

<RRH> Mayer – Shlomo Sirilio’s Renaissance Talmud </RRH>

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Writing the Talmud Anew: Shlomo Sirilio’s Renaissance Edition of the Jerusalem Talmud

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The first edition of the Jerusalem Talmud (also known as the *Talmud Yerushalmi* or the Palestinian Talmud),¹ published in Daniel Bomberg’s press in Venice in 1523, reached the hands of Rabbi Shlomo Sirilio, an exceptional Torah scholar of Spanish origin, shortly after it was printed.² Sirilio’s encounter with this edition had a significant impact on his life; he decided to dedicate the next decade, during which he resided in Safed, to creating a new edition of *Seder Zera’im*, tractates *Shekalim* and *Eduyot*, which consisted primarily of a radical adaptation of the talmudic text, including a composition of new quasi-talmudic paragraphs he adjusted to the original material and a fitting commentary, based on principles that will be described below.

In this essay, I will examine in detail how Sirilio prepared his edition and set his work into its historical context, and I will explain its historical significance. I will argue that Sirilio was not, as has been thought by previous scholars, a man *sui generis*—an idiosyncratic scholar

set apart from his cultural context, operating without historical precedents or any discernable method. In reality, his work is best understood when viewed within the context of humanist scholarship and its traditions: Sirilio treated the parts he selected from the Jerusalem Talmud in a manner similar to the way humanists treated classical texts. Sirilio's detailed literary activity reflects a profound response to Renaissance textual scholarship.

A NEW EDITION OF THE JERUSALEM TALMUD

Besides the linguistic, legal, literary, and thematic differences, arguably the most significant historical difference between the Talmuds relates to their reception. From its compilation until today, the Babylonian Talmud has been thoroughly studied as the basis for every legal, philosophical, or exegetical discussion in rabbinic Judaism. It has become its central opus, mostly thanks to its accumulation and integration of several influential medieval commentaries, especially the eleventh-century exegetical commentary of Shlomo ben Isaac (Rashi), and the scholastic discussions of the tosaphists in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. By contrast, the Jerusalem Talmud was never perceived as a main source of legal knowledge. Only a few medieval sources discuss it, and most of them deal with problems arising from contradictions between the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, as opposed to the linear exegesis Rashi prepared for the Babylonian Talmud. Very few medieval manuscripts of the text itself survived. Its 1523 *editio princeps* was printed without any commentary, because no such commentary was known to its editors.³

Shlomo Sirilio was born in Spain before the Expulsion of 1492 and wandered eastward to the Ottoman Empire with other Spanish refugees. He spent time in a few of the empire's main cities: Constantinople, Adrianople, Salonika, and Bursa. During the 1540s, he immigrated to the

Land of Israel and settled in Safed. At some point, he moved to Jerusalem, where he died between 1553 and 1555. It is possible that he served in some official rabbinic capacity in Jerusalem in his final days.⁴

The first evidence of his public activity comes from the early 1530s, when Sirilio printed a small pamphlet on the laws of ritual slaughter.⁵ In Adrianople, he served as a religious judge (*dayan*) no later than the end of the 1530s. In the late 1530s and 1540s, Sirilio participated in a few local polemics, before he immigrated to Palestine.⁶ In 1548 he signed a public agreement, together with the rabbis of Jerusalem, to exempt Torah scholars from communal taxes.⁷ Nothing else is known about his public activities during the 1540s, and it is entirely possible that it was during that period of silence that he dedicated himself to creating his monumental edition.⁸

The rise of early modern Safed has been described several times as a process that began with the Ottoman occupation in 1517 and the intensive immigration of Spanish Jews to the Land of Israel. Zwi Werblowsky was the first to examine the influence from the other direction: he characterized Safed as a medieval center of intellectual, spiritual, and cultural pilgrimage that attracted the immigrants who arrived there. Moshe Idel identified an intense Italian cultural influence on Safed in the early modern era. In an earlier article, based on other sources, Idel had portrayed Safed as a counterpart to early modern Italy, and its culture as a closed one, created by Sephardic mystics who were not as open to the non-Jewish world as their friends in Salonika or Italy. Assaf Tamari proposed an explanation of this twofold image with a more sophisticated **description** of Renaissance thought in Safed. Tamari suggested that the Italian Renaissance took the shape not of a daily struggle with humanism but of a cultural heritage brought by the refugees from Spain who traveled through Italy and the Ottoman Empire before arriving at Safed. Tamari defined Safed as peripheral to the great centers of Sephardic Jews in Italy and the

Balkans, enabling its scholars to develop quasi-humanistic methods without daily friction and therefore without interruption—a kind of threatless urban laboratory where Renaissance culture could be developed without interruption.⁹

This context sheds light on several literary compositions that were written in Safed in the sixteenth century and were built along Renaissance guidelines, mainly monumental projects that aimed to collect and organize medieval knowledge. Yosef Karo sought to synthesize the whole corpus of legal knowledge using formal rules and thus to create a unified legal system for all Jewish communities. Moses Cordovero attempted to describe the whole universe, using newly developed kabbalistic language, in one static, multifaceted literary portrait. Bezalel Ashkenazi's *Shita mekubetset* and Yossef Alashkar's *Tsofnat pa'aneah* also fit this scheme, as projects that aimed to organize large amount of medieval knowledge—and the most ambitious of them all was Shlomo Almoli's *Me'asef le-khol ha-ma'hanot*, the hypothetical goal of was to gather all the existing information in the world in one book. These projects also had a significant political aspect, as expressed in the attempt by Yaakov Beirav and Moshe di Trani (a.k.a. Mabit), to renew rabbinic ordination (semikhah).¹⁰ The relationship between these literary goals, as newly arranged collections of medieval data, and the literary horizons of the Italian Renaissance, seeking to rearrange medieval knowledge in new ways, is quite clear.¹¹

The local polemics in which Sirilio was involved during the early 1540s were part of the political project of recreating Jewish culture in early modern Safed. These polemics revolved mainly around questions regarding local customs, with Sirilio seeming to prefer the customs of Salonika to those of Safed. Having emerged from a local political arena with a realistic horizon, these polemics aimed to enable the existence of Jewish community life in a city full of immigrants with contradictory customs.¹² However, Sirilio's political activity was rapidly

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eclipsed by a literary one with wider horizons, independent of the local community—from establishing the laws governing the consumption of agricultural produce to correcting the parts of the Talmud connected to the Land of Israel. From this point of view, we can describe Sirilio's transition as a move from realist political activities to metaphysical ones: creating a composition that *prima facie* was not addressed directly to his neighbors in Safed but to all of Israel—a correction of all the lacunae and errors of the Talmud.

