

# THE UNBROKEN CHAIN OF JEWISH TRADITION

*A Visual Overview of the History of the Jewish People*

By Pinchas Winston

# **The Unbroken Chain of Jewish Tradition**

a *Visual* Overview of the History of the Jewish People

Written by

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**An Aish HaTorah Publication**  
5747/1986 Old City, Jerusalem

Printed in Canada by Syrograph International Corporation.

"הודו לה' כי טוב, כי לעולם חסדו."

To my mother and father who continue to support me in all ways, at all times with all they have, and more.

To my wife, for her caring and constant support, for her help and unceasing encouragement.

In memory of Natah Shalom Rosenblum, a righteous person taken at a young age who remains to be an inspiration for all.

To my in-laws, Rabbi Avraham and Roslyn Neumark for their inspiration and support.

*Special thanks* to Rabbi Noah Weinberg, whose 'Mesiros nefesh' has given many Jews a second chance, and made projects like this possible.

*Special thanks* to Aish HaTorah Toronto, for having devoted so much time and care to my development as a Jew.

*Special thanks* to Earl Gorman, a good friend who helped take this project the final step.

To Mordecai Plaut for his assistance in the development of this publication.

To Sam & Laurie Veffter, good friends for their kindness, help and patience.

To Yeshivat Aish HaTorah Jerusalem, for all their help and effort.

To Craig Karpel for having edited this book.

To the many people who selflessly devoted time and effort to me and this publication in one form or another.

ISBN 0-9612088-1-3

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1 Rechov Shvut  
Jewish Quarter, Old City  
Jerusalem, Israel

Printed in Toronto, Canada, by Syrograph International Corporation.

I would like to thank the following people for their generous financial support:

Jack and Betty Winston

Yeshivat Aish HaTorah

Earl Gorman

Stephen Weisbrod

Rabbi Avraham and Roslyn Neumark

Morty & Sonia Pearl

Dr. Harvey Erlich

David Feldman

Albert Reichman

Lorne Austin

Paul Austin

Dr. and Mrs. T. Kohn

Cathy and Murray Belzberg

Mendy Maierovitz

Sidney Sitzer

Howard Winston

Nancy and Albert Friedberg

Joshua Latner

# **Introduction:**

a brief overview of the project

**W**elcome to *The Unbroken Chain of Jewish Tradition*. This is Phase One, *A Visual Overview of the History of the Jewish People*. Using graphics, Jewish history is presented on a series of timelines from four different vantage points. It is part of an ongoing project, the overall aim of which is to broaden familiarity with Jewish history. Phase Two, *A Visual Overview of Jewish History for Children* is similar to Phase One, except that it has been simplified and deals with more basic topics. Phase Three, *A Brief Written Overview of the History of the Jewish People*, transforms the graphic timeline into an experiential one. Written concisely, the book allows the reader to 'travel' through Jewish history without getting caught in pages of information. Graphics are used to illustrate historical data, and 'perspective' dating (constant reference to important dates) is used throughout the book.

### **Phase One: Goals**

This phase of the project presents various aspects of Jewish history visually. Each timeline displays its particular information to offer a broad perspective on each respective theme. For example, *Timeline Two* shows that anti-Semitism is a unique form of racial hatred. It was not inflicted randomly on a Jewish minority, but instead it has followed the Jewish people wherever they have gone throughout their long history (particularly since the destruction of the Second Temple, 3839/70 CE), and inflicted by almost every people with whom they had contact.

A picture is worth a thousand words. *A timeline is worth countless pages of writing*. Nevertheless, these timelines are of course only a supplement for textual material. However, the broad outlines of the Jewish experience are grasped more quickly in this form. They offer a visual perspective of Jewish history *as a whole* without intensive reading, and facilitate the digestion of a wide range of historical data.

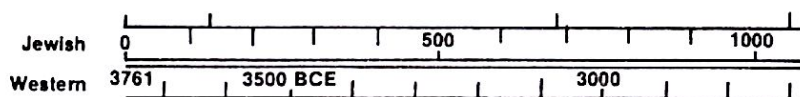
Another goal of this project is to allow involvement of the viewer. As a result, these timelines require careful study, and their success depends partially on the viewer. This system of displaying information encourages the viewer to discover facts for himself or herself, to quantify history simply by

relating the different pieces of information on one timeline, and from one timeline to another. A result of the high level of viewer involvement in the process will be greater mastery of the material and a deeper understanding of Jewish history.

## General Notes on the Timelines

The organization and arrangement of the material highlights the relationship of various themes in a historical perspective. The following are a few innovations.

