover is the first one of all the Holidays and the Festivals of the entire year. Afterwards is Shekalim, because it is before Pesach, and it is like one of its subjects. After Shekalim, we studied the Tractate of Yoma, for it is similar to the Sabbath and to Erubin because the Day of Atonement is similar to the Sabbath. After the Tractate of Yoma, we studied the Tractate of Sukkah because it is after the Day of Atonement and it is a great Holiday. After the Tractate of Sukkah, we studied the Tractate dealing with Yom Tov because it is one subject, and after Yom Tov, we studied the Tractate of Taanith, because after Rosh ha-Shana is the time of plowing and sowing and they are like one subject. (Page 34)

Thus was the study habit of our masters. But if there is someone

who prefers to study one masecta first and another one later, he may do so. Even though we have seen from the masecta that said, "Is not this Tanna from this masecta?" For example: in Masecta Sotah (2 a) as is stated in the Gemara—"Now that the Tanna has finished the (Tractate) Nazir, what is his reason for continuing with (Tractate) Sotah?" Shebuoth (2 b): "Now the Tanna has just ended the treatise Makkoth; why does he study Shebuoth?" Hence, it is obvious that there was an order.

Concerning the Tosefta of Rabbi Hiyya, he certainly did arrange it, but it is not yet certain to us whether he arranged it during the days of Rabbi or afterwards. But there certainly is no doubt, that after the laws of our Mishnah were arranged, the Tosefta was arranged. The words of the Tosefta themselves are proof that they came after the Mishnah. But it is not clear to us whether during the days of Rabbi, Rabbi Hiyya passed away, or whether it was afterwards. For we are astonished that the command which Rabbi gave was that Hanina bar Hama should sit at the head. And the question is raised - Ketuboth (103 b): "Was there not Rabbi Hiyya? He had already gone to his eternal. But did not Rabbi Hiyya state, 'I saw Rabbi's sepulchre and shed tears upon it?' (Page 35) Reverse the names. But did not Rabbi Hiyya state,

'On the day on which Rabbi died,  
priesthood <sup>10</sup> ceased?'

Furthermore, when Rabbi fell ill, Rabbi Hiyya entered into his presence (and found him weeping. 'Master; he said to him, 'why are you weeping?' Was it not taught: ('If a man dies smiling it is a good omen'). If you wish, I might reply: reverse (the names) and if you

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<sup>10</sup> Our text has holiness instead

prefer, I might reply, there is no need to reverse (the name, but as) Rabbi Hiyya was engaged in the performance of pious deeds, Rabbi thought, 'I will not disturb him.' "It is thus evident that this is a subject which is doubtful.

But our masters declare that during the days of Rabbi, the Tosefta was arranged, and it was taught from that day on in the school of Rabbi. It is evident from this statement in *Masecta Hagigah* (13 a): "There were two dumb men in the neighborhood of Rabbi, sons of the daughter of Rabbi Johanan ben Gudgada, and according to others, sons of the sister of Rabbi Johanan ben Gudgada, who whenever Rabbi entered the college, went in and sat down (before him), and nodded their heads and moved their lips. And Rabbi prayed for them and they were cured, and it was found that they were versed in Halachah, Sifra, Sifre, Tosefta and the whole Talmud.

(Page 36) Concerning that which you said, What did Rabbi Hiyya see that caused him to write down the Tosefta, and why did not Rabbi himself write it down? The answer is that, if Rabbi wanted to write down and to compose everything that was taught in his days, then the subject matter would have been very long, and would have been forgotten. But Rabbi taught the essentials of things, and this, he established and wrote down—general principles in a brief language, so that even from one word, many reasons and a multiplicity of Halachot and Hagadot, and great, wonderful things could be learned from it, because our Mishnah was said with the help of Heaven. Then, Rabbi Hiyya came and explained in the Baraitha, the details and the branches to those general principles and essentials. The majority of the reasons, for there are very many, are spread out in the Baraitha;



but the essence is in our Mishnah and we rely upon them, as we said in Taanith (21, a):- "Ilfa then suspended himself from the mast of a ship and exclaimed, 'If there is anyone who will ask me a question from the Baraithas of Rabbi Miyya and Rabbi Hoshaiiah and I fail to elucidate it from the Mishnah, then I will throw myself down and be drowned (page 37) (in the sea). It is thus evident, that whatever there is in the School of Rabbi Miyya and Hoshaiiah, we are able to explain from the Mishnah. And Ilfa came and showed his wisdom because of this story of his with Rabbi Johanan. And when that old man came forward and cited the following Baraitha: 'If a man (in his last will and testament) declares, give a shekel weekly to my sons, but actually they needed a sela, then they should be given a sela; (but if he declared, give them a shekel only, they should be given a shekel. If, however, he declared, on their death others should inherit their allowance in their stead, then, whether he had declared "give or "give only", they are given a shekel only'...It is a duty to carry out the will of a dying man."

However, if Rabbi Miyya disagreed in a Baraitha with Rabbi, we do not listen to him. For example: If Rabbi saw a Halachah and wrote it down anonymously in our Mishnah, even though there was a controversy on that subject previously, and then Rabbi Miyya would come and explain that there was originally a controversy, although it is anonymous in our Mishnah, we would still do as stated in our Mishnah. We do not hold on to the general principles that we have concerning controversies of our Masters. Wherever Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Jose disagreed with one another, the law is according to Rabbi Jose, (but) in a place where Rabbi made it anonymous in our Mishnah according to Rabbi Meir, we do as is stated anonymously.

But in a place where there is a controversy in our Mishnah, we accept the general rule. Like (page 38) wherever Rabbi Meir says thus, and Rabbi Jose says thus, then the law is in accordance with Rabbi Jose.

But, if Rabbi Hiyya likes the reasons of Rabbi Meir who disagreed with Rabbi Jose in our Mishnah, and then Rabbi Hiyya puts it down anonymously in the Baraitha in accordance with Rabbi Meir, then we do not accept it from him. It is like the question which Abbahu was asked by his attendant Rabbi Nahum, in Yebamoth (42 b): "What (is the Halachah) where a dispute is followed by an anonymous statement?" The other replied, "The Halachah is in agreement with the anonymous statement." "What (is the Halachah,)" the first inquires, "when an anonymous statement is followed by a dispute?" The other replied: "The Halachah is not <sup>in</sup> agreement with the anonymous statement." "What if the anonymous statement occurs in a Mishnah and a dispute in a Baraitha?" The other replied: "The Halachah is in agreement with the anonymous statement if the dispute is in Mishnah and anonymous in Baraitha." "If Rabbi has not taught it, whence does Rabbi Hiyya know it, since Rabbi Hiyya was the disciple of Rabbi?" Whatever Rabbi taught him he would recite and Rabbi Hiyya does not know anymore than what he learned from Rabbi. And even where it is only implied in the words of the Mishnah, it takes precedence over what is stated clearly in the Baraitha, as is evident from the controversy of Erubin (15 a, 16 a):

"If the breaches in an enclosure  
are equal in area to its standing  
parts";

and we say this is contradictory to Rab Papa and the law is like Rab Papa. And we ask, Rab Papa is refuted and still the law is like

Rab Papa? And we answer yes, because the implication of the Mishnah is in accord with him as we are taught in the Mishnah "and the gaps do not exceed the built up parts."

(Page 39) The Sifra and the Sifrei were expositions of Scripture that explained where the Halachah are implied in the Bible. They were first taught during the days of the early masters at the time of the Second Temple, and they studied them with this method.

When our masters saw that the other Baraitha, which were not taught by Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Hoshaiah, had many errors, and that amongst them could be found details which resembled the general principles of individuals and general subjects which were not precise; and when they realized that those Baraitha which were arranged by Rabbi Hiyya and by Rabbi Hoshaiah were better than all the others, our masters collected them and taught them in the academies. Concerning these we say in the Gemara, our masters taught לפיכך even though the other Baraitha could be found too, and our teacher taught them also. Each one of them taught what his master taught to him, as well as teaching them the Tannaim (of the Baraitha). For example, Achi was a student of the House of Rabbi Hiyya, and Aschin was a student of the House of Rabbi Ami. Bar Kappara also taught other Mishnot. And in many places we say that Levi investigated in his Baraitha and he found those which were taught; but those of Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Hoshaiah were better than all the others, and each one of them (page 40) had a separate Baraitha for each of the masecta, as we said. Rab Scherabja taught in Kidduschin at the Academy of Levi, and he was already assisting Rabbi like Bar Kappara, and like Rabbi Hiyya and Rabbi Hoshaiah.

And our masters of Babylonia, who were before Rabenu Hakadosh, already had Mishno, as there was a great deal of learning amongst them because they were spreading the Torah at the place of the academy, as we were taught in the Mishnah Yebamoth (16.7):- Rabbi Akiba said:

"When I went down to Nehardia to ordain  
a leap year, (there met me Nehemiah of  
Beth Del).....

and in Pumbedita there was Rabbi Hanina, the nephew of Rabbi Joshua."

And our masters taught in Sanhedrin (32 b)-

"Justice, justice shall ye pursue;  
go after a nice court of law, and  
it is explained, go after Rabbi  
Hanina, the nephew of Rabbi Joshua,  
into the exile."

And the reason they called it exile is because thither they were carrying burdens, as we were taught in Rosh ha-Shana (23 b):

"(The one on Beth Balin did not budge from there) until he saw the whole of the Diaspora before him like one bonfire...." And it says about this: What is the Diaspora? - It is Pumbedita.

And Hillel, the Elder, went up from Babylon and became the Nasi in Palestine. (Page 41)

During the days of Rabbi and afterwards, all these Babylonian Mishnoh in Palestine were called the Mishnah of Rabbi Nathan.

In various places we say it was taught at the Academy of Samuel. This refers to the Mishnoh of Mar Samuel.

And these Mishnoh, which the early Sages taught, were not quoted

in the name of Rabbi Akiba, as is evident from the various places where it is stated, -

"They taught at the House of Rabbi  
Ismael or they taught at the House  
of Rabbi Eliezer ben Jacob."

There were also Baraitha<sup>1</sup> of the very early masters, as is stated in Erubin (19 a): "Rabbah bar Muri taught at the Academy of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai."

All these Baraitha are not established so that everyone should study them as were the Baraitha of Rabbi Hoshaiiah and Rabbi Hiyya, and we do not say about them Tanu - Rabanon, but instead, we say tanya and tana tonei.

The Sifra and the Sifrei were not as well-known at first among our masters as was our Mishnah, which from the moment it was established became widely publicized in all of Israel. (Page 42) But the Sifra and the Sifrei started to circulate only little by little, as is stated in Yebamoth (72 b): Rabbi Johanan said to Resh Lakish:

"I observed that the son of Pedath was  
sitting and making expositions like  
Moses in the name of the Almighty.

"Was this his?" Resh Lakish replied,

"It is really a Baraitha." Where the  
first asked, "Was it taught?" "In Torat  
Kohanim."

