

The Talmud's oral influence can be seen in the way that its structure represents the different voices or bodies of opinion. In the center is the text to which the comments pertain. Below it is the early commentary, primarily oral; around it on both sides are the comments of other scholars. This resembles a stacked argument, where first the central point is introduced, and then someone makes a comment, and then someone comments on the comment, and then someone else links that comment back to a previous discussion, and so forth. It is at once a beautiful way to present scholarly discourse and a useful tool of understanding.

I admit to being confused as to the meaning of the syllabus when it asks about 'the consequence' of reading the Talmud. I did not see anything in the text about 'the' consequence. I suppose some potential consequences might include understanding the Mishnah better, understanding the interconnections of the Mishnah better, or getting horribly confused by the intense scholarly debate. However, I don't see any one direct consequence to reading the Talmud.

What strikes me most about the Talmud is how it has grown over time, and yet remained codified in useful ways. For example, the pages have remained numbered in certain important ways, so that it is easy to refer to the same page in different volumes. However, the Talmudic discourse has grown considerably over the years, and the printers of the Talmud are not shy of including some of that text in newer editions. The dedication both to preservation of tradition

and preservation of discourse seems to me to fit very well with what I know of the Jewish faith.