

Synopsezum Talmud Yerushalmi: Ordnung Zeraim, vol. I. 1-2: Berakhot und Pea; vol. I. 6-11: Terumot, Maaserot, Maaser Sheni, Halla, Orla und Bikurim.

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The Talmud Yerushalmi (also called the "Jerusalem" or "Palestinian" Talmud, or the "Talmud of the Land of Israel"), edited in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. in the areas around Tiberias and Caesaria, is the briefer and somewhat older contemporary of the better-known Babylonian Talmud. Students of this Talmud have long been plagued by a paucity of research tools to deal with a text that is notoriously elliptical and corrupt. The only reasonably complete manuscript of the work, Codex Leiden-Scaliger 3, which was finished in 1289 and forms the basis for the first printed edition (Venice, 1523), is heavily glossed and full of errors. (The tractates and chapters that do not appear in this manuscript are either lost or presumed never to have existed.) A slightly older manuscript, Vatican Ebreo 133, which covers Tractate Sotah and Seder Zera'im excluding Tractate Bikkurim and most of Orlah, is more corrupt than MS Leiden but contains a fair number of better readings from a different text tradition. The Yerushalmi-text is also included in two manuscripts of a sixteenth-century commentary on Seder Zera'im and Tractate Sheqalim by Solomon Sirillo (MS Paris, Bibliotheque nationale, Heb. 1389, with its continuation in MS Moscow, Gunzberg Collection, Nr. 1135; and MS London, British Library Or. 2822-24). While many of the variants in the Sirillo manuscripts represent the commentator's own corrections and reconstructions of the text, some of them clearly derive from an independent manuscript tradition and are better readings than those in either MSS Leiden or Vatican. Similarly, two early printings of portions of the Talmud Yerushalmi - ed. Constantinople, 1662 (covering the halakhic portions of Tractates Berakhot, Pe'ah, Orlah, Hallah, and Bikkurim, with the commentary of Joshua Benveniste), and ed. Amsterdam, 1710 (Seder Zera'im and Tractate Sheqalim, with the commentary of Elijah b. Judah Loew of Foulda) - while based on the *editio princeps*, contain corrections derived from independent manuscript readings.

Faced then with the problem of presenting the primary textual evidence for the study of Talmud Yerushalmi in a manageable form, editors Peter Schafer and Hans-Jürgen Becker have chosen that of a synopsis rather than a standard critical edition. This decision, explained at length in the introduction to the first volume (pp. vii-ix), is well justified. The number of variants between the Leiden and Vatican manuscripts alone is too large to be represented completely in a critical text that does not become unwieldy. A selective listing of variants is always based on a subjective appraisal of what is relevant, and that depends upon a prior interpretation of the text, which is precisely the mooted issue. Moreover, the character of individual variants found in any textual witness can be better appraised contextually - i.e.,

with reference both to their local syntactic and stylistic environments and to the overall characteristics of that witness - than atomistically, as they normally appear in a standard critical edition. For all these reasons, a synopsis is ultimately more helpful to students of the Talmud Yerushalmi. Any interpretation of the Yerushalmi text, whether in the form of a translation or a commentary, regrettably demands a fair amount of textual reconstruction, often conjectural, but this can only be done on the basis of evaluating all the variants. (It is no accident that Schafer's synopsis is an outgrowth of his co-editorship of the German-language Yerushalmi translation project.)

Schafer and Becker transcribe the text of the editio princeps in their first column, as they note (p. viii), more for practical than principled reasons: this is the text that underlies all the later printed editions and is referred to in standard citations and references. MS Leiden appears in column two, followed by MS Vatican, MS Paris/Moscow, MS London, ed. Amsterdam, ed. Constantinople, and, in the final column, relevant Yerushalmi citations that appear in the first editions (both sixteenth century) of Yalqut Shimoni and/or En Yaaqob, two medieval aggadic anthologies that reproduce their sources verbatim rather than reworking them. Where the manuscripts have been glossed or erased, these alterations are identified in the transcription through the use of various sigla. Different manuscript hands also are identified through the use of superscripts. Meticulous care has been taken to insure the accuracy of the transcriptions. Each was proofread more than once, and the final proof was read against the actual manuscripts (excepting the then inaccessible MS Moscow) rather than the microfilms and enlargements used earlier in the work. A spotcheck of the transcriptions against the microfilms by this writer confirms their accuracy.

The editors have chosen not to reproduce in this synopsis any of the relevant Genizah fragments; these are currently being worked on by Yaakov Sussmann at The Hebrew University and will appear in a separate edition. So, too, the editors do not deal with medieval citations of the Yerushalmi text, which also demand a separate study. Much of the introduction is devoted to spelling out their rationale for including and excluding various kinds of textual witnesses; their decisions are eminently defensible. Schafer, Becker, and their co-workers have produced an extremely useful and much-needed research tool. Students of the Talmud Yerushalmi are very much in their debt.

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