RENDERING THE TEXT

Sirilio's edition includes an adapted version of the *Yerushalmi* for *Seder Zera'im* and tractate *Shekalim* based on the Venice edition, together with a new commentary, as well as an artificial, newly composed "Talmud" on tractate *'Eduyot*, for which there is only Mishnah but no Babylonian or Jerusalem Talmuds. On this, too, he composed a new commentary. In his introduction to this complex edition of *Zera'im*, *Shekalim*, and *'Eduyot*, Sirilio described his work as a single, coherent composition, including both Talmud and commentary.¹³

Sirilio's version of the *Yerushalmi* differs in many significant ways from the Venice edition, and consequently from all other extant versions in manuscript or print, to the extent that some scholars have claimed it was not based on the Venice edition at all but instead relied on an independent, unknown manuscript. The confusion about Sirilio's sources and methods becomes even more acute in light of the fact that he indeed did have access to an unknown manuscript, which he occasionally used. Nevertheless, it seems that just as Sirilio did not consider the printed version authoritative, he did not deem this manuscript authoritative, either.¹⁴

For his emendations, Sirilio used all the parallel passages from talmudic literature at his disposal: the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds, Tosefta, and midrashim, in addition to talmudic quotations he found in the writings of medieval scholars and some extensive

emendations based on independent literary conventions. He completed partial or missing (in his own eyes) mishnahs, baraitot, and halakhic and aggadic midrashim, and he replaced unfamiliar terminology with more familiar terminology from the Babylonian Talmud, inserting other *Yerushalmi* terminology where he deemed appropriate.¹⁵

Sirilio was not satisfied with merely adapting the text of the Jerusalem Talmud. He also added texts from other sources, primarily baraitot and talmudic discussions taken from the Babylonian version.¹⁶ The three most prominent examples are a lengthy passage taken from bSot 45a, which Sirilio inserted in yPe’ah 6.10;¹⁷ a lengthy passage from bBM 44b–45b, which he inserted at the end of yMS 2.7;¹⁸ and one exceptional passage taken from Sirilio’s *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, inserted at the beginning of y@Hal 2.6, which will be discussed below.¹⁹ The result is a dense amalgam of the two Talmuds.²⁰

The confusion about Sirilio’s sources and methods is intensified by the discovery of additional evidence in the last portion of his work, *Talmud-‘Eduyot*. Tractate *‘Eduyot* in the Mishnah is likely one of the earliest compilations of tannaitic materials. Since it predates the arrangement of the rest of tannaitic knowledge by subject (into tractates and into the six orders), or at the very least is independent of it, there are significant overlaps between it and individual mishnahs appearing in other tractates, including tractates that contain talmudic commentary.²¹ Sirilio gathered the discussions about mishnahs that parallel those in *‘Eduyot* from both Talmuds and combined them, together with passages from Sifra, Sifre, and Tosefta. Nearly all the transcribed passages also underwent a certain amount of grammatical adaptation. In this manner, Sirilio assembled a new, artificial “Talmud” for tractate *‘Eduyot*.

Surprisingly, in certain places, Sirilio added new quasitalmudic passages from his own hand next to the transcribed passages—seventeen new passages, according to Bezalel Dablitzky,

the editor of the modern *Talmud-‘Eduyot* edition.²² In some cases, these passages fill in gaps where no appropriate material was found in the Talmuds. However, in a significant number of cases, these passages do not complete lacunae but rather add new discussions to the already existing talmudic material. This textual approach is not only exceptional in Sirilio’s era; it is unprecedented in the whole reception history of the Talmud.²³

Sirilio’s artificial passages are mostly constructed upon set criteria. Since he does not mention the names of talmudic sages, the passages do not attempt to masquerade as “ancient.” In some of them, Sirilio offers explanations for the divergent opinions in the Mishnah,²⁴ while in others he discusses the question of the order in which the sages appear in it.²⁵ Some passages contain short discussions about terminology,²⁶ and others are heavily based on previous talmudic discussions or discussions of medieval commentators reframed to mimic the style of a talmudic passage.²⁷

In the only surviving manuscript of *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, which is likely an autograph, there is no marked difference in script or mise-en-page between “authentic” passages, copied from elsewhere in the talmudic corpus, and passages of Sirilio’s invention. Dablitzy, in his edition, chose to mark the artificial passages using a special font to “prevent misunderstanding,” in his words, by those who might think that they are actually passages of original Talmud.²⁸ However, Dablitzy’s typographic selection highlights Sirilio’s decision not to differentiate typographically between the artificial and authentic passages.

In the second stage, Sirilio attached a commentary to this newly created “Talmud.” He appended Rashi’s comments to passages from the *Bavli* and drew up a new commentary, similar in form to Rashi’s, both for passages from the *Yerushalmi* and for passages he authored.

One of these artificial passages is especially important for understanding the scope of Sirilio's literary project. m'Ed 1.2 delineates four opinions concerning the minimum quantity of dough that obligates the allocation of challah. Sirilio composed a lengthy talmudic discussion on this mishnah, explaining each of the four opinions. In the introduction to his work, which will be discussed later, Sirilio added a "reference guide" of sorts, listing all the parallels from the entire Talmud used in his "tractate." The list appears to have been composed as a foundation for the commentary. Two sources are mentioned in the reference guide to this mishnah: bShab 15a, where the mishnah is indeed quoted, but there is, of course, no mention of the artificial passage; and y@Hal 2.6, where the *Yerushalmi* discusses the topic of the minimum quantity that obligates challah, but the specific mishnah under discussion is not quoted, nor is the artificial passage. However, in the Sirilio edition to y@Hal 2.6, the mishnah and the artificial passage, surprisingly, appear together. In other words, the artificial passage appears twice: once in Sirilio's edition of *'Eduyot*, next to other artificial passages, and once in Sirilio's edition of y@Hal. This is the only artificial passage in the *Yerushalmi* parts of Sirilio's edition.

The unusual passage has provoked a broad scholarly debate as to whether Sirilio transcribed an original passage of *Yerushalmi* from a now-lost manuscript without acknowledgment. Amos Samuel and Tirtza Lifshitz noted that this section has a parallel in Sirilio's *Talmud- 'Eduyot* (not yet published at that time). In the introduction to his edition of *'Eduyot*, Dablitzky pointed out that the passage contains all the characteristics of the passages Sirilio invented. Thus, he claimed, the passage was composed by Sirilio in *'Eduyot* and then copied to y@Hal without openly reporting it as such.²⁹

I propose viewing this unusual passage as an extreme expression of the same phenomenon present elsewhere in the composition, even if the editorial intervention was

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somewhat less dramatic. Sirilio, I argue, did not copy any text from an existing manuscript. Rather, he believed that he was merely realizing the potential that already existed in the talmudic text. Therefore, the question of whether a talmudic paragraph is “authentic” in Sirilio’s eyes should be rethought and reframed.

MEDIEVAL MOTIVATIONS

The first place to look for the cultural context of Sirilio’s motivation is his detailed systematic introduction to his work. This introduction is the only ego document available from Sirilio and the only methodological description of his enterprise. In addition, it is the only programmatic text from the sixteenth century that extensively discusses the history of the study of the Jerusalem Talmud. Sirilio investigated the text’s legal authority, its uniqueness, and its relationship to the Babylonian Talmud. He also laid out several arguments to support the requirement to study and explain *Seder Zera ‘im* and spelled out the existing interpretive models that he used in composing his commentary. Additionally, he described scholarly engagement with *Seder Zera ‘im*, *Shekalim*, and *‘Eduyot* over the centuries, traditions that he used to frame the necessity of his own interpretive project.

