

Famous Talmudic Interpretations, Their Structure And Significance: An Historical Discourse

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Abstract

Talmudic interpretations has unique significance in Jewish laws, their structure and divine part is still considered the most authentic and valid source of information in literary circles. Famous interpretations of Talmud present quite unique and complete aspects about oral laws and after that no other interpretation is still required. Talmudic classes era is based upon two thousand two hundred years by seven classes, the current research work basically signify the historical discourse of Talmudic interpretations in the focused context of their time period and classes. The present study is qualitative in nature and comprised upon both primary and secondary sources, Talmud, Bible, Jewish laws and books with an aim to highlight the interpretations of Talmud. Babylonian Talmud is considered the most valuable as it explains the thoughts, values and customs of Jewish society in length and current study will further present the renovation stages in the Talmudic interpretations keeping in view the timeline and it will also highlight the structure of Talmudic translations done by eminent scholars.

Key Words: Talmud, Jews, Oral Laws, Hebrew, Interpretations.

Interpretations of the Talmud

In Jewish law, Interpretation is called Midrash and is derived from the word Darosh, which means the in-depth study and inquiry of the inner and precise meaning of the related passage, is the opposite of its simple and logical study. The word Darosh is also used in the same text so that the facts regarding a particular incident can be brought to light and the hidden can be revealed by investigation. We will investigate and interrogate and interrogate thoroughly in such a way so the term "derishah va-ḥakirah" is used as interrogation of witnesses. The word Talmud is sometimes used for interpretation. According to Halakah, the term Midrash is used in the sense of Tafsir itself. It is also used in Roman law in the sense of interpretation and in English law in the sense of interpretation. In addition, the term (parshanut) is actually used in the sense of tafsir (i.e explanation), which is usually equivalent to rewriting the text or translating it into brief and more understandable terms. However, over time, the term "perjury" has become synonymous with Jewish law. And both meanings are used today. The explanatory step is sometimes carried out with the help of certain rules by which the prosecution is assisted. These are the Middot through which the Torah is interpreted. The process of explanation started by the Torah Madras (i.e, the biblical commentary) and was followed by the Madras of the Halaka. That is, Mishna, and the Talmud and post-Talmudic Halakahi literature. In addition, in the early times, a process was developed for the interpretation of many different legal testaments.

An explanation or critical interpretation especially of the Bible: EXEGESIS

The earliest form of oral law commentary, known in Talmudic literature as Midrash, and specially the commentary that relates to some legal aspect of the Bible, is called Midrash Halakah. BIBLE EXEGESIS refers to the creative and coherent interpretation of biblical interpretation in Jewish law that is directly related to the biblical text. Critical Interpretation or Interpretation of Text Traditionally the term was used for religious texts, especially biblical works, but in modern usage, exegesis can include a critical interpretation of virtually any text.¹

Biblical interpretations are present in the seven rules of Helil

Rule 1	Kal vechamer ("light and heavy"): Argument from simple larger bases.
Rule 2	Gezerah Shavah ("cut equally"): The learning comprised upon similarities or speculation is the result of one verse after another.

¹M. Elon, *Jewish Law, Cases and Materials* (1999), 65–70

Rule 3	Binyan av mikatuv echad ("constructing a teaching rule comprised upon one verse"): The primary sentence is obtained through one verse.
Rule 4	Binyan av mishnai katuvim ("constructing a teaching rule comprised upon two verses"): The primary sentence is obtained by two verses
Rule 5	Kelal uferat-perat vekelal ("common to specific--specific to common"): Education from a common principle to a specific or from a specific to a common.
Rule 6	Keyotza bo bamakom acher ("as derived in another place") Based on a similar teaching in another context.
Rule 7	Devar halamed meinyano ("a word learned from its own problem"): A matter that is learned and solved by its own theme. ²

After explaining some of the principles of Talmudic exegesis, here are some of the famous interpretations of Talmudic. Early commentators, including Rabbi Ishaq al-Fasi (North Africa, 1013–1103), sought to extract legitimate judgment from the extensive and ambiguous articles of the Talmud and to define it and its scope. Al-Fasi's work was so influential that it attracted a number of commentaries and later utilized as a base line for the formation of the Halaqah Code. In addition, the medieval Halakai work, which was related to the Babylonian Talmud, and to some points revolves around the work of Al-Fasi, "the Mordechai", was compiled by Mordechai Ben Hell (c. 1250–1298). It was also the work of Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (d. 1327). Entire compilations and their all and complete analysis have appeared in several later editions of Vilna and the Talmud. Then a Spanish rabbi belonged to 15th century, Yaqub Ibn Habib (died 1516) formed EN³. Yakov. En Yaqub was to remove almost all such Aggadic substance of the Talmud. The aim to acquaint the citizens with the moral aspects of Talmud and to dispel multiple allegations adjoining its contentment. In addition, several explanations were written to refine the Talmudic teachings.⁴

² H.G. Enelow (ed.), Mishnat R. Eliezer (1933), introd.; H. Strack, Introduction to Talmud and Midrash (1945), 289 p. 2–3

³ Ein Yaakov: The Ethical and Inspirational Teachings of the Talmud. October 1999.