He went out and learned it in three days, and was engaged in making deductions and drawing conclusions from it for a period of three months.

After this, the Sifra, the Sifrei and the Tosefta and the entire

Talmud were established, which the rabbis studied until the present time. They were thus established as is stated in Shebuoth (41 b): "Here am I and Rabbi Shesheth who have studied Halachah, Sifra, Sifrei, Tosefta and the entire Talmud."

There is no end to these Baraitha. Each one of the rabbis learned them from his master, as is stated in Shebuoth (45 b): Rab Shesheth met Rabbah bar Samuel and said to him: (page 43)

"Have you studied anything about a hired Labourer?" He replied to him, "Yes we are taught... (A hired labourer (if he claims) within his time limit takes an oath)."

Our masters, the Amoraim that succeeded Rabbi, needed these Baraitha very much, for from them comes forth the depth of those subjects which are stated in our Mishnah in a brief language with only generalizations and hints. There go forth from them branches and innovations and derivations, because Rabbi composed only the essentials, and did not explain the similarities which they have. Our masters also needed Pilpul and logic, and there were some among them that needed a given subject, and he made a comparison to the subject with anything that resembled it to bring it down to its essential, as is stated in Erubin (16 a): "When Rab Hisda and Rab Shesheth met, Rab Hisda was in awe on account of the wide knowledge of Rab Shesheth, and Rab Shesheth was fearful on account of the sharpness (Pilpul) of Rab Hisda."

Our masters praised highly the one who studied a great deal, for to that one are revealed the reasons of the Torah; because (page 44) *since* he who studied *and many teachings* knows, He then also studies a number of secondary things.

one thing which is short and one thing which is long. And something that is very puzzling in one Mishnah is clear in another Mishnah, like the subject in Sanhedrin (42 a): "Where Rab <sup>Aha</sup>ben Hanina says in the name of Rab Ami, in the name of Rab Assi in the name of Rab Johanan, what is written in Proverbs (24.6):

'For with wise advice thou shalt  
make thy war.'

(Rab Aha ben Hanina (further) said in the name of Rab Assi, in  
Rab Johanan's name:

'In whom do you find skill (to  
conquer in) the battle of Torah?<sup>11</sup>  
Only in him who possesses bundles  
of Mishnah <sup>12</sup>(teaching).'

Rab Joseph applied to himself (the verse):

'Much increase (of grain) is  
by the strength of the ox'.<sup>13</sup>

Even though someone who studies and does not know the sophistry (Pilpul) and which one was innovated, and which was born out of it, for it was not taught explicitly in a Mishnah, and he does not know how to compare and how to bring forth his principles from the Mishnah; nevertheless, he is still better than someone who knows how to be argumentative and understands, but did not study what was taught in the

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- 11 Who is qualified to meet the difficulties of the Torah and give a true interpretation.
- 12 Dialectic skill and ingenuity are not enough and in no way can they substitute for a sound knowledge of the subject.
- 13 (He was an erudite scholar).

Mishnah or what was said orally. What is the reason for that? Because the one who has studied this can at least teach those subjects which he had heard for practical application. But the one who is just reasoning cannot teach for practical application; and why? Because one who has not studied the Gemara, -What good is his reason? (Page 45) But one who has studied he knows according to what was said; and he did not derive it from reason alone.

Wherever the Amoraim differed and the accepted law is like one of them, and it is taught in a Baraita like the other, then we do as the one that the Mishnah agrees with, as is stated in Zebahim (96 b):

"Rabbi Isaac, the son of Rabbi Judah, used to attend Rami bar Hama's (lectures). He left him and attended Rabbi Shesheth's (lectures). One day he (Rami bar Hama) met him, and observed: -'The noble has taken us by the hand and his scent has come into the hand! Because you have gone to Rabbi Shesheth, you are like Rabbi Shesheth! 'That was not the reason,' he replied. 'Whenever I asked a question of you, you answered me from reason (and) if I found a teaching<sup>14</sup> (to the contrary) it refuted your answer. (But) when I ask a question of Rabbi Shesheth, he answers it from a teaching, so that even if I find a teaching which refutes him, it is one teaching against another.<sup>1</sup> (P. 46) Said he to him, 'Ask me a question and I will answer you in accordance with *explain it to you by reason* *in accordance with our Mishnah* *a teaching.*' (Thereupon) he asked him, 'If one boiled (the sacrifice) in part of a vessel, does it require scouring and rinsing, or does it not require (them)'? 'It does not require them, he replied,

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<sup>14</sup> Mishnah or Baraita



'by analogy with (the) spurting (of blood), "But it was not taught so," he protested. -' It is logical that it is like a garment, he replied, just as a garment needs washing only in the place of the blood,) so a vessel requires scouring and rinsing only in the place of boiling.' 'If it was taught... I must accept it.

Therefore, in the end of Horayoth (14 a) when the question was asked by them dealing with Sinai and one who can uproot mountains, they wanted to know which one of them was better. One view is that a well-read scholar (Sinai) is superior to the keen dialectician, and the other view is that the keen dialectician is superior. Rabbi Joseph was a well-read scholar; (Sinai) Rabbah was a keen dialectician. An enquiry was sent up to Palestine: Who of these should take precedence? They sent them word in reply: A well-read scholar is to take precedence; for the master said, "All are dependent on the owner of the wheat, which is the Talmud."

Therefore, Rabbi Hiyya realized this and arranged his Baraitha, for at that time only those Baraitha of Rabbi Hiyya were taught at the academy, because the earlier Baraitha had a multiplicity of debates and there were many variants. (Page 47) And whatever our masters needed from these Baraitha was said in Talmud, and they investigated it carefully and took out from it the content and left the rest, for they did not need it. And even though the Baraitha of Rab and Samuel, which was prevalent in Babylonia, was precise and arranged in order as it stated in Tractate Yoma (70 a) concerning the bullock and the goat, which was done outside of the temple, Raba said:

"You have no properly arranged

order (of the service) except  
you adopt either the view of  
Rabbi Eliezer as taught in the  
school of Samuel, or the view  
of Rabbi Akiba as reported in  
the Tosefta."

Nevertheless, this collection of Baraitha of the House of Samuel was abandoned. And we find variants of the Baraitha but we do not rely upon them for they are not taught, and it is not known whether they are true or not. But those of Rabbi Hiyya alone were taught at the academy. We also do not teach from other Baraitha which are called short ones, as for example, the Halachot of Derech Eretz and other Haggadot.

(Page 48) As to your question about the Talmud, even the very early masters already had a Talmud, for we said that they had Halachot which they studied. It is stated: -"Ben Zakkai once tested the evidence even to the inquiring about the stalks of figs." And even though they did not all study with the same words and in one language, the contents were still known to them, for they were all agreed and they were all unanimous. Each one of them taught to his disciples compositions which were different from one another. Each one of them taught it as his master taught it to him, but the Halachot and content were alike even though in their studies (text) they differed from one another.

And their general principles were Kalim Wachamurin<sup>15</sup>(inferences

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15 See Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash: Herman L. Strack, p. 94

a minori ad maius from the light to the heavy, i.e., from the less important to the more important and vice versa) and Gematriot computation of numeric value of letters<sup>16</sup> and ways of interpretation among them are the thirteen midoth which Rabbi Ishmael used to expound and among them are others like a deranged verse<sup>17</sup> and a redundant verse<sup>18</sup> and the ribbui particles of eth or gam which are expounded for amplification and the miutin,<sup>19</sup> and that biblical texts are to be interpreted on the basis of proximity of one section to another<sup>20</sup> and the Hikkish<sup>21</sup> and that wherever two provisions of the law are found in scripture which are so identical that one of them is seemingly superfluous then no further deduction from either of them can be admitted and that you can learn the section above from the section below. If one selects the greater, one does not choose well, but if one selects the lesser, one selects well<sup>22</sup> and the reading of Shebuayim<sup>23</sup> and the reason of Scripture<sup>24</sup> and that we diminish, add and expound Yoma (48 a)

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16 Ibid., p. 97.

17 Baba Bathra 111.

18 Pesachim, p. 18

19 Ibid., p. 96. The three particles of Akh, rak, min which point to a limitation, exclusion of diminution.

20 Video Jastrow.

21 To conform two subjects to one another by the use of analogous phrases.

22 Soncino Sukkah, p. 17.

23 Ibid. Sanhedrin, p. 10.

24 Ibid. Kiddushin, p. 346, note 4.

and that Mikra is determinant in Biblical exposition<sup>25</sup>, and that there is a basis to the Massorah<sup>26</sup> and that it is said here and it is said there<sup>27</sup> that one verse may be interpreted as bearing upon the preceding subject and the one anterior to it. (Soncino Baba Metzia p. 550) And that the verse always retains its simple meaning Sabbath (63 a); that there is no chronological order in Scripture Pesachim (63 a), that the divine law speaks in the language of man.<sup>28</sup>

A statement which occurs in one passage but does not belong to it, but is in keeping with another passage, it may be applied to the other passage. A proposition which requires to be supplemented from a parallel proposition. A statement which is made with reference to one subject, but which is true just as well with reference to another. When a section is stated once and is then repeated, it is only repeated, because of something new that is found in it. Shebuoth (19 b) Deduce from it and again from it, or deduce from it and leave it in its place.<sup>29</sup> Yebamoth (78 b) It is sufficient that the result derived from an inference be equivalent to the law from which it is drawn<sup>30</sup> and many more things like this. When the early masters recited their laws, each one of them taught these words which were Talmud in order

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25 Ibid. Sanhedrin, p. 10, note 4

26 Traditional text of consonant without vowels.

27 Term often used in Talmud to *analogize* to denote analogy of expression.

28 See Mielziener, p. 126.

29 Mielziener, p. 181.

30 Mielziener, p. 134.

to reveal the reasons of the Torah, and like we said in Erubin (13 b), said Rabbi in the name of Rabbi Johanan. There was one of Rabbi Meir's disciples, Symachus, who would say concerning each matter of pollution, forty-eight reasons why it is polluted and for each matter that was clean, forty-eight reasons why it is clean. And there were also other aspects to their Talmud. They were able to show innovations and branches and derivatives and how they derived their law, and how they derived examples, (page 50) and how they were able to return the branch to its stem.

And how do we know that they had a Talmud? Because concerning Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai, they said that even the problems of Abaye and Raba he studied. And we were taught Aboth (4.13) Rabbi Judah said, "Be heedful in your Talmud for an unwitting error in Talmud is accounted wanton transgression." And our Rabbis taught Baba Mezia (33 a) "One who studies Scripture; it is a measure which is no measure. One who studies Mishnah, it is a measure that he receives a reward. But one who studies Talmud; there is no measure greater than that.