Sirilio’s introduction starts with a midrash describing the practice of certain tannaitic scholars when leaving the Land of Israel to travel abroad. Upon reaching the border of the Holy Land, they began crying and stated that dwelling in the Holy Land is equivalent to fulfilling all the commandments in the Torah.³⁰ Sirilio cited this story as a means of explaining the role of his residence in the Land of Israel among the many motivations for writing his composition. He explained that he wanted to study the laws of *Zera ‘im*, which would enable him to properly

fulfill the commandments tied to settling in the Land of Israel, in preparation for “the fulfillment of all the commandments in the Torah.”³¹

Medieval Jewish immigrants to the Land of Israel often prepared their own compilations of halakhic texts regarding the laws pertaining to their destination. Thus, by citing the story of these Holy Land travelers at the start, Sirilio formulated the motivation for his work in line with the classic motivations of those who immigrated to the Land of Israel. Generally, these compilations relied heavily on the medieval rulings of Maimonides and the commentary of Shimshon of Sens (Rash) to the mishnayot of *Seder Zera'im*, as they were the main post-talmudic works on the subject.³²

Sirilio attested that, after investigating these halakhic compositions, he found them to be highly problematic. He reiterated past generations' criticism of both Maimonides and Rashi, stating that they were insufficient, compelling him to approach the relevant talmudic sources himself.

And I have found this issue as the prophet said: “Like those without eyes, we grope. We stumble at noon, as if in darkness [...]” (Isa 59.10). No books and no authors, and even Rabad [Rabbi Abraham ben David], an authorized scholar, who knew the whole Talmud, wrote that our Tosefta and the *Yerushalmi* are not textually accurate; so, who can tell what the right opinion is and what is an authentic tradition? If the great rabbi couldn't make heads or tails of the books he had in his time, it is obvious that we cannot do it.³³

The traditional motivation to study the laws of agriculture needed new construction because in Sirilio's generation there were “no authors and no books,” meaning that the interpretive knowledge of the laws of *Zera'im* did not exist as a text or a living tradition. Rabad's statement about the corrupt state of the *Yerushalmi* and the Tosefta, and scholars' inability to understand

them, helped conceptualize and support Sirilio's description of a crisis concerning the text of the Talmud. According to Sirilio, this textual crisis precluded understanding the Talmud and led him to take literary action to save it. A new textual approach was needed to preserve the scholarly tradition of acquiring the knowledge of *Seder Zera'im* in preparation for immigrating to the Land of Israel.

Criticizing previous scholars and volunteering to take the textual task upon one's own shoulders was also a medieval literary convention. Maimonides' introduction to *Mishne Torah* begins with a description of the long genealogical chain of the transmission of the Oral Torah. Maimonides described this transmission as a response to a continuous crisis that caused traditional knowledge to be dispersed and eventually lost. The ensuing severe theological crisis could only be fixed, according to Maimonides, through the action of an individual who was both aware of the depth of the crisis and had the power and ability to rectify it. Describing the actions of **Rabbi** Judah the Prince, the editor of the Mishnah who saved the textual traditions of the sages and combined them into one composition, Maimonides used the concept of a "time of crisis" as a rhetorical tool to frame his own composition as the only possible resolution to the impending catastrophe:

Therefore, have I, Moses son of Maimon, of Spain, girded up my loins and, supporting myself upon the Rock, blessed be he, made a comprehensive study of all those books and minded myself to construct out of all these compilations a clear summary on the subject of that which is forbidden or permitted, defiled or clean, along with the other laws of the Torah.³⁴

Sirilio wrote in his introduction as follows:

Therefore, have I, Shlomo son of Rabbi Yosef Sirilio, of blessed memory, from the exile of Spain, a spread and dispersed nation, girded up my loins, and I saw it fit to establish thirteen breaches in these tractates, to open in them gates and doors.³⁵

The way Sirilio constructed the image of the historical catastrophe and appointed himself the only personal solution for it, accompanied by a well-constructed self-fashioning as a textual savior, was clearly based upon the Maimonidean model. The main difference is that Sirilio's composition was not only a legal project but an exegetical one. Therefore, instead of comparing his work to that of Judah the Prince as Maimonides had done, Sirilio compared his project to the work of a more fitting model—Rashi, whom he saw as the greatest medieval commentator on the Talmud. Rashi was for Sirilio what Judah the Prince was for Maimonides. Sirilio began by limiting his project to the tractates that were not interpreted by Rashi (i.e., the tractates that have no Babylonian Talmud, but only Jerusalem, or none at all, as *'Eduyot*): *Seder Zera'im*, tractate *Shekalim* from *Seder Mo'ed*, and tractate *'Eduyot* from *Seder Nezikin*. He thus imitated Maimonides in constructing a conceptual framework, in which his literary model, Rashi, played a central role.

Rashi has been considered the most authoritative commentator on the Babylonian Talmud since his grandchildren's generation, the early tosaphists. Both choosing Rashi's Talmud commentary as a model and adapting his commentary to other compositions have a long tradition, which represents an essential part of the reception history of Rashi's commentary in the late medieval and early modern Jewish world. His commentary was adapted into a continuous commentary for Yitzhak Alfasi's (Rif) shortened and more halakhah-focused version of the Talmud. In the fifteenth century, Obadiah of Bertinoro wrote his popular commentary to the Mishnah as an adaptation of Rashi's comments on the *mishnayot* that appear in Rashi's

commentary to the *Bavli*. The writer closest in Sirilio’s time to undertake a similar literary project was his teacher Yaakov Ibn Habib, who composed *En Ya’akov* in Salonika at the beginning of the century. In this popular composition, Ibn Habib extracted the aggadic material from the Talmuds and added a commentary based on Rashi’s commentary to the suitable passages.³⁶

Ibn Habib’s composition also contains conceptual parallels to Sirilio’s work. For example, both were written to complete previously unfinished literary compositions. Ibn Habib, according to his introduction, sought to supplement Rif’s selection of halakhic talmudic passages by choosing the complementary aggadic parts, and Sirilio intended to complete Rashi’s commentary by adapting it to the tractates that lacked such a commentary.³⁷

Sirilio’s literary work might also have a few medieval precedents not mentioned in his introduction. Yaacov Sussmann described two kinds of medieval rewritten versions of *The Jerusalem Talmud*. An abbreviated version of *Seder Mo’ed* titled *Sefer Yerushalmi* (as opposed to *Talmud Yerushalmi*) was known in medieval Ashkenaz but lost over time; its remains were found in the twentieth century in books bound in Darmstadt, Munich, and Trier, and an abbreviated version of one tractate, *Shekalim*, referred to by Sussmann as “Shekalim version B,” which also includes “Bavlizations,” swapped terminology and a few “new” artificial paragraphs taken from the rest of the *Yerushalmi*. Both examples express similar features to Sirilio’s works, creating an abbreviated *Yerushalmi* text based mainly on parallels from the *Bavli*. Neither of the examples were described or even recognized before the twentieth century. It is unclear whether the few readers of the *Sefer Yerushalmi* were aware of its true nature, since this work is quoted in various medieval sources simply as the coming from the Jerusalem Talmud. *Shekalim* version B was circulated widely, more than version A, but in this case also no one realized that there were

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two different versions of the same text, to the extent that we have some medieval and early modern manuscript copies in which one version was corrected according to the other one, as if it was another text witness.³⁸

Although *Shekalim* version B and *Sefer Yerushalmi* could not have been known to Sirilio, since the existence of one was unknown and the other was unrecognized, both can testify to the scholarly traditional treatment the Jerusalem Talmud was given in medieval times; according to these examples, it was perceived as a corrupted Babylonian Talmud, requiring improvement by abbreviating it and bringing it up to par with the superior text.