*The double dateline* (see below): the top one, beginning at zero and continuing until the year 6,000 corresponds to the Jewish calendar (see the next note on *Dating*). The one below beginning at the year 3,761 BCE corresponds to the Western secular calendar. For example,



This design of the double dateline allows for easy conversions from the Jewish date to the common date without calculation.

The overlap of boxes allows for a presentation of history on a two-dimensional plane. It is possible, for example, on Timeline One (see *World Powers*) to follow the development of a particular political power such as the Roman Empire, through its rise to world dominance, and its fall into obscurity. About 160 BCE, Rome conquered most of the civilized world of that time. This is indicated on the timeline by the box representing the Roman Empire cutting down across the box denoting Macedonian Greece. If you look just to the left, it can be seen that geographically, Macedonian Greece was a composition of what was previously the Greek States and the Persian Empire, which was conquered approximately in the year 330 BCE. Meanwhile, the Chinese dynasties were left to themselves, relatively unaffected by the political ambitions of distant Europe.



*Color schemes* are also used to relate information. For example, orange is used to denote people or events. Dark orange is used to isolate the main topic of each timeline. Purple denotes the locations of the Jewish people, blue represents information pertaining to the non-Jewish world, and grey is used as general background colour.

## Dating

Dates that appear without a counterpart (e.g. ADAM 1-930) denote Jewish dating only. Otherwise, the format is Jewish date/Western date, for example, 2448/1313 BCE, or 2448 according to the Jewish calendar and 1313 BCE according to the Western calendar. The acronyms 'BCE' and 'CE' stand for 'before the common era' and 'common era'.

Another important point is that when the world was created, it was created whole. At the end of the sixth day of Creation, the world existed as G'd's completed masterpiece, fully developed in every physical respect. The Jewish tradition dates the early events as follows: *the first day of Creation* was five days before Rosh haShanah of the second year (the first year consisted of only the first 5 days of Creation), or, *the twenty-fifth day of the Jewish month Elul*. Creation continued through the New Year until the seventh day (the Sabbath), or *the second day of the Jewish month Tishrei*. Man was created on the sixth day of Creation, *the first of Tishrei*, Rosh haShanah, the Jewish year. From that time onward, the Jewish calendar proceeds until present day, according to genealogical tables in the Torah, making the world *just under six thousand years old*.

To reconcile views contrary to the Torah account of Creation, *At the Center of the Universe*, and *Challenge* are suggested reading (see *Sources and Reading Material* at the back of the book).

One final note relating to dating. The Jewish and secular Western calendars begin at different times. Therefore, there is usually a numerical difference of 3,760 between corresponding dates (e.g. 5747-1987 CE=3760), and one of 40 between the last two digits (for dates falling in the Common Era). For example, [57]47+40=[19]87. This is because the

Jewish calendar began counting from the moment of Creation, the beginning of time. However, the Jewish new year is about three months earlier than the Western new year. Thus, for those events which occurred at the beginning of the Jewish new year, the units of the secular year will be one year less, leaving only a difference of 39 between the last two corresponding digits.

## Sources

This project is not intended to challenge other works dealing with the same subject matter, even though some facts presented might contradict other sources. This is a view of Jewish history based upon traditional sources. It is a history of the Jewish people according to the Torah, and those who have upheld Torah *in all its details*.

## Example

Draw an imaginary line through the year 4260/500 CE on the top dateline and extend it down through the year 4260/500 CE of the bottom dateline. Everything from the top dateline to the bottom of the lower dateline that falls on this line transpired in that year. All that falls to the left of the imaginary line preceded that date, and that which falls to the right came after. For example, in that year, the Babylonian Talmud was completed. This took place in the period of the Amoraim, at a time Jews could be found in France, German, Rumania, Spain, Italy, Greece, Asia, Babylonia, Russia, North Africa, and Israel. It was also the time of the Holy Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, and the Chinese Dynasties.

# **Timeline One:**

a visual overview of Jewish history

**“You shall remember the days of the world, and understand the years from generation to generation. You shall ask your father, and he shall tell you; the elders, and they shall say to you.”**

Deuteronomy 32:7

**J**ewish history is very complex. There is a great deal of material that must be studied before it is possible to grasp just how complex it is. The Jewish people have lived for a long time, and have accomplished much. They have rarely been left in peace by the other nations of the world. Yet in spite of periodic hardship and secular distraction they have worked tirelessly with much success to maintain and develop the Jewish nation spiritually.

So much of Jewish history is comprised of accounts of the efforts made by many to maintain a Torah lifestyle. Sometimes this was done during peaceful times, within the borders of the Land of Israel. Often this was done outside Israel under the rule of belligerent foreign powers and less than ideal circumstances. Each type of situation worked to develop the Jewish nation, and both need to be studied carefully if insight into the Jewish people is to be gained.

