

Hacham

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(Redirected from [Hakham](#))

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)



*The Hacham of [Moinesti](#) (*Hahamul din Moinesti*), [Stefan Luchian](#), 1909.*

Hacham (or *chakam*, *haham*, [Hebrew](#): חכם *ḥaḥam*, "wise") is a term from [Judaism](#), meaning a wise or skillful man; it often refers to someone who is a great [Torah](#) scholar. The word is generally used to designate a cultured and learned person: "He who says a wise thing is called a wise man ["hacham"], even if he be not a Jew" (Meg.16a). Hence in [Talmudic-Midrashic](#) literature wise and learned non-Jews are commonly called "hakme ummot ha-'olam" (the wise men of the nations).

Contents

[\[hide\]](#)

- [1 In ancient times](#)
- [2 Among the Sephardim](#)
- [3 In Muslim countries](#)
- [4 Karaite Judaism](#)
- [5 References](#)

[\[edit\]](#) In ancient times

"Hacham" as an official title is found as early as the first [Sanhedrin](#), after the reconstruction of that body, when the Hadrianic religious persecutions had ceased; in addition to the [nasi Simon ben Gamaliel](#), two other scholars stood at the head of the Sanhedrin, namely, R. [Nathan as Ab Bet Din](#), and [Meïr as hakham](#). Another hacham mentioned by name was Simon, the son of [Judah ha-Nasi I](#), who after the death of his father officiated as hacham with his elder brother, the nasi. Just what the functions of the hacham were is not clear. Rapoport's suggestion that he was the arbiter in matters of ritual prohibition and permission is highly improbable. [Zecharias Frankel](#) looks upon the ha cham as a presiding officer whose duty it was to examine a case in question from all points of view, and, having

summed up the results, to present the matter for discussion. It is more probable, however, that the office of hacham was created in order to secure a majority in cases of difference of opinion between the nasi and the [ab bet din](#) in the affairs of the Sanhedrin; one of the most eminent scholars was always chosen for the post. A [baraita](#) leads to the inference that the hacham was always the director of a school ("bet ha-midrash"), for in addition to the [Great Sanhedrin](#), which later came to take the place of an academy, there were also private academies under the direction of eminent scholars. The origin of the office of hacham is as doubtful as its duration.

Frankel thinks that [Joshua ben Hananiah](#), who lived in the beginning of the second century C.E., was the first hacham, but he does not sufficiently support this assertion. The office seems to have existed in Palestine as long as the academy of the nasi. An [amora](#) of the fourth century recounts the following rule of etiquette, still observed in his time: "When the hacham appears in the academy everyone present must rise as soon as he comes within four ells of him, and must remain standing until he has gone four ells beyond". It is hardly possible that the office of hacham existed in Babylonia, where the relation of the [resh galuta](#) to the heads of the academy was entirely different from that existing in Palestine between the latter and the nasi. Here "hacham" was merely the term for a Jewish scholar who studied chiefly oral traditions, while the terms "[sofer](#)" and "qara" were applied to Bible scholars. In the Seder 'Olam Zutza every resh galuta is accompanied by a ha cham, who probably had charge of the religious affairs of the [exilarchate](#); but as this work originated in Palestine, the author probably applied Palestinian conditions to Babylon. The Syrian [Aphraates](#), who had met only Babylonian Jews, mentions a man "who is called the 'hakkima' of the Jews" (*Homilies*, xxiv), but this too may mean "the wise man" of the Jews.

[\[edit\]](#) Among the Sephardim

Among the [Sephardim](#) (Spanish-Portuguese Jews) "hacham" is the official title of the local rabbi, but it is not known how old the title is. [Shelomo ben Aderet](#) addresses some of his responsa to people with "le-hacham Rabbi . . ." (Responsa, Nos. 79, 395), others again with "la-rab Rabbi . . ." (Nos. 219, 346), but it is possible that "le-hacham" simply means "to the wise." The plural, "hachamim," is generally used in the Talmud, and also by the [Tannaim](#), to designate the majority of scholars as against a single authority. The Aramean equivalent is "rabbanan."

The surname *Hacham* represents both Sepharadic and Ashkenazic Jews in its variations: *Hacham*, *Hachamovich*, *Hachamson*.

