

## **CAN YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS?**

1. What was the chain of transmission of the Torah from Moshe to the Zugos?
2. Was anything lost in the process?
3. When did prophecy come to an end?
4. Describe the circumstances that led to Onias (Chonio) becoming High Priest.
5. How did Yosef ben Tovia rise to a position of wealth and power?

This and much more will be addressed in the ninth lecture of this series: "The Zugos".

To derive maximum benefit from this lecture, keep these questions in mind as you listen to the tape and read through the outline. Go back to these questions once again at the end of the lecture and see how well you answer them.

**PLEASE NOTE:** This outline and source book was designed as a powerful tool to help you appreciate and understand the basis of Jewish History. Although the lectures can be listened to without the use of the outline, we advise you to read the outline to enhance your comprehension. Use it as well as a handy reference guide and for quick review.

THE EPIC OF THE ETERNAL PEOPLE  
Presented by Rabbi Shmuel Irons

Series I Lecture #9

THE ZUGOS

I. The Weakening of the Chain

A.

משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע ויהושע לזקנים וזקנים לנביאים ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה. הם אמרו שלשה דברים: הווי מתונים בדין והעמידו תלמידים הרבה, ועשו סיג לתורה. שמעון הצדיק היה משירי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר: על שלשה דברים העולם עומד: על התורה, ועל העבודה, ועל גמילות חסדים. אנטיגנוס איש סוכו קבל משמעון הצדיק. הוא הי' אומר: אל תהיו כעבדים המשמשין את הרב על מנת לקבל פרס אלא הווי כעבדים המשמשין את הרב שלא על מנת לקבל פרס ויהי מורא שמים עליכם. יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים קבלו מהם. יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה אומר: יהי ביתך בית ועד לחכמים והוי מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, והוי שותה בצמא את דבריהם. יוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים אומר: יהי ביתך פתוח לרוחה, ויהיו עניים בני ביתך ואל תרבה שיחה עם האשה. באשתו אמרו, קל וחומר באשת חברו. פרקי אבות א:א-ה

Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgement; develop many disciples; and make a fence for the Torah. Shimon the Righteous was among the survivors of the Great Assembly. He used to say: The world depends on three things: on Torah study, on the service of G-d, and on kind deeds. Antigonus, leader of Socho, received the tradition from Shimon the Righteous. He used to say: Be not like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward; instead be like servants who serve their master not for the sake of receiving a reward. And let the awe of Heaven be upon you. Yosei ben Yoezer, leader of Tzredah and Yosei ben Yochanan, leader of Jerusalem, received the tradition from them. **Avos 1:1-4**

B.

אמר רבי יוחנן ליבן של ראשונים כפתחו של אולם ליבן של אחרונים כפתחו של היכל. ואנו כמלא מחט של סידקית. ראשונים ר' עקיבה. אחרונים ר' אלעזר בן שמוע. ואנו כמלא מחט סידקית. אמר אביי ואנן כסיכתא בגודא לגמרא. אמר רבא ואנן אצבעתא בקירא לסברא. אמר רב אשי אנן כאצבעא בבירה לשכחה. עירובין נג.

Rabbi Yochanon said: The understanding (heart) of the earlier generations was as wide as the opening of the entrance hall of the Temple [40 x 20]. The understanding of the later generations was as wide as the entrance to the Sanctuary [20 x 10]. Ours is as wide as the hole of a delicate needle. The earlier generations: Rabbi Akivah. The later generations: Rabbi Elazer ben Shamuah. (Another version: The earlier generations: Rabbi Elazer ben Shamuah. The later generations: Rabbi Oshiah the Great.) Abaye said that our understanding of Talmud is like a spike hammered into a wall (that can penetrate only after much effort). Rovo said that the ability of our minds to penetrate to the depths of a subject is like a finger's ability to penetrate hardened wax. Rav Ashi said that our ability to forget with ease is likened to the effort it takes to put a finger into an empty pit.

### **Eruvin 53a**

C.

