

## CHAPTER VI.

### EPITOMES, CODIFICATIONS, MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTED EDITIONS OF THE TALMUD.

#### INTRODUCTORY.

Since the Babylonian Talmud was considered by most of the Jewish communities in all countries as the source of the rabbinical law by which to regulate the religious life, it is but natural that already at a comparatively early period attempts were made to furnish abstracts of the same for practical purposes.

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[paragraph continues] This was done partly by epitomes or compendiums which, retaining the general arrangement and divisions of the Talmud, bring its matter into a narrower compass by omitting its Hagadic and unnecessary passages, and abridging the legal discussions; and partly by codes in which the results of the discussed legal matter is presented in a more systematic order. The first attempts in this direction were made by R. Jehudai Gaon of Sura (VIII. century), in his book *Halachoth Ketuoth* (Abridged Halakhoth), and by R. Simon of Kahira (--IX. century) in his *Halachoth Gedoloth*. 'Both of these two works, which afterwards coalesced into one work, still extant under the latter title, were, however, eclipsed by later master works of other celebrated Rabbinical authorities.

#### A. EPITOMES.

The principal epitomes or compendiums of the Talmud are by the following authors:

1. *R. Isaac Alfasi* (after the initials, called "Rif," born in 1013 near the city of Fez in Africa, died in 1103 as Rabbi at Lucena in Spain) wrote an excellent compendium, which he called "Halakhoth," but which is usually called by the name of its author, Alpassy. In this compendium he retains the general arrangement, the language and style of the Talmud, but omits, besides the Hagada, all parts and passages which concern laws that had become obsolete since the destruction of the Temple. Besides, he condensed the lengthy discussions, and added his own decision in cases not clearly decided in the Talmud.

REMARK.--Alfasi's compendium comprises in print three large folio volumes in which the text is accompanied by Rashi's Talmud commentary, and besides by numerous commentaries, annotations and glosses, especially those by R. Nissim b. Reuben (••• {Hebrew *RYyN*}); by R. Zerachia Halevi (Maor); by R. Mordecai b. Hillel; by R. Joseph Chabiba (Nimuke Joseph), and by some other distinguished Rabbis.

2. *R. Asher b. Jechiel*, a German Rabbi, later in Toledo, Spain, where he died in 1327, wrote a

compendium after the pattern of that of Alfasi and embodied in the same also the opinions of later authorities. This compendium is appended in our Talmud editions to each Masechta, under the title of the author, Rabbenu Asher.

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R. Jacob, the celebrated son of this author, added to that compendium an abstract of the decisions contained in the same, The Extract of Asher's Decisions.

## B. CODES.

1. *Mishne Torah*, "Repetition of the Law," by R. Moses Maimonides, flourishing in the XII. century. This is the most comprehensive and systematically arranged Code of all the Laws scattered through the two Talmuds, or resulting from the discussions in the same. Occasionally also the opinions of the post-Talmudic authorities, the Gaonim, are added.

This gigantic work, written throughout in Mishnic Hebrew in a very lucid and attractive style, is divided into *fourteen* books; hence its additional name, Sepher Ha-yad (having the numerical value of 14), and by way of distinction, it was later called "Yad Hachazaka," The Strong Hand. Every book is, according to the various subjects treated therein, divided into Halakhoth, the special names of which are given at the head of each of those fourteen books. The Halakhoth are again subdivided into chapters (Perakim), and these into paragraphs.

2. *Sephar Mitzvath Godol* (abbreviated S. M. G.), the great Law book, by the Tosaphist R. Moses of Coucy, in France (XIII. century). This work arranges the Talmudical law according to the 613 precepts which the Rabbis found to be contained in the Pentateuch, and is divided into 248 positive and 365 negative commandments.

REMARK--A similar work, but on a smaller scale, is "Sephar Mitzvath Gaton," also called "Amude Golah," by R. Isaac b. Joseph, of Corbeil (d. 1280).

3. *Turim* (the Rows of Laws), by R. Jacob, son of that celebrated R. Asher b. Jechiel who was mentioned above. The work is divided into four parts, called: *Tur Orach Chayim*, treating of Liturgical Laws; *Tur Yore Dea*, treating of the Ritual Laws; *Tur Eben Ha-ezer*, on the Marriage Laws, and *Tur Choshen Mishpat*, on the Civil Laws. Each of these four books is subdivided according to subjects under appropriate headings, and into chapters, called Simanim. This code differs from that of Maimonides in so far as it is restricted to such laws only which were still in use outside of Palestine, and as it embodies also rules and customs which were established after the

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close of the Talmud. Besides, it is not written in that uniform and pure language, and in that lucid style, by which the work of Maimonides is characterized.

