

CHAPTER V.

APOCRYPHAL APPENDICES TO THE TALMUD AND COMMENTARIES.

Besides the Masechtoth contained in the Mishna and the two Gemaras, there are several Masechtoth composed in the form of the Mishna and Tosephta, that treat of ethical, ritual, and liturgical precepts. They stand in the same relation to the Talmud as the Apocrypha to the canonical books of the Bible. When and by whom they were composed cannot be ascertained. Of these apocryphal treatises, the following are appended to our editions of the Talmud:

1. *Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan*, [1](#) divided into forty-one chapters and a kind of Tosephta to the Mishnic treatise "Pirke Aboth," the ethical sentences of which are here considerably enlarged and illustrated by numerous narratives. In its present shape, it belongs to the post-Talmudic period, though some elements of a Boraita of R. Nathan (who was a Tana belonging to the fourth generation) may have been embodied therein. [2](#)

2. *Sopherim* (the Scribes), containing, in twenty-one chapters, rules for the writing of the scrolls of the Pentateuch, and,

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of the book of Esther; also Masoretic rules, and liturgical rules for the service on Sabbath, Feast and Fast days. R. Asher already expressed (in his *Hilchoth Sepher Thora*) the opinion that this Masecheth *Sopherim* belongs to the period of the Gaonim. [1](#)

3. *Ebel Rabbathi* (the large treatise on Mourning), [2](#) euphemistically called *Semachoth* (Joys), is divided into fourteen chapters, and treats, as indicated by the title, of rules and customs concerning burial and mourning. It is not identical with a treatise under the same title, quoted already in the Talmud (*Moed Katon*, 24a, 26a; *Kethuboth*, 28a), but seems to be rather a reproduction of the same with later additions. [3](#)

4. *Callah* (the bride, the woman recently married). This minor Masechta, being likewise a reproduction of a Masechta by that name, mentioned already in the Talmud (*Sabbath*, 114a; *Taanith*, 10b; *Kiddushin*, 49b; *Jer. Berachoth*, II., 5), treats in one chapter of the duties of chastity in marriage, and in general.

5. *Derech Eretz* [4](#) (the conduct of life), divided into eleven chapters, the first of which treats of prohibited marriages, and the remaining chapters, of ethical, social and religious teachings. References to a treatise by that name are made already in the Talmud (*B. Berachoth*, 22a, and *Jer. Sabbath*, VI., 2).

6. *Derech Eretz Zuta* (the conduct of life, minor treatise), containing ten chapters, replete with

rules and maxims of wisdom. [5](#)

7. *Perek Ha-shalom* (chapter on Peace) consists, as already indicated by the title, only of one chapter, treating of the importance of peacefulness.

Remark: Besides these apocryphal treatises appended to

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our editions of the Talmud under the general title of "Minor Treatises," there are seven lesser Masechtoth which were published by Raphael Kirchheim from an ancient manuscript. (Frankfort on the Main, 1851.)

COMMENTARIES.

The Necessity for such Commentaries.

The Talmud offers to its students great difficulties, partly on account of the peculiar idiom in which it is written, and which is intermixed with so numerous, often very mutilated, foreign words; partly on account of the extreme brevity and succinctness of its style, the frequent use of technical terms and phrases, and mere allusions to matters discussed elsewhere; partly also on account of the circumstance that, in consequence of elliptical expressions, and in the absence of all punctuation marks, question and answer, in the most intricate discussions, are sometimes so closely interwoven that it is not easy to discern at once where the one ends and the other begins. To meet all these difficulties, which are often very perplexing, numerous commentaries have been written by distinguished Rabbis. Some of the commentaries extend to the whole Talmud, or a great portion thereof; others exclusively to the Mishna, or some of its sections.

Up to date new commentaries upon commentaries appear, so that in the last edition printed in Vilna, more than a hundred additional commentaries are given (an illustration of which we give at the end of this chapter). We therefore do not care to point them out. Moreover they all are commentaries to the text which do not belong to our new edition. However, the commentaries exclusively on the Mishna we deem to be interesting for some readers and therefore do not omit them.

Commentaries Exclusively on the Mishna.

1. The first to write a commentary on the whole Mishna was *Moses Maimonides* (XII. century). He commenced it in the twenty-third year of his age, in Spain, and finished it in his thirtieth year, in Egypt. This commentary was written in Arabic, manuscripts of which are to be found in the Bodleian Library

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at Oxford, and in some other libraries. From the Arabic it was translated into Hebrew by several scholars, flourishing in the XIII. century; namely, Seder Zeraim, by Jehuda Charizi; Seder Moed, by Joseph Ibn Alfual; Seder Nashim, by Jacob Achsai (or Abbasi [1](#)); Seder Nezikin, by

Solomon b. Joseph, with the exception of Perek Chelek in Sanhedrin and Masecheth Aboth, including the ethical treatise Sh'mone Perakim, introducing the latter, which were translated by Samuel Ibn Tibbon; Seder Kodashim, by Nathanel Ibn Almuli; the translator of Seder Teharoth is not known. These translations are appended to all Talmud editions, after each Masechta, under the heading of Commentary of Maimonides.

