



BRUCE LICHT

FOUNDER OF *MY ELEVATOR PITCH FOR GOD*, ENTREPRENEUR, AND AUTHOR

Bruce grew up in Lafayette, California and received a BA in Political Science from UCLA as well as a Graduate Gemologist degree from the Gemological Institute of America. After graduating, Bruce operated his family's 100 year-old retail fine jewelry business for twenty-two years. Bruce had a passion for computers and graphic arts, so he changed careers and joined his best friend at a national technical publishing company for seventeen-years as the company's Publisher, where they invented the modern labor law poster industry, including the first "All- On-One Labor Law Poster" and "Labor Law Poster Compliance Plan."

Aside from being the Founder of this website, *My Elevator Pitch for God*, Bruce was the co-editor of the book titled, *Elevator Pitches For God: Volume 1*, and author of the cookbook titled, *Immediate Chef: No Previous Experience Required*.

Bruce's goals for this website are: To introduce more people all around the world to God and strengthen the faith of those who already believe in a non-political and non-religious way, to bring people together, find common ground between different faiths, create meaning in people's lives, and start to move the world in a better direction.

You can help by sending this website to friends and family and posting it on social media!

You can also connect with the website project's LinkedIn page by clicking below:

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What's Most Important?

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The Torah has 304,805 letters, which combined together make up 79,976 individual Hebrew words.¹ Are there any words, phrases, verses or teachings that could be considered "most important," and if so, what can we all draw from them, regardless of what religion we follow?

Our sages tell us that it is ALL equally important—nothing is any more important than anything else,² but that hasn't stopped people from making suggestions. Some have proposed that the first few words, "*In the beginning*"³ are most important. Others have said that it is the first few words of Judaism's most important prayer, *the Shema*, which translates to, "*Hear, O Israel.*"⁴ People have also said it is the first few words of the Ten Commandments, which translates to, "*I am God.*"⁵

The "Rambam" or "Maimonides,"⁶ in his "Book of Mitzvot," listed all 613 commandments within the Torah in what he said were in order of importance, and the top three were: 1) to believe in God, 2) to believe God is one, and 3) to love God.⁷

Some say that one of the most important verses is, "*You shall love your fellow like yourself.*"⁸ Rashi⁹ said, "*This is the most important phrase in the Torah.*"¹⁰ Rabbi Akiva¹¹ said, "*This is a major principle of the Torah.*"¹² Hillel¹³ said, "*This is all of the Torah. Everything else is commentary.*"¹⁴

There is another opinion that one of the most important verses is regarding the offering of sacrifices: "*This is what you shall offer upon the Altar: two sheep within their first year every day, continually. You shall offer the one sheep in the morning, and the second sheep, shall you offer in the afternoon.*"¹⁵ Why is this so important? These two offerings were the "*bookends*" for all the others. They represent the need to do the commandments every day, consistently, even when you don't feel like it. Likewise, when it comes to your relationship with God, it has got to be without fail and continuous. That is how you build, strengthen, and maintain a relationship.

There is another teaching from the Talmud¹⁶ by Rabbi Bar Karpara,¹⁷ who said, "*What is the small, brief passage that all fundamental principles are dependent upon in the Torah?* A verse from Proverbs: "*In all of your ways, you shall know God and He will direct your paths.*"¹⁸ This verse is saying, "*know God*" with whatever you're doing. "*Know God*" when you sit in your house, when you walk along the way, when you lie down and when you rise up.¹⁹

Now, if I²⁰ were to attempt to "boil all this down," it would be to know without a doubt that there's one God and to love Him with all your heart, soul, and might. Practice the Golden Rule: Love your fellow human beings and treat everyone with the same respect and consideration as you would want for yourself. Integrate God into all aspects of your daily life, and be consistent in your behaviors and practices, all day, every day.