4. *Shulchan Aruch* (The Prepared Table), by R. Joseph Karo (XVI. century), the same author who wrote the commentaries on the codes of Maimonides and of R. Jacob b. Asher. Taking the

last-mentioned code (Turim) and his own commentary on the same as basis, and retaining its division into four parts as well as that into subjects and chapters, he subdivided each chapter (Siman), into paragraphs, and so remodelled its contents as to give it the proper shape and style of a law book. This Shulchan Aruch, together with the numerous annotations added to it by the contemporary R. Moses Isserles, was up to our time regarded by all rabbinical Jews as the authoritative code by which all questions of the religious life were decided.

Constant reference to the four Codes mentioned above are made in the marginal glosses which are found on every page of the Talmud, under the heading of "*En Mishpat, Ner Mitzwuah*." It is the object of these glosses to show, at every instance when a law is quoted or discussed in the Talmud, where the final decision of that law is to be found in the various codes. The authorship of these marginal glosses is ascribed to R. Joshua Boas Baruch (XVI. century). The same scholar wrote also the glosses headed *Torah Or* which are found in the space between the Talmud text and Rashi's commentary, and which indicate the books and chapters of the biblical passages quoted in the Talmud, besides the very important glosses in the margins of the pages, beaded *Massoreth Ha-shas*, which give references to parallel passages in the Talmud. The last mentioned glosses were later increased with critical notes by Isaiah Berlin (Pik), Rabbi in Breslau (d. 1799).

### C. COLLECTIONS OF THE HAGADIC PORTIONS OF THE TALMUD.

While the above-mentioned Compendiums and Codes are restricted to abstracting only the legal matter (Halakha) of the Talmud, *R. Jacob ibn Chabib*, flourishing at the beginning of the sixteenth century, collected all the Hagadic passages, especially of the Babylonian Talmud. This very popular collection, which is usually printed with various commentaries,

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has the title of *En Jacob*; in some editions it is also called *En Israel*.

*R. Samuel Jafe*, flourishing in the latter part of that century, made a similar collection of the Hagadic passages Palestinian Talmud, with an extensive commentary under the title of *Y'phe Mareh* (Vienna, 1590, and Berlin, 1725-26). An abridged edition with a short commentary was published under the title of *Benyan Jerusalem* (Lemberg, 1860).

### D. MANUSCRIPTS.

In consequence of the terrible persecutions of the Jews during the middle ages, and the destruction of their libraries, so often connected therewith, and especially in consequence of the vandalism repeatedly perpetrated by the Church against the Talmud, 1 only a very limited number of manuscripts of the same have come down to our time. Codices of single *Sedarim* (sections) and *Masechloth* (tracts or treatises) are to be found in various libraries of Europe, especially in the Vatican Library of Rome, and in the libraries of Parma, Leyden, Paris, Oxford, Cambridge, Munich, Berlin and Hamburg. The only known complete manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, written in the year 1369, is in possession of the Royal Library of Munich A fragment of Talmud Pesachim, of the ninth or tenth century, is preserved in the University Library of Cambridge, and was edited with an autotype facsimile, by W. H. Lowe, Cambridge, 1879.

The Columbia College in the city of New York lately acquired a collection of manuscripts containing the treatises *Pesachim*, *Moed Katon*, *Megilla*, and *Zebachim* of the Babylonian Talmud. These manuscripts came from Southern Arabia, and date from the year 1548. [2](#)

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Manuscripts of the *Mishna* or of single Sedarim thereof, some of which dating from the thirteenth century are preserved in the libraries of Parma, of Berlin, of Hamburg, of Oxford, and of Cambridge. That of the last-mentioned library was edited by W. H. Lowe: "The Mishna on which the Palestinian Talmud Rests," etc., Cambridge, 1883.

Of the *Palestinian Talmud* the only manuscript, of considerable extent, is preserved in the Library of Leyden. See S. M. Schiller-Szinessy, "Description of the Leyden MS. of the Palestinian Talmud," Cambridge, 1878. Fragments of the Palestinian Talmud are also to be found in some other libraries, especially in those of Oxford and Parma.

Fuller information concerning MSS. of the Talmud is given in F. Lebrecht's "Handschriften und erste Ausgaben des Babyl. Talmud," Berlin, 1862. See also M. Steinschneider's "Hebraische Bibliographic," Berlin, 1862 and 1863.