REFRAMING THE TALMUD AND BUILDING IT FROM ITS REMAINS

Sirilio thought about the Talmud as a continuous commentary on the Mishnah and therefore thought it should have covered its whole six orders with one interpretive text. This assumption lead to an unprecedented conclusion: in his view, this imagined text used to be unified and complete, but it was preserved—or rather, known today—only partially. That the Talmud does not covering the whole six sedarim and is split into two different Talmuds is evidence of the corruption it underwent over the years.

For creating this conceptual framework, Sirilio had to decrease the volume of the differences between the two Talmuds and posit the existence of a Talmud as one text that explains the Mishnah, without distinguishing whether the talmudic text originated in the *Bavli*, in the *Yerushalmi*, in both, or elsewhere.

Instead of considering the two Talmuds as two different sources, Sirilio differentiated between *Seder Zera'im* and tractates *Shekalim* and *'Eduyot*, which in his eyes had sustained significant damage, and the other sections of the Talmud, which were not nearly as corrupt.

These tractates [of *Seder Zera'im*] [...] do not have any commentary, and even the Talmuds themselves are not found exact but they all are full of errors [...] and for tractate *Shekalim* too, I have found only two manuscripts full of errors. Those books were filled with errors due to the infrequency of regular study [*mi'ut regilut ha-seder*].³⁹

According to his description, the text of the corrupted parts of the Talmud reached such a state over the course of transmission, because they were not studied enough. The only way to prevent further deterioration was a continuous, active study accompanied by a fine commentary.

Sirilio considered the rest of the Talmud to have remained intact during its transmission because it was studied and interpreted, as opposed to *Seder Zera'im*, which was corrupted “due to the infrequency of regular study.” Throughout his introduction, Sirilio barely addresses the difference between the two Talmuds, instead mentioning the differences between *Seder Zera'im*, which has no proper commentary, and the other sedarim, which have Rashi’s commentary.

Besides the sharp distinction between the condition of the sedarim in Sirilio’s introduction, an unprecedented feature for rabbinic methodological text, it is worth looking at what is missing. He does not refer to the fact that the entire *Yerushalmi*, with its four orders, exhibits uniform terminology, a consistent pattern of errors, and internal references throughout. The fact that there are parallel tractates between the Talmuds is not mentioned. Sirilio only mentions the tractates by title and notes whether they have Gemara and commentary:

And I saw that the entire *Seder Mo'ed* was explained by the great scholar Rashi, excluding tractate *Shekalim* for which I did not see or hear that there is any commentary [...] therefore the Talmud [of *Shekalim*] is still closed [...]

And out of my reading and studying I have seen that in *Seder Nezikin* there is a lack of Talmud for two tractates, *Eduyot* and *Avot*, but for *Avot* I wasn’t afraid since it is

all agadah [legends] and there is a *Tosefta* [talmudic addenda] for it called *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, but *'Eduyot* is a weighty tractate [*masekhta @hamura*].⁴⁰

Sirilio saw no real difference between the Talmuds and did not consider them to be two distinct compositions. Therefore, paragraphs could easily be transferred from one Talmud to another. Technical terminology was considered a relative tool, designed only to link the pieces of halakhic knowledge, and could be replaced indiscriminately.

The fact that Sirilio did not refer to *Zera'im* specifically as the *Yerushalmi* but rather as the Talmud generically demonstrates that he did not view his editing of the text as a rewriting of the Jerusalem Talmud per se but rather as an attempt to reproduce *the* Talmud as a single text. Sirilio perceived the system of internal parallels between the Talmuds, which mainly express partial parallels that have specific similarities but do not truly mirror one another in full, as a key for expanding the talmudic text intensively. According to Sirilio, each of the two Talmuds contains a different expression of an idealized, complete, and imagined Talmud, a system of content rather than a specific text. Therefore, a paragraph with partial parallels was inherently relevant to both texts in which it appeared. The restoration of the text in any given location based on a parallel passage was not, in Sirilio's opinion, a creative act but rather an actualization of an intrinsic quality of talmudic literature. This is also the basis for the solution to the lack of commentary. Since errors needed to be corrected wherever they occurred, and Sirilio thought that Rashi's commentary could easily be adapted to the *Yerushalmi*; he used Rashi's interpretation for the *Bavli* as an equally acceptable source for an explanation of the *Yerushalmi*.⁴¹

After describing the Talmud as a system of unfinished explanations to the Mishnah accompanied by unfinished commentaries on these explanations, and after emphasizing the missing commentaries for *Zera'im* and *Shekalim* and the missing tractate of *'Eduyot*, Sirilio had to explain his own point of view as a defender and potential rewriter of the talmudic text.

Sirilio began by organizing the textual problems of Seder *Zera'im* into three categories. The first category mentioned in Sirilio's introduction is "missing lines" (*shitot*), where "line" refers to either a talmudic statement, a line of text, or the quotation of tannaitic sources. The second category is the lack of quoted Mishnah sentences (*piska'ot*), which makes it difficult to distinguish between different discussions. The *Yerushalmi* moves from a discussion about the interpretation of one Mishnah sentence to another without noting the shift, which automatically creates a "misleading continuous formulation" (*lashon ratsuf u-mat'e*). As mentioned, seeing the Talmud as an exegetical system of knowledge for the Mishnah is a central principle in Sirilio's literary thought. The third category is the language of the *Yerushalmi*, which is not always comprehensible to the average reader of the *Bavli*.⁴²

These three problems define, for Sirilio, the textual challenges that *Seder Zera'im* presents for the contemporary reader and form the actual differences between this *seder* and the rest of the Talmud. In fact, however, these textual differences reflect much deeper differences between the well-received parts of the Talmud and its corrupted parts: a historiographic difference, based upon some contemporary distinctions.

It is widely accepted that according to the medieval view of the past, the past stands in continuum with the present; from the Christian medieval perspective, the only recognized difference between the eras was that the people of antiquity did not have the opportunity to be graced by the light of Jesus. This distinction is well expressed with the medieval concept of "the

virtuous pagan,” a term describing the great Greek and Roman philosophers who, having been born before Christ, could not be baptized. In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, for example, these pagan philosophers occupy the Limbo within the Inferno. All other figures in the Inferno are gathered into groups according to the nature of their sins, with no historical distinction between them. A new concept of the past as a distinct era, well described in the course of Renaissance scholarship, was developed by the first humanists. Instead of one historiographical watershed between the age before the coming of Christ and the days after the coming of Christ, Renaissance thinkers imagined two shifts: one separating antiquity from the “dark” medieval age, and the other separating the Middle Ages from the present, a new era of light and wisdom.⁴³

This distinction shaped the scholarly attitude toward classical texts. The texts of the great Greek and Roman writers were considered of great aesthetic value, but they were corrupted by inexperienced medieval copyists. The Renaissance scholar aimed to amend these damages using a variety of philological tools. Several scholars described the way humanists used historical context in the service of a philological effort to reconstruct partially lost texts and bring them as close as possible to what was thought to be their original form.⁴⁴