After Rabbi established the Halachah and his Mishnah, there was the Talmud, in which the Mishnah was interpreted exactly, and all the general principles, details and explanations for the derivations were given as our Rabbis taught them:- "Run to the Mishnah even more than toward the Talmud." And they said about this, "Isn't this contradictory? Here you say than there is no greater measure than the study of the Talmud, (and then you say, 'Run toward the Mishnah even more than toward the Talmud'.)" Rabbi Johanan said: "During the days

of Rabbi this Mishnah was taught; there is no greater measure than the study of Talmud, but then everyone left the study of the Mishnah and went after the Talmud. Then he reversed himself and taught them: 'Run toward the Mishnah even more than toward the Talmud.' How did he derive it? As Rabbi Judah bar Illai expounded it: -

'Tell to my people their trans-  
gression, and to the house of  
Jacob, their iniquities.'

(Page 51) Tell to my people, "their transgressions" refers to the Sages, for if they commit a sin unintentionally, it is as if they did it intentionally; and to the House of Jacob, "their iniquities" refers to the common people, for even their intentional sins are considered as if they were unintentional. This is in accordance with what we were taught in the Mishnah Aboth (4.13): Rabbi Judah said: 'Be heedful in study for an unwitting error in study is accounted wanton transgression'."

And the Talmud is the wisdom of the early masters, for in it they would explain the reasons for the Mishnah, as our rabbis taught in Baba Metzia (33 a): "The teacher referred to is he who instructed him in wisdom, not he who taught him Bible and Mishnah; "this is Rabbi Meir's view. Rabbi Judah said: "He from whom one has derived the greater part of his knowledge." Rabbi Jose said: "Even if he enlightened his eyes in a single Mishnah only, he is his teacher." Said Raba: "This refers to Rab Sehora, who told me the meaning of Zohama listron."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> A soup ladle with a spoon and fork on either side.

There was no written composition from those early masters until Rabbi passed away. But they were studying it by heart *but they did write explanations for themselves like the commentaries which we use for our disciples* (Page 52) They had a *like those which we give to our students* written commentary similar to that, and all of them were studying it; but one wrote it down in one version and another wrote it down in a different version. Thus they explained their Mishnah and they called those commentaries Talmud.

Their capacity was wide and they did not need anything but a basis; but when the Mishnah was completed and Rabbi passed away, their ability to memorize had decreased and it was necessary to gather their studies and to learn them. They added many other concepts to what they had; the very early masters established them, as we said, "How do we know these things?" And they expounded Scripture, and established innovations and derivations one after another; as we explained it was in the days of the early masters. Also they established things which were not necessary for those early masters like i.e., the commentary for deep things that those early masters did not need to explain, because their understanding was great. But when wisdom diminished afterwards, as we were taught at the conclusion of Sotah:-

" When Rabbi Eliezer died, the Torah scroll was hidden away (page, 53) when Rabbi Joshua died, counsel and thought ceased; when Rabbi Akiba died, the arms of the Torah ceased and the fountains of wisdom were stopped up."

And similarly it was the same in the days of Rabbi. They established in it many details like-- "Why is one thing taught after another?" And we say, "If he taught him this, why was it still necessary to teach this?" If this could not be answered, we say in Yebamoth (3 a). Here Rabbi taught a Mishnah which was not necessary, and we attempt to find the need for every single thing. We say, "What does he attempt to teach us here?" Then they give details and they make comparisons of all these things. But if they lived in the days of Rabbi, he could have explained to them the law of each and everything.

And they needed certain other things that the early masters did not need at all. For instance, in a place where Rabbi saw a certain thing and the later teachers did not see it, they explained it; so that we should not rely upon him (page 54). For example, Rabbi put into the Mishnah the words of an individual anonymously, because it appeared to him that the Halachah should be like this individual; but our later masters did not think so, as is the case of Halitza. When an individual gave an opinion and Rabbi saw from his reasoning that the Halachah should be like him, he taught it anonymously, as we said in Ketuboth (79 b). Rabbi Simeon said: "In respect of that wherein the husband is at an advantage. (Is not this view of) Rabbi Simeon identical (with that of) the first Tanna?" Or in Baba Bathra (156 b) concerning the deal of a dying person on the Sabbath, it was taught that the Mishnah is in accordance with Rabbi Judah, and in Yoma (59 a) "The Man Won over the Man"<sup>32</sup>, there is also a mnemonic device. There are more examples like this, which ask, who is it

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<sup>32</sup> (of Soncino Translation b. Yoma 59 a, p. 278, note 4).



that said this? It is Rabbi "X". Then Rabbi taught it anonymously, but even though Rabbi put it anonymously, we do not do it as he decided.

*Rabbi gave an anonymous view in place of a controversial Rabbi put it anonymously, such as the one in which we are taught that the matter is better (ie more weighty)*  
And wherever there is an even more important controversy and Rabbi put it anonymously, such as the one in which we are taught that the Rites of Minn and Halitza (must be witnessed) by three men, as

is explained in Yebamoth (101 b), or wherever he taught the opinion of an individual as if it were the opinion of the Sages, he did so in order that they should do as he taught. Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi (page 55) Joſhanan Hulin (85 b) Rabbi approved of Rabbi Meir's views in connection with the law of "It and Its Young" and stated it in the Mishnah as the view of "the Sages", and he approved of Rabbi Simeon's view in connection with the law of covering up the blood, and stated it in our Mishnah as the view of "the Sages".

From here we learn that wherever an anonymous Mishnah appears by Rabbi Meir, it is not really his own, because he is only one individual, but is really that of his master, which he heard from his teacher, Rabbi Akiba. Therefore, since Rabbi knew that this statement of Rabbi Meir in the chapter of "It and Its Young" really belonged to his master, Rabbi taught it in the language of "the Sages". In the same way, concerning the verse: "The yeasts shall be burned", we taught it thus: Pesahim (48 b)

"... But the Sages maintain: regarding the one and the other, he who eats it is liable to kareth."

This was not taught in the name of Rabbi Meir, who differs with Rabbi Judah. Therefore, one should not err and say, as is the

general principle, that wherever there was a difference of opinion between Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Judah, the Halachah is like Rabbi Judah. But, in reality, the Halachah in this case is like Rabbi Meir, as Rabba said, "What is the reason of Rabbi Meir", because there is no possibility of a split above it, etc., and we are also taught that in a Baraitha.

Then the Amoraim of the Talmud came along and explained these things wherever Rabbi's opinion seemed reasonable to them; and they revealed their opinions that the Halachah is like this individual wherever they did not agree with Rabbi. They also revealed their opinions (page 56) as in the case of Betzah (31 a) when Rabbi Judah said in the name of Samuel;

"You may take wood only from a  
collected pile in an enclosure."

But we learned:

"From an enclosure even though  
it is scattered about, our Mishnah  
represents the opinion of an indi-  
vidual..."

And this seemed contradictory to Samuel's opinion. Then we answer that this Mishnah expresses an individual's opinion and we bring evidence of it from the Baraitha.

Wherever we find something in a Mishnah that is wrong and needs to be erased from it, like something which has a serious difficulty and just does not seem right, then we say, erase so and so. Such is the case of the subject of "It and Its Young", as we say in Hullin (82 a):- said Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba in the name of Rabbi Johanan:

The "Red Cow" is not part of  
our Mishnah, "The heifer whose  
neck was to be broken" is not  
(part) of our Mishnah."

It is thus evident that when our Mishnah is very difficult and does  
not seem logical, and is not supported by a Baraitha, we reject our  
Mishnah completely, as we are taught in Kelim (13:8) :

"If a flax comb that its teeth  
are missing..."

And we said in Yebamoth (43 a):

"Rabbi Johanan and Resh Lakish  
both agree that this is not a  
Mishnah, and so we do not act  
in accordance with him," accord-  
ing to the <sup>chumra</sup> condition of the critics."

(Page 57) If something should be taken out of the Mishnah,  
then we take it out; and if something needs to be rearranged, then  
we rearrange it. And when there is a mistake in our Mishnah, and  
the Baraitha is more correct than the Mishnah, then we clarify this  
matter, as we are taught in Berakhoth (32 b):

"The School of Shammai said, an  
Israelite should not be counted  
with the Kohen concerning the  
first-born, but the School of  
Hillel permits it, and even if  
he is a Gentile, we say about  
this, that the School of Hillel

is in accordance with the Mishnah,  
Rabbi Akiba is in accordance with  
the Baraitha; and the Halachah re-  
mains like Rabbi Akiba for Rabbi  
Akiba says, it applies even to  
strangers and not Gentiles."

Wherever there are differences of opinion among the Tannaim,  
we say what the reason is for the differences of opinion, and we  
also give the reasons of everyone of them. And then we search the  
Baraithot which are available to clarify the matter or to explain  
from them this question, and we quote these Baraithot wherever we  
can find them, as is the case in Gittin (44 a) Where Rabbi Jeremiah  
says to Rabbi Zera:

"Go and search in your Mechilta."

We are very careful to scrutinize them and clarify each one  
according to his reasons and Halachoth; and we try to find out who  
was the author of the Halachah and according to whom they are, with  
the exception of the controversies of the Amoraim; their problems,  
their answers, their refutations, their solutions, rejections, their  
identifications and we try to elaborate and write things in great  
detail as is the way of the Talmud.

So it was in the days of our early masters, just as we now explain  
our commentaries, and each one of the "Great Ones" taught as he saw  
fit. And too, he taught to everyone of his disciples in accordance  
with what they needed and in accordance with the abilities of each  
one of them. Some told their disciples only the outline, the general  
principles, and left the rest for them to comprehend alone. And

there were some among them to whom it was necessary to explain it all and to broaden it and to illustrate it with examples.

We already said that until that time when Rabbi passed away, each one of the disciples studied (page 59) in the presence of his teacher. Before the Mishnah was arranged, each one's studies were according to his Mishnah; and after the Mishnah was arranged, during the entire lifetime of Rabbi, he explained the Mishnah to each and everyone of them and he taught them the reasons for his Halachah. After Rabbi passed away, it was necessary for them to gather all the laws and to teach them in one manner and in one language.

After Rabbi there were Tannaim from Palestine, like Rabbi Nathan<sup>33</sup> and Rabbi Simon, and Rabbon Gamaliel ben Rabbi, and from here,<sup>34</sup> like i.e., Rabbi Josaiah of Hutzel. But they did not add anything to the Mishnah but what was taught to them before that, as is explained in the book of Adam Harishom. Rabbi and Rabbi Nathan were the last ones who dealt with the Mishnah.

There were also other rabbis during that period who were simultaneously Tannaim and Amoraim i.e., Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yanai and Rab, who were disciples of Rabbi. They (page 60) studied from Rabbi and from Rabbi Hiyya as we said in Hullin (137 b): Rabbi Johanan said:

"I remember when I was sitting  
before Rabbi seventeen rows behind  
Rab, seeing sparks of fire leaping

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33 Apparently means Rabbi Jonathan.

34 Babylon

from the mouth of Rabbi into the  
mouth of Rab ... and I could not  
understand what they were saying."

