

42. See his *Sefer ha-Ma'alot*, ed. Ludwig Venetianer (Berlin, 1894), 12.
43. *Yesod 'Olam*, ed. Barukh of Shklov (Berlin, 1777), 5. Another edition from a different and more complete manuscript was edited by B. Goldberg & L. Rosenkranz (Berlin, 1846-8). See *ibid.*, I, 3. See also the commentary of R. David Kimhi on that verse.
44. It was first printed in Riva de Trenta, 1559, and was reprinted numerous times.
45. See his *Sbevelet Emunab* (Jerusalem, 1990), 352; Shevil VIII.
46. (Constantinople, 1521); abridged edition, ed. H. Goldschmidt-Fraenkel (Jerusalem, 1978). See A. Lazaroff, *The Theology of Abraham Bibago* (no place of publication, 1981).
47. See *Derekh Emunab*, 46; ed. Goldschmidt-Fraenkel, 192-93. See also the introduction of H. Goldschmidt-Fraenkel, 24; N. Roth, *op. cit.*, 58.
48. N. Roth, 59-60, attempts to identify the Greek sage referred to by Bibago as none other than Josephus. See, however, Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus and Modern Scholarship, (1937-1980)* (Berlin-New York, 1984), 860-61, who rejects this identification.
49. The basis for the claim that Aristotle was Jewish seems to be an error in the Latin translation of Eusebius which was used by a number of scholars in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. See A. Lazaroff, 61, n. 130.
50. Commentary on Genesis 10:1. See Benzion Netanyahu, *Don Isaac Abравanel*, 99-100.
51. See I. Bettan, *Studies In Jewish Preaching* (Cincinnati, 1939), 192ff.
52. See his *Kol Yehudab* to the *Kuzari* II:66 (Vilna, 1905), 151.
53. See n. 35 above. I could find no support for this statement in the *Guide*.
54. *Torat ba-'Olah* (New York, 1986), section 1, chapter 11 [no pagination].
55. See *She'elot u-Teshuvot ha-Rema*, ed. Asher Ziff (Jerusalem, 1971), # 5-7 and notes. See also C. Tchernowitz, *Toledot ha-Posekim* (New York, 1947), III, 68-70; J. Ben-Sasson, *Mishnato ha-Iyunit shel ha-Rema* (Jerusalem, 1984), especially chapter 1.
56. See A. Neher, *Jewish Thought and the Scientific Revolution* (Oxford, 1986); *idem*, "Copernicus in the Hebraic Literature From The Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977): 211-26.
57. See A. Neher, "Copernicus", 212. The only complete copy of this book still extant is in the Bodleian Library, evidently collated from several copies.
58. See the introduction to *Nehmad ve-Na'im* (New York, 1990), 8; A. Neher, *ibid.*, 198.
59. See Yoseph H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (Washington, 1981), 221. David Ruderman, "The Impact of Science on Jewish Culture and Society in Venice", in Gatano Cozzi, *Gli Ebrei e Venezia* (Milan, 1987), 430-31 treats these contentions as artificial and as lacking conviction. However, he is mistaken because, as we have repeatedly seen, the tradition of the Jewish transmittal of scientific knowledge goes back to ancient times and finds support from non-Jewish sources as well.
60. See Jakob J. Petuchowski, *The Theology of Habam David Nieto* (New York, 1970); Raphael Loewe, "The Spanish Supplement to Nieto's Esh Dath," *PAAJR* 48 (1981): 287-96; David B. Ruderman, "Jewish Thought In Newtonian England: The Career and Writings of David Nieto", *PAAJR* 57 (1992): 193-219.
61. See *Kuzari ba-Sheni* (Jerusalem, 1986), 58-105, especially 59. See also Petuchowski, 51.
62. See *Sefer Yeshua be-Yisrael* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1720); reprinted in *Sefer Po'el Hashem* (Bnei Brak, 1968).
63. See I. Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature*, trans. B. Martin (Cincinnati and New York, 1975), VI, 271-74. See also David Fishman, "A Polish Rabbi Meets the Berlin Haskalah: The Case of R. Barukh Schick", *AJS Review* 12 (1987): 95ff.
64. See Zinberg, 274.

Adam Mintz

## Words, Meaning and Spirit: The Talmud in Translation

The Talmud has been the central pillar of Jewish life for the past two thousand years. As Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz wrote:

In many ways, the Talmud is the most important book in Jewish culture, the backbone of creativity and of national life. No other work has had a comparable influence on the theory and practice of Jewish life, shaping spiritual content and serving as a guide to conduct. The Jewish people have always been keenly aware that their continued survival and development depend on the study of the Talmud, and those hostile to Judaism have also been cognizant of this fact. . . . At times, talmudic study has been prohibited because it was abundantly clear that a Jewish society that ceases to study this work had no real hope of survival.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish survival has been maintained through the study, teaching and application of the Talmud in Jewish homes and schools throughout the generations.

Since the early sixteenth century, Jews have studied from a printed Talmud with the text, in the original combination of Hebrew and Aramaic, in the middle of the page and the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot lining the outside margins.<sup>2</sup> As is well known, the printed edition does not contain either vocalization or punctuation. Despite the complicated nature of the Talmud and its difficult language, Jews did not compose any translations of the Talmud for centuries.<sup>3</sup> Having most often begun the study of Talmud in their youth, Jews were familiar with the language and, therefore, did not feel the need for such a study aid. In situations where the language or the contents

proved very difficult, students of the text considered the vast literature of commentaries, especially those of Rashi and Tosafot, to be sufficient. Indeed, it was not until the nineteenth century that vernacular translations were composed by Jews. This article will discuss the major Jewish<sup>4</sup> translations of the Talmud, particularly those that elicited controversy, and how these translations and the reactions to them have affected Talmud study to this very day.<sup>5</sup>

### Translations and the Jewish Tradition

Whether or not sacred writings can and should be translated are issues that have concerned religious thinkers for centuries. Willis Barnstone, the author of a recent book about the history of translations, wrote:

The politics of religion, particularly of Christianity, in regard to translations have always been ambiguous. On the one hand there is the sacred view that holds to the process of entropy, the idea that any passage between languages implies waste, corruption, and fundamental loss. On the other, there is the constant didactic and messianic need to spread the word of God to potential converts, for which Bible translation is an indispensable tool.<sup>6</sup>

While Judaism, of course, rejects the notion of using translations for the sake of converting non-Jews, the importance of translations in making the word of God available to all of the Jewish people has always been evident. At the same time, the ambivalence towards translations exists within Judaism as well.

Suspicion about translations in the Jewish tradition can be traced back to the first translation in Jewish history, the translation of the Torah into Greek, which took place in Alexandria in the third century BCE. Regarding this translation, known as the Septuagint, the Talmud (*Megillah* 9a) records the following episode:

It is related of King Ptolmey that he brought together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two separate rooms, without telling them why he had brought them together, and he went into each one of them and said, "translate for me the Torah of Moses, your master." God then prompted each one of them and they all conceived the same idea.<sup>7</sup>

This passage of the Talmud focuses on the need for God's intervention in the translation, emphasizing the difficulties involved in the process of translation, and suggesting that without God's approval and participation, the translation could not, or perhaps should not, have taken place.

In another account of this translation of the Torah into Greek, *Massekhet Soferim*, a Geonic work appended to the end of *Seder Nezikin* in the standard editions of the Talmud, writes:

There was an incident in which five elders translated the Torah into Greek for King Ptolmey and this day was as difficult for the Jews as the day that they worshipped the golden calf because the Torah can not be translated "*kol zarkab*".<sup>8</sup>

Here, the hostility of the Jewish tradition towards translations is explicit. According to this view, the translation of the Torah is objectionable because "the Torah can not be translated *kol zarkab*." This phrase seems to mean "in its entire need" and implies that translations are improper because they can never capture the essence of the original work. Indeed, it is ironic that this phrase that gives the reason for opposing translations is itself difficult to translate. Thus, the ambivalence towards translations in Jewish tradition already expressed itself regarding this first translation in history.<sup>9</sup>

While the translation of the Torah into Greek, over time, ceased to be an issue, the opposition to translating the Torah into the vernacular by no means disappeared,<sup>10</sup> and, in the modern era, it arose once again. In this case, the controversy reflected the conflict over the integration of Jews into secular society. For the Jews of Western Europe, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of transition, both politically and socially. Politically, the process that ultimately led to full citizenship for the Jews of Western Europe began with the Edict of Toleration granted by Emperor Joseph II in Austria in 1781-1782 and the decision by the National Assembly of France in 1790 to turn the Jews of France into full citizens. Socially, Jews and non-Jews began to meet each other for purposes other than business. This new sociability between Jews and non-Jews was the first sign of the social acceptance of Jews in European society.<sup>11</sup> Among the many Jews who played significant roles in the establishment of this social acceptability, of particular note was Moses Mendelssohn. Born in Dessau in 1729, Mendelssohn moved to Berlin in 1742 and, once there, had the opportunity to add secular knowledge to his already rich rabbinic scholarship. His interest in mathematics, languages, and philosophy brought him into close contact with some of the most influential non-Jews of the time. As Mendelssohn's philosophical treatises became recognized throughout German circles, he became part of the intellectual community. While this integration was never complete, it was an important first step in breaking down the social barriers between Jews and non-Jews.<sup>12</sup>

Mendelssohn believed that an indispensable component of Jewish integration into secular culture would be the Jews' ability to converse in German rather than Yiddish or even Hebrew. Towards this goal, in 1783, Mendelssohn wrote a German translation of the Bible, written in Hebrew characters<sup>13</sup> and accompanied by a Hebrew commentary called the *Biur*.<sup>14</sup> In the introduction to his work, called *Or le-Netivah*, he wrote, "When God in His grace gave me sons and the time arrived to teach them Torah . . . I took it upon myself to translate the Five Books of the Torah into decorous and refined German."<sup>15</sup> However, in a letter to his non-Jewish friend, August Adolph Friedrich Henning, Mendelssohn gave another, probably more accurate, reason for undertaking this translation. He wrote that the translation would be "the first step towards culture, from which my nation is, alas, kept at such a distance that one might almost despair at the possibility of an improvement."<sup>16</sup>

Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah was praised even in rabbinic circles. At the beginning of the first volume of the first edition of the translation, Mendelssohn included a *baskamah*, an approbation, from Rabbi Hirschel Lewin, the Chief Rabbi of Berlin. He wrote:

I am looking forward to the benefit that will accrue from it to all who come in the name of the Lord, desirous of knowing the clear language of Scripture and the interpretation offered by him [i.e., Mendelssohn]. No longer will our young rush to drink the wells dug by strangers, for now they will find refreshing water flowing down from the mountain of Israel.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequent editions of the translation contain *baskamot* from leading rabbis and, by the middle of the nineteenth century, Mendelssohn's translation was widely read in rabbinic circles.<sup>18</sup>

There were, however, many Jews opposed to this integration into secular society and, to them, Mendelssohn's translation came to symbolize this dangerous trend. Most notable of this group was Rabbi Moses Sofer (1762-1839), known as *Ḥatam Sofer*, who served as the chief rabbi of Pressburg, the most important Jewish community in Hungary, from 1806 until his death. *Ḥatam Sofer* was a native of Frankfurt and was well aware of the changes that were taking place in the German Jewish community. He believed that integration provided the Jews with an opportunity to slip away from traditional Jewish society. As a result, in his view, Jewish tradition had to be maintained in its totality, not only in terms of content, but also with respect to its form and linguistic expression. *Ḥatam Sofer* summed up his philosophy by appropriating the halakhic statement, "*ḥadash assur min ha-Torah*," to forbid the introduction of even the slightest innovation, even one that could be shown to be halakhically justifiable.<sup>19</sup>

*Ḥatam Sofer's* opposition to innovation is reflected in his view towards translations of the Torah. He was unalterably opposed to them because, "they remove the dress of precious stones, the allusions and the secrets contained in the Torah, and the rabbinic traditions emanating from it, and garb it, instead, in the scarlet clothing of philosophic wisdom alone."<sup>20</sup> According to *Ḥatam Sofer*, translations in general undermined traditional Torah study. Concerning Mendelssohn's translation in particular, *Ḥatam Sofer* instructed his descendants in his last will and testament, "Never lay a hand on the works of Rabbi Moses of Dessau [Mendelssohn]."<sup>21</sup>

This opposition to modernity in general, and translations in particular, was not limited to the circle of *Ḥatam Sofer*. In Russia and Poland, the Haskalah was slower in developing, and when it did begin to have an impact in the 1840s, there were many traditionalists who opposed this move towards integration into general, secular society. Unlike in Germany where even the traditionalists, for the most part, accepted some form of integration, in Russia and Poland they reacted to the Haskalah by consolidating themselves into tightly knit communities in order to battle against the Maskilim and their new ideology. Hasidim and Mitnagdim put aside their differences to wage the common struggle against the Maskilim, and while they were not successful in eradicating this new group, they were able to solidify and strengthen their own forces.<sup>22</sup> In Russia and Poland, as well, the conflict over modernity expressed itself in the reaction to Mendelssohn's translation. The Maskilim introduced it as a basic text in their new schools as part of their program that emphasized the importance of studying the vernacular. The traditionalists, on the other hand, not only rejected Mendelssohn's translation, but insisted on maintaining Yiddish as the language of the people.<sup>23</sup>

### The Talmud in the Vernacular

The controversy in the Jewish community between those who favored increased involvement in secular culture and those who wanted to keep Jewish tradition separate and distinct was also fought out in the realm of translations of the Talmud. Attempts to translate this work began in Germany, the home of the Haskalah, in the mid 1800's and continued in the United States and England, countries that inherited this yearning for greater integration. Each of these translations elicited opposition from the more traditional elements of Jewry in these countries. However, ultimately, the need to translate prevailed and translations have come to be recognized by virtually all elements of Judaism.

The first attempt by a Jew to translate the entire Talmud was undertaken by Dr. Ephraim Moses Pinner (1800-1880). Born in Poznan, Prussia, Dr. Pinner studied Talmud under the famous Rabbi Jacob of Lissa, author of the *Netivot ha-Mishpat*. Dr. Pinner was widely respected as a talmudic scholar even by his opponents, and it is reported that he had received a letter of praise for his talmudic wisdom from the great Rabbi Akiva Eger.<sup>24</sup> Dr. Pinner was also very well versed in Jewish scholarship, and he published numerous scholarly works. In 1831, he published *Kizzur Talmud Yerushalmi ve-Talmud Bavli* in Berlin which contained German translations of selections from these works and a biography of the Tanna, Rabbi Simeon bar Yoḥa'i. Planned as the forerunner of his translation of the entire Talmud, both Bavli and Yerushalmi, this work was used by Dr. Pinner as a way of selling subscriptions to his forthcoming translation. The first volume of the translation, *Talmud Bavli: Berakhot*, was published in Berlin in 1842. This volume was a splendid folio edition containing the traditional talmudic layout with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot on one side of the page and the German translation on the facing page. In addition, Dr. Pinner provided punctuation for the Gemara as well as for Rashi and Tosafot. At the bottom of the original Hebrew page, he included the translation and etymology of certain difficult words found in the text. On the facing page, in addition to a literal German translation of the text, Dr. Pinner wrote a more elaborate German commentary, both in German letters, and beneath that, a Hebrew commentary which makes extensive use of the traditional commentaries. The volume also contains a translation of the introductions to the Talmud of both Rambam and Rabbi Samuel ha-Naggid. At the beginning of the volume, Dr. Pinner printed the eighteen *baskamot* given to his work by both rabbis and Maskilim of the time. It is significant that all fifteen of the rabbinic *baskamot* were granted by rabbis from Western European countries. The traditionalists of Eastern Europe remained opposed in principle to the concept of translations. He also listed nearly a thousand subscribers to his work. Among them were Czar Nicholas I of Russia, King Frederick Wilhelm IV of Prussia, King Wilhelm I of Holland, King Leopold of Belgium and King Frederick IV of Denmark. The volume is dedicated to Czar Nicholas I.