The characteristic feature of this commentary of Maimonides consists in this, that it follows the analytical method, laying down at the beginning of each section the principles and general views of the subject, and thereby throwing light upon the particulars to be explained, while Rashi in his Talmud commentary adopted the synthetical method, commencing with the explanation of the particulars, and thereby leading to a clear understanding of the whole of the subject-matter.

2. Several distinguished Rabbis wrote commentaries on single sections of the Mishna, especially on those Masechtoth to which no Babylonian Gemara (and hence no Rashi) exists. Of these commentaries the following are found in our Talmud editions:

(a) *Rashi's Commentary* on all Masechtoth of Seder Zeraim, except Berachoth, and all Masechtoth of Seder Teharoth, except Nidda, by *R. Simson of Sens* (XII. century), the celebrated Tosaphist.

(b) *Asheri's Commentary* on the same Masechtoth, by *R. Asher b. Yechiel* (XIII. century), the author of the epitome of the Talmud which is appended to all Masechtoth.

(c) *Rashi's Commentary* on Masecheth Middoth, by *R. Shemaya*, who is supposed to have been a disciple of Rashi.

(d) *Rabad's Commentary* on Masecheth Eduyoth, by *R. Abraham b. David* (XII. century), the celebrated author of critical annotations on Maimonides' Talmudical code.

(e) Commentary on the Masechtoth Kinnim and Tamid by an anonymous author.

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3. *R. Obadya of Bertinoro* in Italy, and Rabbi in Jerusalem (d. in the year 1510), wrote a very lucid commentary on the whole Mishna, which accompanies the text in most of our separate Mishna editions. He follows the analytic method of Rashi, and adds to each paragraph of the Mishna the result of the discussion of the Gemara.

4. *Additions of Yom Tob*. Additional comments by *Yom Tob Lipman Heller*, Rabbi of Prague and Cracow (XVII. century). These comments, likewise extending to all parts of the Mishna, and accompanying its text on the opposite side of Bertinoro's commentary in most of our Mishna editions, contain every valuable explanation and critical remarks.

5. Of shorter commentaries to be found only in some special editions of the Mishna text the following may be mentioned:

(a) *Tree of Life*, by *Jacob Chagiz*, Rabbi in Jerusalem (XVII. century), the author of a

Talmudical terminology, *Techilath Chochma*.

6. *Full Spoon of Delight*, by Senior Phoebus (XVIII. century). This commentary is an abstract of Bertinoro's and Yom Tob Lipman Heller's commentaries.

(b) *Spoon of Delight*, by Isaac Ibn Gabbai in Leghorn (XVII. century), is generally based on the commentaries of Rashi and Maimonides. [1](#)

"*Tefereth Israel*" to all Mishnayoth, by Israel Liphshitz, a very reasonable commentary.

Footnotes

[44:1](#) In our new edition it is translated in Vol. I. (IX.) and divided into paragraphs to each Mishna of Aboth.

[44:2](#) Compare Zunz, "Gottesd. Vortraege," p. 108, sq.--Solomon Taussig published in his "Neve Sholom" (Munich, 1872), from a manuscript of the Library in Munich, a recension of the Aboth d'Rabbi Nathan which differs considerably from that printed in our Talmud editions. The latest edition of Aboth d. R. N. in two recensions from MSS. with critical annotations was published by S. Schechter (Vienna, 1887).

[45:1](#) See Zunz, GD. V., p. 95, sq. The latest separate edition of Masechet Sopherim from a MS. and with a German commentary was published by Joel Mueller (Leipsic, 1878).

[45:2](#) Translated by us in Vol. VIII. with a brief commentary by Rodkinson.

[45:3](#) See Zunz, G. V., p. 90, and N. Brüll "Die Talm. Tractate Uber Trauer um Verstorbene" (Jahrbücher für Jüd. Geschichte und Literatur, L, Frankfurt a. M.), p. 1-57. M. Klotz published "Der Talm. Tractat Ebel Rabbathi nach Handschriften bearbeitet, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen," Frankf. on the Main, 1892.

[45:4](#) Also these three are translated in Vol. I. (IX.) of our new edition.

[45:5](#) On both of these Masechtoth Derech Eretz, see Zunz, GD. V., pp. 110-112. See also Abr. Tawrogi, "Der Talm. Tractat Derech Erez Sutta Kritisch bearbeitet, übersetzt und erläutert" (Berlin, 1835).

[47:1](#) See Graetz, "Geschichte d. J.", Vol. VII. p. 302.