Footnotes:

- 1) Those 79,976 individual Hebrew words are contained within 5,845 verses, among the 54 Chapters (called Parshas) that comprise the Five Books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy

From Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe's Podcast Collection: Midrash and from The Shema Podcast for the Perplexed: The Deeper World of Hebrew Names, June 15, 2025.

There is a teaching that the Torah has 600,000 letters, corresponding to the 600,000 "core" souls (of the living as well as future converts) that were present at Mount Sinai. If you open up a Torah scroll and start to count, it's true that there are actually 304,805 letters. So how do we reconcile this number with the 600,000 number which we often hear quoted?

The answer is that, of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, 19 of them (all but three letters - the vav, zayin and the yod) are made up of what is called, "composite letters" (letters made up of 2-3 other letters). For example, the alef, can be broken down to be made of two yods and a diagonal vav. The letter he (pronounced "hey") can be broken down to be made of a dalet and a yod. The letter shin can be broken down to be made of three vavs.

The Zohar, known as the primary text of the Kabbala, says that the Torah was given in "black fire written on white fire." That means the spaces between the letters and the crowns of the letters are spiritually significant. You also have some letters that are larger, smaller, dotted, floating, or broken. You also have places with extra spaces between letters, verses, chapters, etc. All these particulars - this special "divine type setting" contribute to the "hidden count," bringing the total number from 304,805 up to 600,000.

- 2) While acknowledging that some commandments might have a greater impact on society or one's relationship with God, the teaching that every single part is equally important to every other part, is rooted in traditional Judaism's belief of the Torah's divine origin, being given directly from God
- 3) From Genesis / Bereishis / Chapter 1 / Verse 1: *"In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth"*

- 4) The Shema is recited three times daily by Jewish people as a declaration of faith and allegiance to God. The full text of the Shema is found in the Torah within three passages:
- Numbers / Parshas Shelach / Chapter 15 / Verses 37-41
 - Deuteronomy / Parshas Devarim / Chapter 6 / Verses 4-9
 - Deuteronomy / Parshas Eikev / Chapter 11 / Verses 13-21
- 5) The Ten Commandments were given to Moses at Mount Sinai after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. They are found in the Torah, with only minor differences, in two places:
- Exodus / Parshas Yisro / Chapter 20 / Verses 2-17
 - Deuteronomy / Parshas Va'Eschanan / Chapter 5 / Verses 6-21
- 6) The great twelfth-century physician to the Sultan of Cairo in Egypt and codifier of Jewish philosophy and Torah law, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon
- 7) https://www.jewfaq.org/613_commandments
- To know that God exists (Exodus, Chapter 20, Verse 2 and Deuteronomy Chapter 5, Verse 6)
 - Not to entertain the idea that there is any god but the Eternal (Exodus, Chapter 20, Verse 3)
 - Not to blaspheme (Exodus, Chapter 22, Verse 27)

Additionally, within two verses in Deuteronomy, it says that there are four things that God asks of you. Deuteronomy / Eikev / Chapter 10 / Verses 12-13 says:

"Now, O Israel, what does HASHEM, your God, ask of you? Only to fear HASHEM, your God, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve HASHEM, your God, with all your heart and all your soul, to observe the commandments of HASHEM, and his decrees, which I command you today, for your benefit."

So the four are:

- To fear God (this does not mean to be terrified of Him. It is to understand that He is the Creator and Master of Heaven and Earth. He is all being, all knowing, all caring)
- To emulate God
- To love God
- To serve God

8) The saying, *"You shall love your fellow like yourself,"* is contained within Leviticus / Parsha Kedoshim / Chapter 19 / Verse 18

9) "Rashi," whose full name was Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, was a renowned 11th-century French commentator on the Torah and Talmud. He is

considered one of the most influential Jewish commentators in history. His commentaries, known for their clarity and conciseness, are still widely studied today.