אם הראשונים כמלאכים אנו כבני אדם. אם הראשונים כבני אדם אנו כחמורים ולא כחמור של פנחס בן יאיר. שבת קיב:

If the earlier generations were like angels, then our generation is to be considered human. If the earlier generations were considered human, then ours is a generation of donkeys inferior to the donkey of Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair (who instinctively refrained from eating untithed fodder). **Shabbos 112b**

D.

כל אשכולות שעמדו להן לישראל מימות משה עד שמת יוסף בן יועזר היו למדין תורה כמשה רבינו מכאן ואילך לא היו למדין תורה כמשה רבינו. והאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל שלשת אלפים הלכות נשתכחו בימי אבלו של משה? דאישתכח להו אישתכח ודגמרינן להו הו גמירי כמשה רבינו. והא תניא משמת משה אם רבו מטמאין טמאו אם רבו טהורין טיהרו? ליבא דאימעיט מיגמר הו גמירי להו כמשה רבינו. במתניתא תנא כל אשכולות שעמדו לישראל מימות משה עד שמת יוסף בן יועזר איש צרידה לא היה בהם שום דופי מכאן ואילך היה בהן שום דופי...אמר רב יוסף דופי של סמיכה קתני והא יוסף בן יועזר גופיה מיפליג פליג בסמיכה כי איפליג בה בסיף שניה דבצר ליבא. תמורה טו, טז.

All the "eshkolos" (men of complete scholarship and piety) that arose on behalf of the Jewish people from the days of Moshe until Yosef ben Yoezer were learned in Torah like Moshe himself. From that point on they were not. But didn't Rav Yehudah say in the name of Shmuel that three thousand halachos were forgotten in the days of mourning after Moshe's death? Those that were forgotten were forgotten, but those that were still remembered were faithfully preserved. But didn't we learn in a Braiisah that from the time of Moshe's death, when a problem came up, if the majority rules that a thing is "unclean" it is deemed "unclean" and if the majority rules that a thing is "clean" it is then deemed to be "clean"? Their understanding and sharpness diminished (and were not able to accurately reconstruct that which had been forgotten) but they still preserved faithfully the rest. **Temurah 15b**

E.

ת"ר משמתו נביאים האחרונים חגי זכריה ומלאכי נסתלקה רוח הקודש מישראל ואף על פי כן היו משתמשין בבת קול. סנהדרין יא.

The Rabbis taught that when the Prophets Chagai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Divine Spirit left the Jewish People. Even so, the Jewish People still made use of a spiritual voice from Heaven. **Sanhedrin 11a**

F.

ת"ר ארבעים שנה ששמש שמעון הצדיק היה גורל עולה בימין מכאן ואילך פעמים עולה בימין פעמים עולה בשמאל והיה לשון של זהורית מלבין מכאן ואילך פעמים מלבין פעמים אינו מלבין והיה נר מערבי דולק מכאן ואילך פעמים דולק פעמים כבה והיה אש של מערכה מתגבר ולא היו כהנים צריכין להביא עצים למערכה חוץ משני גזירי עצים כדי לקיים מצות עצים מכאן ואילך פעמים מתגבר פעמים אין מתגבר ולא היו כהנים נמנעין מלהביא עצים למערכה כל היום כולו ונשתלחה ברכה בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים וכל כהן שמגיעו כזית יש אוכלו ושבע ויש אוכלו ומותיר מכאן ואילך נשתלחה מאירה בעומר ובשתי הלחם ובלחם הפנים... יומא לט.

