

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

Chapters of the Tosefta: The Origin and Significance of the Differences in the Chapter Divisions

Binyamin Katzoff

Alongside the uniformity among the various manuscripts of the Tosefta in the great majority of chapter divisions, which indicates that the division precedes all the copies we have, the Tosefta contains a considerable amount of interchange between the textual witnesses in chapter divisions. In most cases, the Erfurt manuscript (hereafter E) has an additional chapter division that is not found in the other large witnesses and fragments, and the additional chapter division in E matches, or closely approximates, the corresponding chapter division in the Mishna. This finding indicates that in the E tradition the Tosefta was transmitted, at some point, by a learned scribe, who did not merely copy mechanically, but paid attention to the content as he wrote, and often with an eye to the corresponding Mishna. For him the Tosefta was not an independent work, but one that was to be studied together with the Mishna, which was the work of primary importance. Hence, internal divisions of the Mishna were transferred to the E tradition of the Tosefta, which contains divisions that do not represent the original structure of the Tosefta.

An Old-New Collection of Responsa from the Geonim and R. Isaac Alfasi

Simcha Emanuel and Mordechai Sabato

An obscure bit of information about an unknown manuscript of Geonic responsa emerged about sixty years ago, in a footnote by Rabbi Wolf Leiter, in which he refers to a photocopy of a manuscript of Geonic responsa in the possession of Prof. Moshe Lutzki in New York. The manuscript (which, there are indications, may have been part of Moses Gaster's collection in England) vanished without a trace, and the fate of Lutzki's photocopy was likewise unknown. With the generous assistance of Ms. Shulamith Berger, we have recently located the photocopy of the manuscript in Lutzki's estate, which is housed at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University,

New York. Its call number is now MS 1425.

The manuscript is complete, though small in scope (51 folios). It contains three collections of responsa. The first two collections contain primarily Geonic responsa that appear in the *Sha'arei Tzedek* collection as well, and the printed version of these responsa is generally better than the version in this manuscript. The third collection is the most significant; it contains mainly responsa of Rif (Rabbi Isaac Alfasi), though it contains responsa of other sages as well. In the appendix to this article, seven new responsa from this manuscript are published, some by the Babylonian Geonim and others by Rabbi Meir Ha-Nasi, who is apparently none other than Rabbi Meir Ha-Levi Abulafia.

Don Isaac Abravanel in Portugal (1437-1483): A Socio-cultural Profile

Cedric Cohen Skalli

A century separates Don Samuel Abravanel's conversion (circa 1388) and the dramatic events which forced the Abravanel family to emigrate from Seville to Portugal, and the flight of Isaac Abravanel and his family back to Castile in the years 1483-1485. Isaac Abravanel's biography (1437-1508) was greatly determined by this double emigration. For 46 years, Abravanel lived and acted in Portugal. This period is rich in documents which illuminate the wide range of his activities in economy, politics, literature and philosophy. The present article outlines and analyses the historical, social and cultural processes which shaped the rise and fall of Don Isaac in the Portuguese Kingdom, as reflected in his documents, letters and writings during this period. The article proposes a comprehensive interpretation of Abravanel's life and work which integrates historical, social, economic, political, literary, philosophical and theological considerations. Thanks to this integrative approach, the article presents a coherent historical figure of Abravanel, while shedding new light on the Jewish and Christian socio-cultural history of 15th century Portugal.

**Which Were the Real Addressees of Alt Yiddish Books? *Seffer Middos*
– “Book of Virtuous Conduct” – as Test Case**

Noga Rubin

The essay deals with the phenomenon of the commencement of printing books written in Yiddish. Focusing on the first two printing decades (starting at Krakow 1535) the central claim discussed is that not only were those books printed in Christian publishing houses, but they were also adapted by them also aiming at Christian readers.

Prominent alt-Yiddish literature researchers have stated that this genre was generally designated for humble Jewish readers who weren't, in most cases, fluent Hebrew or capable *Leshon-Kodesh* readers. This was especially true for many Jewish reading communities till after the Haskalah period. The texts were adapted in a manner enabling such audiences to participate in rituals held in the synagogue or at home and so the reader could have an idea about Jewish fundamentals and basic Halacha.

Several seminal texts printed at the outset of Yiddish book printing are thoroughly examined throughout the article. What emerges is that most of the texts weren't originally meant for Jews but for Christian Hebraists. Different layers constituting the texts in Yiddish – stylistic, linguistic and the “Urtexts” out of which those texts originate from – reveal their somewhat unusual addressees. Christian Hebraists, as it seems, initially used Yiddish books to get acquainted with the Hebrew alphabet (Yiddish language was close enough to the German they spoke so it was the Hebrew alphabet left to cope with). The next step, as designed by them, was hopefully learning *Leshon-Kodesh* reading Hebrew.

Having said that, it wouldn't be farfetched to assume that the translators and publishers of Yiddish books meant also to encourage Jewish readers to buy those books by which Christian ideas would infiltrate Jewish communities. It is important to mention that Yiddish literature key researchers pointed several books from the outset of Yiddish printing were adapted or edited by missionaries.

The essay's main contribution is two-fold: firstly it is carefully based on quite a few examples from the first printings in Yiddish; secondly this essay reveals the abovementioned claims as pointing at a general cultural horizon and not only a matter of few sporadic occurrences.