And in many places we say Rab is a Tanna, and he may differ with  
other Tannaim.

There were also other masters who were only Amoraim, like  
Samuel and Rabbi Sheila, and Rabbi bar bar Hana, Rab Cahan<sup>A</sup>I, and  
Rab Asi. At the end of their days there were Rab Adda bar Ahavah  
and our grandfather <sup>35</sup>, Rabba bar Abuha. He was from the house of  
the Nasi, for we have a tradition that we are of the house of the Nasi  
and of the seed of Rabba bar Abuha.

After this, there were in Palestine Rabbi Hanina, Rabbi Yanai,  
Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Simon ben Lakish, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and  
Rabbi Elazar, who was their assistant, and (page 61) who was also the  
assistant to Rab and Samuel in Babylon. Nevertheless, wisdom was  
greater in Babylon than in Palestine.

After their generation, there was Rab Nahman, Rab Judah, Rab Huna,  
Rab Hisda and Rab Shesheth in Babylon, and others of their masters who  
were going up and down (from Babylon to Palestine and back), like Ulla  
and Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba and Rabbi Samuel bar Nachmani, as well as  
our teachers from Babylon, who went up to Palestine---Rab Ami and Rab  
Asi.

After this, came Rabba and Rab Joseph in Babylon, and our teachers,  
who were going up and down<sup>36</sup>, such as Rab Abba, who was like the rest

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35 : Sherira's ancestor.

36 To and from Palestine.

of the early masters, and Rab Isaac Napcha, Rabbi Zera, Rabbi Jeremiah, Rabbi Abuha and Rabbi Hanina bar Pappi.

After this, there were Abaye and Rabba, but as persecution increased in Palestine, teaching diminished there greatly; and whoever there was of the Babylonians, came back like Rabbin and Rab Dime and all those that descended here.

(Page 62) Each one of these generations had laws which our masters taught them, and they constantly arranged them, as we said in Berakoth (38 a):

"Rab Hiyya bar Abba reviewed his studies every thirty days."

We also said in Pesachim (68 b):

"Rab Shesheth used to review his studies every thirty days, and then would suspend himself at the bar of the door and would say: rejoice my soul, it is for your sake that I studied and it is for your sake that I repeated."

And these laws which the entire world was studying would be explained by each Rabbi to his disciples with other comments and details. They were also innovating things, for they made decisions concerning questions that were asked of them. They would give and take; and there were controversies between each one and his partner.

A new generation came and ability diminished. (Page 63) And these things which were so clear to our early masters, they would explain to their disciples. They were like those comments that no one needs to study and to establish in the Gemara, but now in this generation, they

became doubtful... It was necessary to establish them in the Gemara and in studies; and they recited them in the academy, and they established them in the Gemara, and our masters studied them from the Gemara, as we said in Erubin (32 b):

"If he deposited it (the erub) on a tree... Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba and Rab Asi and Raba bar Nathan sat at their studies while Rab Nahman was sitting beside them... Where could that tree have been standing? If it be suggested that it stood in a private domain, what matters?"

And we said in the end (of that discussion)- "Well spoken." Said Rab Nahman to them, and so also did Samuel say: "Do you explain with it?" They said to him, "so much." (But did not they themselves explain (their difficulty) thereby?) In fact, it was this they said to him: "Did you embody it in the Gemara?"

With the passing of each generation, the mind diminished some more, as Rabbi Johanan said in Erubin (53 a):

"Our heart (page 64) (intellectual power) is like the eye of a fine needle."

And Abaye said:

"It is a difficult for us to study Gemara as it is to put a peg into a latch wall."



And Rabba says:

"We are like a finger pushed into a  
cake of wax as far as reasoning of  
Talmud is concerned."

And Rab Aschi says:

"We forget as easily as to put a  
finger into a cave."

According to the measure that their capacity diminished and  
doubts arose, then comments of those early masters that were not es-  
tablished in their days, now became established and taught; and the deeds  
of those early masters were now taught in the Gemara.

If all of our masters heard a thing and they said it together and  
no one master said it first, then, it is stated anonymously, "they said".  
But if someone had heard it first, and he said it, then it is recited in  
his name: Rabbi "X" says, as we said in Pesachim (104 b): "'Ulla  
happened to be in Pumbedita', said Rab Judah to his son Rab Isaac 'Go  
and bring him a basket full of fruits and see how he says the habdalah,'  
He did not go by himself but he went and sent Abaye instead. When Abaye  
returned he (Rab Isaac) asked, 'What did he say, (in the habdalah)?  
'Blessed is he who maketh distinction between holy and profane'...  
So he came and he said to his father, 'I did not go myself, but I sent  
Abaye and he told me that he said, 'Blessed is he who maketh distinc-  
tion between holy and profane.' Said he to him, 'Your pride and your  
haughtiness are the cause that you are unable to state the law from his  
own mouth'."

And the more careful a wise man as he recited a law which he heard  
from the mouth of his master, and not from the mouth of others, the

better was his law, as we said in Berakoth (38 b): "Rab Nahman bar Isaac said: Ulla became confirmed in his error by accepting the word of Rabbi Benjamin bar Jefet. Rab Zera expressed his astonishment. How (he said) can you mention Rabbi Benjamin bar Jefet along with Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba? Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba used to go over his learning every thirty days. Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba was very particular to get the exact teaching of his master Rabbi Johanan, whereas, Rabbi Benjamin bar Jefet was not particular. Furthermore, if he said it from the mouth of one master, then, it is even better, as we said in Hullin (18 b):

"When Rab Zera went up (to Palestine,) he ate there of an animal (which was slaughtered in that part of the throat) which was regarded as deflection by Rab and Samuel."

He was asked, "Are you not from the place of Rab and Samuel?"<sup>37</sup> (Page 66) He replied, "Who taught it (in the name of Rab and Samuel)? Was it not Joseph bar Hiyya? Well, Joseph bar Hiyya took traditions from everyone!"<sup>38</sup> When Joseph bar Hiyya heard of this, he was annoyed and said, "What! I take my traditions from everyone! Indeed I received my traditions from Rab Judah, who recited in his statements of traditions even the doubt as to his authorities as in the following statement..." "And I am in doubt

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37 And thus within their jurisdiction.

38 Thus unreliable as far as his sources.

whether he reported in the name of Rab or in the name of Samuel: three ordinary persons may declare a firstling permitted for the use where there is no specialist available."

Wherever all our Sages said one thing, we say it (anonymously) as it is .

In this way the Talmud grew generation after generation. For each generation would establish in the Talmud things which were of doubt or which they innovated; actions and questions that were asked of them as the one in Sanhedrin (41 b) "where we said Rab Kahana and Rab Safra were studying the Tractate Sanhedrin in the school of Rabbah, when Rami bar Hama met them. He asked them, "What have you to say on the Tractate Sanhedrin as taught in the School of Rabbah?" They retorted, "And what in particular are we to say of the Tractate itself? (What is your special difficulty)? 39

(Page 67). They also scrutinized thoroughly their questions, which were added and innovated by our later masters. This does not mean that the early masters did not know this, but they left it for a generation that would come after them to expand themselves with it. But the world did not need it during their own days, as our masters said in Hullin (6 b):

"Rab Joshua ben Zaron, the son  
of Rabbi Meir's father-in-law,  
testifies before Rabbi that  
Rabbi Meir ate a leaf of a vegetable at Beth-Sheam, (without tithing it). On this testimony,

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39 He meant to say he had no new points, it was taught the same way as elsewhere.

therefore, Rabbi permitted the  
entire territory of Beth-Sheam."

Thereupon, his brothers and other members of his father's family combined to protest, saying,

"The place which was regarded as  
subject to tithes by your fathers  
and ancestors, will you regard as  
free?"

Rabbi thereupon expounded the following verse: 2 Kings (18:4):

"And he (Hezekiah) broke in pieces  
the brazen serpent that Moses had  
made; for unto those days the children  
of Israel did offer to it, and  
it was called Nehushtan."

"Now is it at all likely that Asa did not destroy it? Or that Jehoshaphat did not destroy it? Surely Asa and Jehoshaphat destroyed every form of idolatry in the world! It must therefore be that his ancestors left something undone whereby he (Hezekiah) might distinguish himself; so in any case, my ancestors left room for me to distinguish myself." From it is to be learned that whenever a scholar reports a decision, (page 68) however strange it may sound, he should not be made to move (mezihin) from his tradition... some say he should not be rejected... some say he should not be regarded as arrogant." The one who says, we do not cast him off, (he should not be made to move) as it is written in Lamentations (3:31):

"For the Lord will not cast off  
forever;"

the one who says, we do not let him loose, (he should not be rejected)

as is in Exodus (28:28):

"And let the breastplate be not  
loosed;"

the one who says, we do not let him become arrogant, as we are taught  
in Baraitha Sotah (47 b):

"Since the arrogant of heart increased,  
controversies multiplied in Israel."

This is the answer to the question you asked: Why did the early  
masters leave the majority of it to the later masters? If you have  
found an exceptional thing which the later masters said, it is because  
the early masters left it for them deliberately so that they might dis-  
tinguish themselves with it. It was also to multiply with these things  
that the Talmud increased one generation after another, as we said in  
Sanhedrin (106 b):

"Seven hundred questions were  
asked by Dosg and Achitofel  
about a tower which flies in  
air." 40

And Rabba said thereof, Taanith (24 a & b):

"In the time of Rabbi Judah, all  
studies were concentrated on  
Nezikin, whereas we study all  
the six sections."

When Rabbi Judah reached the passage (in the Mishnah) (page 69)- "If a

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40 It is thus obvious that they had questions that needed clarifi-  
cation.

woman was preserving vegetables in a pot etc.," or as some say to us, the passage: "If olives are preserved together with their leaves, then the leaves are not susceptible to uncleanness." He exclaimed, "I see here disputations of Rab and Samuel and yet we today teach Ukazin in thirteen different sessions. And yet when Rab Judah removed one shoe (as a sign of humiliation), rain fell.<sup>41</sup> But when we cry out the whole day, no one pays any heed, yet the Holy One, Blessed Be He, wants the heart."

Therefore, the teaching increased generation after generation until Rabbina; but after Rabbina it ceased as Samuel Yarchinai saw it in the book of Adam Harishom. And there was written in it, Aschi and Rabbina are the end of Horaah.<sup>42</sup>

After this, even though there certainly was no more Horaah, there were Saboraim, who explained things which were close enough to Horaah, and these Saboraim were the ones who were called the Saboraim, our rabbis. Whatever was still undecided (page 70) they explained, ie., Rab Rechumai and Rabba and Rab Joseph and Rab Achai of Be Chatim, as we said in Gittin (7 a):

"And Be Chatim is a city in the  
neighborhood of Nehardea."