⁴ Saad Jaffar, and Dr. Abdul Rasheed Qadri. 2020. "An Overview of Fundamental Articles in Talmūd (Mishnā): متن التلمود(مشنه) کے اساسی مضامين کا اجمالی جائزہ". *Iḥyā' al'ulūm - Journal of Department of Quran O Sunnah* 20 (01). <https://doi.org/10.46568/ihya.v20i01.78>.

Famous interpretations of the Talmud:

The interpretations of the Talmud are only a small part of the divine literature. When the Talmud was completed, the basis of the traditions was imprinted in the minds of the rabbis of that time, so there was no need to write further interpretations of Talmud.

Paltoi ben Abaye (c. 840) the first ever person to make oral and textual interpretation on the Talmud. Geon, born around 820, was the youngest ever Geon, to be born at just 21 years old. In his time as Geon, his dominance and influence extended beyond Babylon to the communities of Spain and North Africa. On one occasion, a community in Spain sent a letter to Paltoi requesting that he write a description of the Talmud for them.⁵

Zemah ben Paltoi is the son of Joe Paltoi ben Abaye and the reason for his fame is his first Talmudic dictionary Arukh. In it he explains about 300 Aramaic terms, as well as a description of the Babylonian Talmud and its possibilities and his work was founded on the work of R. Nathan ben Jehiel, who belonged to Rome in 1101 AD.⁶

Abraham Zacuto's fame is a great astronomical dissertation developed a new kind of astro lab. The title of the dissertation was Ha-ḥibbur ha-gadol, it is in Hebrew language and its another title is The Great Book in English language. The dissertation consisted of 65 detailed astronomical tables.

“In the year of 1504, Abraham Zacuto in Tunisia, maintained a historical record of the Jewish people, Sefer yuḥasin, until 1500, especially till the creating of the world, History was highly honorable and reprinted in the place of Cracow in the year of 1581, at Amsterdam in the year of 1717, and at the place of Königsberg in year 1857, while a fully fledged, published uncensored edition by Herschell Filipowski in London at the year of 1857”⁷

Saadia Gaon Saeed bin Yusuf Al Fayumi:

Saadia Gaon

A Jewish philosopher, well known Rabbi and commentator who took active participation in the Abbasi caliphate, he was the first ever prominent rabbi to write comprehensive Jewish literature in the language of Arabic. Popular for his rational research on Hebrew science of languages, slaughter and Jewish philosophy, he was the administrator of a school of philosophy called "Jewish Kalam". In this scenario, his literary and philosophical

⁵ Abramson, Merkazim, 10, 16

⁶ Sherira Gaon , The Iggeres of Rav Sherira Gaon. Translated by Nosson Dovid Rabinowich. Jerusalem: Rabbi Jacob Joseph School Press - Ahavath Torah Institute Moznaim. p. 143

⁷ Dan Rabinowitz in Hakirah, The Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought, Nekkudot: The Dots that Connect Us, p. 64

contribution, known as "The Book of Beliefs and Opinions", is the pioneer contribution to introduce elements of ancient Greek philosophy. He was also very active. And Saeed is regarded by Jewish thinkers and theologians as a credential in Rabbinic Judaism ⁸.

Rabbenu Gershom of Mainz (10th century) and Rabbenu Hananel (early 11th century)

Some early scholars and speakers, such as Rabino Gershom of Mainz belonged to 10th century) and Rabino Shannanel from 11th century, presented a detailed account of the different tracts. These literary works can be read along with the interpretations of the Talmud and assist to elaborate the true meanings and words of the prescribed text. Logically, numerous things in the shape of Talmud that are still a mystery and unable to provide clear information. Numerous words from two languages of Persian and Greek that have shown irrelevant time period. A very huge part of the academies associated with Talmud were formed to explain these references and words. Their work is called Seliha.⁹

Sefer ha-Mafteah (Book of the Key):