In the introduction to the *Berakhot* volume, Dr. Pinner wrote:

Originally, the language of Hebrew was a sign of glory for the Jewish people. . . . However, now it is almost forgotten among the people. . . . This has caused us to be unable to study Talmud in the original. Even if there is one person who understands the Talmud, he is unable to teach it to others. Up to now no one has undertaken to translate the Talmud

into the vernacular, and there are even some who have distorted the Talmud and accused the Rabbis of saying things that they never would have said. Therefore, I have taken upon myself to translate the Talmud into German.<sup>25</sup>

Dr. Pinner provided two reasons for the necessity to translate the Talmud: the present inability of the Jews to understand it in the original and the need to correct the distortions of the Talmud that had been created by its opponents. By the 1840s, the Jews were well entrenched as accepted members of the non-Jewish society in Germany, and they had become familiar with German, while at the same time lacking, for the most part, a knowledge of Hebrew. Dr. Pinner felt that a German translation was needed in order to ensure the continued study of Talmud. A translation would also serve to refute anti-Semitic claims that were being made against the Talmud, especially in Russia. Czar Nicholas I of Russia, who ruled from 1825 to 1855, regarded the Jews as an alien group that needed to be assimilated into Russian society. He attempted to accomplish this in several ways. He introduced compulsory military service for Jews, forced Jewish children to attend military school, and expelled the Jews from many locations. As a result of Czar Nicholas' concern with the "Jewish problem," a secret report was issued in 1841 exploring why the Jews refused to acculturate into Russian society. According to this report, the Talmud was the cause of the problem. Czar Nicholas I felt that the only way to expose the evil in the Talmud was to have the Talmud translated.<sup>26</sup> The Czar offered huge sums of money to anyone who would translate that work into European languages, thereby serving to convince the Jews of the evils contained within it.<sup>27</sup> Seeking financial support, Dr. Pinner traveled to St. Petersburg where his translation received the endorsement of the Czar who thought that Dr. Pinner would do what he wanted. The Czar purchased one hundred copies of Dr. Pinner's translation and the first volume, *Berakhot*, was therefore dedicated to him. When the Czar saw that Dr. Pinner's motive was actually to correct that which had been maliciously written about the Talmud, he canceled his subscription and, without the financial support, Dr. Pinner was unable to continue his project. Only one volume, *Berakhot*, was ever published.<sup>28</sup>

The next attempt to translate the entire Talmud into German was undertaken by Dr. Lazarus Goldschmidt (1871-1950). Dr. Goldschmidt was born in Lithuania and was a student in the famous Slobodka Yeshivah. He left the traditional world of Lithuania and entered the University of Berlin where he became an expert in Semitic languages. Among his many works were *The Earliest Illustrated Haggadah* (London, 1940) and a *Subject Concordance to the Babylonian*

*Talmud* (Copenhagen, 1959). Dr. Goldschmidt also had an extensive collection of early Hebrew incunabula. However, his greatest contribution to Jewish scholarship was his translation of the entire Talmud Bavli into German. The translation appeared in two editions; a nine-volume work (Berlin, 1897-1935) containing the original Hebrew text in the middle of the page, without the traditional commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot, and a German translation with variant readings and notes surrounding the original text, and a twelve-volume edition (Berlin, 1929-1936) without the Hebrew text. In both editions, the translation was written in German characters.

In an autobiographical essay that he wrote at the end of his life,<sup>29</sup> Dr. Goldschmidt explained that he took upon himself this unimaginable task of translating the entire Talmud in response to the anti-Semitic atmosphere that was prevalent at the time. At the end of the nineteenth century, there was a terrible outbreak of anti-Semitism directed, in large part, against the Talmud.<sup>30</sup> In 1871, the anti-Semitic professor of Hebrew literature at Charles University in Prague, August Rohling, published *Der Talmudjude*, a collection of deliberately corrupted quotations and forgeries directed against the Talmud. He claimed, among other things, that the Talmud requires that Jews make use of Christian blood in preparing *mazah* and wine for Passover. Rohling was challenged by Rabbi Samuel Bloch, a Viennese rabbi and member of the Austrian Parliament. Rohling sued Rabbi Bloch for libel but was unable to prove his case. In 1885, shortly before the case was to be heard, Rohling withdrew his suit and was forced to pay the cost of the trial. In addition, he lost his academic position. However, his anti-Semitic activity did not cease. He continued publishing anti-Semitic works and, in 1893, commissioned Paulus Meyer, a baptized Jew who had previously accused the Jews of Ostrog, Poland, of ritual murder, to write a book which proved by means of rabbinical sources that ritual murder was required by Jewish law. Meyer was also challenged by Rabbi Bloch and was ultimately convicted of defamation of the character of those Jews whom he had accused.<sup>31</sup>

In 1895, shortly after the Paulus Meyer episode, Dr. Goldschmidt wrote that he was living in Leipzig and was approached by his non-Jewish landlord who suggested that he translate the Talmud into German to correct all misconceptions about it. After much consideration, he decided to do so. He based his work on the first edition of the printed Talmud (Venice, 1520-1523) which had not been censored so that no one could later claim that the Talmud had been altered. This translation was the first complete translation of the Talmud Bavli and was done entirely by Dr. Goldschmidt.

Due to the popularity of this translation, a large celebration was held in 1931 on the occasion of its author's sixtieth birthday. He received good wishes and compliments from Jews throughout the world, though, as in the case of the Pinner Talmud, rabbinic approval was limited to rabbis from Western European countries. While he himself was not an observant Jew, Dr. Goldschmidt was praised for his important contribution to Jewish scholarship and learning by such notables as Rabbi Meir Hildesheimer, the dean of the Rabbinical Seminary in Berlin. In a letter written to Dr. Goldschmidt on this occasion, Rabbi Hildesheimer wrote:

Your translation of the Talmud that has opened this vast world for the first time into a foreign language has already taken its appropriate place in the literature of the world, and has assured for you a place of respect and honor in the world of Jewish scholarship.<sup>32</sup>

Samuel A. Horodezky, one of the leading Jewish scholars and historians of the early twentieth century, wrote in the Hebrew newspaper, *Ha-'Olam*, "this translation was not done by the 'seventy' and not by an academy of scholars who divided the work but rather by one young man. He began the work and he completed it."<sup>33</sup> This translation by Dr. Goldschmidt is the authoritative German translation of the Talmud to the present day.<sup>34</sup>

With the growth of the number of Jews living in the United States and England at the end of the nineteenth century, there arose a need for an English translation of the Talmud as well. Many of these immigrants, even those committed to maintaining their standards of religious observance, desperately wanted to be accepted into secular society. The first step towards this acceptance was the ability to speak the language of the land. Within a short period of time, many Jews became more comfortable with English than with their native Yiddish. An English translation of the Talmud served to facilitate the study of Talmud and to express the fact that Jews had become part of the English speaking culture in these countries.<sup>35</sup> The first attempt to translate the Talmud into English was undertaken by Michael Levi Rodkinson (1845-1904). While his translation was ultimately not accepted in either Orthodox rabbinic or scholarly circles, it represents an important chapter in the history of the translation of the Talmud. Rodkinson was born in Russia where he was a Hebrew writer and editor of several publications. He was accused of forgeries and extortion and fled Russia first to Germany and then to Austria. While living in Vienna, Rodkinson was accused by the local Jewish newspaper of assisting Rohling in his anti-Semitic attacks. In 1889, Rodkinson moved to New York and after attempting unsuccessfully to revive

several of his publications, began his project of translating the Talmud into English.<sup>36</sup>

In 1896, Rodkinson began publishing what he called *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud: Original Text Edited, Corrected, Formulated, and Translated into English*. This work was published in ten volumes (1896-1903) and was reprinted in 1918. The tenth volume contains a history of the development of the Talmud, a bibliography of works on the Talmud, an incomplete list of translations of the Talmud, and an attempt to justify the morals and ethics of the Talmud for the Christian world. In the introduction to his work, Rodkinson explained why he undertook the publication of an abridged edition of the Talmud into English. He wrote:

Since the time of Moses Mendelssohn the Jew has made great strides forward. There is today no branch of human activity in which his influence is not felt. . . . But with the Talmud it is not so. The vast encyclopedia of Jewish lore remains as it was. No improvement has been possible; no progress has been made with it. Issue after issue has appeared, but it has always been called the Talmud Babli, as chaotic as it was when the canon was originally appointed. . . . But why speak for it? Let it open its mouth and speak in its own defence! How can it be done? The Talmud must be translated into the modern tongues and urge its own plea. . . . Translation! That is the sole secret of defence!<sup>37</sup>

However, Rodkinson's method of translation was unlike any of those that had preceded his. He wrote that, "[we] have reedited it [the Talmud] by omitting all such irrelevant matter as interrupted the clear and orderly arrangement of the various arguments."<sup>38</sup> His editing of the original went even further. He explained in his introduction, "We have also omitted repetitions; for frequently the same thing is found repeated in many tracts; while in this translation each statement is to be found only once. In this way there disappear those unnecessary debates within debates, which serve only to confuse, never to enlighten, on the question debated."<sup>39</sup> Rodkinson's abridged edition of the Talmud reproduces the original Hebrew text with punctuation for the tractates of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Shekalim*, and the commentary of Rashi is included on the bottom of the page in *Rosh Hashanah*. However, it seems that the arrangement of the Hebrew text became too difficult; therefore, the rest of the tractates contain only the English translation.<sup>40</sup> Rodkinson maintained the division between the Mishnah and the Gemara, although he did not include the traditional page numbers. He began each volume with an introduction to the tractate being translated and a synopsis of subjects in that tractate. He included the endorsements of eight leading American Conservative and Reform rabbis, including the well-known

talmudic scholars Dr. Marcus Jastrow and Dr. Moses Mielziner. They all praised the work and expressed the need for such an edited edition of the Talmud which, as Dr. Mielziner argued, "will greatly facilitate the study of the Talmud, especially for beginners."<sup>41</sup> In the final volume, Rodkinson included some press comments from secular publications praising the translation.<sup>42</sup>

The reaction to Rodkinson's translation provides a very interesting chapter in the history of translations of the Talmud. The famous American Jewish editor, J.D. Eisenstein, dedicated two articles to criticizing this translation, arguing that Rodkinson had done an inadequate job abridging the Talmud in an attempt to make it easier to understand. Rodkinson, he argued, left out critical elements of the text, misinterpreted passages, and even contradicted himself.<sup>43</sup> Eisenstein wrote that this work is not even worthy of critique but, since it was given endorsements by such prominent scholars, he felt it necessary to comment on it. However, in regard to the question of whether an abridged edition of the Talmud serves any purpose, Eisenstein wrote, "I have no objections [to an abridged edition of the Talmud], however, this work cannot be done with a pair of scissors, but rather with intelligence, with great caution and care. It is not for one man to finish, but rather for a group of great talmudic scholars. . . and only for the use of students in schools."<sup>44</sup> Although this edition of the Talmud, translated and abridged by Rodkinson, is not widely used or respected today,<sup>45</sup> it represents a further attempt to make the Talmud more accessible to the masses. Rodkinson's work was rejected because of its poor quality, and not because of an objection on principle to this type of abridged translation.

The next attempt to translate the Talmud into English was far more important than the Rodkinson translation, both from a scholarly perspective and in terms of its usefulness for us today. This translation was published by the Soncino Press in England between 1935 and 1952 under the editorship of Dr. Isidore Epstein, the librarian and, later, principal of Jews' College in London.<sup>46</sup> The translation was done by different scholars and it was published in thirty-five volumes without the original Hebrew text. Each volume contains introductions to the tractates as well as extensive notes beneath the translation. These notes serve as cross references to other volumes of the Talmud as well as to other scholarly works on many different topics. The notes also provide further clarification of ideas that are not made clear by a simple translation of the text. An index volume was published in 1952 providing a very helpful general index as well as an index of all biblical references in the Talmud. This index volume is an important resource even for people who are not using the Soncino translation.

While *baskamot* as we know them are not included in this translation, the foreword was written by Rabbi J.H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Commonwealth from 1913 to 1946, and the epilogue was written by Rabbi Israel Brodie, Chief Rabbi from 1948 to 1965. In his foreword, written in 1934 at the very beginning of the project, Rabbi Hertz wrote: "A reliable English translation of the whole Babylonian Talmud has long been looked forward to by scholars. This expectation is beginning to be realised by the publication of the Soncino edition of the Order *Nezikin*."<sup>47</sup> Rabbi Hertz saw this translation of *Seder Nezikin* as the beginning of an important project. In the epilogue, written thirteen years later, following the destruction of European Jewry, Rabbi Brodie wrote:

English is now the vernacular of more than half of the Jewish population of the world. Not everyone, not even one in a thousand, has access to the original, sometimes difficult and intractable, texts of our sources. Nor can a translation however perfect replace the original. Nevertheless, the earnest Jewish cultured reader who is unfamiliar with the original can read and study a translation which introduces him to the world of thought, feeling and content which will repay the painstaking efforts and concentration demanded.<sup>48</sup>

Rabbi Brodie emphasized the contemporary need for an English translation. While he clearly recognized that no translation can ever replace the original, he argued that the Soncino translation would "introduce" the student to the world of the Talmud and, therefore, the world of Jewish thought. Reprinted with the original text on the facing page, it was used until recently as the premier English translation of the Talmud.<sup>49</sup>

While there were few translations of the Talmud in the hundred years following Dr. Pinner's work, in the past thirty years several important translations into both Hebrew<sup>50</sup> and English<sup>51</sup> have appeared. In 1967, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, a scholar in both religious and secular fields, began the project of translating the Talmud into Hebrew. Rabbi Steinsaltz serves as editor for a team of scholars who are writing the actual translation. To date, twenty-five volumes of the Steinsaltz edition of the Babylonian Talmud have been published as well as one volume of the Jerusalem Talmud. Rabbi Steinsaltz expects to finish the translation of the entire Talmud in forty volumes within fifteen years.

In his quest to compose a useful Hebrew translation, Rabbi Steinsaltz maintained the original text of the Talmud but added punctuation and vocalization, a feature missing from the traditional editions of the Talmud. Although he included the classical commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot, he did not maintain the traditional layout of the tal-

mic page. In the Steinsaltz Gemara, two pages contain the material that comprises one page in a standard Gemara, and the traditional page number is identified on the corresponding page of the Steinsaltz edition. On the outside margin of each page, Rabbi Steinsaltz added a Hebrew translation and commentary in which he reprinted the original text of the Gemara with a literal translation of each Aramaic term followed by a short explanation of what the Gemara means. In this way, the reader does not have to refer back and forth to the Gemara but rather can easily follow the original text, the translation of difficult words, and the commentary by reading Rabbi Steinsaltz's work on the outside margin of the page. Rabbi Steinsaltz felt that it was unnecessary to translate every word literally since much of the Talmud is written in Hebrew, and, instead, chose to intersperse his translation and explanation with the standard talmudic text. Rabbi Steinsaltz also included paraphrases of selected commentaries, certain decisions in *Mishneh Torah* of Rambam and *Shulhan 'Arukh*, notes on talmudic language, realia, as well as biographical sketches of talmudic sages and variant texts. In the back of every volume, he included extensive indices and even a list of abbreviations found within that tractate. Rabbi Steinsaltz provided the student and scholar with the vehicles necessary to familiarize himself or herself with the complex world of the Talmud as well as the references necessary to further his or her study of the Talmud and its commentaries.