One example illustrating this perception is that of the great Venetian printer Aldus Manutius, who described in the preface to his 1497 edition of Aristotle’s *Natural Philosophy* what happened when he asked to publish Theophrastus’s works:

But there is one thing much to be regretted. Of the numerous works of Theophrastus—for, as one can see from his biography, he wrote as much as Aristotle—it was only possible to find these; and they are not complete and in good order but mutilated and faulty. And they are so rare that I was able to find only one copy of what you read here in the whole of Italy. So I have printed whatever texts I could obtain, in the hope that, if

better copies lie hidden somewhere, they will eventually come to light, after a careful search by scholars who have read these faulty texts. I have done a great deal of work on Aristotle, both on the texts now offered to the reader and on those which we shall shortly offer, if God favors. In order that they should reach the public in as correct a state as possible, the best early manuscripts were sought, several copies of the same text were collated and corrected, and they were handed over to the printer to be taken apart, perishing like the viper that gives birth.⁴⁵

Manutius mentioned the faulty condition of the existing copies—in this specific case, a single copy—of the classical text and the scholarly effort required to overcome the corruption. He described the work of sorting and gathering the remaining material, using it to recreate the classical text, and bringing it to the publisher so that he would print a new text, similar to the original. These expressions can be recognized throughout Manutius’s introductions, as well as in other humanists’ writings.

Sirilio was certainly not trained in a humanist context, but I suggest that he borrowed elements from humanistic scholarship to define the scope of his textual project. Sirilio considered the parts of the Talmud that were interpreted by Rashi to be *medieval texts* with a stable tradition of reception. However, he regarded *Seder Zera'im* and tractates *Shekalim* and *'Eduyot* as *classical texts*, in the humanistic sense of the concept: that is, a text that had been neglected for hundreds of years and could not be explained properly, because missing commentaries caused the many errors that crept into it. In relation to the rest of the Talmud, Sirilio appears to be a traditional “medieval” reader who benefited from Rashi’s mediation, but the chosen tractates are presented as an antithesis to the rest of the Talmud. As a commentator, Sirilio defined himself as somewhat of a Renaissance scholar, returning to study a corrupted

classical text. For his chosen tractates Sirilio created historiography with two watershed moments, similar to humanist historiography. Renaissance historiography was combined here with the medieval models described earlier, creating a unique critical approach:

And I saw before my eyes all the great rishonim, and none of them was willing to approach this work [of correcting the talmudic text of *Seder Zera'im*], because they saw that this matter was too great for them, as certainly the person would have to be a sage as great as one of the amoraim, or at least Rashi, to do this work.⁴⁶

The necessary work was correcting the text of *Seder Zera'im* and interpreting it, which no one had yet attempted to do. To achieve this task, Sirilio constructed a model of the man trained for this work of pioneering resuscitation. This person must be “a sage as great as one of the amoraim, or at least Rashi.” The leap from the amoraim (the sages of the Gemara) to Rashi is not coincidental; it marks the difference between the “medieval” text and the “classical” text. Since,

when it comes to the *Bavli*, it contains several commentaries of the geonim, but without the great illuminator, Rashi, the later commentators would not have found their arms and legs in the study hall, and through his explanations and interpretations, they were fortified and added some innovations as additions; and after all this, we still cannot be sure.⁴⁷ But here, where there is nothing but a desert wasteland, where no person has passed and no one has sat to enlighten us, but the wisdom died with the death of the early sages, how much more so [will it be excessively difficult to understand]?⁴⁸

The first historical watershed marked by Sirilio is the transition from the early sages, the amoraim, to the later, medieval sages. This divides the first period, when the talmudic texts were completely and thoroughly understood, from the later medieval period, during which the text survived without an interpretative tradition. The only representative of the medieval era who

served as an agent for transmitting the tradition of interpretation from the amoraim to the medieval sages is Rashi. On the one hand, he is considered an expert in the methods of the Talmud and, on the other, a commentator who explained its ways to the sages of his generation and enabled the next stage of the talmudic discussion: “And through his explanations and interpretations, they buckled down and added some innovations as additions.”

Sirilio describes the Talmud of *Seder Zera'im* with a series of impressions—“a desert wasteland,” a “frontier”—as though he referred to a textual “region” in which there were no humans who could correct the errors that inevitably occurred during its transmission and thus enable the continued development of the talmudic discussion. The difference between *Zera'im* and the rest of the Talmud is that the latter contains Rashi’s commentary, meaning that there is a history of study, whereas there is no Rashi commentary on *Zera'im*.

Sirilio marked the second watershed moment, which separates the medieval period from his own time, as the transition from the period of the “later commentators” to his period. Here he confronted a paradox. In his time, understanding those texts was a fortiori impossible. Yet Sirilio planned to interpret them himself.

But my lust and my desire burned my heart with the fire of the Torah, and my heart was rising, and my kidneys were silent, and my heart said to me, “Rise and make a commentary to *Seder Zera'im*, eleven tractates; the Lord your God knows your ways, and he will give wisdom, as not many can become sages or elders that understand the judgment, but with the spirit in the human and the soul of God you will understand them. “Your God is with you, he will not let go of you or abandon you, neither fear nor be afraid.”⁴⁹

According to Sirilio, providence would replace tradition. Though *Seder Zera'im* is like a desert wasteland, God would give him the wisdom to interpret it correctly. The individual scholar will be able, through the power of the human spirit and with divine assistance, to arise and interpret the sections of the Talmud that have not yet been interpreted.

This literary project seems, at first glance, to be a highly radical and innovative venture. But a close reading of Sirilio's introduction reveals that one of his great innovations was the way he was able to divide the text into two layers and relate to each one of them differently. Sirilio seems to have used medieval and Renaissance ideas of transmission of ancient traditions for his conception of Talmud. According to this historical division, only the Talmud on *Seder Zera'im* and tractates *Shekalim* and *'Eduyot* had been corrupted. Sirilio's project represented a new approach, through which he could suggest a remedy for the corruption of the text and restore it to its original pristine condition. This line of thought expresses Renaissance humanist ways of textual scholarship, though heavily leaning upon existing medieval Jewish historical models.

"IN ALL OF THE BOOKS"—SIRILIO AND THE PRINTING PRESS

To this point, I have described Sirilio's way of thinking about the different parts of the Talmud, explained his attitude toward the literary traditions of Maimonides and Rashi, and suggested an option for contextualizing his work in humanistic thinking. Having isolated the different aspects of Sirilio's work and his connections to medieval and humanist thought, I will now reevaluate one additional aspect of his literary project—Sirilio's awareness of and responsiveness to the technological innovations of his generation.

As mentioned, Sirilio lived and worked during the first years after the printing of the *editio princeps* of the Jerusalem Talmud in Venice 1523. His text was clearly based on this

edition. Moreover, as seen in the example from Manutius, the existence of the printing press was essential for the self-awareness of Renaissance scholars and their distinction from their medieval predecessors. However, the tremendous philological efforts invested in recent years to reach this historical conclusion imply that Sirilio did not consider the fact that he worked with a printed book to be of any importance. He did not bother to mention this fact anywhere and certainly did not think of his project as a reproduction of a printed product. It seems that Sirilio did not consider any of the textual sources in his possession authoritative and always preferred a comprehensible text over what he could find in one of his textual sources. He did not regard the fact that he found textual versions in a manuscript or a printed book to be evidence worth mentioning. *Prima facie*, it seems that he was blind to the differences between manuscript and print, just as he was blind to the differences between a written textual version and an imagined one.

