

# The History of the Talmud

What is at Stake? Why Should We Care?

# Professor David Weiss Halivni



# Rechov Dorot Harishonim



# The Early Chronologies

- b. Bava Metzia 86a: רב אשי ורבינא סוף הוראה
- Zakhor (Yerushalmi) – Memory vs. History
- Seder Tanna'im ve Amoraim 886 CE – Sura?
- Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon 986 CE – Pumbedita
- Sefer Haqabbalah – Ibn Daud 1161 CE

# History of the Talmud

- History as a tool of interpretation
- Original Intent, Originalism or Living Constitution
- Tradition versus Creativity
- History: Leopold Ranke and Scientific Study (Wissenschaft)
- Geiger and the evolution of law
- The Struggle against Reform

# The Issues

- Authority – Top Down or Bottoms Up?
- R Elchonon Wasserman and Rav Kook (Rihata Dehaqlei)
- The Sealing of the Talmud: Organic or Deliberate?
- Role of Interpretation

# R Yitzhak Isaac Halevy

- Heinrich Graetz's *History of the Jews*
- Isaac Hirsch Weiss' *Dor Dor Vedorshaiv* (6 editions)
- Volozhin and R Chaim
- *Dorot Harishonim* and *Hokhmat Yisrael* (1897)
- The Historian/Talmudist combination
- Rav Kook
- Chazon Ish



# Rav Kook and Halevy's Matseva





# Agudath Israel

- Halevy and Rosenheim
- Bad Homburg (August 1909)
- Kattowitz (May 1912)
- Mo'etses Gedolei Hatorah
- Rav Chaim and the 18 “points”
- Rav Moshe Soloveitchik

# Sources for Next Class

## [www.aribergmann.com](http://www.aribergmann.com)

- David Weiss Halivni, “Contemporary Methods of the Study of Talmud,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30, no. 2 (1979): 192–201
- Irwin H. Haut, *The Talmud as Law or Literature: An Analysis of David W. Halivni’s Meqorot Umesorot* (New York: Bet Sha’ar Press, 1982), 45–7
- Ari Bergmann, *The Formation of the Talmud: Scholarship and Politics in Yitzhak Isaac Halevy’s Dorot Harishonim* (Berlin and Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 140-153
- Shamma Friedman, “A Critical Study of Yevamot X with a Methodological Introduction (Hebrew),” in *Texts and Studies: Analecta Judaica I* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1977), English Summary
- Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, “Criteria of Stammaitic Intervention in Aggada,” in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaitim) to the Aggada*, ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 417–20
- David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, Introduced, Translated and Annotated Jeffrey L. Rubenstein (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3–13
- H. A. Alexander, “David Halivni and Shamma Friedman: Conflicting Trends in Talmud Criticism,” *Conservative Judaism* XXXIX, no. 3 (1987): 45–57