

Who's Who in the Talmud

Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi

I. Quick Facts

- Fifth Generation Tanna
- Lived 135CE – 188CE or 219CE
- Oldest son of Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel, seventh generation from Hillel Hazaken
- Also called Rabbeinu Hakadosh or just "Rabbi"
- Attributed to having compiled the Mishna

II. Life

<p>1. B. Kiddushin 72b When R. Akiba died, Rabbi was born; when Rabbi died, Rab Judah was born; when Rab Judah died, Raba was born; when Raba died, R. Ashi was born. This teaches that a righteous man does not depart from the world until [another] righteous man like himself is created, as it is said, the sun riseth and the sun goeth down:</p>	<p>1. תלמוד בבלי מסכת קידושין דף עב עמוד ב כשמת ר' עקיבא נולד רבי, כשמת רבי נולד רב יהודה, כשמת רב יהודה נולד רבא, כשמת רבא נולד רב אשי, ללמדך, שאין צדיק נפטר מן העולם עד שנברא צדיק כמותו, שנאמר: +קהלת א+ וזרח השמש ובא השמש</p>
<p>2. B. Sanhedrin 32b Our Rabbis taught: justice, justice shalt thou follow,? this means, Follow the scholars to their academies. e.g.. R. Eliezer to Lydda, R. Johanan b. Zakkai to Beror Hail, R. Joshua to Peki'in, Rabban Gamaliel [II] to Jabneh, R. Akiba to Benai Berak, R. Mathia to Rome, R. Hanania b. Teradion to Sikni, R. Jose [b. Halafta] to Sepphoris. R. Judah b. Bathyra to Nisibis, R. Joshua to the Exile, <u>Rabbi to Beth She'arim</u>, or the Sages to the chamber of hewn stones.</p>	<p>2. תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף לב עמוד ב תנו רבנן: צדק צדק תרדף, הלך אחר חכמים לשיבה: אחר רבי אליעזר ללוד, אחר רבן יוחנן בן זכאי לברור חיל, אחר רבי יהושע לפקיעין, אחר רבן גמליאל ליבנא, אחר רבי עקיבא לבני ברק, אחר רבי מתיא לרומי, אחר רבי חנניה בן תרדיון לסיכני, אחר רבי יוסי לציפורי, אחר רבי יהודה בן בתירה לנציבין, אחר רבי יהושע לגולה, אחר רבי לבית שערים, אחר חכמים ללשכת הגזית.</p>
<p>3. B. Ketuvot 103a It was taught: Rabbi was lying [on his sickbed] at Sepphoris but a [burial] place was reserved for him at Beth She'arim. Was it not, however, taught: Justice, justice shalt thou follow. Follow Rabbi to Beth She'arim? — Rabbi was [indeed] living at Beth She'arim but when he fell ill he was brought to Sepphoris because it was situated on higher ground¹ and its air was salubrious.</p>	<p>3. תלמוד בבלי מסכת כתובות דף קג עמוד ב תניא: רבי מוטל בציפורי, ומקום מוכן לו בבית שערים. והתניא: +דברים ט"ז+ צדק צדק תרדף - הלך אחר ר' לבית שערים! ר' בבית שערים הוה, אלא כיון דחלש אמטיהוה לציפורי, דמדליא ובסיס אוירא.</p>
<p>4. Y. Chagiga 2:1 77c The daughters of Elisha Ben Avuyah went to Rabbi to collect charity. He decreed saying, "do not show kindness or favor to his orphans." They said to him, Rabbi, do not look at his actions, look at his Torah. In that moment, Rabbi cried and decreed to support them.</p>	<p>4. תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת חגיגה פרק ב דף עז טור ג /ה"א הלכו בנותיו ליטול צדקה מר' גזר רבי ואמר אל יהי לו מושך חסד ואל יהי חונן ליתומיו אמרו לו רבי אל תבט במעשיו הבט בתורתו באותה השעה בכה רבי וגזר עליהן שיתפרנסו</p>

III. Exchanges with Antoninus

5. B. Avoda Zara 10a-b

Antoninus once said to Rabbi: It is my desire that my son Asverus should reign instead of me and that Tiberias¹⁷ should be declared a Colony.¹⁸ Were I to ask one of these things it would be granted while both would not be granted.¹⁹ Rabbi thereupon brought a man, and having made him ride on the shoulders of another, handed him a dove bidding the one who carried him to order the one on his shoulders to liberate it. The Emperor perceived this to mean that he was advised to ask [of the Senate] to appoint his son Asverus to reign in his stead, and that subsequently he might get Asverus to make Tiberias a free Colony.