Timeline One is a general overview and provides a framework for the information on the timelines that follow.

## Notes on Timeline One

The Jewish people as a *Torah nation* began with the acceptance of Torah at Mt. Sinai (2448/1313 BCE). However, these timelines precede this date back to the time of Creation with Adam, the ancestor of all mankind.

The orange squares on the top dateline represent either the major individual or major group of people of a particular period in Jewish history. The overlap of one square to another indicates the overlap of lifespans. For example, Noah who was born in 1056 and died in 2006 lived his final days during the middle years of Abraham, who was born in 1948 and died in 2123.

The small light orange rectangles on the dark orange squares contain names of some major Jewish personalities, and act as reference points.

Just below the top non-Jewish dateline, there is one long horizontal bar spanning 6,000 years that is divided equally into three parts of 2,000 years each. The first section is called *2,000 Years of Spiritual Desolation*. This period begins after the

expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (1/3761 BCE), and ends when Abraham reached 52 years of age. During this period, the world turned to idol-worship, and the generations that followed saw fewer and fewer righteous people.

This continued until Abraham sought to bring the world back to G'd. At the age of 52, in the year 2000/1761 BCE, he ushered in a new era called the *2,000 Years of Torah Dissemination*. It was during this period that the forefathers of the Jewish people lived, and gave birth to the twelve tribes of Israel. This period climaxed in 2448/1313 BCE, when the Jewish people stood at Mt. Sinai and received the Torah from G'd.

The last of the three 2,000 year periods is called the *Period of the Messiah*. The Torah describes an ideal Jewish society in which the Jewish people will live peacefully as a nation within the borders of Israel, and act as a "light unto other nations". The Messiah (Mashiach, meaning "anointed") will initiate such a society. The year 4000/240 CE (170 years after the Roman destruction of the second Temple) has been designated the beginning of the period of his arrival. These three periods will be referred to by the *tripartite bar*.

Below, there are three levels of rectangles also colored light orange. They contain pictures that represent some of the major events of Jewish history. The lines that extend from each rectangle continue downward (or upward) to the datelines for historical cross-reference, but do not intersect horizontal bars to maintain graphic simplicity.

Below this, but above the bottom dateline, the dispersion of world Jewry is illustrated (purple horizontal bars). Although the Jewish people entered the Land of Canaan together under Joshua's leadership in 2488/1272 BCE, they did not remain together. They were exiled from Israel and dispersed among the nations. This often led to assimilation and even the disappearance of many Jews, including the ten lost tribes (3205/555 BCE). The purple horizontal bars indicate when Jewish communities became established in different parts of the world.

These bars, shown as continuous, do not represent the numerous expulsions the Jewish people experienced from

almost every country they ever lived in (see Timeline Two). However, in almost every case, no matter how poorly they had been dealt with by the host country, the Jews returned during more peaceful times, often within the same decade.

The last graph on this timeline (colored blue) shows the ongoing development of the powers that controlled the world. This graph is approximate but serves to show the beginning and end of various powers and eras. The overlap of boxes indicates the succession of empires.

The following timelines will go into more detail.

## **Timeline Two:**

a visual overview of anti-Semitism throughout the centuries

**“You ask me to relieve your land of their taxes; would that I were able to tax the very air that you breath.”**

Roman Co-Emperor Pescinnius Niger  
circa 193 CE

**O**n the bottom right-hand corner of this timeline is a quotation from an article by Mark Twain. By all odds, he said, the Jewish people should have disappeared a long time ago. Instead, they have contributed to the advancement of mankind far out of proportion to their numbers.

One only needs to study Jewish values and experience Torah to see that we are a people devoted to peace and the pursuit of lofty goals. Yet Jews have been treated by many nations in a most severe manner, as if guilty of the most heinous crimes.

It is understandable that many would want to ignore such a history; leave it behind as if it never happened. New generations of Jews are growing up believing that anti-Semitism began (and ended for that matter) with the Holocaust. However, history indicates otherwise. Martin Gilbert has written in the preface to the *Jewish History Atlas*:

...as my research into Jewish history progressed, I was surprised, depressed, to some extent overwhelmed by the perpetual and irrational violence which pursued the Jews in every century and to almost every corner of the globe.

If anti-Semitism is to be prevented from happening again in the future, its full scope should not be forgotten. It must be studied so that it can be overcome. This timeline provides a visual perspective of anti-Semitism throughout the ages since Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes (2171/1640 BCE). Although the term "anti-Semitism" is a recent one, it is being used to describe destructive acts against the Jews based on anti-Jewish sentiments.