While there are no *baskamot* printed at the beginning of each volume, the Steinsaltz Talmud did receive an unpublished *baskamah* from Rabbi Moses Feinstein. In this *baskamah*, Rabbi Feinstein explained the necessity of such a work:

This is indeed an important work that will serve a crucial function not only for those who are familiar with the study of Talmud and want to delve further, but also for those who are just beginning their study of Talmud, to teach them how to understand the sea of the Talmud.<sup>52</sup>

The Steinsaltz Talmud has, indeed, served an important function both for those with a background in Talmud and for those with little or no background. Over one million copies of the Hebrew Talmud have been sold, and, in 1989, Rabbi Steinsaltz was awarded Israel's most prestigious honor, the Israel Prize, for this work.

In 1989, Rabbi Steinsaltz began publishing an English translation of the Talmud. He serves as the editor for a group of scholarly translators in this series as well. He wrote in the introduction to this edition that, "This edition has been designed to meet the needs of advanced students capable of studying from standard Talmud editions, as well as of beginners, who know little or no Hebrew and have had no

prior training in studying the Talmud.”<sup>53</sup> The English volume maintains the original Hebrew talmudic text adding vocalization and punctuation, as well as the commentary of Rashi, printed in Rashi script. Rabbi Steinsaltz included a commentary on the right hand side of the page which he entitles the “Literal Translation,” intended “to help the student to learn the meaning of specific Hebrew and Aramaic words.”<sup>54</sup> The main aid to studying the intricacies of the Talmud is the “Translation and Commentary” which appears on the left hand side of the page; it consists of a translation of the Hebrew commentary from the Steinsaltz Hebrew Talmud with some adaptations and expansions for the English edition. Like its Hebrew counterpart, the English translation intersperses commentary with the original text. The English edition also includes an English version of the notes, halakhah, realia, language and biographies found in the Hebrew edition.

In addition to his translations of the Talmud, Rabbi Steinsaltz published *A Reference Guide* (Jerusalem, 1989) “to facilitate the study of the Talmud, both for the beginner and the more advanced student.”<sup>55</sup> This work contains a historical background of the talmudic period, guidelines for Talmud study, talmudic terminology, talmudic weights and measures as well as the rules governing halakhic decision-making. Even for those not studying the Steinsaltz Talmud, the *Reference Guide* proves to be an extremely useful reference tool.

The English edition and the *Reference Guide* have been published by Random House, and the translation has been praised in many major newspapers and periodicals.<sup>56</sup> In addition to the *Reference Guide*, nine volumes of the English Talmud have been published, six volumes of *Bava Metzia* and three volumes of *Ketubot*. Random House has committed itself to publishing twenty volumes of the English Talmud. The Steinsaltz English Talmud has become a major media event and Rabbi Steinsaltz has become an international celebrity.<sup>57</sup>

The most recent attempt to translate the Talmud into English has been undertaken by Mesorah Publications. Called “The Schottenstein Talmud,”<sup>58</sup> it is the latest project in the very successful ArtScroll series.<sup>59</sup> The Schottenstein Talmud is being published under the general editorship of Rabbi Nosson Scherman, who is the general editor of the ArtScroll series, and Rabbi Hersh Goldwurm, who passed away in the summer of 1993. While no editorial successor has been named, Rabbi Yisroel Simcha Schorr, *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of Ohr Somayach in Monsey, New York, is serving as the interim editor. The translators themselves are not listed by name but instead are referred to “a team of Torah scholars” on the title page of the first volume.<sup>60</sup>

In the introduction, Rabbi Scherman and Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz, the chairman of the Mesorah Foundation, explained the nature of this work:

It is not the purpose of this edition of the Talmud to provide a substitute for the original text or a detour around the classic manner of study. Its purpose is to help the student understand the Gemara itself and improve his ability to learn from the original, preferably under the guidance of a rebbe. The Talmud must be *learned* and not merely read. As clear as we believe the English elucidation to be, thanks to the dedicated work of an exceptional team of Torah scholars, the reader must contribute to the process by himself to think, analyze, and thus to understand.<sup>61</sup>

In order to create a Gemara that will adhere to these guidelines, the editors arranged the format as follows: the entire original talmudic page is reproduced, with its translation and commentary on the facing page. Since the commentary is considerably longer than the original text, the original page is reproduced several times with a gray line alongside the text being discussed. The translation and commentary contain the actual Gemara text, divided phrase by phrase with punctuation and vocalization.<sup>62</sup> Each phrase is translated literally,<sup>63</sup> with the translation in bold type, followed by a more elaborate commentary which clarifies its meaning. The translation and commentary, according to the editors, almost always adheres to Rashi’s interpretations while other opinions are mentioned in the notes at the bottom of the page. Supplementary background information, definition of terms, and additional sources are also included in the “Notes” at the bottom of the page. There is an additional glossary of terms in the back of every volume. In the first volume, there is another section on the bottom of the notes called “Insights”, which includes important disputes among the commentators and conceptual analyses of major talmudic discussions. This feature has been left out of all subsequent volumes.<sup>64</sup>

Each volume of the Schottenstein Talmud contains numerous *haskamot* from the leading halakhic authorities of our time including Rabbi Mordecai Gifter, the *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of Telz, Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, the *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of Mesivta Tiferet Yerushalayim, and Rabbi Aharon Schechter, the *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of Mesivta Chaim Berlin. The *haskamot* praise the entire ArtScroll series and especially the Schottenstein edition of the Talmud which they believe will assist scores of people in the study of that work. As Rabbi Gifter wrote:

This volume will be of great use not only for those who are unable to study Gemara but also for those who are proficient in its study, since

English is more familiar to them than the talmudic language. In our day, even the teachers in the *yeshivot* use English so that the students will understand.<sup>65</sup>

As part of the attempt to provide a study aid even for those with a background in Talmud study, Mesorah has made an effort, when possible, to publish the volume of the Schottenstein Talmud in conjunction with the tractate being studied in *daf yomi*, the daily synchronized study of Talmud by Jews around the world. To date, eighteen volumes of the Schottenstein Talmud have been published, and, within ten years, Mesorah hopes to complete this edition of the entire Talmud Bavli in sixty-eight volumes.

The recent translations such as those undertaken by Rabbi Steinsaltz and the ArtScroll series illustrate the growing demand for translations of the Talmud. These translations have been widely accepted and are used by Jews throughout the world. This, however, is only part of the story.

### Polemics on Translations

Opposition to translations of the Talmud in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was based on a variety of reasons, all merging into one another. Similar to the opposition to the translation of the Torah over two thousand years before, opposition to Talmud translations reflected an inherent concern that a translation cannot capture the full essence of the original. This fear is expressed in a *haskamah* to an edition of *Pirkei Avot* published with a Yiddish translation (Ostrog, 1816) which states:

Indeed, in accordance with our religion the language of the Gemara and of the Mishnah must not be translated, because the translator [is bound to change] the meaning [of the original]. Even Moses ben Maimon, the great teacher, wrote only a commentary on the Mishnah in Arabic.<sup>66</sup>

The problem with translations is not only the inability of the translator to translate but also the nature of the work that does not lend itself to accurate translation. In addition, these translated volumes gave non-Jews access to the Talmud for the first time in history, leaving open the possibility, if not probability, of misunderstanding and even misuse of talmudic texts. Finally, the opposition of the last two centuries to translations of the Talmud has reflected the continuing battle over the role of modernity in Jewish life. For those opponents of translations, these works in the vernacular represented an intro-

duction of secular language, and, by logical extension, secular culture, into Jewish society.<sup>67</sup>

As noted above, the Pinner translation in 1842 was the first attempt to translate the entire Talmud in the modern period. While this work contained many *haskamot* from both rabbis and Maskilim of the time, it nevertheless became the focus of a bitter controversy. Prior to publishing the first volume of his work, Dr. Pinner traveled to many cities seeking *haskamot* for his project from local rabbis. Among the rabbis whom Dr. Pinner approached was Hatam Sofer in Pressburg. Hatam Sofer described his reaction upon hearing from Dr. Pinner about the planned translation:

How can you possibly understand and translate everything? Many times the rabbis themselves disagree how to understand the comments of Rashi, and how many sheets of paper have been used in explaining one statement of Rashi. How can one individual hope to properly understand every matter?<sup>68</sup>

Hatam Sofer's critique was not directed solely at Dr. Pinner; he was questioning any one person's ability to translate the Talmud.<sup>69</sup> According to Hatam Sofer, Dr. Pinner responded that he did not plan to translate the entire Talmud himself. Rather, he would serve as editor for other worthy, knowledgeable rabbis who would translate the various tractates. One of the rabbis mentioned by Dr. Pinner was Rabbi Nathan Adler, a distinguished German rabbi and teacher of Hatam Sofer. Dr. Pinner claimed that Rabbi Adler had consented to translate the difficult tractates of *'Eruvin* and *Yevamot*. Hatam Sofer seemed to have been satisfied with Dr. Pinner's editorial role and he wrote a *haskamah* for the work. Dr. Pinner then used this *haskamah* as a way to convince other rabbis to follow suit.<sup>70</sup> It is evident from the willingness of Hatam Sofer to grant a *haskamah* to this work that, while he questioned the feasibility of translating the entire Talmud, he was not inherently opposed to its translation. It is surprising that Hatam Sofer, the leading rabbinic opponent of integration into secular society and of Mendelssohn's Bible translation, would grant a *haskamah* to a translation of the Talmud. Most probably, this *haskamah* was given solely because he was told that his teacher, the great German rabbi Nathan Adler, had given Dr. Pinner a *haskamah*. As will be shown, when Hatam Sofer found out that this report was false, he quickly rescinded his *haskamah*.

Many rabbis objected to Dr. Pinner's translation and were upset with Hatam Sofer for giving Dr. Pinner a *haskamah*.<sup>71</sup> When word of this opposition reached Hatam Sofer, he reevaluated his position. At this same time, he wrote that he had received a letter from Rabbi

Adler in which Rabbi Adler both denied ever having agreed to participate in the translation and claimed that he did not even consent to give Dr. Pinner a *baskamah*. Upon hearing this, Hatam Sofer retracted his *baskamah*.<sup>72</sup> It seems, however, that this retraction did not stop Dr. Pinner from continuing to use Hatam Sofer's original *baskamah*. In order to bring an end to this misrepresentation, Hatam Sofer published a proclamation in which he recounted the entire episode and concluded: "I therefore ask all the rabbis to prohibit the printing, buying and reading of this book in their jurisdictions. It must become a closed chapter, never to be mentioned again among the Jewish people."<sup>73</sup>

While the retraction of the *baskamah* by Hatam Sofer was not based on the merits of this translation, this controversy gave rise to other objections to Dr. Pinner's work that did deal with that issue. The most informative critique is found in a letter written by Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Lehrin, one of the most prominent members of the Amsterdam Jewish community, and a known opponent of any innovation in religious practice.<sup>74</sup> In a letter to Hatam Sofer upon hearing that he had rescinded his *baskamah*, dated 10 Tevet 5695, Rabbi Lehrin wrote:

How much did those who came before us complain about the translation of Moses Dessau [Mendelssohn]. And, if they found a problem with that translation that was done in Hebrew letters and was a translation of the written Torah, how much more so would they oppose the translation of the Talmud into German letters allowing the non-Jews to understand the Talmud. We know that there is a prohibition against teaching the Oral Torah to non-Jews.<sup>75</sup>

Rabbi Lehrin's objection to the translation is not based on the technical issue as to whether or not the Talmud can be translated properly, but rather on the implications of the translation, even assuming that it is accurate. The risk, he argued, was that non-Jews would be able to read and understand the Talmud, in violation of the prohibition against teaching Torah to non-Jews.<sup>76</sup> However, the fear of making the Talmud available to non-Jews was a practical concern as well. As Rabbi Lehrin continued in this letter:

According to his [Pinner's] words, he is composing this translation to sanctify the name of God and to glorify the words of the Rabbis. In truth, he is causing a denigration of God's name and a lessening of respect for the Rabbis. If the deviant Jews claim that the disagreement between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel concerning an egg that is born on the holiday is irrelevant, how much more so will the non-Jews mock the talmudic tradition.<sup>77</sup>

Rabbi Lehrin was concerned that if the non-Jews were able to understand the Talmud, they would then mock that work and its teachings. He further argued that even if Dr. Pinner was capable of portraying the Talmud in a positive light, he might then be accused of trying to convert the non-Jews to Judaism. According to Rabbi Lehrin, the fear of integrating into secular society is not only dangerous because it may lead Jews to stray from tradition but also because increased contact with non-Jews may cause the undermining of Judaism and its teachings.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike Pinner's translation, the translation of Dr. Lazarus Goldschmidt was widely accepted and did not create the uproar of the earlier translation.<sup>79</sup> There is, however, an interesting report of the existence of opposition to his translation as well. In an article describing the sixtieth birthday celebration for Dr. Goldschmidt, reference is made to critics of the translation:

The same complaint that the rabbis had concerning the Septuagint, "that it could not be translated *kol zarkah*," was used by Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Lehrin concerning Pinner's translation . . . and similar arguments were made by the *haredim* against Goldschmidt's translation.<sup>80</sup>

It is not clear to what arguments the author of this article is referring. I am aware of only two vague references to opposition to the Goldschmidt translation. Rabbi David Sperber, a Romanian rabbi who moved to Israel after the Second World War and died in 1962,<sup>81</sup> made reference in a *teshuvah* about teaching Hebrew to non-Jews to an article he wrote entitled "*Et ha-Ha'atakot Zreh Halah*"<sup>82</sup> in which he expressed his opposition to the translation of the Talmud into the vernacular.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, this article was never published,<sup>84</sup> but the fact that this volume of *teshuvot* was first published in 1940 (the *teshuvah* itself is undated) suggests that this article was directed at Dr. Goldschmidt's translation. The other reference to opposition is a note written by Rabbi Solomon Sofer, grandson of Hatam Sofer and editor of *Iggerot Soferim*, a collection of the family letters, published in 1928. In a footnote to Rabbi Lehrin's letter to Hatam Sofer, he made reference to a new attempt being made to translate the Talmud into German, and he wrote that "from Rabbi Lehrin's letter, people should realize the risks involved in translations."<sup>85</sup> Considering the year that it was written, this reference could only be referring to the Goldschmidt translation. While these two sources make only veiled reference to this translation, they are historically significant because they show that there was opposition to Goldschmidt's translation, and that this opposition came from two rabbis who were part of the traditionalist camp.