[On another occasion] Antoninus mentioned to him that some prominent Romans were annoying him. Rabbi thereupon took him into the garden and, in his presence, picked some radishes, one at a time. Said [the Emperor to himself] his advice to me is: Do away with them one at a time, but do not attack all of them at once. But why did he not speak explicitly? — He thought his words might reach the ears of those prominent Romans who would persecute him. Why then did he not say it in a whisper? — Because it is written: For a bird of the air shall carry the voice.

The Emperor had a daughter named Gilla who committed a sin, so he sent to Rabbi a rocket-herb, and Rabbi in return sent him coriander. The Emperor then sent some leeks and he sent lettuce in return. Many a time Antoninus sent Rabbi gold-dust in a leather bag filled with wheat at the top, saying [to his servants]: ‘Carry the wheat to Rabbi!’ Rabbi sent word to say. ‘I need it not, I have quite enough of my own’, and Antoninus answered: ‘Leave it then to those who will come after thee that they might give it to those who will come after me, for thy descendants and those who will follow them will hand it over to them.’

Antoninus had a cave which led from his house to the house of Rabbi. Every time [he visited Rabbi] he brought two slaves, one of whom he slew at the door of Rabbi's house and the other [who had been left behind] was killed at the door of his own house. Said Antoninus to Rabbi: When I call let none be found with thee. One day he found R. Haninah b. Hama sitting there, so he said: ‘Did I not tell thee no man should be found with thee at the time when I call?’ And Rabbi replied. ‘This is not an [ordinary] human being.’ ‘Then’, said Antoninus, ‘let him tell that servant who is sleeping outside the door to rise and come in.’ R. Haninah b. Hama thereupon went out but found that the man had been slain. Thought he, ‘How shall I act now? Shall I call and say that the man is dead? — but one should not bring a sad report; shall I leave him and walk away? — that would be slighting the king.’ So he prayed for mercy for the man and he was restored to life. He then sent him in. Said Antoninus: ‘I am well aware that the least one among you can bring the dead to life, still when I call let no one be found with thee.’ Every time [he called] he used to attend on Rabbi and wait on him with food or drink. When Rabbi wanted to get on his bed Antoninus crouched in front of it saying. ‘Get on to your bed by stepping on me.’ Rabbi, however, said, ‘It is not the proper thing to treat a king so slightly.’ Whereupon Antoninus said: ‘Would that I served as a mattress unto thee in the world to come!’ Once he asked him: ‘Shall I enter the world to come?’ ‘Yes!’ said Rabbi. ‘But,’ said Antoninus, ‘is it not written, There will be no remnant to the house of Esau?’¹¹ ‘That,’ he replied. ‘applies only to those whose evil deeds are like to those of Esau.’ We have learnt likewise: There will be no remnant to the House of Esau, might have been taken to apply to all, therefore Scripture says distinctly — To the house of Esau, so as to make it apply only to those who act as Esau did. ‘But,’ said Antoninus, is it not also written: There [in the nether world] is Edom, her kings, and all her princes.’ ‘There, too,’ Rabbi explained, ‘[it says:] ‘her kings’, it does not say all her kings; ‘all her princes’, but not all her officers!’

