



Biography
of the
Vilna Shas
תלמוד בבלי

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ירושלים

תמוז תשס"ז

דרכיה דרכי נעם

Introduction

Typeset by the Romm Printing House in the city of Vilna, Lithuania, the Vilna Shas is by far the most common edition of the Babylonian Talmud still in use today. This biographical analysis of a typical page of Talmud was designed to help both beginner and more advanced learners to familiarize themselves with the origin and function of the various commentators printed on the margins of the classic Vilna Shas.

Besides the primary commentaries of Rashi and Tosafos, the Romm printers made use of a variety of other important, but less well known commentaries in the outer margins of the text. The publishing house employed scholars to search for these manuscripts in libraries and private collections across Europe, including that of the Vatican. After studying these lost manuscripts, the scholars were able to copy them and bring them to the Romm publishers who included them, even though they did not cover every tractate. In this biography the only one of these commentaries mentioned is Rabbeinu Chananel whose manuscripts were found for most of Shas. Furthermore, the Sefer HaAruch (written by Rabbi Nossan ben Yechiel) indicates that Rabbeinu Chananel's commentary originally covered every tractate, although many have now been lost.

Different tractates contain other commentaries in the margins of the Gemara. The additional commentaries not included in this work include the following: Rabbi Nissim Gaon 4750 – 4822 (990 – 1062 CE), Perush Rabbeinu Gershom, referred to as the Meor HaGolah, מאור הגולה 4720 – 4788 (960 – 1028 CE), Hagahos HaRi Landau by Rabbi Yechezkel Landau 5473 – 5553 (1713 – 1793 CE) also known as the Noda B'Yehuda and Rabbi Yeshaya of Trani I HaZaken, known as Tosafos Rid, תוספות רי"ד 4940 – 5020 (1180 – 1260 CE).

The '*Tzuras HaDaf*' layout is designed to facilitate the visual learner and is based on the original printing of the Vilna Talmud. This edition was first printed between 5640 and 5646 (1880 and 1886 CE), although it has now been reproduced and reprinted with innovative features and changes that organize the commentaries on the outside columns differently. No mention has been made of new versions in this pamphlet.

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I also wish to thank my wife for her enduring encouragement and support, without which this project would have been impossible.

Future projects

אם ירצה השם, I will be continuing this project and beginning work on the other commentaries at the back of the Vilna Shas before starting new projects on other ספרי קדש. Please contact me at vilnabiography@gmail.com for any comments you may have and to order more copies.

א א Ein Mishpat Ner Mitzva: The Wellspring of Justice – The Lamp of Commandment was authored by the Spanish Rabbi Yehoshua Boaz Mevorach.

ב ב The Ein Mishpat Ner Mitzva is a combination of two cross-reference indices.

ג ג The Torah Ohr, found between the text of the Gemara and Rashi's commentary was also written by Rabbi Yehoshua Boaz and cites the sources for the pesukim in Tanach brought down in the text of the Mishna and Gemara. It is referenced by an open circle in the text like this: ○

רבינו חננאל

Rabbeinu Channanel ben Chushiel lived from 990 – 1055 CE in Tunisia, North Africa. His commentary on the Talmud is one of the earliest. Rabbeinu Channanel mainly deals with the explanation of principles and issues raised in the Gemara. On occasion he is also cited by Tosafos. His commentary is unique in that it often brings equivalent sugyot from the Jerusalem Talmud. His most famous student was Rabbi Yitzchak ben Yaakov Alfasi, also known as the Rif, רי"ף. Also many of Rabbeinu Channanel's comments can be found in the ספר השו"ע, a dictionary compiled by Rabbi Nosen ben Yechiel of Rome. Please refer to the introduction for other commentaries that may appear here.