And Rab Ravai of Rove, who explains in Sanhedrin (43 a) concerning what Rabbi said, "One who goes forth to be executed is made to drink a potion of Galbanum so that he should become doped," because it is said

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41 In preparation for feast.

42 The end of Talmud.

in Proverbs (31:6):

"Give strong drink unto him that is  
ready to perish, and wine unto the  
bitter in soul."

And we are taught, the noble women of Jerusalem would donate it from their own. And we ask, if (page 71) they do not donate it from their own, where do we get it from? Said Rab Ravai of Rove, "It is understandable that we get it from the community because it is stated, T'nu (give ye). And also Rove, the city of Rab Ravai, was in the vicinity of the academies of Mehardea, and our masters said that Rab Ravai was a Gaon and lived many, many year.

Many explanations were established in the Gemara including one from our later masters like i.e., Rab Ena and Rab Simona, and we learned from our early masters that the Gemara of "A woman may be acquired in three ways", which we are taught at the beginning of Kiddushchin, "How do we know these things? How do we know that a woman may be acquired with money?" All these questions and answers which were discussed in the Gemara were answered and established by the Saboraim.

As to your writing--- How was the Mishnah and the Talmud written? The Talmud and the Mishnah were not written, but the answers were arranged, and our masters were careful to study them by heart, but not from written versions, as we said in Temurah (14 b):

"Things which were said orally  
are not permitted to be recited  
from writing." (page 72)

As Scripture says:

"For according to these things,

I make a covenant with thee."

"These things you may write down, but you may not write down Halachot."

As to your question—What is the order of the Saboraim after Rabbina, and who reigned after them from that time until the present?

As we are able to explain it to you, the essence of this matter concerns the beginning of Israel and how the two academies were divided because there is an error in this matter.

Know ye, that at the beginning, when Israel was exiled in the exile of Jechonjia, and the draftsmen and the smiths and many prophets were exiled with them, they were brought to Nehardea. Then Jechonjia, the king of Judah, and his entourage built a synagogue, and they founded it with stones and earth which they brought with them from the Holy Temple, so that they could fulfill what is stated in Scripture, Psalms (102:15):

"For thy servants take pleasure  
in her stones and love her dust."

And they named this synagogue in Nehardea, "The Synagogue which travelled and settled." (Page 73) That is to say, that the Holy Temple had travelled and settled here and the Divine Presence was with them, as is stated in Megillah (29 a):

"Where in Babylon is the SheKinah?  
Rab said: In the Synagogue of Huzal  
and Samuel says...In the Synagogue of  
Shaf Weyatib in Nehardea?"

Do not however imagine that it is in both places, but it is sometimes in one and sometimes in the other. Said Abaye:

"May I be rewarded because whenever  
I am within a parasang ( of either



of these synagogues) I go in and pray there."

And this Synagogue of Huzal is near the House of Study of Ezra, the scribe, and it is below Nehardea.

Because Ezra and Zrubabel went up from Babylon and the exile went with them, they built the Temple, and there were the heads of the Sanhedrin, like Simon, the Just, and Antigonus, the man of Socho, and all these other Zarot, the majority of whom came up from Babylon. Hillel, the Elder, also went up with them from Babylon. Nevertheless, they continued to spread Torah here in Babylon and they had an Exilarch from the House of David. But they had neither a head of the academy nor a Sanhedrin amongst them, (page 74), because they said that one of those could only be from the place which the Lord had chosen."

And until Rabbi passed away, there was a custom in Babylon to have an Exilarch, but they had neither heads of the academy nor princes because they were the heads of the Sanhedrin in Palestine until Hillel and Shammai, as is stated in Aboth (1:12).

After Hillel, there was his son, Simon, and after him was Rabban Gamaliel the Elder, his son, and after him was Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel I, who was executed before the destruction of the Temple. And Rabbi Ishmael, the son of Elisha, was the High Priest then.

These four generations were during those hundred years which are mentioned in Shabbath (15 a):

"Hillel and Simon, Gamaliel and  
Simon, carried their princely  
offices for one hundred years before  
the destruction of the Temple."

After Rabban Simon ben Gamaliel, who was killed with the martyrs of the regime, there was Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai, who lived at the time of the destruction of the Temple. They brought him out (page 75) to the Emperor Vespasian, and he requested from him the family chain of Rabban Gamaliel and Yabneh and its Sages, Gittin (56 a). And when Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai and our teachers rested in Yabneh, they proclaimed ten ordinances, as we are taught in Rosh ha-Shana (29 b):

"Then the Holy Temple was destroyed, Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai ordained."

After Rabban Gamaliel, the son of Rabban Simon ben Gamaliel, the Elder, who was killed with the ten martyrs of the regime, this Rabban Gamaliel was the Nasi at Yabneh and Rabbi Joshua was the head of the court. But because Gamaliel inflicted pain on Rabbi Joshua three times, he was discharged, and Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah, who was a wealthy man and who was the tenth in line to Ezra the scribe, was appointed instead. Afterwards Rabban Gamaliel apologized to Rabbi Joshua and they returned Rabban Gamaliel to his post, but they did not remove Eliezer ben Azariah; instead, Rabban Gamaliel held office for three weeks and Rabbi Eliezer ben Azariah, one week, as is stated in Berakhoth (26 a).

After him, his son Rabban Simon, (page 76) became Nasi, and after him, Rabbenu Hakadosh, his son, who lived in Zippori and Beth-Shearim.

During the days of Rabbi, Rab Huna I was the Exilarch in Babylon, and this is what we said in Horayoth (11 b): "Rabbi asked of Rabbi Hiyya,

"Is one like myself to bring  
a he goat?"<sup>43</sup>

So he said to him, "Your competitor is in Babylon, and who is he?  
Rab Huna." "There, the other replied, is the scepter; here is only  
the law giver," as it was taught, and as is stated in Sanhedrin (5 a):

"The scepter shall not depart  
from Judah nor the ruler's staff  
from between his feet." Genesis (49:10).

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah" refers to the Exilarch in  
Babylon, who rules over Israel with the scepter; "nor the ruler's  
staff from between his feet" refers to the grandchildren of Hillel  
who teach the Torah to Israel in public. It is thus obvious that  
the ones in Babylon are better because they are the "scepter".

During the days of Rabbi, Rab Huna passed away in Babylon, and  
the masters explained in the Palestinian <sup>Talmud</sup> Mishnah of Kilaim (Chap. <sup>Talmud</sup>  
9:3) and in Ketuboth (Chap. 12:3) that Rabbi was very humble, and  
that Rabbi used to say:-

"Anything that a man would tell  
me, I would do, with the excep-  
tion of what the Elders of Bathyra  
would tell my grandfather, for  
they resigned from their princely  
offices and they appointed him.

(Page 77) And if Rab Huna, the

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43 Is a patriarch of Palestine to be considered "ruler" of  
all Israel to bring the ruler's sin offering?

Exilarch, would come up here, I  
would seat him above myself, for  
he is from the tribe of Judah and  
I am from the tribe of Benjamin.  
He comes from the Great Ones of  
Judah, his lineage is from the  
males, and I am from the Small  
Ones' from the females."

One time Rabbi Hiyya the Great went in to him and he said to him:  
"Rab Huna is outside." Rabbi's face reddened, and he said to him,  
"His coffin is coming." Said Rabbi to Rabbi Hiyya, "Go and see who  
needs you outside." He went out and could not find anyone; so, Rabbi  
Hiyya knew that Rabbi was angry with him and he took upon himself the  
custom of excommunication for thirty days, and he did not go to see  
Rabbi during that time. Said Rabbi Jose ben Bun:

"During those thirty days, Rab  
learned from him all the general  
principles of the Torah."

After Rab Huna, Mar Rab Ukva was appointed in Babylon, and with  
him was Samuel, as is stated in Moed Katan (16 b):

"When Samuel and Mar Ukva are  
studying, Mar Ukva sits before  
Samuel within his four cubits",  
and when they sit at Judgement  
then Samuel sits before Mar  
Ukva within his four cubits,"  
as we said in Shabbath (55 a).

Said Samuel to Rab Judah Shinana<sup>44</sup>

(page 78), "Your head is in cold water, but the head of your head is in hot water".<sup>45</sup>

It is thus obvious that Mar Ukva and his law court existed and Scripture says about them, Jeremiah (21:12):

"O House of David, thus saith the Lord, execute justice in the morning."

During the days of Rabbi, Rab went down to Babylon during the year 530 according to the Greek calendar, to which we are accustomed; (3979 of creation).

Rabbi Shiloh was the head of the academy after Rabbi, and he was called the Head of the Order in Babylon as we said in Yoma (20 b);

"Rab came to the place of Rab Shiloh and he placed upon him the title of "Amora". "

When Rab Shiloh passed away, Rab and Samuel were here, but Rab did not want to be the one above him and to seat Samuel before him; likewise Samuel did not want to be above Rab and to seat Rab before him, because Rab was a great deal older than Samuel, as we said in Baba Kamma (80 a) (page 79):

"Rab and Samuel and Rab Asi came  
to a feast of circumcision, but

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44 One with large teeth.

45 I don't suffer from it because after all I am your teacher, but a teacher suffers from it.

some say that it was a feast of  
the redemption of the first-born;  
Rab did not want to enter before  
Samuel, Samuel did not want to  
enter before Rab, and Rab Asi did  
not want to enter before Rab. They  
said, 'Who should wait outside'?  
Should Samuel wait outside so that  
Rab and Rab Asi should enter,<sup>46</sup> or  
should Rab wait outside, or Rab Asi?"

And the answer--Rab removed Samuel from before him on account of  
this story when he cursed him.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, Rab left Samuel in Nehardea, for it was his place and  
it was a place of learning. And he removed himself to a place where  
there was no learning, which was Surah, also known as Mata Mechasia.  
There were many Jews in this place who did not even know what was pro-  
hibited nor what was permissible. And Rab said:

"I will live here so that there  
will be Torah at this place,"

Just as in the story stated in Hulin (100 a):

"Rab found a valley and he  
fenced it in."

(Page 80) When he came to Tatalfos, he studied with them and taught

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46 Our text Baba Kamma has a different version.

47 Shabbath (108 a).

then the various prohibitions of the uterus.

And he was called the head of the academy, as it appears in Hullin (137 b): Rabbi Johanan said to Asai ben Hini, "Who is the head of the order in Babylon?" So he said to him, "Abba Aricha." And it was verified in a dream, in which Rabbi Hanina had seen him standing, as is stated in Yoma (87 b).

And Rab acquired a piece of land as the garden adjoining the academy, for it was property of a proselyte, and he gathered there many disciples, and he disseminated the Torah a great deal and established there a court of law.

There were in Babylon two great law courts----one in Nehardea, which already existed, and one in Surah, which Rab established. And this is what Samuel said in Gittin (36 b):

"We do not write a "prosbol"  
except at the court of Surah  
or at the court of Nehardea."