The Soncino translation, unlike the previous two translations, received the communal approval of the Chief Rabbinate of Great Britain. This automatically gave it almost unanimous acceptance. However, there was at least one rabbi, Rabbi Shemaryahu Menashe Adler, who opposed this translation as well. Born in Poland, Rabbi Adler emigrated to England and became a London businessman. He wrote fifteen books on halakhic topics, and was a vocal as well as literary critic of the British Chief Rabbinate.<sup>86</sup> In the introduction to one of his volumes, he wrote that he had been imprisoned for three weeks on charges stemming from a disagreement which he had with the Chief Rabbinate and, on another occasion, the Chief Rabbi wanted to have him expelled from England.<sup>87</sup> One of the reasons he opposed the Chief Rabbinate was because of their support for the Soncino translation. In his book, *Emek ha-Bakha*, he dedicated an entire section to a discussion about the Soncino translation of the Talmud.<sup>88</sup> He quoted the London Yiddish newspaper, *Die Zeit*,<sup>89</sup> which describes the party held to celebrate the completion of the first volume of that translation in 1935. In attendance at this celebration were Chief Rabbi Hertz, rabbis and *dayanim* from the London community, local dignitaries, as well as representatives of the Anglican Church. In his speech that evening, Rabbi Hertz praised the translation project as the means by which non-Jews would better understand the true essence of Judaism and expressed the hope that, in this way, anti-Semitism, which was on the rise throughout the world, would be diminished. Rabbi Adler described his impressions upon reading this article in the Yiddish newspaper: "When I read this article, my heart was broken inside me because of the great breach that was created. In truth, it is such actions that cause the destruction of the Jewish nation."<sup>90</sup>

However, when Rabbi Adler discussed this matter with one of the members of the community, he was informed that the translation had actually been done with the *baskamah* of Rabbi Joseph Rozin, the great Polish talmudist known as the Rogachover. Upon hearing this, Rabbi Adler wrote to the Rogachover, who lived in Dvinsk at the time, asking whether he had indeed given his *baskamah* to this translation. The Rogachover responded with a qualified approval of the translation. He wrote that the text of the Talmud should not be translated and that only a transliteration of the original is permissible. However, he did permit the writing of a vernacular commentary which could be included on the side of the original Gemara text.<sup>91</sup> Rabbi Adler responded with a lengthy letter explaining that the real purpose of the translation was not for the sake of teaching Jews but, rather, it was intended to impress the non-Jews who were unable to

read the original. Upon receiving this clarification, the Rogachover rescinded his *baskamah* and wrote that it was clearly forbidden to teach Talmud to non-Jews.<sup>92</sup> Rabbi Adler concluded his article by quoting Hatam Sofer's response to Dr. Pinner in which he retracted his *baskamah* to Pinner's work.<sup>93</sup>

This episode is important for several reasons. First, while Rabbi Adler was a vocal opponent of the Soncino translation, he was a lonely voice in England. He wrote that, after having read the article in the Yiddish newspaper, he was silent because, "I had no one willing to listen to me in this land."<sup>94</sup> Second, while the Rogachover eventually rescinded his *baskamah*, he was initially willing to grant one to this translation. His original *baskamah* was limited to an approval of a commentary in the vernacular and not to a true translation, but it reflected the willingness of this great rabbinic giant of Eastern Europe to accept a work in the vernacular that would assist Jews in understanding the Talmud.<sup>95</sup>

When publication of the Steinsaltz Hebrew Talmud began in the 1960s and 1970s, there was little opposition. While many did not use this edition because they felt that it would be "cheating" to make Talmud study so easy,<sup>96</sup> there was no formal opposition to it. This all changed in 1989, just around the time that Rabbi Steinsaltz began publishing his English edition. In the summer of that year, a ban was placed on all of Rabbi Steinsaltz's works by the leading halakhic authorities in Israel, including Rabbi Elazar Menahem Man Schach, *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of the Ponovetz Yeshiva, Rabbi Yosef Sholom Eliashiv and Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Sheinberg. Rabbi Avigdor Nevenzahl, dean of *Yeshivat Ha-Kotel* and rav of the Old City of Jerusalem, ordered all copies of the Steinsaltz Talmud found in the neighborhood synagogues to be placed in the *genizah*.<sup>97</sup> The complaint against the Steinsaltz Talmud is somewhat ambiguous. The English edition of *Yated Ne'eman*, a weekly publication founded by and reflecting the views of Rabbi Schach, published the letters of halakhic authorities who had banned it.<sup>98</sup> While a number of the letters mention the Talmud translation, there is no direct criticism of it. Rather, it was banned because it was written by the same author who penned several books which they considered to contain words of heresy.<sup>99</sup>

There was, however, one letter which did contain a direct reference to the translation of the Talmud, written by Rabbi Schach. He wrote:

How the heart aches to see "the sanctity being swallowed up" by one who has, pretending to wisdom under advice of his *yetzer hora*, written a commentary to the Gemara known as "*Talmud Hamevuar Vehamenukad*" wherein he has inserted various explanations designed

to make the study of Gemara, as it were, easier. In actuality, this sort of learning causes any trace of holiness and *emunah* to vanish, for the Talmud is presented as a book of laws similar to secular wisdom, God forbid. It is clear that it will thereby cause the Torah, *chas ve-shalom*, to be forgotten. Let no one argue that through [this commentary] the number of learners will be increased. It is our duty to preserve the "cruse of pure oil" in its purity rather than increase that which is impure. A small light can dispel much darkness.<sup>100</sup>

Rabbi Schach expressed a serious concern about the Steinsaltz Talmud. While Rabbi Steinsaltz attempted to make the study of Talmud easier, his study aids facilitated the reading of the Talmud as a secular book, with none of the struggle that has accompanied Talmud study for the past two thousand years. Therefore, Rabbi Schach wrote, Rabbi Steinsaltz caused "any trace of holiness and *emunah* to vanish." While these works may lead more people to study Talmud, their experience is meaningless, argued Rabbi Schach, because they will be studying Talmud bereft of all holiness and sanctity.<sup>101</sup>

Rabbi Schach's criticism of the Steinsaltz Talmud represents a turning point in the history of opposition to translations of the Talmud. The fears associated with non-Jewish readership of the Talmud, no longer a critical issue, have been replaced by the concerns about the effects of translations on Jewish readers. According to Rabbi Schach, translations into the vernacular are a concession to modernity. They "present [the Talmud] as a book of laws similar to secular wisdom." Much as Hatam Sofer argued over 150 years earlier concerning Mendelssohn's translation of the Torah, Rabbi Schach believed that translations of the Talmud would undermine traditional Talmud study by making it the same as studying a secular work.

This concern that the Talmud in translation would lose much of its sanctity is also evident in the reaction to the Schottenstein Talmud. However, in this case, the criticism does not come from outside critics, but, rather, is reflected in a qualification given by the editors and the rabbis who wrote *baskamot* to this edition. As previously mentioned, the editors clearly stated that this translation is not intended "to provide a substitute for the original text or a detour around the classic manner of study. Its purpose is to help the student understand the Gemara itself and improve his ability to learn from the original, preferably under the guidance of a rebbe."<sup>102</sup> The editors were very sensitive to the need for maintaining the traditional method of study, and did not want their translation to be a substitute for it. In that way, they ensure that the holiness does not vanish from the study of Talmud.

An ambivalence towards translations is evident not only in the comments by the editors but also in the *baskamot* that were written for the Schottenstein Talmud. While most of the *baskamot* simply praise the ArtScroll series and note how important it is to have a translation of the Talmud that will simplify its complex study, there are two *baskamot* in particular which deserve a closer look. Rabbi Yosef Shalom Eliashiv, a leading halakhic authority living in Jerusalem and one of the rabbis who opposed the Steinsaltz Talmud, wrote: "Since we live in a generation in which people are translating the Talmud irresponsibly in a way that lessens the sanctity of the Talmud, it is a great mitzvah to continue in this project."<sup>103</sup>

Two things can be understood from this short comment of Rabbi Eliashiv. First, he was obviously critical of other translations, though he does not elaborate about those to which he was referring. Furthermore, it is clear that Rabbi Eliashiv had some mixed feelings even about the Schottenstein edition. His *baskamah* is not based on the merit of the edition per se, but rather on its importance in correcting the errors of others. One wonders whether Rabbi Eliashiv would approve of translations if there was no need to undo what others have done.

The second *baskamah* is written by Rabbi Aharon Schechter, *Rosh ha-Yeshivah* of Mesivta Chaim Berlin. At the conclusion of his lengthy *baskamah*, the longest one in the Schottenstein Edition, Rabbi Schechter wrote:

While it may be possible to hold a specific quantity of water in a container, one cannot capture the force of a flowing stream. So, too, a translation, by its very nature limited, can encompass only the words but not the depth and greatness of the process of Gemara study [*derekh ha-gemara*].<sup>104</sup>

Rabbi Schechter, therefore, suggested that the editors not call this work a "translation", but rather refer to it as an "explanation" of the Talmud.<sup>105</sup> The editors accepted the advice of Rabbi Schechter, and they called the Schottenstein edition of the Talmud an "elucidation" rather than a "translation".

Both Rabbi Eliashiv and Rabbi Schechter expressed their discomfort with translations of the Talmud. As Rabbi Schach wrote concerning the Steinsaltz edition, there are great risks involved in translating this work. While Rabbi Eliashiv and Rabbi Schechter both commended the editors of the Schottenstein edition for their important effort, they emphasized that great care must be taken to ensure that the sanctity of the Talmud is maintained even in translation.

### A Traditional Message Through Modern Techniques

As we have seen, the Talmud was translated a number of times over the past two hundred years in order to make it accessible to those who would otherwise be unable to study it in the original. As Dr. Pinner wrote in 1842 in the introduction to his translation, "Originally, the language of Hebrew was a sign of glory for the Jewish people. . . . However, now it is almost forgotten among the people. . . . This has caused us to be unable to study the Talmud in the original."<sup>106</sup> This reason is even more clearly valid today when there are an increasing number of people with no background studying Talmud. The outreach movement, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, has involved thousands of people in the study of Talmud who are unfamiliar with the original language and style of the Gemara. It is only through translations that they can gain initial exposure to the vast world of the Talmud and, through it, to Jewish law and Jewish history. The argument in favor of translating the Talmud is still valid today but are the arguments against translating the Talmud as valid today as they were 150 years ago when Hatam Sofer banned Dr. Pinner's translation?

The opposition that was encountered in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries revolved around the prohibition against teaching Torah to non-Jews. This prohibition is clearly stated in the Talmud,<sup>107</sup> and while there have been some who have espoused a more lenient position concerning teaching non-Jews, the prevalent view throughout the ages has been to forbid this practice.<sup>108</sup> While there are still some who argue for the application of this prohibition in its strictest form,<sup>109</sup> many leading halakhic authorities have adopted a more flexible approach in light of contemporary circumstances. Rabbi Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg, the great German and Swiss halakhist of the twentieth century, was asked whether it was permissible to lecture on a talmudic topic at a non-Jewish university. Rabbi Weinberg wrote that he first considered this issue when he was appointed as a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Giessen in Germany. He analyzed this question and the different opinions of the authorities throughout the ages and concluded that a refusal on the part of a Jew to teach Talmud to a non-Jew could lead to *eivah*, ill-feeling on the part of the non-Jew, and therefore it was permissible to teach in such a setting. He wrote that there are many things that are permitted because of the fear of *eivah*,<sup>110</sup> and in our times when anti-Jewish sentiment is rampant, we should not give the non-Jews any reasons for this bad feeling. He concluded that it is permissible to teach in such a class even if no Jews are present.<sup>111</sup>

Regarding translations of the Talmud, however, the question is less difficult than the one posed to Rabbi Weinberg because the Talmud translations are not written solely for the benefit of non-Jews. There are a number of contemporary *teshuvot* that discuss the issue of teaching Jews and non-Jews together. Rabbi Moses Feinstein allowed a Jew to explain the *Haggadah* at the Seder even if a non-Jew is present.<sup>112</sup> Rabbi Pinchas Teitz decided to air his weekly Talmud class on the radio in English despite the possibility of non-Jewish listeners<sup>113</sup> and Rabbi Menashe Klein permitted airing television programs with Torah content even though there would be non-Jewish viewers.<sup>114</sup> In all of these cases, the argument was that Torah education must not be withheld from Jews just because non-Jews may also benefit. These *teshuvot* by the leading halakhic authorities of this generation reflect the fact that potential non-Jewish readership is no longer considered a valid reason to forbid translations of the Talmud. In addition, the *teshuvah* of Rabbi Teitz expresses a realization of the language barriers confronting Jews today. The importance of understanding Torah overrides the concerns of introducing the vernacular into Jewish learning.

Furthermore, it was once argued that the fact that non-Jews would now be able to read and understand the Talmud led to the fear that they would find anti-Christian and other objectionable material in it. As noted above, Rabbi Lehrin wrote to Hatam Sofer, "if the deviant Jews claim that the disagreement between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel concerning an egg that is born on the holiday is irrelevant, how much more so will the non-Jews mock the talmudic tradition."<sup>115</sup> This concern does not have the same force today that it did in the 1830s. The past 150 years have witnessed a dramatic change in the phenomenon of anti-Semitism.<sup>116</sup> The Christians of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were still convinced that the Jews were evil because of what they believed and that their only hope of salvation was through baptism. If the Jews were to be punished for their rejection of Christianity, the Talmud, which was both the basis of Jewish life and a potential source of anti-Christian material, became a prime target for Christian attacks.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, Christians wanted to understand the Talmud, and, as a result, Jews were correctly reluctant to translate it. Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, however, this form of anti-Semitism was gradually replaced by a new form, racial anti-Semitism, where the Jews were hated not because of what they believed but rather because of who they were. As early as the 1850s, Ernest Renan, an influential French scholar, popularized the notion that there was a distinction between "Semites" and Indo-Europeans or Aryans. According to Renan, the "Semite" race "repre-

sented an inferior combination of human nature."<sup>118</sup> This racial anti-Semitism reached its apex with the Nazis who saw the Jews as "poisoners" of the nations and it continues to be the underlying cause of anti-Semitism today. This form of anti-Semitism need not look to the Talmud for objectionable material. Therefore, the fear of non-Jews misusing the Talmud is much less of a concern now than it was at the time of the Pinner translation.

Finally, the argument that the Talmud should not be translated because it can never be translated satisfactorily must also be analyzed. Unlike the issues concerning the non-Jewish readership, this matter is as much a problem today as it was in the third century BCE.<sup>119</sup> Because of the unique nature of the Talmud, the problem of translation is especially acute. As Leon Wieseltier, literary editor of *The New Republic*, wrote in a review of the Steinsaltz English Talmud: "But it is precisely in the space between the literal meaning and the legal ruling that the experience of Talmudism is to be found. After the rudimentary explanation of words and concepts, after the judicial extrapolation of practices and regulations, the dance of reason begins."<sup>120</sup> It is this experience of Talmud study that cannot be captured in translation. The legal debates, the rich aggadic material, the succinct aphoristic style, the poetry and the music are very difficult to reproduce in any language other than in the original. The only way to translate these elements of the Talmud is the traditional method of teacher to student which combines study of the text with oral communication and explanation.

So, what are our options? The Jewish community can dismiss all translations of the Talmud as inadequate and deprive countless numbers of people of the opportunity to participate in this critical aspect of Jewish learning and Jewish tradition. However, with the exception of those who agree with Rabbi Schach, this solution has been rejected. The option that has been accepted in the broad Jewish community is to translate the Talmud to the best of our ability. As Willis Barnstone wrote about translations in general, "Everything is untranslatable. Once having established this unholy principle, we plunge ahead and translate."<sup>121</sup> However, the editors of the recent translations of the Talmud, realizing the limitations of translations, have adopted a different strategy. Instead of trying to replace the Talmud with English translations, they have written works that will serve as a companion volume to the Talmud, commentaries that will assist the English speaking reader in studying and understanding the original.

The Steinsaltz and Schottenstein editions have gone a long way in solving the problem of how to present the Talmud to the modern reader who is unable to read the original while at the same time

wishes to maintain the experience of traditional Talmud study. However, we must keep in mind that the recent flood of translations of Jewish religious works, admittedly necessary to meet contemporary needs, tends to lead to a neglect of the Hebrew language. It is now possible to study *Humash* with Rashi and Ramban, the works of Rambam, and even the *Mishnah Berurah* in translation without any knowledge of the Hebrew language.<sup>122</sup> On this issue also, the Steinsaltz and Schottenstein editions have made a major contribution. By including the original Hebrew text and integrating the translated material with explanation and commentary, these editions have maintained the primacy of the Hebrew original and made it clear that they did not intend a new English work but consider their work as a companion to help understand the original.<sup>123</sup>

In the final analysis, the recent translations of the Talmud do not represent a capitulation to modernity as feared by Rabbi Schach and his followers. Rather, they reflect the exploitation of modern techniques for the purpose of transmitting the Talmud to the Jewish people. The ability to make the Talmud understandable and to present the translation in a manner that is both aesthetically pleasing and easy to use without forfeiting the traditional text and method of study is the supreme challenge only now being met by the courageous scholars who have undertaken this sacred work.