## Notes on Timeline Two

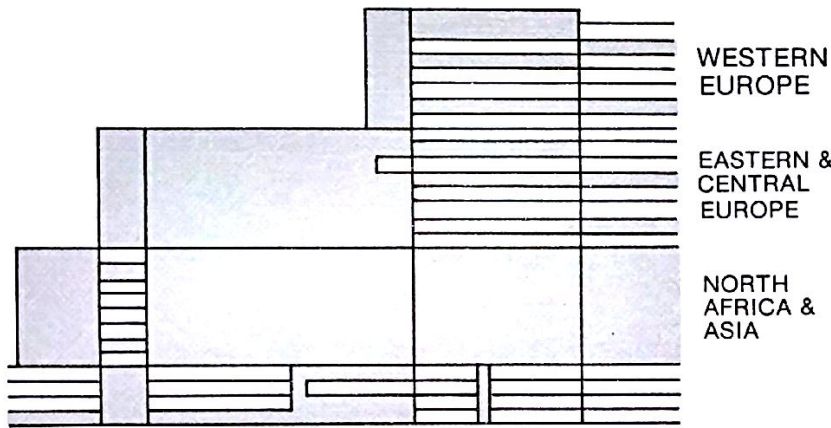
The top dateline is a duplication of Timeline One, except that the lineage of the Jewish people is dark orange, and the lineage of all mankind is light orange. What follows between the upper dateline and lower dateline is the basis of Timeline Two.



The space between the years 2193/1568 BCE and 5760/2000 CE is divided into fourteen periods. Each period is named, and dated, for example:

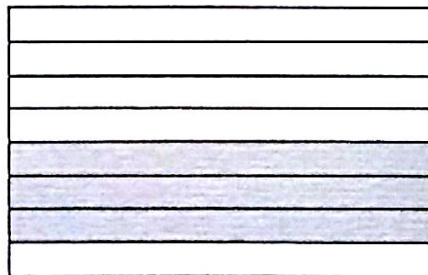
PRE-SINAI  
2193-2448/  
1568-1313 BCE

The grey boxes below these period headings represent six major areas to which the Jews emigrated. The beginning of the box marks the approximate date that Jewish communities became established, for example:



Each of these grey boxes is again sub-divided into eight bars. Each bar corresponds to one of eight different forms of anti-Semitism listed (below and inside the explanation box on the timeline). If the box is colored grey, it means the corresponding form of anti-Semitism was not prevalent in that period of history in that part of the world. For example, the graph below shows a period of history when only the first, second and third forms of anti-Semitism were used.

MASS MURDER
VIOLENT ATTACKS
EXPULSION
RESTRICTIONS
FORCED CONVERSIONS
DISTINCTIVE DRESS
SPECIAL TAXATION
LIBEL(WRITTEN & ORAL)



AMERICAS

Of course there is much to discuss and study on the topic of anti-Semitism. It is an area that requires in-depth inquiry and thought. This timeline is only a beginning. Certainly though, no matter how one looks at it, the Jewish people have always been a unique nation, an eternal people. The question Mark Twain began we ourselves can conclude; what is the secret of such immortality? Timeline Three begins to answer that question.

## **Timeline Three:**

a visual overview of the Mesorah, the chain of Torah transmission

**“The Jew — is the symbol of eternity. He is the one whom they were never able to destroy, neither bloodbath nor afflictions, neither the fire nor the sword of the Inquisition succeeded in annihilating him. He is the one who for so long has guarded the prophetic message and transmitted it to all mankind.”**

Leo Tolstoy

**O**ver 3,000 years ago, more than three million Jewish men, women and children stood at Mt. Sinai and received the Torah from G'd. They received it in two parts, *Torah sh'b'csav*, or Torah that is in writing (commonly called the Five Books of Moses), and *Torah sh'b'al peh*, Torah that is by mouth, the *Oral Law*, or the *Oral* or *Masoretic Tradition*.

The Jewish people have gone to great lengths to preserve both the Written and Oral Law in authentic form. A written law is much easier to preserve since there are recorded texts. It is more difficult to guarantee the accuracy of an oral law through the years. Since the maintenance of the Oral Law is crucial to the survival of the Jewish people, it is imperative that a system be utilized to assure each generation of the authenticity of their transmission of the Oral Law. This system is called the *Mesorah*.

Literally, mesorah means *handing over*. It was necessary that each generation transmit the Oral Law to the next. The foundation of this process is universal education, thoughtful material development to stimulate learning and memorization, and careful structural organization. Leaders of impeccable moral standards were needed to oversee the process of transmission. This system, bolstered by a national devotion to it, allowed the Jewish people to avoid many of the problems that might occur with such a phenomenal task as the *accurate* oral transmission of a vast body of laws and concepts.