Another important work in the interpretation of the Talmud is by Nissim Gaon (Sefer ha-Mafteah), a foreword in which the Talmudic arguments are explained in different ways and then the short references in the Talmud are balanced arguments.¹⁰

Hiddushim and Arukh:

Joseph ibn Migash and Rabbi Nathan b. Jechiel is one of the famous rabbis of Megash. Hedosheim, written by Megash, is basically an interpretation of the two chapters of the Talmud, Bawa Batra and Shefwot. Rabbi Nathan b. Jechiel developed a dictionary called Arokh in the 11th century to help translate difficult words into the Talmud.¹¹

Tosafot:

It is a collection of explanatory and critical commentaries on the Talmud in the Middle Ages, which are found in almost all versions of the Talmud, is near to the outer margins and is contrary to the interpretations of the rabbis. The authors of Tosafot are called Tosafists. Tosafot, published since the earliest edition of the Talmud, covers thirty-eight articles of the Talmud of Babylon. Most of the articles are covered by Tosafists and many Tosafot revisions are credited to Perez b of Elijah's school. Following are some of the personalities and their interpretations. .

⁸ Scheindlin, Raymond. A Short History of the Jewish People: From Legendary Times to Modern Statehood (Illustrated ed.). Oxford University Press US. p.80.

⁹ Bloch and Lévy, Histoire de la Littérature Juive, p. 310

¹⁰ Davidson, Israel Selected Religious Poems of Solomon ibn Gabirol. Schiff Library of Jewish Classics. Translated by Zangwill, Israel. Philadelphi., p. 247

¹¹ *Sefer ha-Yashar*, p. 525

1. Berakot: Moses of Évreux.
2. Shabbat, 'Erubin, and Menaḥot: the Tosafot of Sens;
3. Beṣah, Nedarim, Nazir, Sanhedrin, Makkot, and Me'ilah: Perez b. Elijah's school (many written by Perez himself)
4. Yoma: Meir of Rothenburg.
5. Giṭṭin, Baba Ḳamma, and Ḥullin: the Tosafot of Touques.
6. Soṭah: Samuel of Évreux.
7. Avodah Zarah: Samuel of Falaise.
8. Zebaḥim: Baruch b. Isaac of Worms.¹²

Famous translations of the Talmud:

The following are the most important translations of the Talmud in modern times.

1. The Noé Edition of the Koren Talmud

This is the latest and modern English version of the Talmudic Babylonian translation, Published by Koren Publishers Jerusalem in 2012 and an explanation by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz containing original letters and punctuation of the original text of Aramaic. This translation contains bilingual text along with English / Aramaic translation. The footnotes include color maps, mirrors and footnotes based on Rabbi Eden Stanislaus's Hebrew translation and interpretation of the Talmud. Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb has served as Editor-in-Chief. As of March 2017, 28 volumes have been published. The whole collection will consist of 42 volumes.¹³

2. The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition (Random House)

This is an English translation of the Talmud, containing the final Hebrew Rabbi Stanislaus translation and interpretation of the Talmud. 22 volumes and a reference guide are still not completed. Modern Hebrew is available in different versions (first volume 1969), in English language (first version 1989), other languages included French and Russian.¹⁴

3. The Schottenstein Edition of the Talmud (Artscroll/Mesorah Publications)

¹² S. Friedman, *Tosefta Atiqta* (2002); idem, in: S. Friedman (ed.), *Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume* (1993), 64-119

¹³ "Queen for a Day", *Tablet Magazine*, 5 February 2013

¹⁴ "Steinsaltz edition of the Talmud". Archived from the original on August 16, 2007. Retrieved 2021-10-23

This translation of the Talmud consists of 73 volumes, especially in two different languages of English and Hebrew. In front of each page of English is the page of Aramaic Hebrew. English pages are explained and elaborated. Each Talmudic Hebrew page usually needs a translation and notice of three English pages. The first volume was published in 1990, and the series was completed in 2004. Also included is an extended text in the language of English, it comprised upon the textual translation and it further reveals the definitions which are inconsistent.¹⁵

4. The Soncino Talmud

Isidore Epstein has translated the Talmud and consists of 26 volumes published by Soncino Press. The feature is that the on every page details are giving extra substances which can be used as background. Publishing of this translation has its own and presents in different editions of texts.¹⁶

5. The Babylonian Talmud

Written by Jacob Neusner and is an American translation, published by Scholars Press for Brown Judaic Studies in 1984.¹⁷

6. Rodkinson

This translation of the Talmudic Babylon was done by Michael L. Rodkinson in the English language in 1903 AD.¹⁸

7. The Babylonian Talmud

The Talmud of Babylonian is translated and interpreted by famous rabbis, including Jacob Neusner, Tzvee Zahavy, Alan Avery-Peck, B Barry Levy, Martin S. Jaffe, and Peter Haas, Hendrickson.

