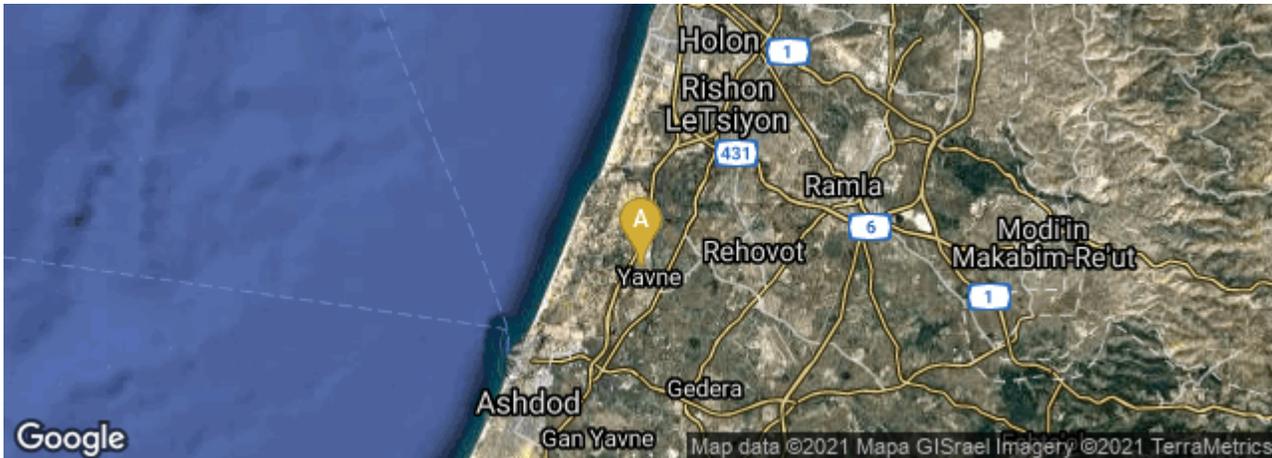


The Council of Jamnia May Have Been Influential in the Process of Canonizing the Old Testament



[A: Yavne, Center District, Israel](#)

Circa 90 CE

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About 90 CE Rabbi [Yohanan ben Zakkai](#) relocated to the city of [Yavne](#)/[Jamnia](#) and received permission from the Romans to found a school of [Jewish law](#) there. The school became a major source for the later [Mishna](#) (Mishah), which recorded the [Tannaim](#).

This school is often understood as a wellspring of [Rabbinic Judaism](#). The Council of Yavne or [Council of Jamnia](#), thought to have taken place about this time, referred to a hypothetical council under Rabbi Yohanan's leadership that, according to tradition, was responsible for defining the [canon of the Hebrew Bible](#).

"Today, there is no scholarly consensus as to when the Jewish canon was set. Nevertheless, the outcomes attributed to the *Council of Jamnia* did occur whether gradually or in a definitive, authoritative council. Several concerns of the remaining Jewish communities in Israel would have been the loss of the national language, the growing problem of conversions to Christianity, based in part on Christian promises of [life after death](#). What emerged from this era was twofold:

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1. A rejection of the [Septuagint](#) or [Koine Greek](#) Old Testament widely then in use among the [Hellenized diaspora](#) along with its additional books not part of the [Biblical Hebrew](#)/[Biblical Aramaic](#) [Masoretic Text](#).
2. The inclusion of a curse on the "[Minim](#)" which probably included [Jewish Christians](#) ([Birkat ha-Minim](#)). According to the Jewish Encyclopedia article on [Min](#): "In passages referring to the Christian period, "minim" usually indicates the Judæo-Christians, the [Gnostics](#), and the [Nazarenes](#), who often conversed with the Rabbis on the [unity of God](#), [creation](#), [resurrection](#), and similar subjects (comp. Sanh. 39b). In some passages, indeed, it is used even for "Christian"; but it is possible that in such cases it is a substitution for the word "Nozeri," which was the usual term for 'Christian' . . . On the invitation of [Gamaliel II](#), Samuel ha-Ḳaṭan composed a prayer against the minim which was inserted in the "[Eighteen Benedictions](#)"; it is called "Birkat ha-Minim" and forms the twelfth benediction; but instead of the original "Nozerim" . . . the present text has "wela-malshinim" ("and to the informers"). The cause of this change in the text was probably, the accusation brought by the [Church Fathers](#) against the Jews of cursing all the Christians under the name of the Nazarenes."

"Sociologically, these developments achieved two important ends, namely, the preservation of the [Hebrew language](#) at least for religious use (even among the [diaspora](#)) and the final separation and distinction between the Jewish and Christian communities. (Through nearly the end of the first century, Christians of Jewish descent continued to pray in synagogues.) But see also [John Chrysostom's Sermons on Jews and Judaizing Christians](#)" (Wikipedia article on Council of Jamnia, accessed 12-07-2008).