(Page 81) Rab and Samuel had two academies in Babylon, as is stated in Gittin (6 a). Rab says Babylon is like Palestine in matters of divorce, and Samuel says that it is like the Diaspora. And we explained it because Rab thought that since there were academies, therefore witnesses were available; and Samuel thought that the students at the academies were too busy with their studies.

From time to time, Rab and Samuel would see each other. Rab died in the year 558 (which is 4003 according to creation). And Samuel carried on alone after him for seven years, and then there was only one academy. While Rab was still alive, Rabbi Johanan would write to him: "To our master in Babylon." After Rab died, Rabbi Johanan would write

to Samuel: "To our colleague in Babylon." So Samuel said, "Doesn't he know yet that I am his master?" So he wrote to him and sent him a calendar of sixty years. So Rabbi Johanan said, "Now all his wisdom is in mathematics." So Samuel sent him thirteen camels loaded with questions of doubtful cases of Trefot. (page 82) Then he said, "Apparently I do have a master in Babylon; I will go and I will see him", as is said in Hullin (95 b).

Samuel died in the year 564 (that is 4010 of creation), and his disciples were Rab Nahman in Nehardea, Rab Judah in Pumbedita, and Rab Shesheth in Schilhis.

In the year 575, which is the year when Papa bar Netzar came and destroyed Nehardea, Rabben Abuha, our grandfather, went to Shechnatziv and to Schilchi and to Mechuza. And there was Rab Joseph bar Hana, the father of Rabba and our masters in Pumbedita, because from the days of the Second Temple, Pumbedita was the mainstay of the Diaspora, as we were taught in Rosh ha-Shana (25 b):

"Until we see the Diaspora  
before him like a bonfire."

And Abaye says, "Diaspora is Pumbedita."

(Page 83) After Samuel, Rab Huna reigned forty years, for he was of the children of the Nasi. He spread a great deal of Torah, as we said in Ketuboth (106 a):

"When our masters were talking  
leave from the house of Rab Huna,  
800 of the sons of the academy  
remained with him and Rab Huna  
would expand with the assistance



of thirteen Amoraim.

And when our masters would rise  
from the academy of Rab Huna and  
would spread their garments, the  
dust would rise and cover the  
light of the sun.'

'And they would then say in Palestine, the academy of Rab Huna thus  
arose.' As we said in Yebamoth (64 a):

'That Abba bar Zabdah and Rab  
Shesheth and Rab Helbo and Rab  
Giddal and Aha bar Hanina——  
all became impotent on account  
of their studies with Rab Huna." <sup>48</sup>

Says Rab Acha bar Jacob, 'with the exception of myself, for I fulfilled my needs', and "wisdom preserveth the life of him that hath it". <sup>49</sup>(7:12)

During the days of Rab Huna, Rabbi Johanan passed away in Israel, and we said that Rabbi Johanan (page 84) reigned for eighty years in Palestine after Rab Hanina, who was after Rab Efes, who was after Rabbenu Hakadosh, as is stated in Ketuboth (103 b).

In the year of 590, both Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Eliezer died, and Rab Ami reigned.

Rab Huna became very strong, since he was of the house of the Nasi; and Rab Judah of Pumbedita and his disciples were before him.

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48 They would not rise during their studies to fulfill their physical needs.

49 He would rise during the lectures to fulfill his needs.

Rab Judah would be seeing Rab Huna at times, as well as Rab Nahman in Shilchi and in Mechuza, with the Sages of Nehardea. We do not find any place that Rab Nahman entered before Rab Huna (as a disciple) but they were like colleagues; for in many places, i.e., Baba Metzia (15 a) Rab Nahman says:

"Our colleague Huna established  
it in a different way."

The academy of Rab Huna was close to Mata Mehasia, and Rab Hisda was a colleague of Rab Huna's as he was in Surah. During the years of Rab Huna, Rab Hisda, in the year 604, built an academy.

(Page 85) Rab Huna died in the year 608; and they brought his coffin to Palestine, as is stated in Moed Katan (25 a): "Where did they place his coffin?" In the grave of Rab Hiyya. And it was said there, the reason why the House of the Exilarch was not punished, was because they set up the coffin of Rab Huna. Rab Judah took his place for two years, and all our teachers came to him at Pumbedita.

After Rab Judah, who died in the year 610, Rab Hisda reigned in Surah for ten years, and then he died in the year 620.

Rabba and Rabbi Joseph, who were in Pumbedita with Rabbi Judah, each said to the other, "You reign"! They each did not want to accept lordship to become the leader. It is stated at the end of Tractate Horayoth and at the end of Tractate Berakhoth, that Rabba and Rabbi Joseph both were needed at that hour, and so they sent the question from there: "An erudite and a dialectician, which one is preferable?" The answer came that the erudite is preferable, because all people depend on the owners of the wheat (i.e. sound learning is the bread, while dialectics are the spices of study). Rabbi Joseph (page 86) however,

demy." And the whole story is related in Baba Metzia (86 a).

And during those years that Rabba bar Nachmani was in Pumbedita, Rabba bar Hiyva was disseminating Torah in Surah.

After Rabba bar Nachmani, Rab Joseph reigned in Pumbedita for two and one-half years, until he died in the 634.

After him Abaye reigned for thirteen years, and then died in the year 649. And thus it is stated in Gittin (60 b):

"This Shofar <sup>51</sup> was at first in  
the House of Rab Judah, and then  
in the House of Rabba, and then  
in the House of Rab Joseph, and  
in the end, in the House of Abaye."

That is to say, that they were the heads of the academy (page 88). This Shofar was the collection box of our teachers of the academy, for whatever came to them from the Israelites, they would put into it, as was taught in Shekalim (6:5):

"There were thirteen Shofar-chests  
in the Temple, whereon was inscribed:  
New shekel dues and old shekel dues."

After Abaye, Rabba from Pumbedita reigned in Mechuza, as is stated in Berakhoth (56 a):

"Bar Hedia was interpreting dreams,  
and he said to Rabba, 'Abaye passed  
away and his whole academy is coming  
to you'."

And the rabbis of the entire world gathered before him.

51 Meaning (collection box)

And although from the time of Rab Hisda's death, there was no Gaon in Surah,<sup>52</sup> still the reign of Rabba was much greater and he exercised a great deal of power; and the blessing of Rab Joseph became fulfilled in him, as is stated in Yoma (53 a):

"When Rabba was taking leave from the house of Rab Joseph, he would walk backwards and injure his feet (page 89) and the threshold of the house of Rab Joseph would be filled with blood."

They came and told it to Rab Joseph, so he said to them:

"May it be the will that your head should be exalted above that of the entire city."

And the duration of Rabba's reign was for fourteen years, until he died in the year 663.

During all those years of Rabba's reign, there was only one academy in Pumbedita; and after Rabba, it was split into two academies--- Rab Nahman bar Isaac led in Pumbedita for four years, and died in the year 667; and Rab Papa was in Benrash, which is close to Surah, where he reigned for nineteen years, and died in the year 687.

And after Rab Nahman bar Isaac, many Geonim reigned in Pumbedita, such as Rab Hana in Pumbedita, and he died in the year 688, as was said in Shebuoth (54 b):

"There was no judge like Rabbi Eliezer."

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<sup>52</sup> Meaning head of the academy.

And there was one scholar there who said:

"I will bring a letter from the  
west<sup>53</sup> (page 90) proving that the  
law is not in accordance with  
Rabbi Eliezer."

So he came before Rab Hama and he said to him:

"If a judge decided according to  
Rabbi Eliezer, then it is done."

After him, Rab Sebid reigned in Pumbedita, and he died in the  
year 696. After him, Rab Dima of Nehardea reigned, and he died in  
the year 699.

After him Rafram reigned, and he died in the year 706; and after  
him, Rab Kahna reigned, and he died in the year 725.

After him, Rab Acha, the son of Rabba, reigned, and he died in  
the year 730.

During all these years after Rab Papa, Rab Aschi was the Gaon at  
Mata Mechasia. He demolished the old synagogue at the house of Rab  
and rebuilt it, as we said in Baba Bathra (3 b), and he delivered  
many fine ordinances. He established them as "feast and fast", which  
were only for the Exilarchs in Nehardea, and he ordained the feast of  
the Exilarch in Surah; since he was outstanding and his knowledge and  
greatness were renowned (page 91). Huna bar Nathan, who was the  
Exilarch in those days, and Marimar and Mar Sutra who came after him,  
were all subordinate to Rab Aschi, They made their feast in Mata Me-  
chasia, as was said in Gittin (59 a): Said Rab Acha, the son of Rabba,  
and we too can say:-

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53 Probably referring to Palestine.

"From the days of Rabbi to the days of Rab Aschi there is no place where we can find Torah and greatness in one place."

"But wasn't there Huna bar Nathan?" "And the answer is, that Huna bar Nathan is one althogher different, for he was subordinate to Rab Aschi."

Because they had established the feast of the Exilarch at Mata Mechasia, it became incumbent upon the heads of Pumbedita to go there for the Sabbath of Lech-Lcha because this was the Sabbath on which the feast of the Exilarch was held. And it was established that the majority of the leaders of the Diaspora would go there.

And what Rab Aschi did, did not cease to exist afterwards as it had during the years of Rab Judah and Rabba and Rab Joseph, and Abaye and Rabba, for at that time there was (page 92) only one academy in Pumbedita. After Rab Aschi, there were two academies, and that is what Rab Aschi said in the Tractate of Shabbath (11 a):

"I am responsible that Mata Mechasia was not destroyed."

During each year that the Exilarch was at Mata Mechasia, when the festival was established at the academy, all the heads and rabbis of Pumbedita would come to him for the festivities.

And thus existed the custom of this practice for approximately two hundred years. The Exilarchs had a great deal of power and dealt much cruelty during the days of the Persians and during the days of the Arabs, for the position of the Exilarch was sold for a great deal of money. There were amongst them, some that persecuted and hurt our

masters a great deal.

Our own ancestors are from the house of the Nasi, but they had forsaken all these evil ways of the presidency, and they entered the academy in the midst of our masters to seek humility, lowliness and meekness. And we are not (page 93) from the sons of the Bostanai,<sup>54</sup> since before that our grandfather entered amongst the rabbis of the academy.

And because the presidents were reigning, the leaders could not avoid coming to visit them during the feast. But in the middle of the Arab reign, in the days of David ben Zakkai, they were lowered from their posts due to an edict of the king. After that, the leaders of Pumbedita did not go to them except when it was convenient for the Nasi to have a festival in Pumbedita. Then they would go there and would establish it.

At the present time no one was left of the entire household of the Nasi with the exception of one youth.

Rab Aschi led as the head of the academy for nearly sixty years. This is what we said in Baba Bathra (157 b): "At the first cycle, Rab Aschi taught us thus, and at the second cycle (page 94) of Rab Aschi, he taught us with a different interpretation." It was thus ordained by our masters to study two Tractates each year, whether it be a minor or a major Tractate, so that the entire Talmud could be reviewed in thirty years.