This Talmudic interpretation of Babylonia, consisting of 22 volumes, is called a revision of a literary contribution, University of South Florida Academic publish it, Commentary Series (1994–1999). Its feature is that it also refers to Mashna, Torah and other classical works in Orthodox Judaism.¹⁹

¹⁵ Scherman, Nosson; Kasnett, Nesanel (2005), "The Schottenstein Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: The next stage in Talmudic elucidation", in Mintz, Sharon Liberman; Goldstein, Gabriel M. (eds.), *Printing the Talmud: From Bomberg to Schottenstein*, Yeshiva University Museum, p. 156

¹⁶ <https://www.oztorah.com/2012/06/rabbi-dr-isidore-epstein-a-tribute/>,23.10.2021.11:01

¹⁷ Magid, Shaul (2016-08-23). "Is It Time to Take the Most Published Man in Human History Seriously? Reassessing Jacob Neusner". *Tablet Magazine*. Retrieved 2016-12-08.

¹⁸ Kohler, K. *The American Hebrew*, volume 59, , September 4, 1896, p.457

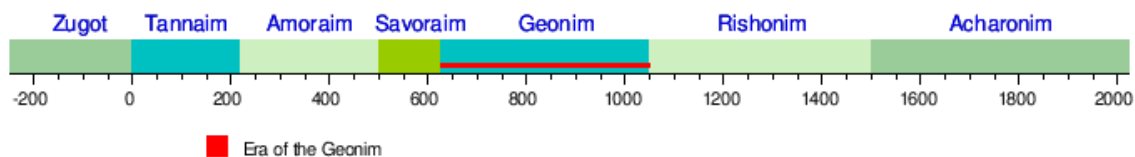
¹⁹ Neusner, Jacob (2011). *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (22-Volume Set ed.). Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson p.15

The Talmud into Arabic

Center for Middle Eastern Studies published an Arabic version of Talmud in the year of 2012 in Jordan and almost 90 Muslim and Christian scholars took active part in its translation.²⁰

The Talmud classes:

There are basically seven classes of people involved in oral law and its compilation and interpretation, and these classes cover about two thousand two hundred years. Two hundred years after Christ, those who contributed were called Tannaim. The Amoraim period is between 400 and 500 AD. The 6th to 10th century AD people are called Geonaim. Interpreters from the 10th century to the 14th century AD are called Rishonim and from the 16th century to the 20th century AD people are known as Acharonim. ²¹



To date, oral law and related interpretations span nearly 2,000 years, and the majority of Jews are aware of its importance. This is because it is the oral law that provides important information regarding their political, social and social life and it would not be wrong to say that it is the Talmud that reveals Jewish thoughts and ideas. Because the Talmud itself solves the myths of the Old Testament and reveals the thoughts and ideas of their eminent scholars. During these two thousand years, the oral law has been renewed in one form or another. Initially, it was in Hebrew and Aramaic. Later, it was translated into English and other languages. It is only thanks to the Talmud that other nations besides the people of language have come to know their thoughts and ideas.

CONCLUSION

The Jewish laws mostly rely on the Talmud and it is considered one of the most authentic oral laws of Jews. Many interpretations have been done in different languages e. g. English, Hebrew, Urdu by the various groups of people, all process took nearly up to two thousand years. All the process and time period is comprehensively discussed in this research work and it also aimed to highlight the historical discourse of Talmudic interpretations with enough detail. Talmudic classes discussed the Jewish norms and traditions along with

²⁰ Marlios, Itamar (2012). "Arab translation of Talmud includes anti-Israeli messages". *Ynetnews*. /,23.10.2021.11:01

²¹ Abrahams, Israel (1911). "Gaon" . In Chisholm, Hugh (ed.). *Encyclopædia Britannica*. **11** (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press. p. 455

providing the social and political life. All the interpretations of Talmud briefly highlight the divine laws along with their time and need. An explanation or critical interpretation especially of the Bible EXEGESIS is comprehensively added in this study which provides a deep overview about the critical but logical explanatory interpretations.

Furthermore this research work not only brings the Talmudic interpretations into the lime-time by eminent scholars but it has also provided in-depth overview about the significance of Jewish oral laws and their need in the present times. It is a complete historiography of the Talmudic interpretations and their structure which elaborate the purpose of the renewal of Jewish oral laws into organized shape.