



# Introduction to Talmud Study Guide

*The Essential Talmud*

by

Adin Steinsaltz

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## Lesson One: Chapters 1-3

### Instructions

All answers are to be prepared and submitted as an email attachment using a document format that can be opened by either the majority versions of Microsoft Word or Adobe Reader. Acceptable formats include doc, rtf, html, and pdf. Your answers are to be either single- or double-spaced, with the question number clearly indicated.

Be sure to include the page number on which you base your answer in parentheses at the end of your answer. In the event your answer is different from the one expected, you will be given credit if the instructor can find the basis for your answer on the page that you indicate.

Be sure to include the course title on the first page and your name and the date on all pages.

The answers to "true or false" questions must include your *reason(s)* for deciding whether the statement is true or false.

If you are asked to state your opinion, in the spirit of Talmud no opinion will be considered as incorrect as long as it (a) pertains to the issue, (b) can cast some light on the issue, and (c) is clearly stated and defended.

1. "If the Bible is the \_\_\_\_\_ of Judaism, then the Talmud is the \_\_\_\_\_ ..." (p. 3)
2. Why is the Talmud the most important book in Jewish culture?
3. Why has talmudic study historically been prohibited?
4. What does the author say is the formal definition of the Talmud?
5. What are the two main components of the Talmud, and what is the primary function of each?
6. What is the main objective of the Talmud?
7. True or false? The Talmud is the authority for purposes of ruling on halakhic law. Explain your answer.

8. How is the Talmud best understood?
9. The Talmud is the embodiment of what great concept?
10. What does the author believe is the main purpose of studying Torah?
11. Do you agree or disagree with the author (question 10)? Explain why or why not.
12. What does the author claim is the “sole objective” of the talmudic student?
13. Along what lines is the Talmud constructed?
14. With what three things is the Talmud concerned?
15. What is one of the most ancient methods of studying the Talmud?
16. Is it legitimate to voice doubts in the study of Talmud? Why or why not?
17. What two components will keep any inquiry from being considered unfair or incorrect?
18. True or false? The author believes that one should not question the time-honored decisions of the sages.
19. How does the author say that true knowledge is attained?
20. What is the basic task of the oral law?
21. How is the definition of words derived?
22. Another important task of the oral law relates to what?
23. Who is the first sage to be identified by name?
24. What are the approximate dates of the era of the *Knesset Gedolah*?
25. What is another name given to those of the Great Assembly, and why were they called that?
26. Who was it that decided which of the books were to be included in the canon of the Tanakh?
27. What does the author say was the main achievement of the scribes?
28. What methods does the author include in the basic methods of *midrash halakhah*?
29. What ancient text does the author say can be viewed as the world’s first constitution?
30. What is the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy?
31. Name two units of commentary on the written law that are of a mystical nature, and in what body of work they are now contained.
32. What does the anonymity of the sages of the Second Temple period indicate?
33. Approximately what time period is covered by the *zugot*?
34. Who is the person (or persons) who dominated the early days of the era of the *zugot*?
35. What book from the Second Temple period extols the virtues of Simeon Ha-Tzadik?
36. The spiritual leaders of what minority party were considered the heirs of the members of the Great Assembly?
37. What is the Hebrew term for “let him die rather than sin”?
38. To whom is the ordinance permitting defensive warfare on Shabbat attributed?
39. What did the Sadducees advocate, and what was their main concern?
40. Give three tenets of faith that were rejected by the Sadducees.
41. What does the term “Pharisee” mean?
42. Who were the “pairs” who headed the Sanhedrin, and what function did each perform?

43. Who was the sage who was in constant opposition to the Sadducees during the reign of Alexander Yanni?
44. What woman ruled Israel and brought about a “golden age” and what did she do?
45. Why is Simeon Ben Shetah significant?