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MEIR MINA THE GREAT IRAQI KABBALIST THAT BECAME A HERETIC

Barak Hoffman

This article presents the generally unknown story of Meir Mina, a leading rabbinical figure and a great kabbalist in Iraq who chose to leave the orthodox way of life. The first part of the article expands of Mina's biography: his birth in Iraq, his immigration to Israel, his disputes with kabbalists in Jerusalem, and his decision to adopt a secular way of life until his death. Discussion of his books and teachings follows, with an emphasis on how Mina dealt with questions and doubts in his writings. The article concludes with a discussion of the impact of Mina's story on our understanding of twentieth century kabbalistic circles in Israel and the Iraqi Jewish leadership. I maintain that Mina's story exemplifies the struggle between the Iraqi kabblistic circle and the sages of Beit Eil and Jerusalem. In addition, I argue that Mina played a part in power struggles between the old Iraqi Jewish leadership that immigrated to Israel in 1920s and 1930s and the new Jewish Iraqi leadership that immigrated to Israel in 1951.

Rashba wide-ranging manuscripts. Some are organized topically, while others copied the responsa according to a different scheme. By necessity, a corrected edition of *Responsa Rashba* must rely on these works, but first we must understand the relationships between the various manuscripts and ascertain what was copied from what. This article takes a step in that direction. It describes a considerable group of *Responsa Rashba* manuscripts in which the responsa are organized by topic. Whereas this arrangement was helpful to readers trying to locate Rashba's responsa on any given topic, altering the original order in which responsa were sent to questioners obscured important historical details. Furthermore, the repeated editing of these collections in new and different forms made it hard to discern the complex relationships between them.

The first section of the article discusses two early and important manuscripts of *Responsa Rashba*—MS Cambridge, University Library Add. 498, and MS London, British Library Add. 26983—as well as additional manuscripts copied from them. The second section discusses MS Moscow, State Library, Ginzburg Collection 595 and its copies. The third section discusses MS Oxford, Bodleian Opp. Add. Fol. 70, and MS London, British Library Add. 22089 (which contains some responsa that were copied indirectly from MS Moscow 595) and their numerous copies. The five named manuscripts are among the largest and most comprehensive manuscripts of *Responsa Rashba* that have reached us, averaging over 1,000 responsa each. In conclusion, the article discusses two printed collections of *Responsa Rashba* with clear links to these manuscripts.

R. REPHAEL BERDUGO'S *ROKE'AH MIRKAHAT* – ON AGGADIC MATERIALS, AUTHORITY AND INTERPRETATION

Michal Aziza Ohana

Raphael Berdugo (1747–1821), a prominent North-African rabbi, served as a dayan in Meknes, Morocco, where he enacted numerous rabbinical regulations. He authored a number of essays, including the work *Roke'ah Mirkahat*, which has yet to be explored and is the focus of the present article.

In his essay Berdugo offers a sharp, comprehensive, and systematic critique of aggadic materials, joining a long line of medieval to late modern Jewish authors who criticized this literary corpus. Discussion includes the scope and nature of this volume, along with the interpretive and theological difficulties that Berdugo pinpoints in the aggadic writings. I maintain that *Roke'ah Mirkahat* significantly deviates from conventional rabbinic literary norms and view his critique as a direct continuation of the rationalist medieval tradition. This discourse involved controversy with regard to the extent of the Sages' authority. Berdugo limits the latter to halakhic content only, evincing a tendency in his method to “humanize” the Sages.

Berdugo's introduction to his book *Mei Menuhot* completes the picture. This paratext represents a critique of three prevalent schools of interpretation regarding aggadic literature and conveys both Berdugo's own interpretive approach—endeavoring to reveal the intention of the author(s)—and his autonomy relative to his predecessors.

ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

SABBATH EXPOSITIONS IN *MEKHILTA DE-RABBI SIMEON BAR YOHAI*: ON THE USE OF SOURCES FROM THE SCHOOL OF R. ISHMAEL BY THE REDACTOR OF *MEKHILTA DE-RABBI SIMEON BAR YOHAI*

Menahem Kahana

An examination of the *Midrash ha-Gadol* Sabbath expositions on Ki Tisa and Vayakhel seemingly supports Melamed's hypothesis that *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Ki Tisa and Vayakhel incorporated much material from *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* in its expositions.

New light on this issue is shed by Jeshua ben Judah's commentary to Exodus, which cites three midrashic expositions on the Sabbath from Ki Tisa and Vayakhel that are identical to those in *Midrash ha-Gadol*, and differ from those of *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*. The same holds true for midrashic terms characteristic of midrashim from the School of R. Akiva that were quoted by Jeshua ben Judah and *Midrash ha-Gadol*. This consistent accordance of the citations by Jeshua, whose work predated *Midrash ha-Gadol* by three centuries, clearly teaches that Jeshua copied these passages, as well, from *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon*.

Further evidence is adduced from reexamination of the Sabbath expositions on Ki Tisa and Vayakhel in *Midrash ha-Gadol*. Consistent differences between *Midrash ha-Gadol* and *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael* indicate that *Midrash ha-Gadol* copied the tannaitic expositions on Ki Tisa and Vayakhel from *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon*, as Lewy and Hoffmann surmised, and not from *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, as Melamed believed.

This insight aligns with the conclusion I drew in another article: one of the features unique to *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon* is its relatively major use of material from the School of R. Ishmael. However, the few additions from the School of R. Ishmael found in the rest of the halachic parts of the *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Simeon* are not like the phenomenon in the Shabbat passages, where most of its expositions are derived from the School of R. Ishmael. The explanation for this unusual phenomenon needs further study.

THE RESPONSA OF RASHBA: BRINGING ORDER TO A MAZE OF MANUSCRIPTS

Simcha Emanuel

The responsa of Rabbi Shlomo ben Avraham Adret (Rashba, d. ca. 1310) were almost all printed in a long series of collections, but the text of the responsa in these collections is often defective. A significant number of the responsa were abridged and revised by editors, and in many other cases the fault lies with copyists who did not perform their craft faithfully.

There are about fifty extant manuscripts of *Responsa Rashba*; some are large and comprehensive; others are small or are surviving fragments from complete *Responsa*

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