Unlike the other timelines in this series, this one covers only a 2,000 year period of time, from 2400/1361 BCE to 4400/639 CE. It has been designed primarily to trace the unbroken chain of transmission of the Oral Torah from the time it was received at Mt. Sinai (2448/1313 BCE), until the time it was written down.

### **Notes on Timeline Three**

The Rambam (Maimonides) in his introduction to the *Mishneh Torah* (a 14 book compendium of the Talmudic legal code), lists 42 leaders who comprised the 'chain' that allowed

the Oral Law to continue unbroken from the time of its inception to the time of its commitment to written form. They were the transmitters, or, *baalei Mesorah* in Hebrew (literally, *masters of the handing over*). The list of masters can be broken up into three time periods. The first group began with Moses (2448/1313 BCE), and ended prior to the leadership of Ezra the Scribe (3414/347 BCE). During this period, the Oral Law was transmitted from the master and his *Bais Din* (Jewish court of law) to the next master. Ezra did not receive the Oral Law himself as the masters before him did, but rather received it with his *Bais Din*. During this period, most of the masters were prophets (in direct communication with G'd), and almost all of Israel studied both the Written and Oral Torah mastering both.

The second period began with Ezra (3414/347 BCE) and ended with the period of the Tannaim (3770/9 CE). In the year 3448/313 BCE, the period of prophecy came to a close, the Jewish people no longer being worthy of such close contact with G'd. The number of people who studied and knew the Law well diminished, especially after the Babylonian exile of 70 years (3338-3408/423-353 BCE). Persecution and assimilation had taken their toll.

The third and last grouping that concerns this timeline covers the era of the Tannaim and the Amoraim. Because of Roman oppression, the number of students studying the Oral Law to a degree which maintained its accuracy was very small. Faced with a situation that threatened the survival of the Oral Law, and therefore all of Torah, the Tannaim (literally, *Teachers*), began to prepare for redaction. They organized the oral law into *mishnayos* which were concise, codified teachings designed to facilitate memorization. Rabbi Akiva (circa 3870/110 CE) began the process of collecting and ordering the vast sea of knowledge known as the Oral Law into *mishnayos*. Rabbi Judah the Prince and his *Bais Din* completed the six orders of *Mishnayos* in the year 3948/188 CE, 1,500 years after Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Torah.

Once again, 300 years later, the Jewish people were faced with a similar struggle. The Mishnah, in its terse form still relied upon the accurate oral transmission of the laws and their discussions. Continual persecution and assimilation made this difficult. However during the period of the Amoraim (from the

word *emor*, the Hebrew word for *speaking*, since they communicated Torah verbally), the laws and their discussions were finally recorded in detail. What had been forgotten was temporarily lost, and what had been in doubt was listed as such. However, what was known was known with certainty and recorded. In the year 4260/500 CE, Rav Ashi and his Bais Din completed this monumental task that came to be called the *Talmud Bavli*, or the Babylonian Talmud, which is studied in yeshivos around the world today.

Even after having been recorded as *mishnayos* and then surrounded by explanations in the Talmud, the Oral Law maintains much of its original spoken character. It remains necessary for a student of Talmud to learn from the mouth of one more learned, who in turn heard it from his teacher. It is really quite impossible to come to a clear understanding on one's own of all the levels on which Torah law is expounded in the Talmud. Much of the information is not found in the simple reading of the text. Furthermore, there are methods by which to extract such information, crucial even for deriving the simple understanding of any Torah concept. These too must be learned. In fact, before one can learn Talmud, one must learn *how* to learn it. All of this requires a strong teacher-student relationship that uses the spoken word as the vehicle to express ideas and techniques that have existed for over 3,000 years. Thus, even today we maintain an aspect of the oral transmission process.

Below the tripartite period is a bar graph which traces the development of the Oral Law. For almost 1,000 years, from the time it was received at Mt. Sinai until the time of Ezra, there was little controversy over its contents.

The period that saw such measures as the redaction of the Oral Law began with Ezra and his *Anshei Knesses haGedola*, or *Men of the Great Assembly* (3370-3500/391-261 BCE) and continued until the time of the Talmud (4260/500 CE CE), a period of 890 years. During these years, the *Tanach* (see next note) was closed to additions as well, and prayer for daily service was formalized.

The Five Books of Moses were closed by Moses prior to his death.