The • word Tosafos (תוספות) means additions and serves as an analysis to Rashi and an analysis of apparent contradictions in the text of the Mishna and Gemara based on Mishnayos and Gemaras elsewhere in Shas :

Tosafos • is printed on the opposite side to Rashi farthest from the binding and is printed in Rashi script. There were a number of Baalei Tosafos in different yeshivas throughout the 12th and 13th centuries and it probably began as notes made by the talmidim on discussions and shiurim :

Some • of the most prolific Baalei Tosafos include Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir (Rabbenu Tam, ר"ת) from Ramerupt in France who lived from 4860 – 4931 (1100 – 1171 CE). He was the grandson of Rashi. Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir (Rashbam, רשב"ם) who lived from 4845 – 4934 (1085 – 1174 CE). Rabbi Yitzchak of Dampierre (Ri, ר"י) 4880 – 4960 (1120 – 1200 CE), lived in France during the 12th century. The nephew of Rabbenu Tam and the Rashbam he was one of the most prolific of the Baalei Tosafos. Rabbi Shmuel 4840 – 4918 (1080 – 1158 CE) was the brother of Rabbenu Tam. Rabbi Shimshon ben Avraham of Shantz (Tosafos Shantz), lived in France during the latter 12th and early 13th century and was the most important disciple of the Ri. In addition to his Tosafos he composed a commentary to the two orders of the Mishna for which no Babylonian Talmud was written. Another Baal Tosafos was Rabbi Meir ben Baruch of Rothenberg

who was born in Worms, Germany, 4985 – 5053 (1225 – 1293 CE). **The** • compilation of the various Tosafos was carried out primarily by French Rabbis. The majority of the Tosafos printed in the standard Talmud editions were collected by Rabbi Eliezer ben Shlomo of Touques : **Rabbi** • Asher ben Yechiel (the Rosh) edited and compiled Tosafos from the important French yeshivas. In 5063 (1303 CE) he left Germany for Toledo, Spain. Other significant redactors include Rabbi Shimshon of Shantz and Rabbi Peretz of Corbeil, France. His work, Tosafos Rebbeinu Peretz was written between 5110 and 5128 (1350 – 1368 CE) :

The

Rashi • Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki was born on 29th Shevat 4800 (February 22nd 1040) and died on 22nd Tamuz 4865 (July 13th 1105). He was born in Troyes in France and as well as writing a commentary on the Talmud,

תורה אור

also wrote commentaries on the Tanach : **Rashi** was the **only child** • to his parents, Yitzchak and Leah. He traced his lineage through his father's side back to Rabbi Yochanan Hasandlar who in turn was a direct descendant of King David : **Rashi's commentary** • was originally written within the text of the Mishna and Gemara. Later, the printers of the Talmud placed his commentary around the side of the text, on the inner margin by the binding. The type face used is called 'Rashi script' which takes its name from its use in Rashi's commentaries; Rashi did not write in Rashi script. It developed as a printed version of the semi-cursive way that Hebrew was

written by Jews in Italy between the 14th and 15th Century. Each entry begins with a heading called the 'dibbur hamaschil' (= דיבור המפתחיל). In new editions of the Talmud these are printed in bold : **The commentary** • has many functions. Rashi helps us understand the simple meaning of the Mishna and Gemara, focusing on specific issues while resolving difficulties in the text. Often, this is achieved by completing passages in the text that have apparently been truncated by the Mishna or Gemara. He occasionally brings different versions of the text. Some entries of Rashi are meant to be read independently from

the דיבור המפתחיל while other entries are meant to read as a continuation and are called 'run-on Rashi's' : **Rashi's students** • copied his commentary into book form called Kuntresim (קונטרסים) and often Rashi is referred to by Tosafos as 'kunterus' : There



was compiled around the year 3960 (200 CE) by Rabbi Yehudah Ha-Nasi. The sages of the Mishna are known as the Tannaim. The word Mishna (משנה) comes from the root שנה, which means to teach: **גמל**. The period of the Gemara began after the redaction of the Mishna. Sages throughout Eretz Yisrael and Babylonia, called Amoraim, analyzed, debated and discussed the mishnayos. These discussions form the basis of the Gemara (גמרא) and were written primarily in Aramaic, the language spoken in Babylonia and in Eretz Yisrael after the return from the Babylonian exile. The Gemara provides a detailed analysis of the Mishna, raising difficulties and questions:

מתני The text of the Mishna is broken up into segments also known as individual mishnayos (משנה plural of משנה) and accordingly, each segment is called a Mishna. The Mishna quoted in the text of the Talmud and introduced in the text of the Talmud by the word מתניתין = מתניתין meaning 'our Mishna', can be one segment, a part of a segment or consecutive segments joined together. A number of mishnayos (משניות) make up a perek (פרק chapter), a number of

The Mesores HaShas means tradition of the six orders of the Mishna.

The Mesores HaShas was written by Rabbi Yehoshua Boaz Mevorach (see Ein Mishpat Ner Mitzvah).

הגהות
הב"ח

(b) Compiled by Rabbi Yoel Sirkes (the Bach) who wrote notes on the textual syntax and sentence structure in the Talmud, Rashi and Tosafos.

(c) The Bach lived in Poland from 5321 (1561 CE) until 5400 (1640 CE).

(d) The Bach is cited by a Rashi script letter in parentheses (as shown above).

גליון הש"ס

The Gilyon HaShas was written by Rabbi Akiva Eiger who lived in Posen, Prussia between 5522 and 5598 (1761-1837 CE). His notes reference relevant passages in Shas and other commentaries. The Gilyon HaShas are noted by a flywheel: ⚙

There are times * when Rashi uses the French vernacular to explain the meaning of a word :

There are some tractates * where the text states that Rashi died before completing his commentary of that tractate, and that it

was completed by a student. This is true of the tractate *Makkos*, the concluding parts of which were composed by his son-in-law Rabbi Judah ben Nathan (*Rivan*) and in *Bava Basra* by his grandson, Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (*Rashbam*) : **Descendants** * Rashi had three daughters; Yocheved, Miriam and Rachel. Yocheved married Meir ben Shmuel and had four sons: *Rashbam*, *Rabbeinu Tam*, the *Rivan* (the *Baalei Tosafos*) and *Shlomo* who died young :

and divorce, levirate marriage, vows and *nazirus*. 4. *Nezikin* (נזיקין Damages) dealing with criminal and tort law. 5. *Kodoshim* (קדשים Holy things), regarding the sacrificial order, the laws of the Temple and the dietary laws and 6. *Teharos* (טהרות Purities) concerning the laws of spiritual impurity including *Taharas Mishpacha* – the laws of family purity. The acronym זמ"ן נק"ט is used to remember the order of the six סדרים :

גמ'. There are certain מסכתות in ש"ס for which no Gemara was written in Babylonia and only contain the משניות. The Babylonian Talmud is therefore found primarily on the Mishnayos in קדשים, גזיקין, מועד and נשים. The remaining מסכתות only have Gemara (from Babylonia) on the tractates *Berachos* (ברכות) and *Niddah* (נדה): **מתני'.** The *Tannaim* lived in a number of cities in Eretz Yisrael. During the time of the Mishna, the spiritual Jewish center was Yerushalayim, but in 3830 (70 CE), after the destruction of the city of Yerushalayim and the Second Temple, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai founded a new religious center in Yavne, while other centers of learning were established in Lod, Bnei Brak, the Galil and other small enclaves dispersed throughout Eretz Yisrael: **גמ'.** During the early part of the 5th century CE, Ravina I and Rav Ashi led a group of *Amoraim* to compile the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud refers to the sections of Gemara written primarily in the *Yeshivos* of Sura, Pumbedisa and Mechasia, which lay close to the Euphrates River in Babylon, now modern day Iraq. The last of these editors and compilers was Ravina II. After Ravina II died in 4235 (475 CE), no further additions were made to the Talmud, except for minimal editing by the Rabbanan Savurai 4236 – 4320 (476 – 560 CE). The debate often centers on specific questions. The *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* often used the thirteen principals of biblical exposition to derive their positions on *halachic* issues from biblical sources. The Gemara may clarify the rationale behind particular non-Torah laws, or laws based on logic. Problematic words or language used in the Mishna are explained, as well as the context and practical application of the statement. Resolutions are sought for difficulties found in the internal logic of the Mishna and contradictions based on משניות and other *Tannaitic* sources elsewhere in ש"ס, excluded from the Mishna (such as a *Braisos*, ברייתא). On occasion, the scholars of the Romm printers discovered differences in the various manuscripts that were used to print the Vilna Shas. They derived a system where curved brackets () indicated that the text that should be excluded, and square brackets [] and when words should be included :