**Did Isaac Last Forge Two Pages in His Edition of Joseph Ibn Kaspi's
Commentary on Proverbs? On the Life, Work, and Moral Integrity of
a Forgotten Judaica Scholar**

Gad Freudenthal and Hannah Kasher

In a paper recently published in *Alei Sefer* [23 (5773/2013), 165-178; English abstract, p. XII], Ms Arlette Lipszyc-Attali argued that two pages of text in Isaac Last's edition of Joseph Ibn Kaspi's Commentary on Proverbs (1903) have no *Vorlage* in the (single) manuscript from which the edition was made (Paris, BNF, MS héb. 184): "the edition gives on pp. 46 to 48 a text which does not exist in the manuscript." Her conclusion she formulated as a rhetorical question: "Did Isaac Last forge these pages?"

In the first, short part of this paper we answer the rhetorical question with an emphatic: No. The purportedly "missing" pages are in the manuscript, although they are somewhat out of place.

More importantly, in the second, principal part of the paper we offer a first biographical account of Isaac Last (1847-1913). Last was born in Stanislawow (Galicia) and had a business. In 1900 he lost his money and decided to earn his living as a copyist of Hebrew manuscripts. He had some connections with scholars (e.g. Hayim Brody) and they entrusted him with jobs, for which he went to Oxford. (Today some 50 manuscripts copied by Last can be identified.) Last was very happy with his new profession and made it into a vocation: side-by-side with copying manuscripts on demand, he also copied Hebrew texts of his own choice and had them published. He became particularly fond of Joseph Ibn Kaspi, the fourteenth-century scholar, many of whose works Last published for the first time. Good chance allowed him to publish also the *editio princeps* of Ha-Meiri's *Magen Avot*. He traveled much from library to library to check different copies of the works he was publishing (making the accusation of forgery particularly unjust). Last published his various editions privately, putting a heavy burden on his limited economic means.

Last's education was that of a *talmid haḥam*, schooled only in a *yeshivah* and without any university education. His editions did not match the exacting criteria of modern scholarship and he was often criticized for that. Last was aware of the deficiencies of his work and willingly and gratefully accepted all criticism.

As his reputation increased, Last gradually got support from various Jewish institutions of learning. Beginning in 1908, he was resident at the

Lady Judith Montefiore College in Ramsgate. He died in Ramsgate on 3 November 1913. (Photos of his tomb accompany the article.)

The *Rinat Yisrael Siddur*: Creation, Innovation and Influence

Reuven Gafni

The production of the *Rinat Yisrael* series of *siddurim*, the first of which was published in Jerusalem in 1970, was one of the most dramatic events in the field of Jewish liturgy in recent generations. Other than its religious and educational importance, its appearance was the culmination of a long ideological and social evolution, in which various groups and personalities sought to reshape the prayer and synagogue world, and to adapt it to the changing social, national and political reality in the Land of Israel, since the beginning of the 20th century.

This paper seeks to describe comprehensively, for the first time, the story of the production of the series (mainly its original three parts), with reference to various issues relating to its creation, uniqueness and influence: the foundation of the creation of the series and its educational and ideological goals; the personalities and officials involved in various stages of its preparation and production; its unique and innovative elements, both liturgical and graphic; the complex process that led to the production of the Sephardic-Oriental *siddur*; the widespread distribution of the series in the national religious public, and its influence on the design of the prayer, its ordinances and customs; favorable and critical reactions which appeared after its publishing; its effect on a variety of *siddurim* since its inception; and, finally, a review of the process whereby *Rinat Yisrael* loses its hegemonic status, and becomes one of the many offered and popular *siddurim* in communities identified with the national religious public.

The paper is based on documents collected in various archives, differing references to *Rinat Yisrael* that have been published over the years, a few excerpts published by Shlomo Tal, the series' editor, fragments of memoirs of some of those involved and interviews with various personalities who contributed their knowledge or interpretation of the process and its significance.

More on “Prayers for the Welfare of Soldiers in the Modern Era”

Yael Levine

In his article “Prayers for the Welfare of Soldiers in the Modern Era”, published in *Alei Sefer* 24–25 (2015), Aaron Ahrend compiled and presented a substantial amount of material concerning this topic. The current article seeks to complement Ahrend’s study, thus including a large number of additional formulae of prayers and sources not mentioned by him, mainly relating to the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers.

In the present article, the sources are discussed according to the following categories: general prayers for the welfare of the IDF soldiers; Rabbi Goren’s version of the *Mi she-Berakh* prayer; prayers intended for recitation by the soldiers themselves; prayers to be recited prior to conscription; prayers to be recited by parents of the soldiers; and prayers for the prevention of the enlistment of Jews in foreign armies. The prayers in each of these units are organized, for the most part, according to the chronological order of their composition, to the extent that this is known, or according to the estimated date of their institution.

It is important to note that the formulation of prayers for the welfare of the IDF soldiers is a dynamic manifestation, and new prayers on this topic have been written in recent years. Ahrend’s article as well as the present one attest to the diverse liturgical composition related to this genre, and the creativity it entails. It is likewise reasonable to assume that the complete repertoire of these prayers has not thus far been identified and compiled.

In light of the plethora of prayers and the richness of the liturgy pertaining to this topic, it is necessary to establish a research institute that will undertake the task of collating and documenting all the formulae of prayers concerning the IDF soldiers and the material related to this genre.