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I would like to thank Prof. Edward Fram for carefully reading this article and for his many helpful suggestions.

## NOTES

1. Adin Steinsaltz, *The Essential Talmud* (New York, 1976), 3.
2. The first complete printed edition of the Talmud was published by a Christian, Daniel Bomberg, in Venice (1520-1523). The layout of the page and the pagination of this edition have been maintained in almost all editions of the Talmud up to the present. For an extensive discussion of early printed editions of the Talmud, including the single tractates which predated the Bomberg Talmud, see Marvin J. Heller, *Printing the Talmud: A History of the Earliest Printed Editions of the Talmud* (New York, 1992).
3. There is a report in Abraham ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*, ed. G. Cohen (Philadelphia, 1967), 66, that Rabbi Isaac ben Shatnash "interpreted the whole of the Talmud into Arabic for the Moslem King al-Hakam in the tenth century." Solomon ben Joseph ibn Ayyub, the translator of Rambam's *Commentary on the Mishnah* into Hebrew, wrote in his introduction to his commentary on Mishnah *Nezikin* (printed in the standard editions of the Talmud at the beginning of Rambam's commentary on Mishnah, *Bava Kamma*) that, "Rabbenu Hanokh, son of Moses, explained the entire Talmud in Arabic." Tuviah Preshel, "Targum ha-Shas li-Sfot Nekhar u-Mitnagdav," *Ha-Modia* (Sept. 24, 1954): 3, argued that Abraham ibn Daud and Solomon ben Joseph were referring to the same work. We have no other record of this translation.

4. Apart from the Jewish translations, Christians also translated portions of the Talmud. The most well-known of these translations was written by the apostate Nicholas Donin in 1238. Donin translated thirty-five sections of this work into Latin, with each section containing a different charge against it. These included allegations that the Talmud contained blasphemies against Jesus, hostilities towards Christianity, and proof that the Jews had elevated the authority of the Oral Torah over the Written Torah, thus impeding the Christian attempt to convert Jews. Donin presented these charges together with the translations to Pope Gregory IX who ordered an investigation of the Talmud. Eventually, due to these allegations, the Talmud was condemned to be burned and, in 1242, twenty-four wagon loads of books, totaling thousands of volumes, were publicly burnt in Paris. For a discussion of the events leading up to this event and the text of these thirty-five allegations, see Hēn-Melekh Merhavyah, *Ha-Talmud be-R'ei ha-Nazrut* (Jerusalem, 1970), 227 ff.

During the Renaissance, Christian interest in Jewish books, including the Talmud, grew as part of the renewed interest in classical studies. In many cases, this led later on to a need for translations of all Jewish texts. Among the most important translations by Christian Hebraists were two eighteenth century Talmud translations: a translation of the entire Mishnah together with the commentaries of Rambam and Rabbi Obadiah Bartenura (Amsterdam, 1698-1703) by the Dutch Hebraist, Willem Surenheim, and a translation of seventeen tractates of the Talmud (Vienna, 1744-1769) by Blasio Ugolini, most probably a convert from Judaism, who included these translations in a collection of thirty-four folio volumes of works by Christian authors on all aspects of Judaism. For a recent analysis of the Christian Hebraists and their interest in Jewish books, see Frank E. Manuel, *The Broken Staff* (Cambridge, 1992).

In the last three hundred years, non-Jews periodically translated selections of the Talmud to illustrate the evils of that work. For example, Johann Eisenmenger (1654-1704) translated selections of the Talmud into German as part of his 2,000 page book, *Entdecktes Judenthum* (Königsberg, 1710). The purpose of this book, as described in its last chapter, was to help Jews recognize their error and acknowledge the truth of Christianity. In the nineteenth century, Luigi Chiarini (1789-1832), an Italian cleric, was commissioned by the Russian government to translate the Talmud into French, for which he received a subsidy of 12,000 thalers. He believed that a translation of the Talmud complete with refutations of the talmudic doctrines would free the Jews from its influence. Only two volumes appeared, and they were poorly done. See *Jewish Encyclopedia* 4 (New York, 1906), 21-22.

For an analysis of the non-Jewish use of the Talmud in the last three hundred years, see the references to "talmudic tradition" in Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933* (Cambridge, 1980).

5. I will also only deal with translations or attempted translations of the entire Talmud. For a list of translations of individual tractates into Hebrew, Yiddish, French, English, and Russian, see *Ha-Enzyklopedia ha-Ivrit* 32 (Jerusalem, 1981), 889. A history of translations of the Talmud by both Jews and non-Jews up to the end of the nineteenth century can be found in Erich Bischoff, *Kritische Geschichte der Thalmud-Übersetzungen* (Frankfurt a.M., 1899).
6. Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation* (New Haven, 1993), 43. An example of the Christian opposition to translating the Bible can be found in the following report about John Wyclif's translation of the Bible into English: "This master John Wyclif translated from Latin into English . . . so that by his means it has become vulgar and more open to laymen and women who can read than it usually is to quite learned clergy of good intelligence." See *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Cambridge, 1969), II, 388.
7. For a discussion of other historical accounts of the writing of the Septuagint, see Sidney Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study* (Ann Arbor, 1978). The most

important and earliest is *The Letter of Aristeas*, written by Aristeas, a Jew who claimed to have lived at the time of the writing of that work. While most historians dismiss his claim, this letter is still the earliest account of the Septuagint. According to Aristeas, King Ptolemy requested this translation of the Bible as part of his attempt to collect all of the books in the world for his royal library (*ibid.*, 36). Other historians argue that it was composed to meet the needs of Alexandrian Jewry that no longer knew how to read Hebrew (*ibid.*, 59). For the dating of *The Letter of Aristeas*, see *ibid.*, 29-58. There is an abundant literature on the Septuagint; see Jellicoe and his accompanying bibliography.

8. *Massekhet Soferim* 1:7. This account is corroborated in *Megillat Ta'anit* in which we are told, "On the eighth day of Tevet, the Torah was translated into Greek in the days of King Ptolemy and, as a result, darkness descended on the world for three days." This tradition is quoted in *Shulhan 'Arukh, Orach Hayyim*, 580:2, and there was a custom to fast on this day in commemoration of this event. While the current custom is not to fast on the eighth of Tevet, the translation of the Torah into Greek is mentioned in the *selihot* that are recited on the fast of 'Asarah be-Tevet, two days later. Philo, *Life of Moses*, trans. F.H. Colson (London, 1935), II, no. 41, recorded that Jews and non-Jews used to celebrate on the day that the Torah was translated on the island of Pharos to "both do honor to the place in which the light of the version first shone out, and also to thank God for the good gift so old yet ever young." While Philo does not give the date of the translation, Yehoshua Amir, "Shetei Panim le-Aggadat ha-Nes she-be-Targum ha-Shiv'im," *Bet Mikra* 133 (1993): 186, argued that the fast day of the eighth of Tevet may be an outgrowth of that celebration. Originally, the translation was viewed as a reason for rejoicing since the Torah could be understood by all people. When Jewish tradition began to view the translation as a reason for mourning, this day was transformed into a fast day. (It is not clear, according to Amir, when this change of attitude took place.)
9. Philo, *Life of Moses*, II no. 37, also understood that there was divine intervention in this translation. For a discussion of the relationship between the account in the Talmud and the account in Philo, see Y. Amir, 183-86.
10. There were translations of the Torah by Jews in the Middle Ages, the most well-known of which was prepared by Rav Saadiah Gaon into Arabic in the tenth century. We do not know of any opposition to that translation or to any other translation during that period.
11. For an in-depth treatment of the emancipation of the Jews during this period, see Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto* (New York, 1973).
12. For more information about this aspect of Mendelssohn's life, see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Philadelphia, 1973).
13. The tradition of printing works in the vernacular in Hebrew characters was a popular one at the time. There were several reasons for this practice. First, many Jews were unable to read the vernacular alphabet. The author of *Shulhan ha-Panim* (Salonika, 1648), a Ladino translation of the laws of the *Shulhan 'Arukh*, wrote in his introduction that he composed his work in Hebrew characters because "there are many simple people who do not understand any other writing." Furthermore, Hebrew characters, in most cases, prevented the non-Jews from reading the books. Finally, Hebrew characters helped ensure that the Jews would not become too acculturated into the secular society. As Hatam Sofer instructed his descendants in his last will and testament, "And the girls should study books written in German. However, they must be written in our letters and based on the *aggadot* of the Rabbis." (The Hebrew text of Hatam Sofer's last will and testament can be found in R. Moses Sofer, *Sefer ha-Zikbronot* [Jerusalem, 1957], 119-23.) While Mendelssohn does not write explicitly why he composed his work in the Hebrew alphabet, it would appear that he was trying to ensure that his translation would be readable by the German Jew who did not yet know the German alphabet.

This issue of writing works in the Hebrew alphabet, along with many others concerning the translation of the Talmud and the opposition to it, can be found in a four part article by Tuviah Preshel, "Targum ha-Shas li-Sfot Nekhar u-Mitnagdav," *Ha-Modia* (Sept. 3, 1954): 3; (Sept. 10, 1954): 3; (Sept. 24, 1954): 3; and (Oct. 11, 1954): 4. I would like to thank Rabbi Preshel for bringing this article to my attention.

14. There is an abundant literature on Mendelssohn and his translation. For a well-known treatment of the topic, see A. Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*, 368-420. See also Perez Sandler, *Ha-Biur la-Torah shel Moshe Mendelssohn ve-Sioto, Hitbavuto ve-Hashpa'ato* (Jerusalem, 1941); Moshe S. Samet, "Moshe Mendelssohn, Naftali Herz Veizel ve-Rabbanei Doram," in *Mehkarim be-Toledot 'Am Yisrael ve-Erez Yisrael*, ed. A. Gilboa and B. Mevorach (Haifa, 1970), I, 233-57, and Meir Hildesheimer, "Moses Mendelssohn in Nineteenth Century Rabbinical Literature," *PAAJR* 55 (1988): 79-133.
15. *Or le-Netivab* was printed as the introduction to the first edition of Mendelssohn's translation, *Netivot ha-Shalom* (Berlin, 1783). The translation of this quote and a discussion of it can be found in A. Altmann, 368-69. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of post-talmudic citations are my own.
16. This letter, dated June 29, 1779, is reprinted in A. Altmann, 371. In it, Mendelssohn repeated the necessity of such a translation for the sake of the children, but added that it would also serve to expose the German Jews to culture.
17. This *haskamah* is found in *Netivot ha-Shalom*, 1a-1b, and the translation is found in A. Altmann, 379-80.
18. The edition published in Vienna in 1817-1818 contained the *haskamot* of Rabbi Mordechai Banet, rabbi of Nikolsburg and district rabbi of Moravia. The edition that appeared in Basel in 1822 included a *haskamah* from Rabbi Naphtali Hirsch Kazenellenbogen, rabbi of Frankfurt a.d. Oder. The edition of 1831-1833, published in Berlin, contained the *haskamot* of Rabbi Akiva Eger, the celebrated rabbi of Posen and the father-in-law of Hatam Sofer, and Rabbi Jacob Zevi Mecklenburg, rabbi of Konigsberg, and author of *Ha-Ketav ve-ha-Kabbalah*. It is noteworthy that in the *haskamot* of Rabbi Eger and Rabbi Mecklenburg no mention is made of Mendelssohn's work and it is possible that they were granting *haskamot* to an additional commentary written by Jeremias Heinemann that had been added to that edition. For an analysis of these *haskamot* and a listing of the rabbis who subscribed to the different editions of Mendelssohn's translation, see M. Hildesheimer, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 89-106.
19. An important discussion of Hatam Sofer and his opposition to change is found in J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 142-60 and *idem.*, "Kavim le-Biographiah shel he-Hatam Sofer," in *Halakhah ve-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1984), 353-86; trans. David Ellenson, "Towards a Biography of the Hatam Sofer," in *From East and West: Jews in a Changing Europe 1750-1870*, ed. F. Malino and D. Sorokin (Oxford, 1990), 223-66.
20. D. Ellenson, 256. J. Katz argued that Hatam Sofer never read Mendelssohn's works but was familiar with them from the journals of the Maskilim, *Ha-Me'asef* and *Bikurei ha-Itim*.
21. R. Sofer, *Sefer ha-Zikbronot*, *op. cit.* (n. 13). Shnayer Z. Leiman, "R. Moses Schick: The Hatam Sofer's Attitude Towards Mendelssohn's Biur," *Tradition* 24:3: 83-86 reproduced the postscript of a *teshuvah* of Maharam Schick (*Likkutei Teshuvot Hatam Sofer*, ed. E. Stern [London, 1965], 75) in which he described Hatam Sofer's attitude towards Mendelssohn's translation: "He would not touch them, he kept them at a distance, for they had the status of heretical works."

Among the other rabbis who opposed Mendelssohn's work was Rabbi Ezekiel Landau (1713-1793), the chief rabbi of Prague and the author of *Noda bi-Yehudab*. He wrote that Mendelssohn's translation "induces the young to spend their time reading Gentile books in order to become sufficiently familiar with refined German to be able to understand the translation. Our Torah is thereby

- reduced to the role of a maidservant to the German tongue." This comment is found in a *haskamah* that Rabbi Landau gave for a word-by-word German translation of the *Humash* and *Megillot* by Sussmann Glogau. He wrote that the translation of Glogau, unlike that of Mendelssohn, does not create this problem because "it is not deep and everyone is able to understand it." This *haskamah* originally appeared in *Ha-Me'asef* (Iyyar, 1786): 142-44. It was reprinted in *Mekorot le-Toledot ha-Hinnukh be-Yisrael*, ed. S. Assaf (Tel Aviv, 1954), I, 240-42. A selection from this *haskamah* is printed in English translation in Altmann, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 382-83. While Rabbi Landau was clearly opposed to Mendelssohn's translation, the report that he banned the work, a report which reached Mendelssohn, has no basis in reality. See M. Samet, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 180-84.
22. The rise of the Haskalah in Russia and Poland and the opposition to this movement is documented and analyzed in Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1983).
  23. See M. Stanislawski, 97-122, and 148-54. Mendelssohn's translation was reissued in the late 1840s by the Vilna Maskilim, A. Lebenzon and Y. Ben-Ya'akov, and broadened to include new commentaries by the editors as well as such diverse commentaries as Rabbi Obadiah Sforno, the late eighteenth-century critic Wolf Heidenheim, the Vilna Gaon, and Samuel David Luzzatto. In response to this activity, Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Lubavitch, the author of *Zemah Zedek* and the third of the Lubavitcher rebbes, issued the following plea: "To all rabbis especially in the hasidic communities: organize a *yeshivah* with a *rosh yeshivah* wherever there is a sizable group of lads requiring instruction. . . . To all hasidic *melamdim*, endeavor to enroll every single child and youth in a *heder*, leaving no one without instruction." He further advised communities to "avoid finding sources of revenue for the maintenance of the public schools." See Joseph I. Schneersohn, *The "Tzemach Tzedek" and the Haskala Movement* (New York, 1969), 60-61. Interestingly, of the eighty rabbis who subscribed to Mendelssohn's translation, only one came from Russia or Poland. See M. Hildesheimer, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 102-06.
  24. This praise of Dr. Pinner is found in a letter written by Rabbi Zevi Hirsch Lehrin to Hatam Sofer criticizing the translation of Dr. Pinner. This letter can be found in a collection of the letters of the Sofer family, *Iggerot Soferim*, ed. Solomon Sofer (Tel Aviv, 1970), II, 73-78.
  25. *Berakhot*, trans. E. M. Pinner (Berlin, 1842), 12.
  26. For a comprehensive analysis of the position of the Jews under the reign of Czar Nicholas I, see M. Stanislawski, *op. cit.* (n. 22).
  27. A German translation was especially useful to further Czar Nicholas' goals because of its proximity to Yiddish. He felt that most Jews would understand this translation, while, at the same time, being exposed to the German language. In a similar vein, a German translation of the *Mishneh Torah* of Rambam was published by the Russian government in 1850. For an analysis of this work, that contained a covert plea for the emancipation of the Jews, see Michael Stanislawski, "The Tsarist Mishneh Torah: A Study in the Cultural Politics of the Russian Haskalah," *PAAJR* 50 (1983): 165-83. It is noteworthy that the Russian Maskilim advocated learning Russian rather than German for they felt that the most preferable language was the that of the country in which one lives. For a discussion of the Haskalah and the Russian language, see Stanislawski, *op. cit.* (n. 22), 115-18.
  28. This story is recounted in Joseph Klausner, *Historiah shel ha-Safrut ha-Ivrit* (Jerusalem, 1960), III, 11-14. Luigi Chiarini, an Italian cleric, was one of the people commissioned to translate the Talmud as part of this project (see above n. 4). For more on why Dr. Pinner was unsuccessful in completing his project, see below, n. 78.
  29. This essay, written originally in German but never published in that language, was published in Hebrew translation, "Targum ha-Talmud ha-Bavli le-Germanit," *Areshet*, ed. N. Ben Menahem and I. Raphael (Jerusalem, 1960), II, 309-30.