The style * in which *Tosafos* raises a difficulty and then offers an answer may vary. Often

a problem will be raised by וא"ת = תאמר

literally 'if you say' or תימא (also spelled תימא)

meaning 'wonder' and resolved with the words

ו"ל = ויש לומר literally

'there is to say' meaning 'it is possible to say'. Another

common classic question – answer combination is

והוא קשה 'and it is difficult' which is usually answered

by ונראה 'and it seems'. Additional questions are

introduced by ועוד or the Aramaic equivalent ותו

ועוד קשה 'and a further difficulty'.

Additional answers are often introduced by the

words ועוד יש לומר 'and it is possible to say

further' or אי נמי 'if also' meaning 'alternatively' :

The Mesoras HaShas cross-references to other passages in the Talmud where the same quote appears.

The link from the Talmud text can be designated by an asterisk, * that points to a reference directly opposite in the margin or by a Hebrew letter pointing to a list of references that are assembled together in the margin or at the bottom of the page.

[Later, additional notes and references were added by the Rabbi of Breslau, Rabbi Yeshaya Berlin 5486 – 5560 (1725 CE – 1799 CE). These are enclosed in square brackets.]

הגהות
הב"ח

(ב) The Bachi will often cite the part of the text of the Gemara, Rashi or Tosafos that needs correction.

(ג) The 'Bachi' or ב"ח stands for בית חדש meaning 'new house' which is his commentary on the Arba' Turim.

גליון הש"ס

The comments of the Gilyon HaShas usually consist of concise observations on the Talmud, Rashi, and Tosafot. Occasionally there are references to similar sources in Shas. Usually, other sources are cited that either contradict or pose a difficulty to the sugya. Answers are rarely given and are often concluded with וצריך עיון meaning further study is needed.

א The Ein Mishpat (small letters) contains references to the main codes of Jewish law, Maimonides' Mishna Torah (מ"ט), the Tur and Shulchan Aruch (ש"ט) and the Sefer Mitzvos Gadol (ס"ג).

ב The Ner Mitzvah (the large letters) enumerates, in order of their appearance, all the codified laws that are contained in each chapter of the Talmud (i.e. all the laws that are indexed in the Ein Mishpat).

ג The marginal notes (shown here) link up to superscript letters set in the Talmud text.

הגהות
הגר"א

א The Vilna Gaon (Rabbi Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, known as the Gra) was born on the 15th Nissan 5480 (April 23, 1720) and died on 19th Tishrei 5558 (October 9, 1797). He wrote corrections to the text of the Gemara that were later printed with the Talmud.

ב The changes suggested by the Gra are often cited with רא"ש = ראשי תיבות which means 'these words were erased' followed by the phrase ג"כ = נכתב בצדו 'written at its side' introduces what the text should have said and usually the Gra completes his emendation with כצ"ל = כן צריך לומר meaning 'this is what it should say'.

ג The Roshei Teivos (ראשי תיבות, acronyms) are also found in other commentaries.

ד The notes are introduced with a square letter enclosed by square brackets.