The Rabbis taught that in the forty years that Shimeon Hatzadik served as "Kohen Gadol" the lot for the goat that was sacrificed on the altar on Yom Kippur came up on the right hand. After his death there were times that it came up on the right hand and times on the left. In his days, the crimson tongue of wool turned white. After his death there were times that it turned white and there were times that it didn't. In his days the "western" lamp of the Menorah would last a full day. After his death there were times it did and times that it didn't... **Yoma 39a**

## II. Crisis in Leadership

A. And while these princes ambitiously strove one against another, every one for his own principality, it came to pass that there were continual wars, and those lasting wars too; and the cities were sufferers, and lost a great many of their inhabitants in these times of distress, insomuch that all Syria, by the means of Ptolemy, the son of Lagus, underwent the reverse of that denomination of Saviour, which he then had. He also seized upon Jerusalem, and for that end made use of deceit and treachery; for as he came into the city on a Sabbath day, as if he would offer sacrifices, he without any trouble gained the city while the Jews did not oppose him for they did not suspect him to be their enemy; he gained it thus, because they were free from suspicion of him, and because on that day they were at rest and quietness; and when he had gained it, he ruled over it in a cruel manner.

But when Ptolemy had taken a great many captives, both from the mountainous parts of Judea, and from the places about Jerusalem and Samaria, and the places near mount Gerizzim, he led them all into Egypt, and settled them there.

When Aristeus was saying thus, the king looked upon him with a cheerful and joyful countenance, and said, "How many ten thousands dost thou suppose there are of such as want to be made free?" To which Andreas replied, as he stood by, and said "A few more than ten times ten thousand." **Josephus Antiquities Book XII Chapters 1 & 2**

B.

ולא געלתיים בימי יונים שהעמדתי להם שמעון הצדיק... מגילה יא.

Neither will I abhor them (Leviticus 26:44) refers to the period of the Greeks when I caused Shimon Hatzaddik to stand up on your behalf... **Megillah 11a**

C. It was Simon, the son of Onias, the great priest, Who in his lifetime repaired the house, and in his days strengthened the sanctuary. He laid the foundation for the temple enclosure. In his days a water cistern was hewed out, a reservoir in circumference like the sea. He took thought for his people to keep them from calamity, and fortified the city against siege. How glorious he was, surrounded by the people, As he came out of the sanctuary! Like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon when it is full; Like the sun shining forth upon the sanctuary of the Most High. **The Wisdom of Sirach 50:1**

D.

אותה שנה שמת שמעון הצדיק אמר להן שנה זו הוא מת אמרו לו מנין אתה יודע אמר להן כל יום הכפורים נזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש לבנים ונתעטף לבנים ונכנס עמי ויצא עמי שנה זו נזדמן לי זקן אחד לבוש שחורים ונתעטף שחורים ונכנס עמי ולא ויצא עמי לאחר הרגל חלה שבעת ימים ומת ונמנעו אחיו הכהנים מלברך בשם בשעת פטירתו אמר להם חוניו בני ישמש תחתי נתקנא בו שמעי אחיו שהיה גדול ממנו שתי שנים ומחצה אמר לו בא ואלמדך סדר עבודה הלבישו באונקלי וחגרו בצילצול העמידו אצל המזבח אמר להם לאחיו הכהנים ראו מה נדר זה וקיים לאהובתו אותו היום שאשתמש בכהונה גדולה אלבוש באונקלי שליכי ואחגור בצילצול שליכי בקשו אחיו הכהנים להרגו רץ מפניהם ורצו אחריו הלך לאלכסנדריא של מצרים ובנה שם מזבח והעלה עליו לשום עבודת כוכבים וכששמעו חכמים בדבר אמרו מה זה שלא ירד לה כך היורד לה על אחת כמה וכמה דברי רבי מאיר. מנחות קט:

The Rabbis taught that in the year that Shimeon Hatzadik died he told them that he would die in that year. They asked him: how do you know? He replied that every Yom Kippur he would see the apparition of an old man clothed and wrapped in white that would enter and leave the Holy of Holies with him. That year the old man was clothed and wrapped in black. He entered with me but did not depart. After the holiday (of Succos) he fell ill for seven days and died. The fellow "cohanim" abstained from uttering their blessings using the Divine name.