- Besides this essay, we know little about Dr. Goldschmidt. His extensive personal library is part of the collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen.
30. For an overview of this phenomenon, see J. Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction*, *op. cit.* (n. 4), 281-91.
  31. For a description of the circumstances surrounding these two cases, as well as a stenographic report of the Meyer case, see Joseph Bloch, *My Reminiscences* (Vienna, 1923). This book serves not only as an important historical document, but also presents a flavor of the fierce anti-Semitism that was rampant at that time.
  32. This letter, dated December 15, 1935, is published in *Aresbet*, *op. cit.* (n. 29), 322.
  33. S.A. Horodezky, "Ma'aseh Rav," *ha-'Olam* (March 14, 1935), 174. Goldschmidt quoted this article in *Aresbet*, 320-22.
  34. It was reprinted in Berlin in 1964 in twelve volumes.
  35. For a history of the Jews in the United States and their acculturation, see Howard M. Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York, 1992), 174-214. For an analysis of the mass immigration to England during this period, see Todd M. Endelman, *Radical Assimilation in English Jewish History 1656-1945* (Bloomington, 1990).
  36. For two contemporaneous opinions of Rodkinson, see J. Bloch, *op. cit.* (n. 31), 138-51, and Ephraim Dienard, *Zikbronot Bat 'Ami* (New Orleans, 1920), I, 26-43. For a description of Rodkinson's dishonest and manipulative practices in Europe, see Joseph Kohen-Tzedek, *Sefat Emet* (London, 1879). This latter work was originally published with the title *Mikhael ha-Nebepakh le-Sama'el* (London, 1879), with *Mikhael* referring to Michael Rodkinson and *Sama'el* the name of Satan, but Kohen-Tzedek wrote in the introduction that he changed the title at the advice of several of his friends who felt that it was too explicit in its criticism of Rodkinson. I would like to thank Dr. Benny Ogorek and Rabbi Zalman Alpert for bringing these sources to my attention.
  37. *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud*, trans. M.L. Rodkinson (New York., 1896), I, viii, xii.
  38. *Ibid.*, xii.
  39. *Ibid.* A lengthy discussion of his method of translation is found in the Hebrew introduction to *Rosh Hashbanah* (New York, 1896), i-xix. *Rosh Hashbanah* is included in the fourth volume of his work following the traditional order of the Talmud. However, Rodkinson explained that he published this tractate first because *Berakbot*, the first tractate of the Talmud, which was supposed to be published first, was delayed at the printers. He also wrote that *Rosh Hashbanah* was preferable to other tractates since it was short, and the original text together with the translation could appear in one small volume. I would like to thank Dr. Abraham Karp for providing me with a copy of the first edition of the *Rosh Hashbanah* volume of Rodkinson's Talmud.
  40. He wrote in the Hebrew introduction to *Rosh Hashbanah* (p. xvii) that it was difficult to arrange the commentary of Rashi on the bottom of the Hebrew page since it was often much longer than the text of the Talmud itself. Due to the difficulty in arranging Rashi on the Hebrew page, Rodkinson decided to omit the Hebrew page entirely.
  41. These approbations, which he called endorsements and opinions, are included in the fourth volume of the translation in the introduction to *Rosh Hashbanah* (pp. v-xi), which was published first. Some of them are reprinted at the end of the tenth, and final, volume, *The History of the Talmud* (Boston, 1903), 9-11.
  42. *Ibid.*, 12-18. He included seven pages of news clippings with praises for his translation from such publications as *The New York Times*, *The New York Herald*, *The Washington Times* and others. It is impressive that a translation of the Talmud was so favorably reviewed in the secular press over ninety years ago.
  43. J.D. Eisenstein, *Ma'amare Bikkoret* (New York, 1897); reprinted in the second part of his autobiography, *Ozar Zikbronotai* (New York, 1929), 285-301.
  44. *Ibid.*, 286. Eisenstein claimed, *Ozar Zikbronotai*, 179, that Rodkinson did not even understand English. He charged that Rodkinson would translate the Talmud into Yiddish and he would then hire young educated men who would translate the Yiddish into English. When they came to Rodkinson to demand their salaries, Rodkinson said that they had not done an adequate job, and did not pay them. He would then hire other men to continue the job.
  45. See for example, *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 15 (Jerusalem, 1971), 768: ". . . the first attempt at what purported to be an English translation was an unscholarly abridgment in 20 volumes by M.L. Rodkinson."
  46. *The Minor Tractates*, ed. I. Epstein, was added in 1965.
  47. *The Babylonian Talmud: Seder Nezikin*, ed. I. Epstein (London, 1935), I, xxvii. It is interesting that, like many books with multiple authors, the Soncino translation was not published in the order of the Talmud. *Nezikin* was published first in 1935, *Nashim* in 1936, *Moed* in 1938, and after a twelve year hiatus during the Second World War, *Tohorot* was published in 1948, *Zera'im* in 1948, and finally *Kodashim* later that same year.
  48. *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Kodashim* ed. I. Epstein (London, 1948) I, xv. Other reactions to the translation can be found on the back of the book jacket of the 1961 edition of the Soncino Talmud. For example, Rabbi Dr. A. Feldman, Dayan of the Beth Din of London, wrote, "This translation will open up the English speaking reader the most varied and indispensable index to the collective wisdom of the post-Biblical Hebrew mind." *The Times Literary Supplement* wrote, "The rendering is accurate and scholarly . . . . In particular, the translators deserve praise for their choice of suitable equivalents for technical terms and phrases that are difficult to turn into another language."
  49. The English only edition of the Soncino Talmud was reprinted in an eighteen volume set in 1961. A Hebrew-English edition was published in twenty-nine volumes from 1960-1989. The Soncino Talmud was not fully protected by copyright in the United States, and, therefore, an unauthorized edition was published by Traditional Press in Hebrew-English in 30 volumes from 1976-1980. However, at the time of the printing of this unauthorized edition, Soncino Press secured letters from the Chief Rabbinate in England, the Rabbinical Council of America, and the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada which forbade the copying of any material from the Soncino Talmud without their consent. The letter from the Rabbinical Council of America also forbade the purchasing of the Traditional Press Talmud based on the prohibition of assisting someone in transgressing a sin. I thank Mr. Jack Goldman of Soncino Press for making copies of these letters available to me.
  50. There is a tradition that Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810-1883) attempted to have the Talmud translated into Hebrew to assist those with little or no background. He tried to gather one hundred scholars who would each translate thirty pages of the Talmud. This project was never realized due to Rabbi Salanter's inability either to find the necessary translators or to raise the necessary funds for the project. See Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Yisrael Salanter ve-Reshitah shel Tenu'at ba-Mussar* (Jerusalem, 1984), 259. Tuviah Preshel, "Rabbi Yisrael Salanter zz'l ve-Targum ha-Shas li-Sfat Nekhar," *Ha-Doar* 53 (1973): 555, argued that Rabbi Salanter never intended to actually translate the Talmud, but rather wanted to compose an extensive Hebrew commentary. This is important in light of the opposition to translations that will be discussed later. Dov Katz, *Tenu'at ba-Mussar* (Jerusalem, 1982), I, 223-24, wrote that after the proposed Hebrew translation failed, Rabbi Salanter wanted to have the Talmud translated into European languages so that talmudic study could be integrated into the curriculum of high schools and universities. But, this project also failed.
- In the 1930s, there was a debate among American Hebraists about whether there was a need for a Hebrew translation of the Talmud. S. Bernstein, "Talmud 'Ivri," *Ha-Doar* 12 (May 13, 1932): 363-64, wrote that a Hebrew translation of the

- Talmud would make it into a popular work able to be read by all, and would also revive the Hebrew language. S. Rosenfeld, "Al ha-Talmud be-Ivrit," *Ha-Doar* 12 (June 3, 1932): 413-14, argued that Dr. Bernstein was wrong on both claims. He said that by its very nature, the Talmud would never become a popular work. Furthermore, he maintained that since the Talmud was not written in pure Hebrew, it would not assist in reviving the Hebrew language.
51. Two other English translations are worthy of mention. The first is *Talmud with English Translations and Commentary*, published by El Am (Jerusalem, 1965). This translation, a project of the United Synagogue of America which was never completed, gives the vocalization and punctuation of the original text with a literal translation and an extensive commentary including details of realia and biographical notes on the talmudic sages. The other translation is one of the Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi by Prof. Jacob Neusner. These two ambitious projects, *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* ed. J. Neusner (Chicago, 1982) and *The Talmud of Babylonia: An American Translation*, trans. J. Neusner (Chico, California, 1984) were completed but were not well received in the scholarly community. The harshest criticism was written by Saul Lieberman, "A Tragedy or a Comedy?" *Journal of American Oriental Society* 104:2 (1984): 315-19, in which he wrote about two volumes of the translation of the Talmud Yerushalmi, "The right place for our English translation is the waste basket."
  52. This is from an unpublished letter by Rabbi Moses Feinstein dated 7 Iyyar 5743 written as a *baskamah* for the tractates of *Bezah* and *Rosh Hashbanah*. I would like to thank Mrs. Margy-Ruth Davis of the Aleph Society for making this letter available to me.
  53. *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition: Bava Metzia* (Jerusalem, 1989), I, ix.
  54. *Ibid.*
  55. *The Talmud: The Steinsaltz Edition: A Reference Guide* (Jerusalem, 1989), vii. The *Reference Guide* is an English translation of his *Madrikh le-Talmud* (Jerusalem, 1984).
  56. See, e.g., Leon Wieseltier, "Unlocking the Rabbi's Secrets," *The New York Times Book Review* (Dec. 17, 1989): 3, 31; Helen Dudar, "Talmudic Translator: Letting His People Know," *The Wall Street Journal* (Jan. 16, 1990): section A, 14; Walter Reich, "Opening the Book of Rabbinical Wisdom," *The Washington Post Book Review* (Jan. 7, 1990): 1,10; and "Thanks to Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, You Don't Have to be a Hebrew Scholar to Enjoy the Talmud," *People* (Dec. 18, 1989): 130. I would like to thank Mr. Arthur Kurzweil for providing me with these articles.
  57. Rabbi Steinsaltz has also begun to publish a translation of the Talmud into Russian and French. The Russian edition of the *Reference Guide* and the first volume of *Ketubot* have been published by the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the French edition of these two volumes have been published by the publisher J.C. Lattes in Paris. While there have been several translations of tractates of the Talmud into French (see e.g., below, n. 78), the only prior translation of the Talmud into Russian was an eight volume translation of the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the *Mekhilta*, *Sifra*, and tractate *Berakhot* (St. Petersburg, 1898-1912) by Nehemiah Perferkovich, a Russian orientalist.
  58. It bears this name in memory of Ephraim, Anna, and Jerome Schottenstein of Columbus, Ohio. The first volume referred to as "The Schottenstein Talmud" was *Megillah*, the third volume of the series, published in 1991. I would like to thank Mrs. Judith Calder of the Mesorah Foundation for her assistance in gathering information about the Schottenstein Talmud.
  59. For a general critique of this series, see B. Barry Levy, "Judge Not a Book by its Cover," *Tradition* 19:1 (1981): 89-95. In this article, Levy accused the ArtScroll series of being inaccurate, unscientific, and unscholarly. This article is a shortened form of his more lengthy article on this topic, "Our Torah, Your Torah and Their Torah: An Evaluation of the Artscroll Phenomenon," in *Truth and Compassion: Essays on Judaism and Religion in Memory of Rabbi Dr. Solomon Frank*, ed. H. Joseph, J.N. Lightstone, and M.D. Oppenheim (Waterloo, Ontario, 1983), 137-89. For a response to Levy, see Emanuel Feldman, *Tradition* 19:2 (1981): 192.
  60. After the first volume of the series, *Makkot*, was published in 1990, the editorship was limited to Rabbi Goldwurm. In all subsequent volumes, the translators are mentioned by name.
  61. *Talmud Bavli: Tractate Makkot* (New York, 1990), xxv-xxvi.
  62. The editors explained the rules for vocalization as follows: "Upon the counsel of *gedolim*, the vowelization [sic] generally follows the correct pronunciation. However, since this work is meant primarily as a study aid, we have striven to prepare the student for the pronunciation he will encounter in the *bais medrash*. Thus, the system of vowelization [sic] seeks a balance between grammatical precision and common usage" (*Makkot, ibid.*). One wonders whether this is an attack on the Steinsaltz Talmud which has always been careful to follow the strict rules of vocalization even when the pronunciation differs from the common usage.
  63. Later in the introduction, the editors clarified their position concerning literal translation: "In the English text, the Hebrew or Aramaic words are nearly always translated, but there are exceptions. If the Hebrew is a 'technical term' that does not lend itself to a simple or comprehensible translation—like *gezairah shavah*—the Hebrew will be transliterated and explained in the Notes" (*ibid.*).
  64. Some of the "Insights" have been incorporated into the "Notes", while the more complex ones have been omitted. This occurred because the editors felt that anyone able to understand these complex disagreements would be able to read them in the original.
  65. Rabbi Gifter's *baskamah* is the second one printed in this edition of the Talmud. The large number of *baskamot* at the beginning of each volume speaks loudly about the projected audience of this translation.
  66. This portion of the *baskamah* is quoted in Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Jewish History* (New York, 1977), 181. This translation of *Pirkei Avot* was an exception to the general opposition to Talmud translations because it contained only moralistic teachings and not halakhic rulings. During this period, plans were made in Königsberg, Warsaw, and Czernowitz to publish Yiddish translations of the Mishnah. However, they did not materialize due to stiff rabbinic opposition. See Hayyim Lieberman, "Seler Tikunei Shabbat," *Kiryat Sefer* 39 (1963-1964): 109. Since that time, individual volumes of the Talmud have been translated into Yiddish. The most well-known translation is a complete translation of the Mishnah (Montreal, 1946) by Symcha Petrushka. For a comprehensive analysis of Yiddish translations of Jewish books and the opposition to these translations by many rabbis, see the classic work by Israel Zinberg, *Toledot Safrut Yisrael* 4 (Tel Aviv, 1958), esp. 103-13.
  67. This article will deal with the opposition to translations of the Talmud from a historical perspective. It will incorporate the halakhic material as it relates to each episode. We will not deal with the formal halakhic issue of whether it is permissible to translate the Talmud, a topic which has been discussed in the responsa literature. See, for example: Rabbi Yehudah Aszod, a prominent nineteenth century Hungarian rabbi, in his *Teshuvot Mabariya, Orah Hayyim*, I, #4 who opposed translations based on the prohibition of teaching Torah to non-Jews (see below). Rabbi Shmuel Walkin followed this same reasoning in a *teshuvah* dated 1937, in *Zekan Aharon*, II, *Yoreh De'ah*, #70 in which he forbade the translation of the Mishnah into the vernacular in a case in which it was done specifically for use by non-Jews. Others have felt that the problem of translating the Talmud is a greater problem for the aggadic sections than for the halakhic parts. In the nineteenth century, Rabbi Moshe Grunwald, in *Arugat ha-Bosem, Orah Hayyim*, #214, advised someone against translating *'En Ya'akov* because, "the *aggadot* contain hidden meanings, and if the ignorant are able to read these in