IV. On Writing the Mishna

<p>6. B. Gittin 60b R. Judah b. Nahmani the public orator of R. Simeon b. Lakish discoursed as follows: It is written, Write that these words, and it is written, For according to the mouth of these words. 'What are we to make of this? — It means: The words which are written thou art not at liberty to say by heart, and the words transmitted orally thou art not at liberty to recite from writing. A Tanna of the school of R. Ishmael taught: [It is written] These: these thou mayest write, but thou mayest not write halachoth. R. Johanan said: God made a covenant with Israel only for the sake of that which was transmitted orally, as it says, For by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.</p>	<p>6. תלמוד בבלי מסכת גיטין דף ס עמוד ב דרש רבי יהודה בר נחמני מתורגמניה דרבי שמעון בן לקיש, כתיב: + שמות ל"ד + כתוב לך את הדברים האלה, וכתיב: + שמות ל"ד + כי ע"פ הדברים האלה, הא כיצד? דברים שבכתב אי אתה רשאי לאומרו על פה, דברים שבעל פה אי אתה רשאי לאומרו בכתב. דבי רבי ישמעאל תנא: אלה - אלה אתה כותב, ואי אתה כותב הלכות. א"ר יוחנן: לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר: + שמות ל"ד + כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל.</p>
<p>7. Rambam Intro to Mishna Torah And why did the Holy Rabbi [compile the Mishna] and not leave things as they were? For he saw that the students were declining in number and dispersing, and there were new troubles with the Roman government spreading in the world and becoming stronger. And the Jews were dispersed to the edges. And so he composed one composition to be in the hands of everyone so that they would learn it quickly and not forget</p>	<p>7. הקדמה ליד החזקה לרמב"ם ולמה עשה רבינו הקדוש כך ולא הניח הדבר כמות שהיה. לפי שראה שתלמידים מתמעטין והולכין והצרות מתחדשות ובאות ומלכות רומי פושטת בעולם ומתגברת. וישראל מתגלגלין והולכין לקצוות. חיבר חיבור אחד להיות ביד כולם כדי שילמדוהו במהרה ולא ישכח.</p>

V. Death

<p>8. B. Ketuvot 104a On the day when Rabbi died the Rabbis decreed a public fast and offered prayers for heavenly mercy. Furthermore, they announced that whoever said that Rabbi was dead would be stabbed with a sword. Rabbi's handmaid ascended the roof and prayed: 'The immortals desire Rabbi [to join them] and the mortals desire Rabbi [to remain with them]; may it be the will [of God] that the mortals may overpower the immortals'. When, however, she saw how often he resorted to the privy, painfully taking off his tefillin and putting them on again, she prayed: 'May it be the will [of the Almighty] that the immortals may overpower the mortals'. As the Rabbis incessantly continued their prayers for [heavenly] mercy she took up a jar and threw it down from the roof to the ground. [For a moment] they ceased praying and the soul of Rabbi departed to its eternal rest. 'Go', said the Rabbis to Bar Kappara, 'and investigate'. He went and, finding that [Rabbi] was dead, he tore his cloak and turned the tear backwards. [On returning to the</p>	<p>8. תלמוד בבלי מסכת כתובות דף קד עמוד א ההוא יומא דנח נפשיה דרבי, גזרו רבנן תעניתא ובעו רחמי, ואמרי: כל מאן דאמר נח נפשיה דר', ידקר בחרב. סליקא אמתיה דרבי לאיגרא, אמרה: עליוני מבקשין את רבי והתחתוני מבקשין את רבי, יהי רצון שיכופו תחתונים את העליונים. כיון דחזאי כמה זימני דעייל לבית הכסא, וחלץ תפילין ומנח להו וקמצטער, אמרה: יהי רצון שיכופו עליונים את התחתונים. ולא הוה שתקי רבנן מלמביעי רחמי, שקלה כוזא שדייא מאיגרא [לארעא], אישתיקו מרחמי ונח נפשיה דרבי. אמרו ליה רבנן לבר קפרא: זיל עיין. אזל אשכחיה דנח נפשיה, קרעיה ללבושיה ואהדריה לקרעיה לאחוריה, פתח ואמר: אראלים ומצוקים אחזו בארון הקדש, נצחו אראלים את המצוקים ונשבה ארון הקדש! אמרו ליה: נח נפשיה? אמר להו: אתון קאמריתו ואנא לא קאמינא. בשעת פטירתו של רבי, זקף עשר אצבעותיו כלפי מעלה, אמר: רבשי"ע, גלוי וידוע לפניך שיגעתי בעשר אצבעותי בתורה ולא נהייתי אפילו באצבע קטנה, יהי רצון מלפניך שיהא שלום במנוחתי, יצתה ב"ק ואמרה: + ישעיהו נ"ז + יבא שלום ינוחו על משכבותם.</p>
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Rabbis] he began: 'The angels and the mortals have taken hold of the holy ark. The angels overpowered the mortals and the holy ark has been captured'. 'Has he', they asked him, 'gone to his eternal rest?' — 'You', he replied, 'said it; I did not say it'. Rabbi, at the time of his passing, raised his ten fingers towards heaven¹⁴ and said: 'Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed and known to you that I have labored in the study of the Torah with my ten fingers and that I did not enjoy [any worldly] benefits even with my little finger. May it be Thy will that there be peace In my [Last] resting place'. A bath kol echoed, announcing, He shall enter into peace; they shall rest on their beds.