

How did Islam begin?	<p>Mohammed, a man who believed that he had received prophecy, began to preach monotheism to the polytheistic, ancestor/family loyal Bedouin people of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Some people agreed with this new faith, abandoning their gods and clans for one G-d and one people. However, many others hated Mohammed and wanted to harm him. He and his followers left Mecca for Yatrib (later renamed Medina, <i>city of the prophet</i>). This flight, in the year 622, is the first year in the Muslim calendar as it was the year that the new Muslims broke ties with the past, effectively forming a new, unified group. This group later returned to conquer Mecca. They did so, and the new religion was spread across the entire Arabian Peninsula, as land was conquered from Spain to China, forming the Empire of Islam.</p>
What are the beliefs of Islam?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belief in one G-d and Mohammed as a prophet 2. Hajj, yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, a city special because of the Kaba stone, believed by Muslims to be a shrine built by Avraham 3. Prayer 5 times a day facing Mecca 4. Ramadan, a month of fasting 5. Charity <p>These are the "5 Pillars" of Islam</p>
What is the Arabian Peninsula?	<p>An enormous, mostly desert area. It was inhabited by nomadic tribes at first; eventually this became the Islamic Empire. The Empire was huge, and peaceful; non-Muslims, however, had to comply with the Pact of Umar.</p>
What was Europe like during this era?	<p>It was inhabited by barbaric tribes. Communities were extremely isolated. Jews had to endure extreme persecution.</p>
What was Babylonia like during this era?	<p>Jews were heavily persecuted as Babylonians responded to the onset of Christianity by becoming religious fanatics. Jews were saved, ironically, by the rise of Islam. The Jewish response to persecution was, also, often, to move to cities, which were safer than isolated farming villages. This impacted the schedule of Jewish life in regards to the Yarchei Kallas that were held twice every year, as holding them during the slow seasons for farmers was no longer practical.</p>
What is a Caliph and what was the Caliphate?	<p>A caliph is a Muslim ruler; the Caliphate is the Muslim government. In the beginning, it was tolerant of non-Muslims, and delegated the leadership of the Jewish community to the Reish Galuta and the Gaonim. In time, however, infidels became sub-citizens who had to pay taxes and forfeit rights for the protection of the Pact of Umar.</p>
What was the Omayyad Dynasty?	<p>This dynasty controlled the Caliphate and Babylonia during the Gaonic era. During their time, the Islamic Empire saw military success, economical stability, and a flourishing of culture. This Caliphate moved from Baghdad to Damascus; the next dynasty, the Abasid dynasty, moved back to Baghdad.</p>
What was the pact of Umar?	<p>This agreement/enactment made all non-Muslims into second class citizens in turn for protection. It restricted religious practice, land ownership, and some jobs; it had some restrictions that were more political in nature, aimed at demeaning non-Muslims, as well. Some laws were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-Muslims may not hold public religious processions ● Non-Muslims may not wear the clothes Muslims wear/must wear clothes that identify them as non-Muslims ● Non-Muslims may not ride donkeys ● Non-Muslims may not sell alcoholic beverages to Muslims ● Non-Muslims must house Muslim travelers for up to 3 days ● Non-Muslims may not build or repair shuls, churches, or other religious buildings

What was the political situation like for Jews?	<p>There were usually small communities, but also Torah centers. The Muslims, unlike the Christians, allowed Jews to go to Jerusalem. They settled there and created long lasting communities. When the Caliphate moved from Baghdad to Damascus, it was good for the Jews, because Israel was rebuilt (from wars between the Babylonians and Muslims), given attention and resources, because it was so close the capital.</p> <p>It was at this time that Jerusalem became a holy city for Muslims.</p>
Who was Rav Saadya Gaon?	<p>Saadya ben Yosef, he was born in Egypt (which was not a scholarly community but closely connected to the Torah centers in Israel and Babylonia).</p> <p>Early in his life, he wrote <i>Sefer HaEgron</i>, a work on Hebrew grammar, style, and poetry as well as <i>Refutation of Anan</i>, the most famous treatise against the Kaarites. Kaarites threatened his life and broke into his home, so he moved to Israel, where he had studied previously. He was then invited to be the Gaon of Sura—the youngest ever, at 46 years old. He restored the diminishing power of the yeshiva.</p> <p>He wrote the first translation of the Torah into Arabic. In addition to <i>Sefer HaEgron</i>, he wrote <i>Or Tzakhut Lashon Haivrit</i>—another work on Hebrew grammar. He also authored many treatises on Halacha as well as responsa, often in Arabic.</p> <p>He also wrote <i>Sefer Emunot V'Deot</i>, a philosophical work that served as a response to Greek philosophy. It had five major arguments, proved logically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The universe has not always existed, but was created—deliberately—at a certain point in time. ● There is only one creator, not many or a trinity. ● Man has a soul. ● The Torah was given to the Jews at Sini. ● Man has free will to choose between good and evil and is punished or rewarded accordingly.