- translation, they will misunderstand them and will corrupt the words of Ḥazal." In the previous *teshuva*, Rabbi Grunwald permitted the translation of halakhic works based on the community's need for them. Translations of halakhic material have become fashionable in all circles today. However, it should be noted that Rabbi Moshe Feinstein wrote in *Iggerot Moshe, Yoreh De'ah*, III, #91, that he forbade anyone from translating his *teshuvo*t because it may lead people to reach incorrect conclusions. I would like to thank Prof. David Ellenson for assisting me in locating these *teshuvo*t.
68. This is quoted in a proclamation written by Ḥatam Sofer after he had retracted his *haskamah* from Dr. Pinner's translation. A copy of this letter can be found in Raphael Rabinovicz, *Ma'amar 'al Hadpasat ha-Talmud* (Jerusalem, 1965), 247.
  69. A similar objection was expressed by Rabbi Samuel David Luzzatto (1800-1865), the Italian philosopher and exegete. Dr. Pinner's attempt to sell his subscriptions took him all the way to Italy. In Padua, he gave Rabbi Luzzatto the introductory volume in order to enlist his subscription to the entire series. In a letter printed in *Kerem Hemed* 1 (1833): 174-82, Rabbi Luzzatto pointed out the many errors he felt Dr. Pinner made and then, at the end of the letter, questioned the entire project of the translation. As Rabbi Luzzatto wrote, "Concerning this author I would ask. Is it possible to fulfill his promises? Is there enough time in a man's life to translate the entire Talmud, both Bavli and Yerushalmi, with the commentaries of Rashi and Tosafot and all the necessary notes? Rashi himself was unable to complete his commentary, and he only wrote on the Talmud Bavli" (p. 182).
  70. We do not have the text of the *haskamah* of Ḥatam Sofer; we only know of it from the proclamation he wrote after he later retracted it (see Rabinovicz, *op. cit.* [n. 68]) and other correspondence on this issue, e.g., a letter to Ḥatam Sofer from Rabbi Akiva Breslau of Altona, dated 21 Kislev, 5695 found in *Iggerot Sofetim, op. cit.* (n. 24), II, 70. It is important to note that this presentation of the dispute is from Ḥatam Sofer's perspective.
  71. This opposition, the subsequent retraction of the *haskamah*, and its aftermath are all discussed in Zevi Hirsch Lehrin, "Be-Inyan Targum ha-Talmud be-Leshon Ashkenaz," *Moriah* 9-10 (1992): 75-78. I would like to thank Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter for bringing this article to my attention.
  72. We do not have the text of this retraction either. However, it too is referred to by Ḥatam Sofer in the proclamation that he wrote which is printed in Rabinovicz, as well as in the letter that was sent to Ḥatam Sofer by Rabbi Akiva Breslau of Altona. See above, no. 70.
  73. See R. Rabinovicz, *op. cit.* (n. 68), 247. In the introduction to his edition of *Berakhot* (Berlin, 1842), 12, Dr. Pinner responded to his critics: "I am letting it be known to all those who speak badly about me, that I will not listen to them. They dress and walk like righteous people but in truth they are full of evil and deceit. It is not for them or their companions that I have written this work."
  74. For a short biography of Dr. Lehrin, see Z.H. Lehrin, *op. cit.* (n. 71), 75.
  75. *Iggerot Sofetim, op. cit.* (n. 24), II, 74-75. Rabbi Lehrin clearly intended to identify Dr. Pinner's translation with that of Mendelsohn which he knew Ḥatam Sofer so viciously opposed.
  76. The Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 59a states, "A heathen who studies Torah is to be executed." This prohibition is quoted by Rambam in his *Mishneh Torah, Hil. Melakhim* 10:9. The Talmud includes a second prohibition in *Hagigah* 13a against teaching a non-Jew Torah but this prohibition is not mentioned by Rambam. *Minḥat Hinukh*, # 232, suggests that Rambam does not list it because it is included in the general prohibition of placing a stumbling block before the blind.
- There are many issues involved in the question of teaching Torah to non-Jews. Two important articles have been written on the topic: for a historical perspective, see Isaac. H. Mann, "The Prohibition of Teaching Non-Jews Torah: Its Historical Development" *Gesher* 8 (1981): 122-73, and for a halakhic perspective,

- see J. David Bleich, *Contemporary Halakhic Problems* (New York, 1983), II, 311-40.
77. *Iggerot Sofetim*, II, 77.
  78. As noted above, Dr. Pinner was only successful in completing one volume of his translation, *Berakhot*. The reason for his inability to complete more of this project is a matter of controversy. Rabbi Leopold Greenwald wrote in *Ozar Nehmad* (Cleveland, n.d.), 83 that he heeded the words of Ḥatam Sofer and when Ḥatam Sofer retracted his *haskamah*, Dr. Pinner canceled his project. This argument is dubious because the *Berakhot* translation was printed in 1842, two years after the death of Ḥatam Sofer. J. Klausner, *op. cit.* (n. 28), 14, argued that Dr. Pinner was forced to stop his project because when Czar Nicholas' censor realized that Dr. Pinner was not translating the Talmud to expose the evils of the Talmud as they had anticipated, the Czar took away the permission to continue it.
- There are reports of other attempted translations of the Talmud during this period. Israel Michael Rabinowicz published four volumes of a French translation of the Talmud in the 1870's to counter the frequent attacks of the French anti-Semites against it. See Zoza Szajkowski, "The Alliance Israelite Universelle and East-European Jewry in the 60's," *Jewish Social Studies* 4 (April, 1942): 142-43. I would like to thank Dr. Jonathan Helfand for bringing this source to my attention. Isaak Suwalki, a Hebrew writer from Poland, wrote in the introduction to his *Hayyet ha-Yehudi 'al pi ha-Talmud* (Warsaw, 1889), 3-8, that there were many people who wanted to translate the Talmud into European languages in order to present the non-Jews with an accurate account of it. Suwalki was opposed to these attempts because he felt that the non-Jews would not take the necessary time to study the Talmud, even if it was translated. I would like to thank Rabbi Jordan Yagur for bringing this source to my attention. In a similar vein, Mordecai Lipson wrote in his collection of legends and folk stories, *Mi-Dor Dor* (Tel Aviv, 1968), 7-8, that there were those who wanted to translate the Talmud into Russian and they asked Rabbi Isaac Elhanan Spektor (1817-1896), the rabbi of Kovno, for his approval. Rabbi Spektor opposed the translation, claiming that as long as non-Jews are unable to read the Talmud, Jews can easily refute their claims. However, if non-Jews are given the opportunity to understand the Talmud, Jews would no longer be able to refute their arguments so easily.
79. Rabbi David Zevi Hoffmann (1843-1921) did write several articles that were critical of Goldschmidt's translation. However, these articles pointed out flaws in the job that Goldschmidt was doing, but did not oppose translations in general. See *Zeitschrift für Hebraische Bibliographie* 1 (1896-97): 67-71, 100-03, 152-55, 181-85. Goldschmidt responded to these criticisms in a pamphlet, *Die Recension des Herrn Dr. D. Hoffmann über Meine Talmudausgabe in Lichteder Wahrheit* (Charlottenburg, 1896). Interestingly, Rabbi Hoffmann himself translated two orders of the Mishnah into German, *Seder Nezikin* (Berlin, 1893-1897) and *Seder Tohorot* (Berlin, 1910).
  80. Samuel A. Horodezky, *op. cit.* (n. 33), reprinted in Goldschmidt, *Areshet, op. cit.* (n. 29), 321. Horodezky wrote that, in the end, his opponents recognized the greatness of his work and sang Dr. Goldschmidt's praises. There is no other record of this change of heart.
  81. For a biography and a list of works by Rabbi Sperber, see Yizhak Yosef Cohen, *Hakhmei Transylvania* (Jerusalem, 1989), 260-62.
  82. This is a play on the verse in Numbers 17:2.
  83. David Sperber, *Afarkasta de-Ania* (Romania, 1940), I, #46. Rabbi Sperber referred to this article in reference to the question of whether the prohibition of teaching Torah to non-Jews applies to teaching them Torah in translation. He argued that even this is prohibited and noted that he elaborated on this topic in this unpublished article.
  84. See T. Preshel, *op. cit.* (n. 12), (Sept. 10, 1954): 3.
  85. *Iggerot Sofetim, op. cit.* (n. 24), II, 78, n. 4.

86. While Rabbi Adler was not accepted among the members of the British rabbinate, he was well respected in other rabbinic circles. This is evident from the *baskamot* included in his books. *Mareh Koben* (London, 1928) contains a long series of *baskamot* written by leading rabbinic authorities such as Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Rabbi David Zevi Hoffmann. 'Emek ba-Bakha I (Lithuania, 1935), contains the *baskamab* of Rabbi Joseph Rozin, the Rogachover.
87. Shemaryahu Menashe Adler, 'Emek ba-Bakha II (Lithuania, 1935), 6. He included these episodes as part of a prayer that he should not be harmed by the Chief Rabbinate, which he referred to as the Satan.
88. *Ibid.*, 29-68.
89. *Die Zeit* (22 Adar II 5695). The article is reprinted in the original Yiddish in *Emek ba-Bakha*, II, 29.
90. 'Emek ba-Bakha, II, 30.
91. *Ibid.*, 31. In his second letter to Rabbi Adler, the Rogachover not only rescinded his original *baskamab*, but also clarified his original position. See *ibid.*, 66.
92. *Ibid.*, 65-66. Rabbi Adler added an addendum to this letter saying that in a case where the text will only be read by Jews, the Rogachover permitted the commentary to be written in the vernacular, but he thinks that it should at least be written in Hebrew characters.
93. *Ibid.*, 66-68. Rabbi Adler wrote that he received a copy of Hatam Sofer's proclamation from a rabbi in London who wanted to remain anonymous.
94. *Ibid.*, 30. It is also noteworthy that Rabbi Adler published this volume in Lithuania. In all likelihood, he was not able to find anyone in England willing to publish it.
95. The only other criticism of the Soncino translation that I have found is quoted in a review of the English translation of the Talmud edited by Jacob Neusner. "Prior to its publication, many talmudic scholars worried that the 'mystery' of Israel would be revealed and available for appropriation by all. No sooner had the translation appeared when anxiety abated. It became obvious that the translation was no less 'esoteric' than the original." See Harry Fox, "Jaffee's *The Talmud of Babylonia: Horayot*," *JQR* 79 (1989): 235.
96. See, e.g., Kenneth L. Cohen, "Competition for Rabbi Steinsaltz," *Jewish Spectator* 56:2 (Fall 1991): 57 who wrote, "Steinsaltz was to the seminarian what Monarch Notes are to the high school student."
97. The entire episode is described in the English edition of *Yated Ne'eman* (August 18, 1989): 1. The problem began, according to the report, when a group of *ba'alei teshuvah* approached a man in the Kollel Hazon Ish to ask whether some of Rabbi Steinsaltz's books would be appropriate for a library they were establishing. The man in the kollel was disturbed by what he found in these books and he began an investigation into the other works of Rabbi Steinsaltz.
98. The letters written by such authorities as Rabbi Schach, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, and Rabbi Eliashiv are printed on page 19 of that issue of *Yated Ne'eman*. There are, in total, eight letters published which criticize Rabbi Steinsaltz.
99. The three books mentioned in the original ban were: *The Essential Talmud*, *Women in Tanach*, and *Biblical Images*. According to the report in *Yated Ne'eman*, 1, "In these books condemned by the BaDaZ, the objections were not to isolated sentences but to the whole tenor of the works. Transcribers can distort single sentences, but no transcriber could, for instance, fashion from whole cloth the story of the marriage of David Hamelech and Michal bas Shaul as one of a country vulgarian, *chas v'shalom*, and a city girl. For such constructions, Rabbi Steinsaltz must bear responsibility." The references to the transcriber are aimed at refuting the claim made by Rabbi Steinsaltz's institute which stated that the errors found in these books were the results of "strange hands mixing in" and did not reflect the opinion of Rabbi Steinsaltz "who had no intention of speaking disparagingly of Chazal." See *Yated Ne'eman*, *ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*, 2. The translation is that of *Yated Ne'eman*. The original Hebrew letter is