Nevertheless, I wish to make here a hypothetical suggestion that we can identify one term in Sirilio's writings that does relate to the printing press, allowing me to discuss his interaction with the new technology. This term is "the books" (*ha-sefarim*), as a reference to a textual source. This expression originates, like other terminology in Sirilio's commentary, in Rashi's commentary on the Talmud in which he offers suggestions for editing its text. His grandson, Rabbenu Tam, testified to his custom:

Our Rabbi Shlomo [Rashi], if he corrected any textual version, he corrected it in his commentaries, but in his book [of Talmud] he did not write down his corrections. Only those who drank his water [his students] corrected the text following his commentaries, a thing he did not dare to do in his lifetime, apart from tractate *Zeva@him* alone [in which

he did correct the text]. And I have checked in his books and found that they were not corrected in his handwriting.⁵⁰

The term “the books” was mentioned by Rashi several times as related to Talmud copies: “This is what we found in the old books [...] and most of the students were mistaken about this one, and they needed to change the books.”⁵¹ “And this is what we can find in all of the books,”⁵² “and I can’t explain the text I that is written in the books.”⁵³

In Rashi’s commentary, the term “the books” refers to multiple manuscripts that were open in front of him. He had at least two manuscripts with the same text and could therefore testify that a specific textual version was found “in all of the books.” These books were used in Rashi’s commentary as evidence of the need to correct the text of the Talmud. Moshe Assis explained the use of the term “in all of the books” in Sirilio’s commentary in a similar manner and suggested that Sirilio had several exemplars of the Talmud in front of him. I suggest otherwise, and while I will demonstrate this here with a single example, the same interpretation applies to all the eighteen examples mentioned by Assis.⁵⁴

In a certain passage in the tenth chapter of tractate *Shevi’it*, Sirilio quoted two possible versions of the talmudic text and wondered which was better.⁵⁵ Sirilio cites the version found in the Venice edition as follows: “This is what I have found in all of the books, and I explain it as follows [...]”⁵⁶ In comparison, Sirilio quoted from a citation of the *Yerushalmi* he found in the comments of the twelfth-century Italian Mishnah commentator Yitzhak ben Malkitzedek from Simpono (*Ribmatz*): “And I have found in the commentary of Rabbi Yitzhak that cited as follows [...]”⁵⁷ Sirilio mentions the *Yerushalmi* version when stating that “I have found in all of the books” to confirm the text of the Venice edition. The same term also appears in arguments against the text of the Venice edition, as in “and there is a mistake in the books.”

In all other eighteen examples listed by Assis, Sirilio uses the expression “in the books” or “in all the books” only to confirm the text of the Venice edition and not to criticize it. For this reason, I propose that the expression “in the books” relates only to the Venice edition and not to multiple manuscripts. The plural “books” can be explained based upon another phrase Sirilio used. Wherever Sirilio referred to his preferred version of the text, he always used a possessive expression: “our” text, in the first-person plural, linking the writer and his readers as one plural entity, a kind of an “editorial we.” I suggest that Sirilio used the term “books” only in the context of the Venice edition, and that he was aware that his readers might have a copy comparable to his copy. When he wrote to his readers, “This is the version in our books,” he referred to printed books, whose text was identical in every copy. The uniformity of the text enabled him to produce a scholarly conversation based on one version of the text.⁵⁸

If my interpretation is right, the expression “in the books” reveals that Sirilio, as a scholar who lived during an age of great changes in the character of the book, used the medieval terminology in an innovative way. He understood the scholarly advantages created by the invention of the printing press and was aware of the new channels of communication it opened with other scholars.⁵⁹

Sirilio mentioned print directly only once, in a very important passage in his introduction referring to his literary production. As previously mentioned, Sirilio’s introduction only survives in one autograph copy, which is housed today in the British Library. This manuscript contains two layers of text, both written by Sirilio. The first is the primary manuscript that contains the introduction, the talmudic text, and the commentary. The second layer includes hundreds of annotations, corrections, and changes he made in the years after he wrote the first layer. These attest to the long process of rethinking and editing that resulted in this composition. One of the

annotations was added at the end of the introduction. The color of the ink of this annotation is slightly different from that of others, and the handwriting is weak and shaky; we may deduce that it was probably written near Sirilio's last days:

So said the writer: Because I wished to print [*mipne she-ratsiti lehadpis*] these tractates and their commentary, so that the diaspora of Israel will merit them, and my days have come. I am certain that it is impossible that no mistake or error will be found in them, for several reasons. First of all, because of my lack of knowledge, and also because of the hardships of times, and my wanderings from one place to another and from one city to another, and also because most of my work was teaching students Talmud, and my own study was by stealing time away from the teaching and from the day, and I recite about myself the verse "snatched by day or snatched by night" [Gen 31.39]. Therefore I beg every scholar who studies this book to look into it with positive eye and not with a jealous and sarcastic eye, and if he will find in it a mistake or an error, he should correct it, and he will be rewarded from God, because even if I was rich and I had time and I was very wise, I could not do this work, while even @Hanania ben @Hizkia [who was a rich man] was asked to write a commentary on Ezekiel's sacrifices and his temple, and he was rewarded with three hundred oil barrels, and Rashi explained: for food and light.⁶⁰ And as for me, thank God,⁶¹ I lack entirely all of this [food and light], blessed be the eye that will see all of this; and my soul was saddened when I heard this, and my only comfort is, "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task, but neither are you free to absolve yourself from it" [mAvot 2.16] as I wrote [...]

AU: Is the ellipsis here meant to :Commented [CW5] ?indicate trailing off

Commented [YM6R5]: it means the text keeps on, but I quoted only the relevant part

