

Post-Talmudic Period

(505 CE – Present Day)

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GEONIM

- The Geonic period extends from about 690 C.E. until the 11th century.
- The first Geonim or "geniuses" were the heads of the Babylonian academies in which the Mishna was studied and the Gemara written.
- Most of the Geonim lived in Babylon, Egypt and Nth. Africa. They wrote responsa as well as brief commentaries on the Talmud. Included among the Geonim were Rav Hai Gaon, Rav Saadya Gaon and Rav Sherira Gaon.

RISHONIM

- The period of the Rishonim, "the early Sages," starts from about the 11th century C.E. and extends to the 15th century.
- Among the most famous of the Rishonim are:
 - Rashi
 - Maimonides
 - Nachmanides

RASHI

- "Rashi" is an acronym for Rabbi Shlomo Yitchaki, a French scholar born in 1040.
- He is one of the most popular and prolific of the medieval commentators. Rashi wrote commentaries on the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, the Writings, the Mishna, the Gemara and the Midrash.
- His works are such an essential part of Jewish literature, that the Code of Jewish Law considers it mandatory for every Jew to study the Torah with Rashi's commentary weekly.

MAIMONIDES

- Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the Rambam, was one of the first codifiers of Jewish law. His fourteen volume Mishneh Torah covers all of Jewish law, belief and practice. He was born in Spain in 1135, lived most of his life in Egypt, and died there in 1185.
- His works include the Book of Mitzvot, enumerating all 613 commandments; the Guide for the Perplexed, a complete philosophy of Judaism; and many letters and responsa. He was also a famous physician and wrote many medical treatises.

NACHMANIDES

- Nachmanides, Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, is also known by his acronym "Ramban." He was born in Spain in 1134, where he lived for most of his life, and died in Israel in 1204, after having immigrated there in his later years.
- Nachmanides wrote commentaries on the Five Books of Moses, the Talmud, and on a number of books of the Tanakh. He is considered one of the greatest of the Kabbalists and his commentary on the Torah contains many mystical insights.

ACHARONIM

- The period of the "Acharonim", or the "later Sages", starts from about the 15th Century C.E. and extends to contemporary times.
- Among the most famous of the Acharonim are: Rav(Rabbi) Yosef Caro and Rav Moshe Isserles, the authors of the Code of Jewish Law; Rav Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna; Rav Chaim Soloveichik; Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, the Chafetz Chaim; and Rav Moshe Feinstein.
- They wrote commentaries on the Talmud and the Written Law, works of philosophy and ethics, and responsa.

CODE OF JEWISH LAW - SHULCHAN ARUCH

- The Code of Jewish Law is known in Hebrew as the "Shulchan Aruch" or the "Set Table."
- It contains in its four sections:
 1. Orach Chaim - the laws of daily practice, **Sabbaths and festivals**
 2. Yoreh De'ah - the laws of Kashrut
 3. Choshen Mishpat - the laws of business
 4. Even Ha'Ezer - the laws of marriage and divorce
- The Shulchan Aruch was written by a Sephardic scholar, Rav Joseph Caro, in Safed in approximately 1560 C.E. It also contains the comments and rulings of Rav Moshe Isserles of Cracow that include European Jewish custom (Ashkenazic).

RESPONSA

- "Responsa" are the responses of Torah scholars to questions of Jewish law posed to them both by laymen and experts.
- These scholars apply the law and philosophy of Judaism to the changing circumstances of Jewish life; to technological and social innovations; to medical issues; and other aspects of contemporary living.
- Responsa literature provides insight into the workings of Jewish law and reveals the concerns of Jews around the world and throughout the ages.

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