At the time of his death he said that Chonio his son should serve in his stead. Shimie his older son by two and a half years was jealous of Chonio. Shimie said to Chonio: "Come and I'll teach you the order of the service in order to be installed as High Priest." He fitted Chonio with his cloak and belt and he stood him by the altar. Shimie then went to

the other priests and told them: Look how Chonio is fulfilling the pledge that he made to his beloved "the day I become High Priest I'll put on your cloak and belt". The priests were so incensed that they attempted to kill Chonio for his behavior. They ran after him but he escaped to Alexandria where he built an altar and sacrificed upon it to the heathen gods. **Menachos 109b**

E. Now at this time the Samaritans were in a flourishing condition, and much distressed the Jews, cutting off parts of their land, and carrying off slaves. This happened when Onias (Chonio) was high priest; for after Eleazar's death, his uncle Manasseh took the priesthood, and after he had ended his life, Onias received that dignity. He was the son of Simon, who was called the Just (Shimon Hatzaddik), which Simon was the brother of Eleazar, as I said before. **Antiquities Book XII Chap.IV**

F. This Onias was one of a little soul, and a great lover of money; and for that reason, because he did not pay the tax of twenty talents of silver, which his forefathers paid to these kings, out of their own estates, he provoked king Ptolemy Euergetes to anger, who was the father of Philopater... There was now one Joseph, young in age, but of great reputation among the people of Jerusalem, for gravity, prudence, and justice. His father's name was Tobias; and his mother was the sister of Onias the high priest, who informed him of the coming of the ambassador: for he was then sojourning at a village named Phicol, where he was born. Hereupon he came to the city (Jerusalem), and reproved Onias for not taking care of the preservation of his countrymen, but bringing the nation into dangers, by not paying this money. For which preservation of them, he told him he had received the authority over them, and had been made high priest: But that, in case he was so great a lover of money, as to endure to see his country in danger on that account, and his countrymen suffer the greatest damages, he advised him to go to the king, and petition him to remit either the whole, or part of the sum demanded. Onias' answer was this, that he did not care for his authority, and that he was ready, if the thing were practicable, to lay down his high priesthood; and that he would not go to the king, because he troubled not himself at all about such matters. Joseph then asked him, If he would not give him leave to go ambassador on behalf of the nation? He replied, that he would give him leave... So Joseph sent to his friends at Samaria, and borrowed money of them; and got ready what was necessary for his journey, garments and cups, and beasts for burden, which amounted to about twenty thousand drachmae, and went to Alexandria... And when the day came on which the king was to let the taxes of the cities to farm, and those that were the principal men of dignity in their several countries were to bid for them, the sum of the taxes together, of Celesyria and Phoenicia, and Judea, with Samaria (as they were bidden for,) came to eight thousand talents. Hereupon Joseph accused the bidders, as having agreed together to estimate the value of the taxes at too low a rate; and he promised, that he would himself give twice as much for them: but for those who did not pay, he would send the king home their whole substance; for this privilege was sold together with the taxes themselves. The king was pleased to hear that offer; and because it augmented his revenues, he said he would confirm the sale of the

taxes to him...By this means he gathered great wealth together, and made vast gains by this farming of the taxes: and he made use of what estate he had thus gotten, in order to support his authority, as thinking it a piece of prudence to keep what had been the occasion and foundation of his present good fortune; and this he did by the assistance of what he was already possessed of, for he privately sent many presents to the king, and Cleopatra, and to their friends, and to all that were powerful about the court, and thereby purchased their good-will to himself. This good fortune he enjoyed for twenty two years.  
**Antiquities Book XII Chapt. IV.**