Where did the first siddur come from?	<p>Communities far away from Torah centers had lost or confused their traditions as to how prayer was to be conducted. The community in Bartenura, Spain, asked Rav Amram Gaon for a siddur. It was later improved by Rav Saadya Gaon with the addition of several piyutim and is still used by Yemenites today.</p>
When and why did the yeshivot move?	<p>In the 9th century, Babylonia saw rapid urbanization. Jews, even more than before, moved to cities. Rural towns were no longer practical places for Torah learning. Also, people who lived far away from the yeshivot didn't need to go to them because learning had been established in their home cities.</p> <p>Although the move was important, it severed the tradition reaching back to the Amoriam and it placed the yeshivot in the very secular, modern city of Baghdad.</p>
Who was R' Shreria Gaon?	<p>The Gaon of Pumpedita in 968. He strengthened the yeshiva so people would respect it. He relied on the financial support of distant communities; he established a strong connection with them and was responsible for answering their shailot. He wrote a commentary on Nach, among other things, but most of that have been lost.</p> <p>He wrote an “Iggeret R' Shreria Gaon” that gave a complete history of Oral Torah, from the Tanniam to the Amoriam.</p> <p>He also opened Sura again (it had been closed since R' Saadya Gaon, for 20 years) and he appointed his son Hai to be Av Beis Din.</p> <p>Anti-Semites accused R' Shreria and R' Hai of being rebellious. They were arrested and tortured. The Jewish community redeemed them with bribes.</p> <p>At 92 years old, after 30 years (the longest yet) as Gaon, R' Shreria stepped down and R' Hai became Gaon of Pumpedita.</p>
Who was R' Hai?	<p>He was Gaon of Pumpedita for 40 years, surpassing his father as longest. He wrote nearly one third of all existing sheilot, answering the questions of thousands of Jews who came to him</p>

	every year. During his time, the yeshiva was great; "First in greatness though last in time"// "With R' Hai we say goodbye".
Why did the Gaonic era end?	After R' Hai, the Jewish communities were self-sufficient in terms of Torah knowledge. Babylonia was no longer a center, and the era (600-1000) ended. This ushered in the era of the Rishonim.
What was life like for Jews in Muslim Spain?	This was the Golden Age of Spain, for Jews and Muslims alike. Cordoba, the capital, was the center point of the Golden Age (peaking 755-1000) and representative of life everywhere. Jews filled many professions in many fields: math, medicine, architecture, poetry, philosophy, art, astronomy, etc. They were translators because they were multilingual, from many places; bankers because Muslims could not be and because Jewish communities all over the world formed a stable financial network; and doctors because Muslims overlooked prejudices to get the best medical care. Jews lived in peace except for two times when Muslim fundamentalists introduced anti- <i>infidel</i> laws, in 1055 and 1117. Jews lived in an <i>aljama</i> , a walled Jewish quarter where they had their own administration and Beis Din. They were influenced by Muslims in culture and dress (under limitations such as no green and white, no silk, no fur). Jews were very involved in the trade of citrus, banana, cinnamon, and almonds for import and cotton, silk, flax, and wool for export.
What is the Cairo Geniza?	This has been the source for information on Jewish life between 870-1880. Ove 280,000 Jewish manuscript fragments were deposited in the Ben Ezra shul and cemetery in Fostat (Old Cairo). It was discovered by Dr. Solomon Schechter The information has been (and is been) reconstructed to describe the role of Judaism in other religions, economics, culture, and the Middle East.
Who was Hadassi Ibin Shaprut?	(915-970) He was a Jewish leader in Muslim Spain who amassed great power. He was a court physician and translated medical works; he was the Inspector General of customs, in charge of imports and exports; he was involved in diplomatic relations between the Arabs and Byzantine Empire; and he was a religious leader. He tried to use his position to improve Jewish lives, supporting Sura and Pumpedita, building scholars and yeshivot, supporting scholars, and acting as Nassi. Although he relied upon the Teshuvot of the Gaonim, he encouraged self-sufficiency. When the Khazars, a kingdom in Prussia/Ukraine were converted to Judaism as their King Joshep did so, he sent them a letter, fascinated. However, the letter was detained by the Byzantines and didn't reach him before the kingdom was destroyed by the Byzantine Empire.
