

The Talmud is composed of two basic divisions the Mishnah and the Gemarah. The Mishnah is mainly the interpretation of the biblical laws as handed down over the generations as the “Oral Tradition.” The Gemarah represents a commentary on the Mishnah by a group of later scholars, the Amoraim.

The Mishnah had its origin in the period following the return of the Jews from Babylonian captivity (537 B.C.). Ezra the Scribe is believed to have founded the Great Assembly—a supreme Jewish religious and legislative authority. Out of the Great Assembly arose a group of men, called Scribes. The Scribes represented the official copyists of the Bible and taught its laws. They were followed by the Tannaim, sages who continued for several generations to develop methods of interpreting the laws contained in the Bible. The discussions, arguments, ordinances, and interpretations of the Tannaim are known as the Oral Tradition, as distinguished from the Written Law—that is, the Bible itself.<sup>7</sup>

4. It is not from the Pentateuch that the Jews were instructed but from centuries of “discussions, arguments, ordinances, and interpretations” that were passed down, generation by generation,” so that in the Scribes, primarily Pharisees, determined the spiritual life of the Jews.
5. In the midst of all this legalism are Jews who are tasked with the objective of transforming their modus operandi away from the legalistic version of Judaism as interpreted by the Oral-Law mavens at the Sanhedrin over to the grace-orientation mentality of their newly adopted Christian way of life.
6. James is going to stress many Jewish sins, that is, those that were typically committed by Jews and newly Jewish converts especially. These included, quite obviously, legalism as well as hypocrisy, arrogance, love of money, and a number associated with sins of the tongue.
7. The emphasis that James will employ will focus on application with resultant production: learn divine viewpoint, apply its principles to the exigencies of life with production that results from divine viewpoint.
8. Here are some of the things that James will discuss under the principle of timing:

**(End JAS1-02. See JAS1-03 for continuation of study at p. 21.)**

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<sup>7</sup> Naomi Ben-Asher and Haim Leaf, eds., “Talmud,” in *The Junior Jewish Encyclopaedia* (New York: Shengold Publishers, 1996), 303–304.

1. When to speak and when not to speak.
  2. When to do something and when not to do something.
  3. When to discern a given principle and when to apply that principle.
9. Also included in the early chapters is “justification by works” which is often contrasted with the Pauline doctrine of “justification by faith.” The debate that emerges from this is the effort to “justify” one over the other: salvation by faith in Christ or salvation by means of works.
10. The former is defined by grace while the second, to which James understands many Jews subscribe, engenders legalism. We will resolve that debate in chapter 2.

### Principles on James the Apostle

1. Although James is the Lord’s half-brother, he does not mention this in his introduction. This demonstrates grace orientation:
  1. Grace is all that God is free to do for mankind without compromising His divine essence and includes His favor, kindness, and mercy.
  2. Grace is free, unmerited favor and love from God alone, not from our works or because we are attractive to God.
  3. God has personal love for the believer because the believer receives the imputed righteousness of God at salvation.
  4. Grace means that all things from God are received from God as a free gift totally apart from any form of human merit or any system of human works.
  5. There is no legalism in salvation therefore there is no legalism in the Christian way of life.
  6. Grace is benefit from God totally a part of the work of God and totally apart from the works of mankind.
  7. The Christian way of life is infinitely greater than morality. Morality is a function of the energy of the flesh and is for the human race.
  8. Morality is the result of self-determination whereas grace is the result of God’s determination.
  9. The inner life of virtue is not something we can do in ourselves; it is something that God has provided for us in grace.

10. The divine attribute of love is the motivation for God's grace policy toward mankind.
2. James describes himself as a "bond-slave" of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the noun **δοῦλος (*doúlos*)**: "slave; servant." This word is translated "bond-servant" in the New American Standard.
3. There is controversy over how *doúlos* ought to be translated, "slave," or "servant." Each is fine for each contains the idea of being a devotee of someone else, in this case "the Lord Jesus Christ."
4. *Doúlos* is the genitive of possession of the noun **κύριος (*kúrios*)**: "Lord." James is stating that he "belongs to God" whom he identifies as Jesus Christ.
5. This designation is chosen by James instead of his familial relationship to Jesus in His true humanity of half-brother.
6. This shows James's humility which is expressed by his respecting and stressing the hypostatic union of Jesus which consists of His true humanity and undiminished deity.
7. James's *doúlos* relationship with Jesus is described in these annotations about this word in the NET Bible:

Though **δοῦλος (*doúlos*)** is normally translated "servant," the word does not bear the connotation of a free individual serving another. The most accurate translation is "bondservant," in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another.<sup>1</sup>

Undoubtedly the background for the concept of being the Lord's slave or servant is to be found in the Old Testament scriptures. For a Jew this concept did not connote drudgery, but honor and privilege. It was used for national Israel at times (Isaiah 43:10), but was especially associated with famous Old Testament personalities, including such great men as Moses (Joshua 14:7), David (Psalm 89:3); cf. 2 Samuel 7:5, 8) and Elijah (2 Kings 10:10); all these men were "servants (or slaves) of the Lord."<sup>2</sup>
8. The humility expressed by James stresses the mental attitude that is essential for those who study his Epistle. Preconceived personal opinions by any believer of himself will be dispelled in the course of the five chapters.

<sup>1</sup> The NET Bible (Dallas: Biblical Studies Press, 1996–2005), 2352tn2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2352sn2.