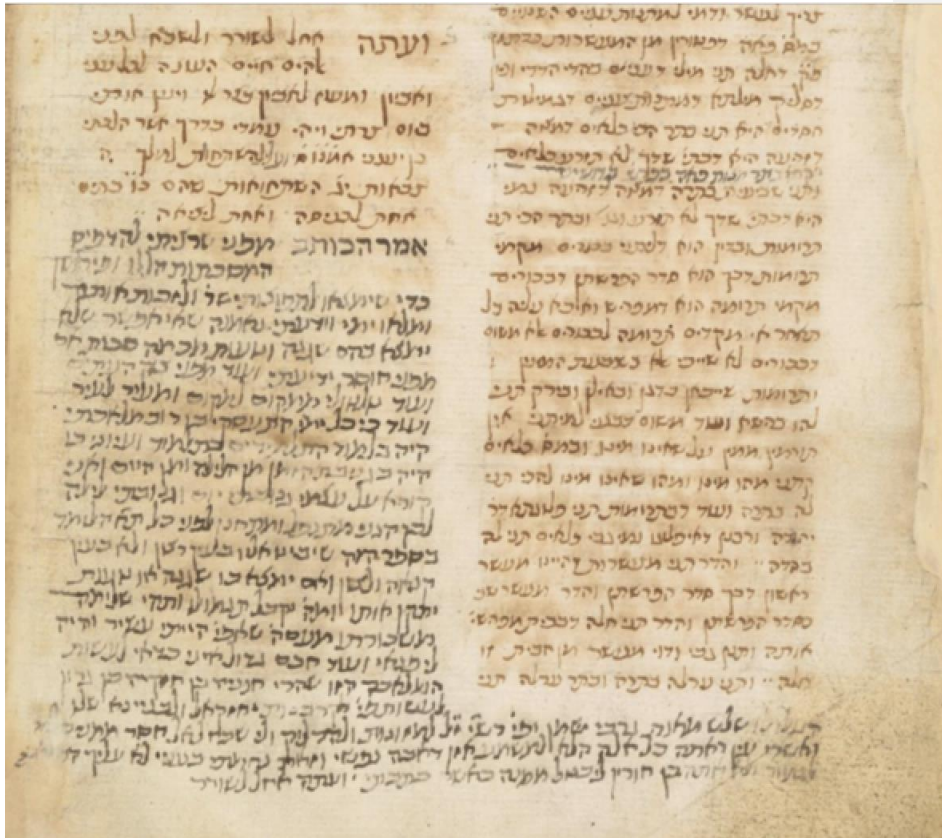


Figure 1. MS British Library 2822, f. 24v.

A comparison between Sirilio's life as it was described in this annotation and the public polemical profile of his early years that I described earlier reflects some changes in his persona that might be connected to his change from public activity when he lived in the large cities of the Ottoman Empire to his individual literary work during his time in Safed. During the 1540s, Sirilio did not hold any public position and lived in poverty. He worked as a Talmud teacher, and his literary work was done at night. Only here, in the late annotation that was written near the end of his life, did Sirilio first mention his desire to print this composition, to bring his efforts

back to the public eye, this time not as a polemic halakhic decider but as a scholar who corrected the understudied parts of the Talmud. The horizon of Sirilio's expectations, shaped by the invention of the printing press, is also an essential aspect of humanistic scholarship, expressed far from the centers of Italian humanistic activity.

CONCLUSION: SIRILIO'S EDITION IN ITS HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The problems Sirilio was facing were traditional ones, and the literary model he followed was medieval in character. But his historical horizon was unprecedented: Sirilio was the first scholar to think about the problems arising from the transmission of the Talmud as a systematic problem that needs a systematic solution. He invested effort in framing the problem, analyzing its scope, and preparing the right edition to solve it. Using a methodology borrowed from Assaf Tamari, I have suggested that Sirilio's scholarship should be understood in light of the late development of the Italian Renaissance, as a phenomenon of cultural transmission that took place in the periphery of the great urban centers of renaissance humanism, in the city of Safed in the Galilee, where Jewish renaissance could be developed with no polemic interruption.

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Abstract:

Shlomo Sirilio, a resident of sixteenth-century Safed, created a radical adaptation of the Jerusalem Talmud based on its 1523 *editio princeps*. He sweepingly adapted the talmudic text,

expanded it with medieval materials, and added novel material, based on his creative scholarly intuition. This essay describes Sirilio's scholarly conception and distinguishes between the medieval motifs and the innovative Renaissance ideas that shaped his work. It argues that such a creative approach could not have been created in the centers of humanistic culture, but only in the peripheral locale of Safed, where humanistic ideas could be developed without polemical undertones.

Keywords:

Sirilio, Safed, Talmud Yerushalmi, Palestinian Talmud, sixteenth century, Rabbinic literature, Renaissance, print culture, Talmud, Mishnah, early modern history.

¹ The terms Jerusalem Talmud and *Yerushalmi* will be used interchangeably throughout this essay, as will Babylonian Talmud and *Bavli*.

² See Yakov Z. Mayer, *Editio Princeps: The 1523 Venice Edition of the Palestinian Talmud and the Beginning of Hebrew Printing* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2022).

³ See Moshe Assis, "The Jerusalem Talmud," in *The Classic Rabbinic Literature of Eretz Israel: Introductions and Studies*, ed. M. Kahana, V. Noam, M. Kister, and D. Rosenthal (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2018), 1:225–60.

⁴ Sirilio's biography and his textual approach were outlined in *Talmud masekhet 'edyot le-Maharash Sirilio*, ed. B. Dablitzky (Jerusalem, 2004), 13n39. This edition contains a detailed introduction with page numbers indicated in digits, and an edition of the text whose pages are numbered with the Hebrew alphabet. In this essay I use regular numbers for the first part and **numbers in bold** to stand in for the Hebrew numbering for the second part. Shmuel Glick with

Dotan Arad and Yaakov Schwartz, *Seride Teshuvot of the Ottoman Empire Sages, from the Cairo Genizah Collection of the Cambridge University Library* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2013), 1:20–22; Amos Samuel, “Rabbi Solomon Sirilio: His Text and Commentary to the *Zera'im* Order of the Palestinian Talmud” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1998); Amos Samuel, “The First Commentator on the Jerusalem Talmud—on the Personality and Work of Rabbi Shelomo Serilio, an Exile from Spain” (Hebrew), *Pe'amim* 49 (1992): 32–53.

⁵ Bezalel Dablitzky, “Hilkhot shekhitot u-vedikot ha-re'a le-rabbi Shlomo Sirilio” (Hebrew), *Min ha-genazim* 11 (2018): 1–26.

⁶ For a controversy about a mikveh in Bursa, see Glick, *Seride teshuvot*. Two other controversies are recorded after he arrived in Safed; they concerned an attempt to institute in Safed the Salonikan custom for checking the lungs of slaughtered animals for punctures and observance of the Sabbatical year (*shemita*); see *Talmud-'Eduyot*, 16.

⁷ For Adrianople, see *Responsa Maharashdam, Even ha-'ezer* 129. In 1539, Sirilio moved from Salonika to Bursa; see Glick, *Seride teshuvot*. For Jerusalem, see Arie Leib Frumkin, *Toledot hakhme yerushalayim* (Jerusalem, 1938), 64–67; *Talmud-'Eduyot*, 16–18.

⁸ This assumption was mentioned by Samuel, “The First Commentator.”

⁹ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (Oxford, 1962); Moshe Idel, “Particularism and Universalism in Kabbalah 1480–1650,” in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. D. B. Ruderman (New York, 1992), 324–44; Moshe Idel, “Italy in Safed, Safed in Italy: Toward an Interactive History of Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah,” in *Cultural Intermediaries: Jewish Intellectuals in Early Modern Italy*, ed. D. B. Ruderman and G. Veltri (Philadelphia, 2004), 239–69; Assaf M. Tamari, “The Body Discourse of Lurianic Kabbalah” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2016), 27–73;

Assaf M. Tamari, “The City of the Kabbalists? Sixteenth-Century Safed as Center and as Periphery” (Hebrew), *Zion* 87.4 (2022): 505–47.