And because Rab Aschi reigned nearly sixty years, there were thus two reviews; he died in the year 738.

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<sup>54</sup> Sherira apparently tries to prove that his lineage is pure, for Bostanai the Exilarch married the daughter of a Persian king who was a prisoner.

After him, Rab Jemar reigned in Mata Mechasia, and he died in the year 743.

After him, it was Rab Idi bar Abin, and he died in the year 763. And after him, was Rab Nahman bar Rab Huna, and he died in the year 766, (page 95) when persecution struck and Jesdigerd ordained to abolish the Sabbath.

Then Rab Tabjome, who is Mar bar Rab Aschi, reigned in Mata Mechasia, and he died in the year 779 on the eve following the Day of Atonement.

And after him, was Rabba Tussafa, and he died in the year 785.

On the fourth day of the Sabbath, which was the thirteenth day of Kislev of the year 811, our master Abina, the son of Rab Huna, who was Rabbina, passed away, and he was the last of the Amoraim.

During those years, (page 96) Rab Bebuah of the house of Catil reigned in Pumbedita, and he died in the year 744. After him, was Refram of Pumbedita, and he died in the year 754. After him came Rab Richume<sup>55</sup> and some say it was Richumai, and he died in the year 760 during the period of persecution that was ordered by Jesdigerd.

After him, Rab Sama, the son of Rabba reigned, and during his time and the time of Mar bar Rab Aschi, we heard from the early masters, and we saw it written down in the books of their memoirs, that they sought mercy (prayed) and a dragon devoured King Jesdigerd in his bedroom, and the laws of his persecution were annulled.

During the days of this Rab Sama, on the seventh day of Tebet of the year 781, our master Anemar bar mar Janke and Huna (page 97) Mar bar Rab Aschi, the Exilarch, and Mesharahaiah bar Pakod were ar-

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<sup>55</sup> This one means Rab Richume II.



rested.

On the eighteenth day of Tebet, Huna bar mar Zutra, the Nasi, and Mesharashaiah were killed. And during the month of Adar of the same year, Rab Anemar bar mar Janke was killed.

And in the year 781, all the synagogues of Babylon were closed and the Jews were handed over to the Angushi.

In the year 787, Rab Sama, the son of Rabba died.

And after him, Rab Jose reigned; during his days the period of Amoraim ended and the Talmud was completed.

Then came the Saboraim, who died within a few years.

Thus, (page 98) the Gaonim explained ~~the books of~~ their memoirs and the chronicles:<sup>56</sup>

"In the year 815, Rabbenu Sama, the son of Rabbenu Judah, died in the month of Sivan, and it is said that he was a chief judge.

And on the first day of the Sabbath, which was the fourth day of Adar of the year 816, Rab Ahai, the son of Rab Huna, died.

And in Nisan of the same year, Rab Rachumi died. Some say that it was Rab Rachumai.

And in the year 817, in the month of Kislev, Rab Samuel bar

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<sup>56</sup> This is a quotation of material taken directly from the archives in Sherira's possession.

Judah of Pumbedita died, and in the month of Adar, Rabbina bar Amuzia died.

In the year 819, Rab Huna, the Exilarch passed away. In the year 822, on the day of Atonement, there was an earthquake and Rab Ahai, the son of Rabba bar Abuha died, And (page 99) in the year 826 Rab Tachna and Mar Sutra, the sons of Rab Hinina died."

And Rab Joseph Gaon remained in our academy for many years.

After this, Rab Ena was in Surah and Rab Simona was in Pumbedita.

And after this, came Rab Rabba, from Robe. He was from our academy and it is said that he was a Gaon.<sup>57</sup>

There were many years of persecution and troubles at the end of the Persian kingdom and they were unable to establish regular studies, and to hold sessions, and to carry on the duties of the Goanate for many years until our masters came from Pumbedita into the area of Nehardea which is in the district of Piruz Shabur.

These Gaonim were in our country in Pumbedita after these events (page 100) at the end of the Persian kingdom. From the year 900, Mar Chanan of Askia reigned.

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57 Gaon here means head of the academy\* \*Also that when Sherira did not have documentary evidence before him, he would indicate it by saying (it is said) not it is written.

And after him came Mar rab Meri, our grandfather, the son of Rab Dime Sargo.

His House of Study is known in Piruz Shabur until this day and is called the House of Rab Meri.

During his days, Rab Mar ben Rab Huna reigned in Surah in the year 902. And after Rab Meri, Sargo reigned in Nehardea. Then Rab Hinnai from the House of Gehara reigned in Nehardea. And it was during his days that Mohammed came into the world, (in the year 4,374 of creation).

And they say that during that time, Rab Hinnai was in Surah and (page 101) Rab Hfa was Gaon of Pumbedita, and Mar rab Isaac was Gaon, and it was he who was in Piruz Shabur at the time when Ali ben Abu-Tallab annexed it. And Rab Isaac went forth from Piruz Shabur towards him, and he was received with great delight. (At that time there were in Piruz Shabur, 90,000 Jews, and Ali ben Abu-Tallab received them very nicely).

After him came Mar rab Rabba. It was during his days that they ordained to give a woman a divorce immediately, and not as was the case in the discussion about Rab Sebid's daughter-in-law Ketuboth (64a).

During his days, Rab Hunai was Gaon in Surah (page 102) and after Mar rab Rabba was Mar rab Bussai.<sup>58</sup>

And in Surah, there was Mar rab Sasna and it was written on his emblem: Mesharshaiah bar Tachlifa.

After him was Mar rab Bussai in Pumbedita; and after him was Mar rab Huna Meri ben mar Joseph, and he was the Gaon in the year 1000.

After him was Mar rab Hiyva of Mesen; and after him was Mar Rabia.

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<sup>58</sup> Bostanai?

After him was Mar rab Natrunai, the son of Mar rab Nehemiah, and he reigned in the year 1030; and it is known that Rab Janke was his son-in-law, for he had married into the house of the Nasi. He spread bitterness among our teachers and they escaped from him and fled to Surah (page 103) until Rab Janke died, when they returned to their academy.

After him reigned Mar rab Judah,

And after him reigned Mar rab Joseph, who was known in all of Kutai in the year 1050.

After him, in the year 1059, reigned Mar rab Samuel bar rab Mar.

After him Mar rab Natro Kahana, the son of Mar rab Amuna, reigned. He was from Bagdad, from the outer bridge, and during his days, Rab Acha of Sabha went up to Palestine, for Mar Rab Natro was his assistant. He went there when they made him Nasi over them.

After him reigned Mar rab Abraham Cahana.

After him reigned Mar rab Dudai, the son of (page 104) Mar rab Nahman, in the year 1072; he is the brother of Rab Judah Gaon.

And after him reigned Rab Chanaaja bar rab Mesharshia in the year 1075.

After him reigned Rab Malcha, the son of Rab Acha, in the year 1082. And he demoted Rab Natronai ben Zabinai, who was the Nasi during the controversy concerning Zakkai Bar mar Ahunai, who was the Nasi before him for many years. The two academies sided with Zakkai, the Nasi, and they demoted Natronai. Then Rab Malcha passed away to the Garden of Eden and Rab Natronai, the Nasi, went up to Palestine.

After Rab Malcha, Mar rab Rabba, the son of Rab Dudai, our grandfather, reigned in the year 1082.

After him, reigned Mar rab Shnuai, but he did not last long.

After him reigned Mar rab Chaninai Gaon Cahana, (page 105) the son of Mar rab Abraham Gaon, in the year 1093, but the Nasi removed him.

After him, reigned Mar rab Huna Mar Hallewi bar Isaac, in the year 1096. It was during his days that they ordained to collect the Ketuba of a woman, and the outstanding debts from orphans, even including moveable goods.

After him, Mar rab Menasche bar mar rab Joseph reigned in the year 1099, who was a Gubain from the house of Ukva.

During these years, all the Gaonim were at Mata Mechasia until the year 1000--- I do not remember them well in order. And there is debate and controversy, for the same Nasi who removed one, would also return him to office; and what is clear to us is already written. But from the year 1000 and after, it is known to us with certainty (page 106). And during the hundred years from 1000 on, when we explained those Gaonim who reigned in Pumbedita, the following Gaonim reigned in Surah:

Mar Rab Hinnai of Nehar Pakod---five years; Mar rab Nahilai Hallewi of Naresh---eighteen years.

After him, Mar rab Jacob Haccohen of Nehar Pakod---eighteen years.

After him, Mar Samuel---eighteen years. And he was from our academy of Pumbedita, and was also one of the grandchildren of Anemar; and the father of this Mar Samuel was the son of Mar Rabba Gaon, whom we had mentioned was Gaon of Pumbedita. With him was Rab Huna of Mata Mechasia (at the time of the ordinance of the divorce). And since there was no one in Mata Mechasia who was as great in wisdom as he was, Solomon

bar Hisda, the Exilarch, took him and appointed him in Mata Mechasia,) and he was a very wise man. His children were in Pumbedita, but there were (page 107) some of his children before us in this academy, and there were some of them that had married into our family.

After him, there was Mar rab Meri Cohen of Nehar-Pakod---eight years.

After him, was Mar rab Acha---one-half year.

After him there was Mar rab Judah bar mar rab Nahman---three and one-half years. He was also from Pumbedita and there was no one as great in wisdom as he at Surah. He too, was taken by Solomon, the Nasi, and was appointed there. It was a delight for the eyes, for he and his brother were the Gaonim of the two academies at the same time, and it was during those days that Anan went forth.<sup>59</sup>

After him was Mar rab Judah mar rab Achunai Cahana, the son of Mar rab Papa, for eight years (page 108) and after Mar rab Achunai Cahana, Bar mar rab Huna---five years.

After him was Mar rab Meri Hallewi, the son of Rab Mesharshaiah--three and one-half years.

After him was Mar rab Biboi Hallewi, bar mar Rabba of Nehar Pakod--ten and one-half years, and he was with Mar rab Huna mar Hallewi and with Mar rab Menasche, the Gaonim of Pumbedita, when they ordained to collect a Ketuba and debts from orphans extending even to removeable goods. And these are the end of one hundred years (page 109). And after them, the Gaonim of Pumbedita was mar rab Isaiah Hallewi, the son of Mar rab Aba, who was from Cloudi, a city near Bagdad, and who reigned in the year 107.

After him reigned Mar rab Joseph bar mar rab Schila from Shilhen,

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<sup>59</sup> The founder of Karai sect.

in the year 109.

After him was Mar rab Cahana Gaon , the son of Mar rab Haninai Gaon, in the year 115.

After him was Mar rab Ibumai Gaon, the brother of his father, who was the son of Mar rab Abraham Gaon, in the year 121.

