



Important Figures of the Generation of Tannaim:

Zugot (Pairs) [Jerusalem] (167 B.C.E - 40 C.E):

1. Hillel the Elder:

was a **Jewish** religious leader, **sage** and scholar associated with the development of the **Mishnah** and the **Talmud** and the founder of the **House of Hillel** school of **tannaim**. He is popularly known as the author of two sayings: (1) "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? And being only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?"^[4] and (2) the expression of the **ethic of reciprocity**, or "**Golden Rule**": "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole **Torah**; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."^[5]

2. Shammai:

was a Jewish scholar of the 1st century, and an important figure in Judaism's core work of rabbinic literature, the Mishnah.

Shammai was the most eminent contemporary of Hillel. His teachings mostly agree with those of Hillel, except on three issues.^[3] Both were divided over an earlier rabbinic dispute, regarding the actual laying on of hands upon a sacrificial animal on a Festival Day, which Hillel permitted.^[4] Their disciples, who had differing views to their masters, disputed many other halakhic matters.^[4] The School of Shammai, founded by Shammai, is almost invariably mentioned along with the School of Hillel, founded by Hillel.

First Generation [Jerusalem] (40-80 C.E):

3. Yohanan ben Zakkai:

was one of the **Tannaim**, an important **Jewish** sage in the era of the **Second Temple**, and a primary contributor to the core text of Rabbinical Judaism, the **Mishnah**. His name is often preceded by the honorific title, "Rabban." He is widely regarded as one of the most important Jewish figures of his time and his escape from the Roman **destruction of Jerusalem**, that allowed him to continue teaching, may have been instrumental in rabbinic Judaism surviving the destruction. He was the first Jewish sage attributed the title of **rabbi** in the **Mishnah**.

Second Generation [Yavneh] (80-110 C.E):

4. Raban Gamliel II:

was a rabbi from the second generation of tannaim. He was the first person to lead the Sanhedrin as nasi after the fall of the Second Temple in 70 CE.

He was the son of Shimon ben Gamaliel, one of Jerusalem's foremost men in the war against the Romans and grandson of Gamaliel I. To distinguish him from the latter he is also called Gamliel of Yavne. He is the grandfather of Rabbi Yehuda Hannasi, the editor of the Mishnah.

5. Eliezer ben Hurcanus:

was one of the most prominent Sages ([tannaim](#)) of the 1st and 2nd centuries in [Judea](#), disciple of Rabban [Yohanan ben Zakkai](#) and colleague of [Gamaliel II](#) (whose sister [Ima Shalom](#) he married), and of [Joshua ben Hananiah](#). He is the sixth most frequently mentioned sage in the [Mishnah](#).

6. Joshua ben Hananiah:

also known as **Rabbi Yehoshua**, was a leading [tanna](#) of the first half-century following the [destruction](#) of the [Temple](#). He is the seventh-most-frequently mentioned sage in the Mishnah. He was of [Levitical](#) descent, and served in the sanctuary as a member of the class of singers.

Third Generation [Yavneh] (110-135 C.E):

7. Rabbi Akiva:

was a leading Jewish scholar and sage, a tanna, of the latter part of the first century and the beginning of the second century. Rabbi Akiva was a leading contributor to the Mishnah and to Midrash halakha. He is also sometimes credited with redacting Abraham's version of the Sefer Yetzirah, one of the central texts of Jewish mysticism. He is referred to in the Talmud as Rosh la-Hakhamim "Chief of the Sages". He was executed by the Romans in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

8. Rabbi Ishmael:

Yishmael's teachings were calculated to promote peace and goodwill among all: "Be indulgent with the hoary head;" he would say, "and be kind to the black-haired [the young]; and meet every man with a friendly countenance".

What he taught he practised. Even toward strangers, he acted considerately. When a non-Jew greeted him, he answered kindly, "Your reward has been predicted"; when another abused him, he repeated coolly, "Your reward has been predicted." This apparent inconsistency, he explained to his puzzled disciples by quoting Genesis 27:29: "Cursed be one who curses you, and blessed be one who blesses you".

