

פרקי אבות



פרק שני

רבי = ר' יהודה הנשיא:

Rabi Yehudah was the son of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and was elected "נשיא" (Prince) after the death of his father. He was born on the very day that Rabi Akiva was killed in the hands of the Romans. In the Mishnah, Rabi Judah the Prince is called, simply, "Rabi," for he was so famous that he needed no other name by which to identify him.

Compilation of the Mishnah:

The most important achievement for which Rabi Yehudah Hanassi is famous, is his publication of the Mishnah. One of the last Mishnaic sages, he recorded, edited, and organized statements of earlier sages, setting the Oral Torah in writing for the first time. Rabi felt that because of the difficulties of Galus, there was a strong probability that many of these laws would be forgotten or accidentally changed, G-d forbid. He therefore decided to gather the laws and write them down, so that they might remain permanently recorded. The word Mishnah means 'learning by repetition'. Rabi succeeded in his tremendous undertaking.

Pious & Wealthy:

Rabi was very wealthy. In his stables there was more wealth than in the treasury of the King of Persia! He used his wealth to support the poor and needy. When a hunger broke out in the land, Rabi opened his orchards and stores of food to feed the hungry.

Yet, despite his great wisdom, wealth, and the great honor in which he was held, Rabi was a modest person and showed respect to all the great Rabbis. He was fond of saying: "I have learned much from my teachers, even more from my friends, but most of all I learned from my students." Because of his amazing personal qualities, teachings, and his refusal to enjoy his own great wealth selfishly, he was recognized everywhere as a holy person, called "רבנו הקדוש" (our holy teacher). Even Eliyahu Hanavi, invisible though, sat among the students of Rabi to listen to his teaching.