Who was Shumel Hanagid?	(993-1055) He was the Vizer, second to the Caliph as well as an army commander. He was also a scholar—as a master of Arabic, he was the secretary to the previous Vizer, influencing and advising his decisions so much that Shmuel was recommended for the position—and a poet, master of Halacha, and head of the Granada Yeshiva, a Torah center. He supported scholars and philosophers and used his position to help Jews. He also wrote Mavo HaTalmud, an introduction to the Talmud that is published with any edition of Talmud.
Who was Rambam?	R' Moshe ben Maimon. He was born in Cordoba, the son of a scholar and Torah leader who taught him Torah, Talmud, math, and science. When he was still young, fanatical Muslims took over and they fled to the S. Spain, then to Fez (Morocco). He studied at university and wrote S' HeMeor. However, the situation was still dangerous—Torah leaders were being killed—so his friend, an Arab poet, snuck him out of Fez. He took a ship to Israel. He was welcomed by the city and became the leader, but moved to Cairo to escape danger that was there as well. In Cairo he found enlightenment and freedom. He enjoyed uninterrupted learning at yeshiva until his brother David, a merchant who had supported Rambam's learning as well as their family, died in a shipwreck on a trip to India.

	<p>Sick with grief for almost a year, he was left responsible for his brother's widow and daughter and began to practice medicine to support them (he never accepted money for Torah). During this time, he cared for the sick (often for free) and wrote seforim in his free time. He was appointed be the personal doctor of the vizer, then of the Sulta, Saladin.</p> <p>At 42 years old he became the chief Rabbi of Cairo. In this capacity, he spoke out against the Kaarities, limiting their ability to infiltrate the Jewish community. He died in Cairo and was buried in Tiveriah; his tombstone says “Mi' Moshe ad Moshe lo kam k' Moshe”.</p>
What were his works?	<p>Sefer HaMeor- He wrote this when he fled fanatical Muslims in Spain at 23 years old and completed it when he was 30 and had settled in Egypt. It was a commentary on the Mishnah and is especially famous for its inclusion of the Yud-Gimel Ikarim, the 13 Principals of Faith.</p> <p>Mishnah Torah/Yad Chazakah- based on the work of the Rif, he organized halacha by topic and wrote the final p'sak, excluding anything irrelevant an all discussion and sources.</p> <p>Sefer HaMitzvot- an introduction to Mishnah Torah, it listed all 613 Mitzvot (248 positive and 365 negative).</p> <p>Moreh Nevuchim- the Guide to the Perplexed. This was a philosophic work tat was motivated by the confusion produced by Greek philosophy. Rambam reconciled reason with faith, explaining that incorporeality, the transcendent nature of G-d, is true—and not anthropomorphism. Anthropomorphism is metaphorical.</p> <p>He also talked about true beliefs, which, based on logic, created intellectual perfection as well as beliefs that were needed for the social order.</p> <p>This was written in Arabic, then translated into Hebrew.</p>
What was controversial about Mishnah Torah?	It didn't cite sources, and the introduction gave the impression that it made other works—including the Talmud—obsolete.
What was controversial about Moreh Nevuchim?	It was disagreed with by those who believed in literal anthropomorphism. Also, Rambam wrote about Techiyas Hamessim but also the immortality of the perfected intellect (like the Greek “active intellect”). He wrote Mamarat Techiyas Hamessim to clarify that he did actually believe in it.
Who was Raavad?	<p>R' Abraham ben David, a contemporary critic of Rambam who livedi n France. He wrote a commentary on the Talmud and was also a mystic—he is known as the “father of kabbalah”.</p> <p>His mystical views did not agree with Rambam's rationalism.</p> <p>He was critical of the lack of sources in the Mishnah Torah, saying that a legal code without proof is unreliable, because people are not infallible.</p> <p>He also disagreed with the Ani Maamin that stated that belief in anthropomorphism was heresy; he said that belief in it does not make a Jew a kofer.</p>
Who was Rabbeinu Yonah?	R' Yonah ben Abraham Gerondi, another French Rambam critic. He persuaded N. France's rabbis to ban philosophy, saying that it denied miracles, viewed prophecy as natural and not divide, rejected Moshiach, and believed in the allegorization of the Torah. This included parts of Mishnah Torah and Moreh Nevuchim. He publicly burned Rambam's books in Paris.
What happened with the controversy?	It continued for many years, escalating until Christian authorities were involved. When they used it as an excuse to burn 24 wagonloads of Talmud, Rabbeinu Yonah apologized.