(After him was Mar rab Joseph, the son of Mar rab Abba, in the year 125,) but he really shouldn't have reigned,<sup>60</sup> because Mar rab Aaron was before him, who was the head of the court and he had studied and was much better than he was. However, it was through a dream that they appointed Mar rab Joseph, Gaon. He was very pious and very old, and it was said that the prophet Elijah of Blessed Memory came to him and sat in the academy during his days. One day he said to our masters absentmindedly, "Make way for an old man (page 110) that came to me." Although our masters could not see anything, they knew that it was Elijah of Blessed Memory. And they made a great deal of room for him, and this is why there is a custom now to make room at the right side of the head of a person. It is on account of this story that we do so. And my grandfather, the Gaon, was his scribe, and he was in charge of all the needs of the academy during his entire lifetime. When he passed away, there was a great tumult and the earth shook. It was also said that he troubled his soul a great deal as a young man for the sake of his learning, and Mar rab Schinoi, the Gaon who was his master, blessed him and said to him:

"May you merit so that you

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60 He wasn't the best candidate for the position since there was mar rab Aaron before him who was the father of the court and who was learned and a great deal better than he.

lead your occupation."

And he reigned for two years.

After him; arose Mar rab Abraham bar mar rab Sherira in the year 127. He reigned for twelve years, during which Mar rab Joseph bar mar Hiyya was the father of the court. During the controversy of the (page 111) Exilarchs Daniel and David, Mar rab Joseph was called to assume the office of Gaon, and in the end they made up with Mar rab Abraham, and they decided that both Mar rab Joseph and Mar rab Abraham should be called Gaonim. When they both met at one place, Rab Abraham would recite and Mar rab Joseph would sit next to him. Once they both came to Bagdad and happened to be in the synagogue of bar Naschela at a Great Calla, and when the leaders arose and announced: "Listen how the heads of the academy explain the text, "the Israelites cried and no one listened to them. But when he said the heads of the Yeshiva,<sup>61</sup> Mar rab Joseph trembled, and he stood up on his feet and said:

"I remove myself from the Gaonate  
and I return to be the head of  
the court."

And Mar rab Abraham blessed him and said:

"May the merciful one merit you  
in his world to come."

And after Mar rab Abraham, our Mar rab Joseph reigned in the year 139 for six years.

(Page 112) After him came Mar rab Isaac bar mar rab Hanania in the year 144, but he was demoted on account of Mar rab Joseph bar mar rab Rabbi, who was the Rabbi during the years of Rab Joseph bar mar

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61 Because they should have one head and not two.



Hiyya. He was the grandson of Mar rab Abba Gaon, our grandfather, and Mar rab Isaac was older than he. When David bar Huna, the Nasi, ordained Mar rab Isaac the Elder, Mar rab Joseph was the Chief Judge; then Mar rab Isaac came to him and said to him:

"Let it not be hard for you,  
Chief Judge, for we are like  
Rabba and Rab Joseph." He said,  
"You may rest assured that you  
will merit to succeed me."

Rab Joseph accepted him and agreed to it, and then said to him:

"I bow before the head of the academy."

He reigned for six years.

After him, our Rab Joseph reigned for two years, beginning in the year 150 (page 113).

After him in the year 153, Mar rab Paltai bar Mar rab Abaye reigned sixteen years.

After him, Mar rab Achai Cahana, who was the son of Mar Rab, reigned for six months in the year 169.

After him there was a controversy between Mar rab Menachem Gaon, the son of Mar rab Joseph Gaon, the son of Hiyya, and the best of our rabbis, who were with him for one and one-half years; and Mar rab Matityahu, the son of Mar Rabbi, who had others of our rabbis with him. Mar rab Menachem passed away in the years 171 and all our rabbis returned after that to Rab Matityahu for ten years.

After him was Rab Mar Abba bar mar rab Ami in the year 180, and he was the grandson of Mar rab Samuel, who was put into office by Solomon ben Hasdai in Mata Menhasia as was explained above; he reigned

for two and one-half years. (Page 114)

After him, in the year 183, Mar rab Zemach Gaon bar mar rab Paltol Gaon, who was the father of the mother of our father, the Gaon, reigned for nineteen years.

After him, in the year 201, reigned Mar rab Hai bar mar David for seven and one-half years.

During that century there arose in Mechasia the following Gaonim: Mar rab Hilai bar rab Meri-----nine years.

After him, Mar rab Jacob Haccohen bar mar rab Mordecai-----fourteen years.

After him, Mar rab Ibumai, the brother of rab Mordecai-----eight years.

After him, Mar rab Zadok bar mar rab Aschi-----two years.

After him, Mar rab Hilai bar mar rab Hanina-----three and one-half years.

(Page 115) After him, Mar rab Kimoi bar mar rab Aschi-----three and one-half years. There was a controversy between them so one should not rely upon them.

After him, was Mar rab Meshashia bar mar rab Jacob-----ten and one-half years. Then they were without a Gaon for two years.

After this, Mar rab Cohen Zedek bar mar rab Ibumai Gaon was ordained, and he reigned for ten and one-half years.

Then Mar rab Schallum bar mar rab Boaz-----ten years.

Then Mar rab Natronai Gaon, bar mar rab Hilai Gaon, bar mar rab Meri-----ten years.

After him, was Mar rab Anram bar Sasna for eighteen years. Before that, Rab Anram quarrelled with him and he was called Gaon, but he

resigned on account of him, and afterwards he reigned as we explained. Then he passed away (page 116).

After him, was Mar rab Nachschon bar mar rab Zadok Gaon for eight years.

After him was Mar rab Zemach bar mar rab Haim, the brother of Mar rab Nachschon Gaon, for seven years.

After him, Mar rab Malcha, for one month, after which he passed away to the Garden of Rest. Then most of the Elders of Mata Mechasia passed away within approximately three months.

After this, Mar rab Hai Gaon was ordained, who was the son of Mar rab Nachschon Gaon, and he reigned for ten years.

Then Mar rab Hilai bar mar rab Natronai Gaon, for eight years.

Afterwards, the situation greatly deteriorated in Mata Mechasia and there were no scholars left in the city.

After him, they appointed Mar rab Jacob bar rab Natronai for thirteen years.

After him there was no one worthy, so David, the Exilarch, ordained Mar rab Yom Tov Kahana (page 117) bar mar rab Jacob, even though he was a weaver, because there were no such great rabbis there; he reigned for ten years.

After him there was discussion amongst the rabbis about abolishing the academy at Mata Mechasia and bringing whosoever was left there to Pumbedita. Finally, they agreed to ordain Mar Rab Nathan Alluf, the brother of our father, the son of Mar rab Judah Gaon, our grandfather, with the title of "Gaon of Mechasia" so that her name should not cease to be. In the meantime, however, he died.

And David Hanasi brought Mar Rabbenu Saadja bar rab Joseph, but he was not one of the sons of the scholars of the academy. He was from

Egypt and was known in Fajumi; and he was ordained in Iyar of the year 239 (4687). He gathered everyone who was left of the disciples of our masters of Mechasia, and some of those who came previously were followers of the masters of Pumbedita, and he established the academy of Mata Mechasia for two years. Then David Hanasi quarreled with them and with Rabbenu Saadja; so Rabbenu Saadja called for the brother of David Hanasi, whose name was Josija, to become the Exilarch, but he did not succeed, and Josija was exiled to Chorasan (page 118).

And David Hanasi called Rab Joseph, the son of Rab Jacob, who was known at Bar Satia, to become Gaon at Mata Mechasia, but he was very young and a minor scholar in comparison to Rab Saadja. Rab Saadja Gaon went into hiding for many years on account of fear due to the controversy with David Hanasi. So Rab Joseph led the Gaonate in Mata Mechasia and in the end, Rabbenu Saadja and David Hanasi made peace, but Rab Joseph remained in his place. Mar Rab Saadja held office for twelve years. And Rab Saadja passed away in the days of our father, the Gaon, in 253, after David Hanasi.

Then Rab Joseph remained alone in Mata Mechasia and his stature diminished altogether so that he could not even open his mouth before Rab Ahron Gaon. So he left Babylon and Mata Mechasia, and went away and settled in Basra; there he died. After this, there was no longer an academy in Mata Mechasia (page 119).

During those last one hundred years, the following Gaonim reigned in Pumbedita:

After Mar rab Hai Gaon, bar Mar rab David, Mar rab Kimo Gaon, bar mar rab Achai Gaon, who reigned in the year 29 for eighteen and one-half years.

After this, our grandfather Mar rab Judah reigned; he was the father of our father Bar Mar rab Samuel, the head of the Calla at the beginning of the year 217. He reigned for eleven and one-half years and died in the month of Adar in the year 226.

There was controversy between the rabbis of the academy and David Hanasi. For when the rabbis of the academy convened and called Mar rab Mevasser Cahana Gaon, bar mar rab Kimo Gaon and David Hanasi called bar rab Cohen Zedek Cahana bar mar rab Joseph, and disagreement lasted until the month of Elul of the year 233. Then David Hanasi made peace (page 120) with Mar rab Mevasser Gaon. Rab Mevasser Gaon sat separately with the best of our rabbis, who were on his side. And Rab Cohen Zedek and his colleagues sat separately, and in the year 237 in the month of Kislew, Mar rab Mevasser Gaon passed away. Then his colleagues came to Rab Cohen Zedek, but he died in the year 247.

After this, Mar rab Zemach Gaon bar mar rab Kafnai reigned for two and one-half years; he died at the beginning of the year 249.

During the month of Tebet, the year of 249, our father Rab Hanina Gaon, the son of Mar rab Judah Gaon, reigned for five and one-half years and he died in the year 254.

After him, Mar rab Ahron bar mar rab Joseph Haccohen was ordained, but he was not one of the sons of the rabbis; he was, though, one of the merchants and Mar rab Mevasser Gaon ordained him in the first row at the academy, not because he was worthy of the Gaonate to succeed our father, the Gaon, but since there was a place for Mar rab Amram, the brother of our mother, the son of Mar rab Menascha, the head of the Calla. Rab Aron who was very powerful, jumped upon him, and Rab

Anram was afraid of him so (page 121) he went away. And after some time, Mar rab Nehemiah bar rab mar Kohen Zedek disagreed with him after he sat next to him. Mar Aron was better than he was and our masters did not separate themselves from him. After Rab Aron died in the year 271, some of our rabbis returned to Mar rab Nehemiah, but we and many scholars did not agree with him and we did not go before him. At this time we<sup>62</sup> were the head of the court, and we did not receive the Gaonate until Mar rab Nehemiah passed away. In the year 279 we were ordained to the Gaonate, and we ordained Hai, our son, as the head of the court approximately two years ago.

May it be the will of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, that he become as worthy as those who are written down for life, and may we deserve to lead Israel in truth, in decency and in worthiness; and may He bring the Messaiah ben David speedily and in the near future, during our lifetime and during your lifetime, and during the lifetime of the entire household of Israel. Thus may it be His will, and let us say, Amen.

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62 We means Sherira and Hai.

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