

Tarbiz

A Quarterly for Jewish Studies

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Volume LXXXIX • Number 4

July – September 2023

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Tarbiz is a peer-reviewed journal published four times a year by the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, with the assistance of the Paula and David Ben-Gurion Fund for Jewish Studies established by the Federmann family.

All material submitted for publication in *Tarbiz*, including books for review, should be sent to: *Tarbiz*, The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem 9190501, Israel. Manuscripts must conform to the *Guidelines* published in volume 72 (2003), pp. 301–306. The Editors assume no responsibility for the opinions of individual contributors.

E-Mail: tarbiz.jerusalem@gmail.com.

All business correspondence should be addressed to: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, P.O.B. 39099, Jerusalem 9139002, Israel. Web site: www.magnespress.co.il. Phone: (972-2) 658-6659; Fax: (972-2) 566-0341.

Annual subscription rate: \$155; single issue: \$29; double issue: \$58.

ISSN 0334-3650

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Printed in Israel

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ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

THE TANNAITIC TRADITION CONCERNING THE PASSOVER CELEBRATIONS OF KING HEZEKIAH

Adiel Schremer and Benjamin Katzoff

The purification of the Temple by king Hezekiah, and the following celebrations of the Passover, as described in 2Chr. 29-30, have attracted much contemporary scholarly attention. They also attracted the attention of the ancient rabbis. Because Hezekiah is described in the Hebrew bible as a righteous king, who followed God's law, the way he celebrated the Passover was assumed by the rabbis as legally valid. Yet, the Chronicler refers to Hezekiah's Passover celebrations and says that they were not done in accordance with the law (2Chr. 30:18). This has troubled the ancient rabbis, and the Tannaitic tradition concerning Hezekiah's Passover attempts to resolve this problem. That tradition exists in two versions: one in the Tosefta in tractate Pesahim, and the other in the Tosefta in tractate Sanhedrin, and in the parallel baraitot in both the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmud. The present article suggests that a close reading of the two versions indicates that the text was expanded, and it suggests an identification of the secondary material which was added. This makes possible a re-consideration of the purpose and meaning of the added comments, and a better treatment of the variant readings existing in the major text-witnesses of the Tosefta.

YESHUA BEN YEHUDA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE MEKHILTA OF RABBI SHIMON BEN YOḤAI AND ITS LANGUAGE

Menahem Kahana and Ofra Tirosh-Becker

Yeshua ben Yehuda, a Jerusalem Karaite scholar of the eleventh century, included many quotations from rabbinic literature in his Judeo-Arabic commentaries on the Torah. While most of these quotations are drawn from well-known compositions, some were quoted from treatises that are no longer extant, first and foremost Sifre Zuṭa on Deuteronomy. In this paper we focus on Yeshua's quotations from the Mekhilta of Rabbi Shimon ben Yoḥai (Mekhilta de-Rashbi), for which we do not have complete documentation, and we discuss the contribution of these quotations to the study of this Mekhilta and its language.

Portions of Yeshua's short and long commentaries on Exodus were preserved in many manuscripts. For this project we studied about forty-five manuscripts of Yeshua's commentaries, many of which were fragmentary with pages incorrectly ordered. In twenty-one of these manuscripts, we found a total of sixty-three quotations from the Mekhilta de-Rashbi.

Two editions of the Mekhilta de-Rashbi have been published so far. David Zvi Hoffmann's 1905 edition was based mainly on Midrash Hagadol, while Jacob Nahum Epstein and Ezra

Zion Melamed's 1955 edition was based to a large extent on Geniza fragments. Further differences between the two editions are due to Hoffmann's tendency to include sections from Midrash Hagadol whose origin could in fact be the Mishna or the Talmud, while Melamed refrained from doing so. Now, on the basis of the quotations preserved in Yeshua ben Yehuda's writings, we can confirm that Hoffmann's approach was sometimes correct. For example, in his edition Melamed did not include the many homilies on the Sabbath in the Mekhilta de-Rashbi commentary on Torah sections *ki-tissa* – *vayaqhel*, as he attributed them to the Mekhilta of Rabbi Yishmael. Now, however, we can establish that they are indeed an integral part of the Mekhilta de-Rashbi as surmised by Hoffmann.

