

## What is Mishnah?

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*Listen, Pray, Think: A Journey Through Mishnah Berakhot*


Women's League for Conservative Judaism

### משנה אבות א, א

משה קבל תורה מסיני, ומסרה ליהושע, ויהושע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים, הוו מתונים בדין, והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סג לתורה:

### Mishnah Avot 1:1

Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, and passed it on to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets passed it on to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: be moderate in law, establish many students, create a hedge for the Torah.

Moses: 16th c. bce  The men of the Great Assembly (starting around 500 bce)  
(אנשי כנסת הגדולה - anshei kneset- hag'dolah)

### The Six Orders of the Mishnah

*shishah sidrei mishnah*

### שישה סדרי משנה

Z'ra'im / זרעים [seeds]	Agriculture
Mo'ed / מועד [times]	Shabbat, Festivals, Torah and Megillah reading, fasts
Nashim / נשים [women]	Marriage and divorce
N'zikin / נזיקין [damages]	Civil and criminal law
Kodashim / קודשים [holy things]	The sacrificial cult / kashrut
Taharot / טהרות [ritual purity]	The ritual purity or impurity of people and objects

### Mishnah Sukkah 2:7

One whose head and most of his body is in the sukkah, and his table is inside the house, Beit Shammai disqualifies and Beit Hillel accepts. Said those of Beit Hillel to Beit Shammai, "that was not the story. When the elders of Beit Shammai and the elders of Beit Hillel went to visit Rabbi Yohanan ben Hahorani, they found him sitting with his head and most of himself in the sukkah, and his table inside the house... and they didn't say anything to him." Beit Shammai said to them, "that's evidence?! They even said to him, 'if this is how you've been conducting yourself, you've never fulfilled the mitzvah of sukkah your whole life!'"

### Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eiruvim 13b

For three years there was a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel, the former asserting, "the halakhah is in agreement with our view" and the latter contending, "the halakhah is in agreement with our view." Then a bat kol issued an announcement, "These and these are both the words of the living God, and the halakhah is in agreement with the rulings of Beit Hillel."

Since, however, both are the words of the living God, what was it that entitled Beit Hillel to have the halakhah fixed in agreement with their rulings? Because they were kindly and humble, they studied their own rulings and those of Beit Shammai, and were even so humble as to mention the actions of Beit Shammai before their own.