- also included in that issue of *Yated Ne'eman*.
101. There were other criticisms of the Steinsaltz Talmud as well. Rabbi Joseph Elias wrote a long article, "Popularizing the Talmud: An Analytical Study of the Steinsaltz Approach to the Talmud," *The Jewish Observer* 22:10 (January, 1990): 18-27, in which he criticized Rabbi Steinsaltz's works, specifically his Talmud, for what he considered heresy. Rabbi Elias argued that Rabbi Steinsaltz did not pay the proper respect to the traditional understanding of Jewish law and the rabbinic role in this process. Rabbi Matis Greenblatt responded to these charges in "Rabbi Steinsaltz's Approach to the Oral Tradition-Revisited," *The Jewish Observer* 23:8 (November, 1990): 13-16 in which he admitted that Rabbi Steinsaltz made certain errors in presentation, but defended Rabbi Steinsaltz's basic philosophy. In that same issue, pages 19-26, Rabbi Elias responded to Rabbi Greenblatt. Rabbi Aharon Feldman, "Learning Gemara in English: The Steinsaltz Talmud Translation," *Tradition* 25:4 (1991): 48-64 found fault with Rabbi Steinsaltz's Talmud. He wrote, "... the beauty of the Steinsaltz Talmud is skin deep. Where a straightforward translation is required, an excellent job is done. However, once it ventures into the deeper waters of clarifying the subtleties of Talmudic discourse and of its commentators, it runs out of strength and begins to flounder." He then listed what he considered to be many inaccuracies of the Steinsaltz Talmud. In the next issue of that journal, *Tradition* 26:2 (1992): 111-21, Rabbi Moshe Soler, the research editor of the Steinsaltz English Talmud, responded to Rabbi Feldman. That issue also contains a reply by Rabbi Feldman to Rabbi Soler's letter (pp. 123-26) and a letter written by David Hojda (pp. 121-23) that emphasizes the importance of the Steinsaltz Talmud for the layman.
102. *Makkot*, *op. cit.* (n. 61), xxxv.
103. *Eruvin* (New York, 1990). This statement is not included with the other *baskamot* but rather as a blessing on the first page from both Rabbi Shelomo Zalman Auerbach and Rabbi Eliashiv. At the conclusion of the blessing it is written, "Harav Eliashiv said: 'Because of the times we live in, it is a great *mitzvah* to proceed with this project.' He requested that the following be inserted into this volume in his name." Then the above quote is written in Hebrew. In the first volume of *Makkot*, there is a blessing from Rabbi Eliashiv; however the text of the blessing does not appear in full.
104. This *baskamab* appears on the fifth and sixth pages of *baskamot*.
105. It is noteworthy that the *baskamab* written by Rabbi Simon Schwab to this volume praises the editors for having chosen not to call their work a translation. However, his reason is not based on the fact that the Talmud cannot be translated but, rather, that a translation will allow people to read the Talmud as "they would read a history book, *chas v'shalom*."
106. *Berakbot*, trans. E. M. Pinner, *op. cit.* (n. 25), 12.
107. See above, n. 76.
108. See I. Mann, *ibid.*, for an excellent historical overview on this issue. It is interesting that the attitude of the rabbis on this matter clearly reflected the relationship between Jews and non-Jews at each period during history.
109. See, e.g., the responsa of Rabbi Schneur Reiz, "Be-Inyan ly Yeot Lilmod Torah be-Radio be-Anglit," *Ha-Maor* 29:1 (1976-77): 16-18, as well as the view of Rabbi Israel Weltatz, "Harza'at Tanakh be-Anglit ba-Radio," *Ha-Maor* 8:5 (1956-57): 8-9 who forbade the airing of Torah classes in English on the radio. Rabbi Weltatz suggested that this is similar to Mendelssohn's translation which also allowed the non-Jews to study Torah. The controversy over Mendelssohn's translation is not forgotten even today.
110. See, e.g., 'Avodah Zarah 6b which permits a Jew to accept a gift from an idolater on the day of his festival even though this may lead the idolater to thank his god because of *eiavab*; the idolater will be upset if the Jew refuses to accept the gift. The Talmud ('Avodah Zarah 26a) also permits a Jewess to serve as a midwife for an idolater even though she is assisting in the birth of an idol worshipper

- because of the ill feelings that could arise if she refused to do so. For a complete list of those conducts permitted because of *etivab*, see *Enzyklopedia Talmudti* 1 (Jerusalem, 1987), 492.
111. R. Yehiel Ya'akov Weinberg, *Seridei Esh* 2 (Jerusalem, 1962), #92. In *teshuvab* #90, Rabbi Weinberg was asked a similar question and there he attempted to permit the teaching of non-Jews based on the decision of Rambam (*Hil. Melakhim* 10:9) that the only time that it is forbidden to teach non-Jews is if they want to learn for religious purposes. However, if their interest is purely intellectual, then it would be permitted. However, he concluded that *teshuvab* with the words, "and each one can choose his own course" and, in *teshuvab* #92, expressed doubt about whether this is the correct interpretation of that Rambam.
  112. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, *Iggerot Moshe, Yoreh De'ab*, II, #132. Rabbi Feinstein confirmed this opinion in a later *teshuvab*. See *Iggerot Moshe, Yoreh De'ab*, III, #90.
  113. See R. Pinhas M. Teitz, "Limud Torah me-'Al Galei ha-Radio bi-Sefat Nekhar," *Ha-Pardes* 28:10 (1953-1954):1-4. Rabbi Teitz was responding to a request by the listeners of his weekly Talmud class on the radio to add an English portion of the program for those who did not understand Yiddish. He concluded that it was permissible. This article was reprinted in *Ha-Maor* 28:6 (1976): 10-14. In this reprinted article, R. Teitz added that twenty years after the original article was written, much had changed and now only ten percent of the Orthodox population speaks and understands Yiddish. Therefore, he strongly affirmed his decision to deliver the Talmud class on the radio in English.
  114. R. Menashe Klein, *Mishneh Halakhot* 5 (Tel Aviv, 1972), #172. While Rabbi Klein argued that there is no prohibition of teaching Torah to non-Jews by broadcasting these television programs, he felt that television is not an appropriate medium through which to learn Torah. He was also afraid that by broadcasting Torah programs, people may be lead to watch other television programs, which he felt was improper.
  115. *Iggerot Soferim, op. cit.* (n. 24), II, 77.
  116. A history of anti-Semitism, as well as an analysis of the changes in its causes, can be found in Robert S. Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (New York, 1991).
  117. For an analysis of how the Christians used the Talmud as a polemic against Jews, see the seminal article by Amos Funkenstein, "Ha-Temurot be-Vikkua' ha-Dat she-ben Yehudim le-Nozrim be-Me'ah ha-Yod-Bet," *Ziyyon* 33:3-4 (1968): 125-44, and Merhavayah, *op. cit.* (n. 4).
  118. Ernest Renan, *Histoire general et systeme compare des langues semetiques* (Paris, 1855), 4, quoted in R. Wistrich, 47.
  119. George Steiner wrote in his monumental work on the history of translations, *After Babel* (Oxford, 1992), 275, "It can be argued that all theories of translation—formal, pragmatic, chronological—are only variants of a single, inescapable question. In what ways can or ought fidelity to be achieved? The issue has been debated for two thousand years." For a list of the works that discuss the history of translations and theories of translation, see the extensive bibliography in G. Steiner, 500-16, and Barnstone, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 279-91.
  120. L. Wieseltier, *op. cit.* (n. 56). A similar point is made in the introduction to the Schottenstein edition: "Thus, the Gemara cannot be 'translated,' in the sense that one captures and transfers the meaning of words to a foreign tongue. The essence of the Gemara is understanding its reasoning and analysis of the laws, based on the methodology that was conveyed to Moses at Sinai" (*Makkot, op. cit.* [n. 6], xxv).
  121. W. Barnstone, *op. cit.* (n. 6), 42.
  122. The reservation about translations resulting in a potential neglect of the Hebrew language was expressed by Alan Mintz, "Hebrew in America," *Commentary* 96:1 (July, 1993): 42-46, who wrote: "If even a fraction of the intellectual resources currently being devoted to the task of translating and popularizing the Jewish experience into the American idiom were to be diverted instead toward the task of making it easier to attain a basic Hebrew literacy, the gain would be substantial."
  123. For an interesting presentation of the argument that translations are important only as a vehicle to better understand the original Hebrew and not to replace the original, see the *derashab* of Rabbi Samuel Landau, the son of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, in *Abavat Ziyyon* (Warsaw, 1881), 19a, reprinted as the second part of his father's *derashbot, Doresh le-Ziyyon* (Brooklyn, 1974), in which he instructed parents how to educate their children. He wrote that the knowledge of Hebrew is critical because a child will be more prone to accept the teachings of the Torah when they are transmitted in the language in which God gave them to the Jewish people. He was critical of those who wrote German translations of the *Siddur* and the *Humash* in order to replace the original.

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Jacob J. Schacter, Editor

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## Letters to the Editor

TO THE EDITOR:

I read with great interest Rabbi Adam Mintz' "Words, Meaning and Spirit: The Talmud in Translation", *The Torah u-Madda Journal* 5 (1994).

Rabbi Mintz deals largely with the attitude of leading rabbis to the translation of the Talmud and it is, probably, for this reason that he did not mention a Hebrew translation of three tractates of the Babylonian Talmud which was published in Israel between 1952 and 1960. This translation did not elicit any public comment by rabbinic authorities.

The Razal Company was founded in the 1940's for the purpose of publishing the Babylonian Talmud with a Hebrew translation, accompanied by a new commentary, variant readings and source references. The late Prof. Jacob Nachum Epstein, Professor of Talmud at the Hebrew University, was named general editor. In all, three tractates were published: *Baba Kamma*, translated and explained by Dr. Ezra Zion Melamed (1952); *Baba Batra*, translated and explained by Prof. Shraga Abramson (1958); and *Baba Mezi'a*, translated and explained by Dr. Moses Nahum Zobel and Prof. Hayyim Zalman Dimitrovsky, and edited by Dr. E. Z. Melamed (1960). The volumes, in which the text of the Talmud and the Hebrew translation appear side by side, were published by the Dvir and Massada publishing houses. Prof. Epstein, who died in 1952, edited *Baba*

*Kamma* and examined the first four chapters of the *Baba Batra* edition.

The late Prof. Mordecai Margaliot, author and editor, authority on Midrashic and early rabbinic literature, told me that he had been among the first to be approached by Prof. Epstein to collaborate on this project and was asked to prepare a sample translation. During a visit to the Hazon Ish זצ"ל—Prof. Margaliot's father was on very friendly terms with him—the latter asked him about his work and studies. When told of the project to translate the Talmud into Hebrew, the Hazon Ish expressed his opposition to the project. He said, "Zol'n zei nisht meinen as men ken lernen Gemore un a rebben" (let them—people—not believe that one can study the Talmud without a teacher). Following his conversation with the Hazon Ish זצ"ל, Prof. Margaliot withdrew from the project.

The scope of Rabbi Mintz' fine study did not call for a listing of all the various translations of the Talmud. May I, therefore, be permitted to mention that besides Rabbi Steinsaltz's edition, another Hebrew translation of the Talmud has been published in Israel: *Talmud Bavli 'im Targum 'Ivri Meforash* by Shimon Ben-Shemen. In this edition, the talmudic text is provided with punctuation marks and is accompanied by an elucidated Hebrew translation. Other features designed to help the student include translations of Aramaic words and biographical notes

about Tannaim and Amoraim.

Only a few tractates of this edition have appeared thus far. I have seen the following: *Ta'anit* (1966), *Mo'ed Katan* (1967), *Megillah* (1967), *Hagigah* (1968), *Baba Kamma* (1971), *Baba Mezia* (1978) and *Baba Batra* (2 vols., 1979-1981).

In addition, several other Hebrew translations have appeared. Rabbi Nissim Benjamin Ohana (1882-1962) was a native of Algeria, served as a rabbi in various countries, and for the last 15 years of his life was Sefardi Chief Rabbi of Haifa. He translated into Hebrew the tractates *Ketubot*, *Kiddushin*, *Baba Kamma*, *Baba Mezia* and *Baba Batra* of the Babylonian Talmud. It seems, however, that only *Kiddushin* (1968), *Ketubot* (1969) and *Baba Mezia* (1972) were printed. These editions feature only the translated text together with explanatory notes (I have seen only the translations of *Ketubot* and *Kiddushin*).

In 1968, the "Organization for Talmud-Illustration and Oral-Tora Exploration" (this is the official English title of that body) of Tel Aviv published a Hebrew translation of tractate *Beza'ab* (*Yom Tov*) of the Babylonian Talmud. This edition features reproductions of the original Talmud pages (with the talmudic text fully vocalized) and, on opposite pages, the Hebrew translation of the text, accompanied by a commentary and illustrations. The translation and commentary were prepared by Abraham Arazi. The volume also contains special features, some in English, to help the student. Six years later, the organization published a translation of the tractate *Rosh Hashanah* in the same format. The translation and commentary were prepared by Shmuel Dov Gevaryahu-Gottesmann with E. Rubin as editor. The special features in Hebrew include an essay on the Hebrew calendar. Rabbi Y. Y.

Baruch Rabinowitz (Grand Rabbi of Munkacz), Chief Rabbi of Holon, served as chairman of the editorial board of both volumes. Prominent rabbis who were associated with the project included the late Rabbi I. Y. Unterman, Chief Rabbi of Israel, and the late Rabbi Dr. Kalman Kahana, Poalei Agudat Israel leader.

In 5733 (1972-73), Mordecai Levanon published Tractate *Berakhot* of the Babylonian Talmud with a Hebrew translation, notes and explanations in Jerusalem. The talmudic text (with Rashi and Tosafot) and the Hebrew translation with notes and explanations were printed on opposite pages. The author mentions in his introduction that, in 1938-1939, a Hebrew translation of tractate *Berakhot* by Rabbi Jozef Fromowicz was printed in Warsaw. (A copy of that edition is found in the New York Public Library.) The original text (in smaller type) and the Hebrew translation (in larger type) are printed side by side. The Hebrew translation is accompanied by a commentary. Some additional features to help the student are printed at the end of the volume.

I have listed here only Hebrew translations of entire talmudic tractates.

Sincerely,  
TOVIA PRESCHER  
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

In his informative essay, "Words, Meaning and Spirit: The Talmud in Translation," Rabbi Adam Mintz demonstrates a fine intuitive sense in concluding that even some of the rabbinic authorities who issued *baskamot* for the Schottenstein Talmud did so with ambivalence.

For at least one noted rabbi, however, ambivalence ultimately turned into active opposition. In 1991, Rabbi Menashe Klein prepared

a work for publication, *Kuntres—Shonu Hakhamim bi-Lashon ha-Mishnab*, that specifically reaffirmed the previous ban on the Soncino edition of the Talmud and applied it as well to the Schottenstein Talmud. He wrote:

... To my friends and dear students and especially to *b'nai yeshivot* and *b'nai Torah* ... Regarding the matter about which many of you have asked: whether the English translation known as the Soncino Edition, which was banned by the scholars and Roshei Yeshivot of the previous generation ... now others have arisen and plan to translate the Talmud into English. Is there a difference between this situation and the preceding one or is there no difference?

RESPONSE: Your question touches the very existence of the Holy Torah in our generation and in coming generations. ... Although we concede that it is the intention of the translators to act for the benefit of Heaven, nevertheless it is apparent that it is the work Satan succeeding. ... Furthermore, we have never seen this kind of behavior practiced by our ancestors in any of their previous diasporas. ... As for making the Talmud accessible to *ba'alei teshuvah*, I have always maintained that the first activity should be teaching them Hebrew.

These are the words of one who is pained at the suffering of the Torah that is now being held captive. Now, my friends who obey *da'at Torah*, study God's Torah as it was studied through all previous generations in the original Holy Tongue. Do not touch these English elucidations no matter who is responsible for the translations.

Somehow, Rabbi Klein was persuaded that it was politically inexpedient to challenge Mesorah Publications, and the galleys were deposited in his shul's *shemot* box, where they were retrieved by an enterprising bibliophile and circulated as samizdat literature. By 1994, however, conditions had apparently changed, and Rabbi Klein resurrected his polemic against the Schottenstein Talmud, merely amending the date on the title-page.

Perhaps the great inroads made by the Schottenstein Talmud in essentially replacing the Vilna *Shas* as the standard *Shas* used in our community rekindled Rabbi Klein's resolve.

On another note, Rabbi Mintz's conclusion in n. 21 (p. 145) downplaying the extent of Rabbi Ezekiel Landau's opposition to Moses Mendelssohn needs to be amended in light of the article by Y. N. Heshel, "Da'atam shel Gedolei ha-Dor be-Milhamtam Neged ha-Maskil Naftali Herz Weisel," *Kovez Bett Aharon ve-Yisrael* 45 (Shevat-Adar 5753): 119-35. The facsimile reproduction (on p. 124) of Rabbi Landau's letter to Rabbi Zevi Hirsh of Berlin, written in Rabbi Landau's own hand, finally establishes the authenticity of this letter which had been suspected as being a forgery since its first publication in the 1924 edition of *Lev Turt*.

In this document, Rabbi Landau describes Mendelssohn as follows: "Now I see that all those who judge him harshly are indeed correct, for he has now proclaimed that he has no share in the God of Israel or His Torah ... He is like Ravshakeh, an apostate ... a sectarian and an informer." These words obviously do not allow much room for exegesis.

Sincerely,  
DR. SHLOMO SPRECHER  
Brooklyn, New York

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