- 10) This is found within Rashi's commentary on Leviticus, Chapter 19, Verse 18
- 11) From https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112059/jewish/Rabbi-Akiva-His-Life-and-Teachings.htm
Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph (known simply as "Rabbi Akiva"), who lived from about 50 – 135 CE., is considered one of the most prolific and inspiring teachers of Judaism in history, formed a crucial link in the chain of transmission of Jewish tradition that began with Moses and continues to this very day. He taught and led during the tumultuous years of the destruction of the Second Holy Temple, and was ultimately executed by the Romans for the "crime" of teaching Torah.
- 12) Rabbi Akiva said that the verse "Love your fellow as yourself" is a major principle of the Torah in the Talmud, specifically in Sifra, Kedoshim, Chapter 4:12 and Talmud Yerushalmi Nedarim 9.3
- 13) Hillel (also called "Hillel the Elder" or "Hillel the Babylonian"), who lived from about 110 BCE to 10 CE, was a Jewish religious leader, sage and scholar. He was associated with the development of the Mishnah and the Talmud and the founder of the "House of Hillel school of Tannaim."
- 14) Hillel's actual statement was, "*That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the commentary; go and learn,*" is found in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat 31a. Hillel's widely quoted statement is actually a negative formulation of the principle, "*Love your neighbor as yourself,*" found in Leviticus Chapter 19, Verse 18.
- 15) From Exodus / Tetzaveh / Chapter 29 / Verse 30.
- 16) From Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe: Torah 101 - #35, #36, #37, #38 (What is Mishnah? / What is Talmud? What is Aggadah? What is Halacha?).

The Talmud is the foundational work for Jewish law, theology, and tradition, offering interpretations and applications of the Torah. There are two massive corpuses of the

"Oral Law" and various other parts within them. There are 63 books of Mishnah and 73 volumes of Talmud.

1) The 63 books of the Mishnah

- A clear, terse, pithy, succinct, concise authoritative handbook of the oral law, of which 37 of them were made into books of Talmud
- The main text of the Talmud assembled by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince in Israel, who lived in a place called Tzipori, which is in the Gallilee - the most gifted writer of the Hebrew language of all, in the years following the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem
- Taught to many sages, revealed to all of Israel and disseminated in order that Torah should not be forgotten by the Jewish people
- Redacted over a span of 50 years
- Its name in Aramaic is "Masnisen"
- Canonized around 200 AD
- Broken down into 6 sections or "Orders"
- So for 1,500 years, the Oral Law was solely "Oral" and now a large part of it was canonized and written in a finalized format that changed Jewish history forever

2) The 73 Volumes of the Talmud

- The "Sister Work" of the Mishnah
- The Talmud is essentially the "stand-in" for the Sanhedrin, which in ancient times was a central court made up of 71 members, whose last ruling was that the Talmud is authoritative, the last work of its kind and the last work of the transmitters of Oral Torah
- There are two versions: The Jerusalem Talmud which was written first and the Babylonian Talmud written more than 100 years later
- The Jerusalem Talmud was written over several generations in Northern Israel in Tiberias under the leadership of Rav Yochanan
- The Babylonian Talmud was written in Babylon, in Mesopotamia, between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers, in modern day Iraq
- Initialized by Rabbi Yehudah the Prince's three students: Rav, Shmuel and Rav Yochanan. Rav and Shmuel moved to Babylon and founded the academies of Surah and Nehardah in the city of Pumbedisa (which lasted for 800 years until they closed in 1038 AD). Rav Yochanan remained in Israel and headed the academies there. Collectively, they wrote the Jerusalem Talmud
- Many years later, the students, of the students, of the students of Rav and Shmuel - a legendary pair of sages called Ravina and Rav Ashi, wrote the second version of the Talmud - the Babylonian Talmud. Rav

Ashi is considered a legend of Jewish history on a level of Moses (wrote down the written law and gave us the Oral Law in an oral format) and Rabbi Yehudah the Prince (codified and canonizes the Mishnah) and 300 years later comes along Rav Ashi who codified and canonizes the Talmud)