## E. THE TALMUD IN PRINT.

### *a. The Mishna Editions.*

Already as early as the year 1492, the first edition of the Mishna, together with the commentary of Maimonides, appeared in Naples. It was followed by several editions of Venice (1546-50, and 1606), of Riva di Trento (1559), and of Mantua (1559-63). In the last-mentioned editions the commentary of Obadia di Bertinoro is added. The editions which have since appeared are very numerous. Those which appeared since the seventeenth century are generally accompanied, besides Bertinoro's commentary, by Lipman Heller's or some other shorter commentaries.

### *b. The Babylonian Talmud.*

The first complete edition of the Babylonian Talmud was published by Daniel Bomberg in twelve folio volumes, Venice, 1520-23. Besides the text, it contains the commentary of Rashi, the Tosephoth, the Piske-Tosephoth, the compendium of Asheri, and the Mishna commentary of Maimonides. This original edition served as model for all editions which subsequently

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appeared at Venice, Basel, Cracow, Lublin, Amsterdam, Frankfort-on-the-Oder, Berlin, Frankfort-on-the-Main, Sulzbach, Dyhernfurt, Prague, Warsaw, Lemberg, and recently at Vienna and Wilna. The later editions were greatly improved by the addition of valuable literary and critical marginal notes and appendices by learned rabbis. But the Basel and most of the subsequent editions, down almost to the present time, have been much mutilated by the official censors of the press, who expunged from the Talmud all those passages which, in their opinion,

seemed to reflect upon Christianity, and, besides, changed expressions, especially names of nations and of sects, which they suspected as having reference to Christians.

The Amsterdam editions, especially the first (T644-48), escaped those mutilations at the hand of the censors, and are on this account considered very valuable. Most of the passages which have elsewhere been eliminated or altered by the censors have been extracted from the Amsterdam edition, and published in separate small books. Of these the following two may be mentioned: "Collected Omissions" and "The Omissions," Koenigsberg, 1860. [1](#)

A critical review of the complete editions of the Babylonian Talmud and of the very numerous editions of single Masechtoth since the year 1484, was published by Raphael Rabinovicz, in his Hebrew pamphlet, Munich, 1877. [2](#)

The same author also collected and published very rich and important material for a critical edition of the Babylonian Talmud from the above-mentioned manuscript in the Royal Library of Munich and other manuscripts, as well as from early prints of single Masechtoth in various libraries. The title of this very extensive work, written in Hebrew, is *Dikduke Sopherim*, with the Latin title: *Variae lectiones in Mishnam et in Talmud Babylonicum*, etc., Munich 1868-86. The fifteen volumes in octavo which have appeared of this valuable work comprise only three and a half Sedarim of the six Sedarim of

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the Talmud. It is to be regretted that in consequence of the death of the learned author the completion of this important work has been suspended.

### *c. The Palestinian Talmud.*

Of the Palestinian Talmud (Jerushalmi) only four complete editions appeared:

1. The first edition, published by Daniel Bomberg, Venice, 1523-24, in one folio volume, without any commentary.
2. The *Cracow* edition, 1609, with a short commentary on the margin.
3. The *Krotoshin* edition, 1866, with a commentary like that in the *Cracow* edition, but added to it are marginal notes, containing references to parallel passages in the Babylonian Talmud, and corrections of text readings.
4. The *Shitomir* edition, 1860-67, in several folio volumes, with various commentaries.

Besides these four complete editions, several parts have been published with commentaries.

[48:1](#) The commentaries of the Palestinian Talmud we omit, but not the Epitomes, etc., which seem to us of interest for the reader.

[52:1](#) It is stated that at the notorious *auto-da-fe* of the Talmud, held in the year 1249, at Paris, twenty-four cart-loads of Talmud tomes were consigned to the flames. Similar destructions of the Talmud were executed by the order of Pope Julius III., in first at Rome, then at Bologna and Venice, and in the following year the year 1553, in Ancona and other cities. Among the 12,000 tomes of the Talmud that were burned at Cremona, in the year 1559 (see Graetz's "Geschichte d. Juden," X., p. 382), were undoubtedly also numerous manuscripts, though most of them may have been printed copies.

[52:2](#) See Max L. Margolis's "The Columbia College MS. of Meghilla Examined," New York, 1892.

[54:1](#) In our "Schulchan Aruch und Seine Beziehungen, etc.," mentioned in our appendix about the Münster process, we give a clear explanation about all the corrections by the censor which does not fully agree with this remark. Concerning these omissions, see our "Concluding Words" to Vols. XVII. and XVIII.

[54:2](#) This instructive pamphlet is also reprinted as an appendix to Vol. VIII. Of Dikduke Sopherim.

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