[\[edit\]](#) In Muslim countries

In [Muslim](#) countries, a [rabbi](#) was often called a *ʔakham* because *al-rab* in [Arabic](#) was one of the names of [god](#) and may have caused offense due to misunderstanding. Thus the [chief rabbi](#) of the [Ottoman Empire](#) was called the [Hakham Bashi](#) (Hahambasi ʔ ʔ ʔ ʔ ʔ).

Although the word *ʔakham* is derived from the common [Semitic root](#) ʔ-K-M, the second consonant is generally spelled with a [ʔaʔʔʔ](#) in Arabic and in languages that use [Arabic script](#), to reflect the Hebrew pronunciation: ʔʔʔ. The term is [cognate](#) to the Arabic words ʔʔʔʔ *ʔakim* (ruler/lord) and ʔʔʔʔ *ʔakim* (wise man/[physician](#)).

[\[edit\]](#) Karaite Judaism

In [Karaite Judaism](#), spiritual leaders are called *hacham* to distinguish them from their [Rabbinic](#) (i.e. non-Karaite) counterparts. Since Karaite theology is based on the use of reason by individuals to determine the applications of the [Hebrew Bible](#)'s laws for themselves, the role of a *hacham* is more "advisory" than that of a rabbi in standard [Orthodox Judaism](#).

Further information: [Sima Babovich](#) and [Abraham Firkovich](#)

[edit] References

This article incorporates text from a publication now in the [public domain](#): [Solomon Schechter](#) and [Louis Ginzberg](#) (1901–1906). "[? akam](#)". *Jewish Encyclopedia*. <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=96&letter=H>.

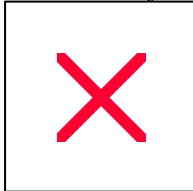
Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hacham&oldid=502465400>"

View page ratings

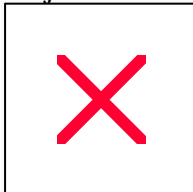
Rate this page

[What's this?](#)

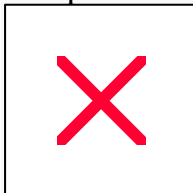
Trustworthy



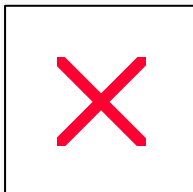
Objective



Complete



Well-written



I am highly knowledgeable about this topic (optional)

Submit ratings

Saved successfully

Your ratings have not been submitted yet

[Categories:](#)

- [Rabbis](#)
- [Orthodox rabbinic roles and titles](#)
- [Hebrew words and phrases](#)

- [Sephardi Jews topics](#)

Hidden categories:

- [Articles containing Hebrew language text](#)
- [Articles containing Ottoman Turkish language text](#)
- [Articles containing Arabic language text](#)
- [Wikipedia articles incorporating a citation from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)
- [Wikipedia articles incorporating a citation from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia without a Wikisource reference](#)
- [Wikipedia articles incorporating text from the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia](#)

Personal tools

- [Create account](#)
- [Log in](#)

Namespaces

- [Article](#)
- [Talk](#)

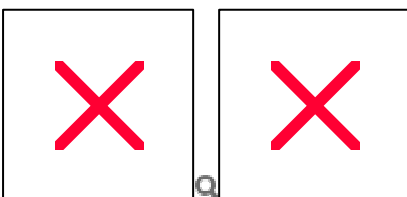
Variants

Views

- [Read](#)
- [Edit](#)
- [View history](#)

Actions

Search



Navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)

Interaction

- [Help](#)

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)

Toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Page information](#)
- [Cite this page](#)
- [Rate this page](#)

Print/export

- [Create a book](#)
- [Download as PDF](#)
- [Printable version](#)

Languages

- [Deutsch](#)
- [Español](#)
- [? ?? ?](#)
- [Français](#)
- [?????](#)
- [Lietuviu](#)
- [????????](#)

- This page was last modified on 15 July 2012 at 17:56.
- Text is available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](#); additional terms may apply. See [Terms of Use](#) for details.
Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the [Wikimedia Foundation, Inc.](#), a non-profit organization.
- [Contact us](#)

- [Privacy policy](#)
- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Disclaimers](#)
- [Mobile view](#)