- Two of the most common sages that you will find in the pages of the Talmud are: Rava and Rabba
- If you studied Talmud 1,500 years ago, around the year 700 or so, you would not have the aid of Rashi, who is a student of Talmud's "best friend" who gives you all the most important information you need
- Ultimately codified 300 years after the Mishnah
- When people say "Talmud" and don't specifically say which version they are referring to, invariably they are referring to the Babylonian Talmud because it is a more finished, better version, written under more peaceful times
- Today, 99.9% of Talmud that is studied is the Babylonian Talmud
- Talmud is a more expanded elaboration of the Mishnah which fills in the gaps of knowledge that were deliberately omitted
- Thus, you can have a book of Mishnah on a given topic, say blessings, and a book of Talmud on that same topic, which elaborates upon the laws of the Mishnah
- Provides the connective tissue to understand what the source and reason is of the law – it unites the Written Torah (Scripture) and the concise Oral Torah (Mishnah)
- On average, Talmud has 20-50 times more content on a subject than the Mishnah
- For example: The Mishnah tells you all about the size of a Sukkah (how big, how tall, what it is made out of, how many walls you need, etc.) So the Mishnah says in one line that the roof of the Sukkah cannot be taller than 20 Amos/20 Cubits high. What is not told in the Mishnah is why? The reasons and the source for this is elaborated upon in the Talmud
- One of the foundations of Talmud is that it cannot conflict with any teaching found in the Mishnah (because the Mishnah is the sealed cannon and the Talmud is written around that – the Mishnah's teachings take priority)
- Written in Aramaic
- "Talmud" is the Hebrew name
- It is also known by its Aramaic name, "Gemara"
- It is also known as "Shash" which is an acronym standing for "6 Orders of Mishnah"

- The standard English edition of the Babylonian Talmud has 2,711 double-sided pages of text (as well as many thousands more devoted to various commentaries)
- In 1920, a project was launched called the "Daaf Yomi Project." "Daaf" mean "page" and "Yomi" means "daily." There are probably hundreds of thousands of people in the world who are a part of this. If one studies a page of Talmud a day, it would take them 7.5 years to finish it.
- Rabbi Yaakov Wolbe calls studying Talmud "*The world's best pencil sharpener for your brain.*"
- Another role of the Talmud is to ask questions (investigative questions, attack questions, questions about context, redundancies, ambiguities or contradictions)
 - Divided into six general sections called *sedarim* or "Orders"
 - Each Order is further divided into *mesichtot* or "Tractates"
 - Each *Tractate* comprises *perakim* or "Chapters"
 - Each paragraph within these Chapters is referred to as a "*Mishnah*"
 - The Talmud may bring in other teachings (like a "Beraisa," which is a Mishnaic era teaching not featured in the Mishnah) to attempt to understand the Mishnaic idea.
 - What Talmud does NOT do is give you the bottom line. That is accomplished by Halacha (in Aramaic, it is called "Shemaytza") which at the time remained oral and to this day is being refined.

17) Rabbi Bar Kappara (Eleazar ha-Kappar) was a Jewish scholar, talented poet and storyteller, who was a student of Rabbi Judah the Prince (Judah ha-Nasi), although they are reported to have had a strained relationship. He lived during the period of Jewish history between the Tannaim and Amoraim, in the late 2nd and early 3rd centuries CE. He was most active in the capital of Caesarea Maritima from around 180 to 220 CE. Though he was a talented scholar, his humor and unconventional behavior sometimes prevented him from obtaining positions of authority.

18) In Brachot, page 63A.

19) This verse, which is part of the Shema, emphasizes the importance of integrating God's word into all aspects of daily life and can be found in Deuteronomy / Parshas Va'Eschanan / Chapter 6 / Verse 7.

20) "I," (myself), not being an ordained Rabbi, or remotely having a full, thorough understanding of the Torah and the Tanach (comprised of the 5 Books, Prophets and Writings).