Quotations embedded in Yeshua's writings enable us to reconstruct several new paragraphs of the Mekhilta de-Rashbi that were not preserved either in Midrash Hagadol nor in Geniza fragments. With the help of other quotations, we can prove that some uncertain reconstructions of Mekhilta de-Rashbi homilies, which are preserved only in Midrash Hagadol, were in fact correct, while others were incorrect and the sources of Midrash Hagadol in those cases were the Babylonian Talmud or Maimonides. Moreover, Yeshua's quotations occasionally preserved a more reliable version of the Mekhilta de-Rashbi than the versions preserved in Geniza fragments and in Midrash Hagadol.

The quotations from the Mekhilta de-Rashbi embedded in Yeshua ben Yehuda's writings reflect many linguistic features of Rabbinic Hebrew known to us from the most reliable manuscripts of rabbinic literature. These linguistic features, including orthography, phonology, verb and noun morphology, and syntax, further testify to the reliability of the transmission by Yeshua. The phonological characteristics of these quotations reflect a variety of pronunciation traditions of Mishnaic Hebrew. The vocalized manuscripts reflect some of the salient characteristics of the Palestinian pronunciation tradition of Mishnaic Hebrew alongside traits reflecting its Babylonian pronunciation tradition. The coexistence of these linguistic features points to a complex linguistic reality in eleventh century Jerusalem, where Yeshua lived and worked, indicating that multiple traditions were preserved there simultaneously.

‘SIDREI TAHAROT’: AN ATTEMPT TO COMPLETE THE TALMUD AS A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF HASSIDISM AND ITS OPPONENTS (HITNAGDUT)

Israel Ori Meitlis

This article examines the relationship between the Talmudic treatise ‘Sidrei Taharot’ (‘Orders of Purity’), written by R. Gershon Henikh Leiner – the Rebbe of Izhbitza-Radzin Hassidism – and the general world of Hassidism as well as the particular world of Hassidic Izhbitza-Radzin.

This Talmudic treatise, which ostensibly sought to complete the Talmudic tractates on ‘Seder Taharot’, has been investigated in academic research from two main directions: opposition to the treatise due to its layout, which was designed as an exact imitation of the customary Talmud page, is discussed in the context of the study of the orthodox trends of the period, while Rabbi Leiner's critical position in ‘Sidrei Taharot’ towards the annotations of The Talmudic text, including his criticism of the Vilna Gaon's method of vigorous annotation method, is discussed in studies of Talmudic research.

The present article brings together the study of Talmudic literature with the study of Hassidism, showing that this Talmudic treatise contains distinct teachings from Izhbitza-Radzin thought and that it is not possible to separate the opposition to ‘Sidrei Taharot’ and the author’s principled disagreement with the Vilna Gaon on the issue of annotating the Talmudic text from the controversy between the Hassidim and the Mitnagdim.

I also show how this Talmudic treatise, which is not often identified in academic studies with the world of Izhbitza-Radzin, is in a certain sense the best literary representation of Izhbitza-Radzin Hassidism as it was practiced in reality: a treatise reflecting a world of intense and conservative engagement with the Talmud and Halakha which also transmits the unique teachings and ways of the rabbis of Izhbitza-Radzin.

AN ERROR ALWAYS REPEATS ITSELF

Simcha Emanuel

The medieval sages invested much effort in clarifying the correct text of the Babylonian Talmud and other works of Rabbinic literature. Often, they did not reveal their thought processes or document the way they determined the correct reading. However, occasionally they do present different possible versions of a passage and explain the considerations that led them to determine which of them is correct.

This article discusses two examples of the latter type of textual clarification, but which have become completely corrupted. One discussion addresses the clarification of the text of a complicated passage from the Palestinian Talmud about a very sensitive topic: under what conditions may a husband divorce his wife if she has gone insane. The second discussion is about the text of a Mekhilta passage about the prohibition of instructing a non-Jew to perform labor for a Jew on the Sabbath. Determining the correct text of this passage has significant halakhic ramifications.

Both of the texts discussed in this article contain recurring phrases, causing early scribes to err in their copying. The medieval sages sought to correct these corruptions and wrote extensive explanations of what the correct text should be. However, later scribes who copied these complex textual discussions were sloppy in their work and re-corrupted what the sages sought to correct, making the text nearly incomprehensible.

In the appendix to the article is a brief discussion of the use of consistent philological rules by medieval sages, especially the well-known principle of ‘omission due to similar ending’, or *homeoteleuton*.