In the dark orange rectangles, the dates of redaction for all of *Tanach* are given. *Tanach* is an acronym for the following:

**T** orah  
**a**  
**n** eviim (Book of Prophets)  
**a**  
**c** esuvim (Book of Writings including the Five  
**h** Megilos, Psalms, etc.)

The *Torah* refers to the *Five Books of Moses*. The *Book of Prophets* is the collection of teachings as spoken by the major prophets of the Jewish people. They are mostly in the form of rebuke, since a prophet came to persuade the Jewish people to return to higher standards of Torah. No other people have taken such care to record words of admonition of their own people for future generations from which to learn. The *Book of Writings* contains many selections by King David, King Solomon, and others.

The light orange rectangles either denote similar information on major literary works, or portray events carried over from Timeline One.

Below these rectangles, the locations of major institutions of learning in Israel and Babylonia are shown as they became established. Below this is a section carried over from Timeline Two, since the political climate often affected the status of the Oral Law and those who maintained it.

The last bar on this timeline displays the major exiles. Over 3,000 years ago, it was revealed to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes, that the Jewish people would undergo four exiles after becoming a Torah nation at Mt. Sinai. The first is called the *Babylonian exile*, which lasted 70 years and began after the destruction of the first Temple in 3338/423 BCE. The remaining tribes of Israel (10 tribes were previously exiled) lost their political sovereignty when they were taken to Babylonia into exile. It was not until the year 3408/353 BCE that this exile was considered completed (with the defeat of Haman and the Persians which we commemorate each year with the holiday of Purim). The *Median exile* overlapped the time period of the Babylonian exile by 18 years. It began when Darius the Mede conquered Babylonia in 3390/371 BCE, and extended until the Greeks conquered Persia in 3442/319 BCE, 52 years.

The *Greek exile* lasted 120 years beginning with the cruelty of the Seleucids (circa 3502/259 BCE) and ended with the defeat of the Greek army. Matisyahu haCohen and his son Judah the Maccabee led a revolt against all odds of victory when the Greeks made it impossible to function as Jews. The miraculous victory in 3622/138 BCE gave way to another miracle, the burning of one vessel of oil for eight days, and the holiday of Chanukah.

The last exile Jacob was told about was the *Roman exile*. It began in 3648/113 BCE, after 26 years of Jewish rule. At first the Jews had signed a peace treaty with the Romans, but 26 years later, the Romans defaulted on their agreement. Fifty years later Pompey led the Roman army in the conquest of Israel which eventually led to the destruction of the Second Temple and Jerusalem (3830/70 CE).

Although the Roman Empire eventually came to an end, the exile did not. *Exile* denotes more than just a physical expulsion. Each exile represents a time when the Jewish people have been denied the ideal conditions necessary to pursue a higher relationship with G'd, and is the result of straying from Torah standards of living. They conceptually represent a different kind of obstacle that the Jews have faced. The problem Jews had to deal with under the Romans did not end with the fall of Rome, but has continued even until today, and will not be solved until the Mashiach arrives. Even though the Jews today have political and national redemption of a sort, it is still considered a time of spiritual exile. This will continue until the entire people will live as a Torah nation in the Land of Israel, and Jews will no longer be oppressed and live in fear of persecution.

The less one knows about the Masoretic process, the more questions he or she will raise about traditional Judaism. Our Mesorah is unique from any other body of tradition that has ever existed, and different from any other form of social education. At one time the Oral Law was as familiar to every Jew as the Written Law. Recently this has not been the case. However, to live according to Torah necessitates the study of the Oral Law, for without it, there can be no accurate understanding of the Written Torah.

In spite of the willingness of many to abandon part or even all of the Oral Law, there have always been Jews who have



upheld the Torah in its entirety. Through them traditional Jewish values have been passed on through the centuries. They have maintained the unbroken chain by keeping the principles of Judaism alive, and make it possible to experience Torah in its true glory. Through such people one can come to an appreciation of being Jewish according to the very *source* of the idea itself, the Torah. Even today, in a time of extensive assimilation of Jews, the chain continues, unbroken from the time of Mt. Sinai, over thirty-two hundred years ago.

# **Timeline Four:**

a visual overview of Great Jewish Thinkers

**“The beginning of wisdom is the fear  
of G’d; good understanding to all who  
do them [commandments]...”**

Psalms 111:10

**M**any are aware that the Jews are a people of unusual ability, having made significant contributions to Western knowledge and culture. In fact, most of the Jewish participation in secular culture has occurred in the last 200 years. Before that, they were not allowed to contribute to the intellectual life of most of the world. However, since before the great emancipation in Europe, Jews have been busy developing their own heritage using these same abilities the effects of which are now seen in Western culture. The same intellectual power which has won so many Nobel prizes, the same diligence which has led to so much success in the business world, the same creativity and genius which have shown themselves in so many areas of human achievement, have been applied to the study of Torah to preserve Jewish values and enrich the quality of Jewish life.