### III. Emergence of Rabbinic Leadership

A. Now it happened that in the reign of Antiochus the Great, who ruled over all Asia, that the Jews, as well as the inhabitants of Celoesyria, suffered greatly, and their land was sorely harassed; For while he was at war with Ptolemy Philopater, and with his son who was called Epiphanes, it fell out, that these nations were equally sufferers, both when he was beaten, and when he beat the others: So that they were very like to a ship in a storm, which is tossed by the waves on both sides; and just thus were they in their situation in the middle between Antiochus' prosperity and its change to adversity. But at length, when Antiochus had beaten Ptolemy, he seized upon Judea: And when Philopater was dead, his son sent out a great army under Scopas, the general of his forces, against the inhabitants of Celoesyria, who took many of their cities, and in particular our nation; which, when he fell upon them, went over to him. Yet was it not long afterward when Antiochus overcame Scopas, in a battle fought at the fountains of Jordan, and destroyed a great part of his army. But afterward, when Antiochus subdued those cities of Celoesyria which Scopas had gotten into his possession, and Samaria, with them the Jews of their own accord went over to him, and received him into the city (Jerusalem), and gave plentiful provision to all his army, and to his elephants, and readily assisted him when he besieged the garrison which was in the citadel of Jerusalem...

King Antiochus to Ptolemy, sendeth greeting:

"Since the Jews, upon our first entrance on their country, demonstrated their friendship towards us; and when we came to their city (Jerusalem,) received us in a splendid manner, and came to meet us with their senate, and gave abundance of provisions to our soldiers, and to the elephants, and joined with us in ejecting the garrison of the Egyptians that were in the citadel, we have thought fit to reward them, and to retrieve the condition of their city, which had been greatly depopulated by such accidents as have befallen its inhabitants, and to bring those that have been scattered abroad back to the city.

**Antiquities Book XII Chapter 3**

B.

יוסי בן יועזר אומר שלא לסמוך יוסף בן יוחנן אומר לסמוך יהושע בן פרחיה אומר שלא לסמוך ניתאי הארבלי אומר לסמוך יהודה בן טבאי אומר שלא לסמוך שמעון בן שטח אומר לסמוך שמעיה אומר לסמוך אבטליון אומר שלא לסמוך הלל ומנחם לא נחלקו יצא מנחם נכנס שמאי אומר שלא לסמוך הלל אומר לסמוך הראשונים היו נשיאים ושניים להם אב בית דין. חגיגה טז:

Yose ben Yoezer said that it is not permissible to lay hands (smicha) on one's sacrifice on Yom Tov. Yose ben Yochanon said that it is permissible. Yehoshua ben Perachia said it is not permissible. Nitai HaArbeli said it is. Yehuda ben Tabai said it is not permissible. Shimon ben Shetach said it is. Shmaya said it is permissible. Avtalyon said it is not. Hillel and Menachem did not disagree. When Menachem left his position, Shamai took his place. Shamai said it is not permissible. Hillel said it is. The first of every pair were the Presidents of the Sanhedrin. The second of every pair were the Av Bais Din.

**Chagigah 16a-b**

C.

תני רמי בר חמא יתומין אין צריכין פרוסכול דרבן גמליאל ובית דינו אביהן של יתומין. גיטין לז.

Rami bar Chama said that orphans do not need to make a Pruzbul (in order to preserve their debts in the period of Shmitta). Raban Gamliel and his Beth Din are the patrons of the orphans. **Gittin 37a**

D.

אמר שמעון בן עזאי מקובל אני מפי שבעים ושנים זקן ביום שהושיבו את רבי אלעזר בן עזריה בישיבה... זבחים יא:

Shimon ben Azai said: I have received from the mouths of the seventy two elders on the day that they instated Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria... **Zevachim 11b**



**TIME LINE**

<b>BCE</b>	<b>EGYPT</b>	<b>SYRIA</b>
312-311	Ptolmey I (Lagos)	Seleucus I
285	Ptolmey II Philadelphus	
280		Antiochus I
261		Antiochus II
246	Ptolmey III Euregetes	Seleucus II
226		Seleucus III
223		Antiochus III (The Great)
221	Ptolmey IV Philopater	
203	Ptolmey V Epiphanes	
199	Palestine Conquered by Syria	
187		Seleucus IV
181	Ptolmey VI Philomater	
175		Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)
163		Antiochus V
162		Demetrius I
150		Alexander
145	Ptolmey VII Eurgetes	Demetrius II
138		Antiochus VI