9. **Eleazar ben Azariah:**

He was of the second generation and a junior contemporary of [Gamaliel II](#), [Eliezer b. Hyrcanus](#), [Joshua b. Hananiah](#), and [Akiva](#). He was a [kohen](#) and traced his pedigree for ten generations back to [Ezra](#), and was very wealthy. These circumstances, added to his erudition, gained for him great popularity. When [Gamaliel II](#) was temporarily deposed from the patriarchate due to his provoking demeanor, Eleazar, though still very young, was elevated to that office by the deliberate choice of his colleagues.

Fourth Generation [Usha] (135-170 C.E):

10. **Simeon ben Gamaliel II:**

Shimon was a youth in Betar when the Bar Kokhba revolt broke out, but when that fortress was taken by the Romans he managed to escape the massacre. On the restoration of the college at Usha, Shimon was elected its president,^[5] this dignity being bestowed upon him not only because he was a descendant of the house of Hillel, but in recognition of his personal worth and influence. There were many children in his family, one-half of whom were instructed in the Torah, and the other half in Greek philosophy.^{[[2][3]} Shimon himself seems to have been trained in Greek philosophy;^[6] this probably accounting for his declaring later that the Scriptures might be written only in the original text and in Greek.

9. **Rabbi Meir Baal HaNes:**

Rabbi Meir the miracle maker was a Jewish sage who lived in the time of the [Mishna](#). He was considered one of the greatest of the [Tannaim](#) of the fourth generation. He is the third most frequently mentioned sage in the Mishnah. His wife [Bruriah](#) is one of the few women cited in the [Gemara](#). A story is related of the fortitude shown on that occasion by Meir's learned wife, Beruriah. Controlling her feelings, she withheld the knowledge of their death from her husband during the Sabbath in order that the day should not be profaned by weeping and lamentation, and on the conclusion of the Sabbath sought to console her husband with a parable. Shortly after the death of his sons Meir lost his wife. According to a legend, she committed suicide after having been dishonored by one of her husband's pupils.

11. Judah bar Ilai:

Rabbi Judah, was a rabbi of the 2nd century (fourth generation of tannaim). Of the many Judahs in the Talmud, he is the one referred to simply as "Rabbi Judah" and is the most frequently mentioned sage in the Mishnah. Judah bar Ilai was born at Usha in the Galilee. His teachers were his father Rabbi Ilai I (himself a pupil of Eliezer b. Hyrcanus), Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarfon. He studied under Tarfon in early youth, and was so closely associated with R. Tarfon that he even performed menial services for him. He was ordained by Rabbi Judah ben Baba at a time when the Roman government forbade ordination. Judah bar Ilai was forced to flee Hadrian's persecution.

12. Shimon bar Yochai:

also known by his acronym Rashbi, was one of the most eminent disciples of Rabbi Akiva, and attributed by many Orthodox Jews with the authorship of the Zohar, the chief work of Kabbalah. In addition, the important legal works called Sifre and Mekhilta are attributed to him. In the Mishnah, in which he is the fourth-most mentioned sage, he is referred to as simply "Rabbi Shimon". According to popular legend, he and his son, Eleazar b. Simeon, were noted kabbalists.[3] Both figures are held in unique reverence by kabbalistic tradition. By tradition they were buried in the same tomb in Meron, Israel, which is visited by thousands year round.

Fifth Generation [Beit Shearaim, Tzipori, Tiberias] (170-200 C.E):

13. Yehudah ha-Nasi:

He was the chief redactor and [editor](#) of the [Mishnah](#). He was a key leader of the [Jewish community](#) during the [Roman occupation of Judea](#). The title [nasi](#) was used for presidents of the [Sanhedrin](#).¹ He was the first nasi to have this title added permanently to his name; in traditional literature he is usually called "Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi." Often though (and always in the Mishnah), he is simply called "Rabbi" the master par excellence. Both the Talmuds assume as a matter of course that Judah is the originator of the Mishnah—"our Mishnah," as it was called in Babylon—and the author of the explanations and discussions relating to its sentences.