Generations of emancipated Jews have grown up believing that modern-day Jewish scientists or entertainers are the proof of Jewish ability. They have never heard of Rabbi Yosef Rosen of Dvinsk, *The Rogotchover*, a contemporary of Einstein who was known to have had extraordinary intellectual ability. Neither do many know the name Eliyahu of Vilna, the *Vilna Gaon*, who left a range of work of amazing breadth, depth and clarity.

The body of Torah knowledge that we have today is the product of generations of indefatigable research and development by a large group of men of unusual ability. Despite constant persecutions, each led an intellectual life of creative vigor. A *Torah sage*, by definition, must excel in all areas of human life. Their genius must be applied to every thought and action and not limited to only one area of achievement. This in itself is a very strong recommendation for the Torah system.

From Timeline Four, the viewer will get some sense of the breadth and depth of the Torah tradition. There were severe limitations of space on this timeline, especially in areas devoted to great Jewish thinkers. As a result, many names overlap, even though their lifetimes did not. Furthermore, this sampling of names of Jewish thinkers barely represents the immense number of great minds the Jewish nation produced in each generation. Even in absolute numbers, there may have been more figures of outstanding ability within the Jewish

tradition than in the rest of the world, as measured by the contribution they bequeathed to succeeding generations.

Many became known according to an acronym of their name. For example, the full name of the Ramchal, an eighteenth century Torah great was **Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto**. Many names listed are such acronyms, especially for Torah leaders of the more recent past.

## Notes on Timeline Four

The gray boxes on the top dateline represent the lineage of the Jewish people, as on Timelines One and Two. The orange rectangles on top divide pre-Jewish history (light orange) and Jewish history (dark orange) into different periods according to Torah development.

Below the tripartite bar are names of some of the notable Torah leaders of the generations. The intention was to include a representative sample of major Torah leaders. In many cases the inclusion of one individual instead of another was arbitrary.

Also, since most English-speaking Jews are of Western, so-called *Ashkenazic* origin, more Ashkenazic leaders are listed. There was no intention to slight anyone by omission.

Below these names are some of the primary secular thinkers. Jews whose contribution was to the realm of secular thought are listed here.

In secular society, philosophy is often studied only by those whose natural tendency is to philosophize. However, learning and wisdom are fundamental to Jewish tradition. Even the most technical areas of Torah study provide valuable steps towards self-fulfillment. This approach to life has resulted in a different attitude towards daily living for Torah Jews as compared to the secular world.

It also accounts for the difference in leaders. As mentioned in the introduction, the life of a great *Torah* leader is one that exemplifies the highest degree of development. Wisdom is fundamental to a Torah society, and therefore, it stands to reason that such a society should constantly produce people

of great intellectual genius.

Below the bottom dateline is an overview of the development of secular philosophy, from its recorded beginning until present day.

## Concluding Note

**F**our different aspects of Jewish history have been presented in this work. It is hoped that these four timelines make it clear that Jewish history is an *unbroken chain in values and spirit*. We are potentially the most recent link in that chain.

Judaism is more than a 'feeling' passed on from generation to generation. It begins with a vision of the ideal human being. It defines the drives of human beings, the goals they pursue, evaluates which are productive and which are not, and prescribes a course of action to achieve that which is worthy of our thought and effort. Its conceptual source is both the Written and Oral Torah.

These timelines provide a structure to begin an investigation into traditional Judaism. Learning what it means to be a Jew is the only way to *maintain the chain*. It is the only way to understand why for over three thousand years Jews have died, and more importantly, lived, to keep the Jewish people alive as a Jewish nation. It is not modernization that has caused many Jews to abandon this effort, nor is it the advancement of secular thought. It is simply the *lack* of knowledge of the Torah that has caused many families to leave behind the values and traditions of their forebears. Today, thousands of Jews have discovered this for themselves, and have taken steps to "return", introducing Judaism back into their families' lives, and ensuring that in their family, the chain will remain strong.

## Sources and Reading Material

1. **Anvil of Sinai, Challenge of Sinai, Legacy of Sinai**, by Rabbi Zecharia Fendel. These three books contain a tremendous amount of Jewish historical data that previously was unavailable to the English reader in this form. Of particular importance is the comprehensive listing of Torah sages throughout the centuries from Mt. Sinai until the present day. Numerous essays discuss the many issues surrounding the Jewish calendar, with many references to modern day science and its findings.

Anvil of Sinai, Challenge of Sinai, Hashkafah Publications, New York, 5739/1979.

Legacy of Sinai, The Rabbi Jacob Joseph School Press, New York, 5741/1981.

2. **The Oral Law**, by H. Chaim Schimmel. This book explains the various components of the Oral Law, and defines each section, citing the sources for the information. It also traces the history of the Oral Law until the time of its codification.

Feldheim Publishers, Jerusalem, 5738/1978.

3. Art-Scroll Series: All volumes of **Sefer Bereishis**, anthologized by Rabbi Noson Scherman, and, **History of the Jewish People, Second Temple Era**, by Rabbi Hersch Goldwurm. With great thought and care, Art-Scroll books have been designed to bring to the English reader some of the breadth and beauty of Judaism. Their overviews deal with central topics, and bring to the foreground many of the foundations of Jewish thought that previously were only available to the learned student. Their commentaries are clear and illuminating, and their presentation is enjoyable, and appropriate for many different age groups and levels of understanding.

Mesorah Publications Ltd., New York.

4. **Medrash Rabbah**, Bereishis Rabbah, Shemos Rabba, VaYikrah Rabbah; Amoraic Aggadic Midrash of Five Books of Moses and the Five Megillos. These contain many of the details that fill in much of what is discussed briefly in the Torah and similar sources of Jewish ideology.

5. **Seder Olam Rabbah**, by Rabbi Yosef B. Chalafta. This book was compiled during the time of the Tannaim (circa 170 CE) and is the source for most dating of Jewish history.

Waxman Publishers, New York, 1952.

6. **The Living Torah**, by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. An excellent English translation of the Five Books of Moses, written in modern English. It is easy to read, with footnotes at the bottom of the page to facilitate understanding. Rabbi Kaplan wrote many books that deal with fundamental topics of Judaism, and all are clear, well written, and informative.

Maznaim Publishing Corporation, Brooklyn, New York, 1981.

7. **The Mishnah Torah**, Introduction, by Maimonides. The introduction to this 14 book compendium of the Talmudic legal code traces the lineage of the oral transmission, and is a very important source of this information.

8. **Talmud Bavli** (Babylonian Talmud), compiled and edited by Rav Ashi and Ravina. The Talmud contains the basis of all Jewish law. It is composed of the Oral Law (see notes on Timeline Three), the many discussions surrounding the Oral Law, as well as many of the accounts of which Jewish history is made of. It is a well-spring of concepts and wisdom unparalleled in history.

Vilna Press.

9. **Tanach: Torah, The Book of Prophets, Writings**. These major works are primary for Jewish history, and world history prior to Mt. Sinai. They are also the source of Jewish thought, and it is from these books that all of Judaism emanates from. They are available with traditional commentary.



10. **At the Center of the Universe**, by Mordecai Plaut. In his book, Mordecai Plaut discusses and examines the very foundations of modern society. His goal is to educate, to teach us what society is about and where and how it has gone astray in order to begin a process of return to a better path. The book consists of several essays, each one very interesting, and refreshingly intellectual.

Brooklyn, New York, 1983.

11. **Atlas of Jewish History**, by Martin Gilbert. A graphic representation of history using maps to follow the course of the Jewish people through the centuries. Martin Gilbert has authored other works along the same lines, including the **Atlas of the Holocaust**, all of which are well detailed, and leave a lasting impression on the mind of the reader.

Dorset Press, USA, 1984.

12. **Anti-Semitism: The Causes and Effects of a Prejudice**, by Paul E. Grosser and Edwin G. Halperin. A well-documented listing of many of the anti-Semitic acts the Jewish people have faced since the destruction of the Second Temple. The list is overwhelming, and the brief explanations help to drive home the point of the phenomenal cruelty displayed against the Jews, and the unrealistic length to which many peoples went to perpetrate such atrocities. Each period of anti-Semitism is analyzed carefully at the close of each chapter. This book must be read, slowly.

Citadel Press, Secaucus NJ, 1976.

13. **Universal Jewish History**, by Philip Biberfeld. Another good source for research into Jewish history.

Feldheim Publishers, New York, 1962.

14. **Challenge: Torah Views of Science and its Problems**, edited by Aryeh Carmel and Cyril Domb. Orthodox scientists deal with modern day scientific issues in light of the Torah.

Feldheim Publishers, New York, 5738/1978.

15. **Antiquities**, by Josephus C. Flavius. A secular historical account of Jewish history written during Roman times, and a source constantly referred to.

These are only a few of the countless books available dealing with the Jewish people and their history. Today, there are a wide range of such books written in English and other languages, and the list is growing.

For more information regarding suggested reading material, or information about this project, please contact:

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