¹⁰ Maoz Kahana, “A Universe of Words: Rabbi Yosef Karo’s Self Perception as a Halakhic Codifier” (Hebrew), *Jewish Law Annual* 30 (2020): 79–127; Tirza Y. Kelman, “‘I Shall Create Halakhic Ruling . . . for That Is the Objective’: The Dimension of Halakhic Ruling in Joseph Caro’s Beit Yosef” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2018); Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero* (Hebrew; Beer-Sheva, 1995); Jacob Katz, “The Controversy on the *Semikha* (Ordination) between Rabbi Jacob Bei-Rav and the Raibah” (Hebrew), *Zion* 16 (1951): 28–45; Uri Safrai, “Worship of the Heart in the Kabbalah of the Sixteenth Century” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2018), 330–36.

¹¹ Ann M. Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn., 2010), 173–229.

¹² See Joseph R. Hacker, “Links between Salonican Jews and the Community of Safed in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” (Hebrew), *Shalem* 8 (2008): 249–326.

¹³ The edition was not published until the nineteenth century, and its last part—*Talmud-‘Eduyot*—was printed only in 2004. Different parts of it were kept in various manuscripts, as described in detail in Samuel, “Rabbi Solomon Sirilio,” 29; and Hans Jürgen Becker, *Die Sirilio-Handschriften des Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 16 (1988): 72. The most important for my purposes is a three-volume copy now at the British Library, which contains not only the text of the Talmud and the commentary but also hundreds of emendations made by Sirilio himself over the years (British Library, Or. 2822, 2823, 2824). The other manuscripts are Moscow Ginzburg 1135 and 1133, Amsterdam Etz Haim A 31 47, and Paris—Bibliothèque Nationale 1989, which is the only manuscript with a colophon; it was written in

Safed in 1542/1547. See Moïse Schwab, “Manuscrits du supplément hébreu de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris,” *Revue des études juives* 61 (1911): 82. Two fragments of Sirilio’s edition were found in the Cairo Geniza, ENA 3033.7-8 and St. Petersburg Evr. 2A 743.

¹⁴ The many differences between Sirilio’s text and other versions of the Jerusalem Talmud have been the focus of most of the studies dedicated to his work to date. See Saul Lieberman, “Mashehu ‘al mepharshim kadmonim la-yerushalmi,” in *Alexander Marx: Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. S. Lieberman (New York, 1950), 287–301 and n89. See also Moshe Assis, *A Concordance of Amoraic Terms: Expressions and Phrases in the Yerushalmi* (Hebrew; New York, 2010), 214–15. Samuel, “Rabbi Solomon Sirilio,” 26, 28n40, 79, 105–18. Recently Assis attempted to prove otherwise. See Assis, *A Concordance*, 216–28. For detailed examples that prove he had a manuscript in his hands, see Yakov Z. Mayer, “From Manuscript Culture to Print Culture: The 1523 Venice Edition of the Palestinian Talmud” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 2018), 219–24.

¹⁵ Assis, *A Concordance*, 204–15. Assis listed all the Babylonian terms that Sirilio used to replace the original *Yerushalmi* ones, such as איתבי in place of מיתב (“he answered”), דאי אמרת instead of אי אמר את (“if you would say”), חזר בי instead of חזר בי (“he retracted”), etc. Assis also listed Babylonian expressions that Sirilio introduced into the text of the *Yerushalmi*, such as אטו, אטו, כי היכי, נמי, and others. Sirilio also introduced in various places Babylonian expressions such as מאי טעמא or מה טעם (“what is the reason”), terms that are very common in the *Bavli* but quite rare in the *Yerushalmi*. Some of these additions were systematic: for example, he inserted terms that signify the introduction of *baraitot*, such as ותני כן (“so it was taught”), כהדה דתני (“as it was taught”), or simply תני or תניא (“it was taught”). All these examples are taken from Assis, *A Concordance*, 204–15. For the differences between the terminology of the *Yerushalmi* and that

of the *Bavli*, see Gustaf Dalman, *Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch und aramäische Dialektproben* (Darmstadt, 1960); Baruch M. Bokser, “An Annotated Bibliographical Guide to the Study of the Palestinian Talmud,” in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, vol. 2, *The Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds*, ed. J. Neusner (New York, 1981), 1–119, 208–11.

¹⁶ Discussed in Samuel, “Rabbi Solomon Sirilio,” 101; Assis, *A Concordance*, 207–8.

¹⁷ See *Talmud Yerushalmi ‘al pi nuskha . . . im perush . . . Shlomo . . . Sirilio*, ed. @H. Dinkels (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1934–1967), yPe’ah 90a; *Talmud Yerushalmi according to ms. Or. 4720 (Scal. 3) of the Leiden University Library*, ed. Y. Sussmann (Jerusalem, 2001). The passage was inserted after 104/38. Sirilio prefaced it with the *Bavli* term *tenan hatam* (it is taught over there).

¹⁸ Dinkels, *Talmud yerushalmi*, 37a. In the 2001 edition, the passage was inserted after 292/50. Sirilio prefaced it with the term *itmar*.

¹⁹ Dinkels, *Talmud yerushalmi*, 46a. In the 2001 edition, the passage was inserted before 320/44. The origin of the passage is Sirilio’s *Talmud-‘Eduyot*; see *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, **22–22**; and Deblitzki’s discussion in *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 44–47.

²⁰ Amos Samuel concluded that there were two distinct stages to Sirilio’s work, reflecting his long struggle with the text of the Venice edition of the *Yerushalmi*. In the first stage, during which he wrote his commentary on the chosen talmudic tractates, he used the Venice edition as its basis. In the second stage, he altered the text of the Venice *Yerushalmi*, revising and developing it based on various parameters. He ultimately transcribed both the adapted text and the commentary in one volume. A partial third stage is marked by the glosses he added in the margins of the manuscript found in the British Library. These glosses primarily contain

emendations to the commentary rather than to the talmudic text. Samuel, “Rabbi Solomon Sirilio,” 26, 28n40, 79. His fifty-five proofs are described in detail on 105–18.

²¹ Menahem Kahana, “On the Fashioning and Aims of the Mishnaic Controversy” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 73 (2004): 51–81, n64; Yair Furstenberg, “From Tradition to Controversy: New Modes of Transmission in the Teachings of Early Rabbis” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 86 (2018): 587–641.

²² There might be even more, since only five and a half of the eight chapters survived in the only known manuscript.

²³ A good example for such an excessive passage can be found in *Talmud-‘Eduyot’s* opening passage. Sirilio created a discussion in the genre common to some introductory passages in the Talmud that contain short discussions about the placement of the given tractate in the sequence of the Talmud (*Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 1–3). This passage does not fill a lacuna in a talmudic discussion but is rather an intellectual exercise.

²⁴ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 20, 24, 142, 287.

²⁵ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 23, 36, 39, 120, 149, 152.

²⁶ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 21, 50, 51.

²⁷ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 125 (an adaptation of a *Bavli* passage), 241 (an adaptation of a comment by the medieval commentator rabbi Avraham ben David, Rabad), 26 (an adaptation of a passage of the tosaphists).

²⁸ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 60.

²⁹ See Amos Samuel, “Al nusho shel rabbi shlomo Sirilio leyerushalmi masekhet @hala,” in *Studies in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature in Memory of Tirzah Lifshitz*, ed. M. Bar Asher, J. Levinson, and B. Lifshitz (Jerusalem, 2005) 435–60; Tirzah Lifshitz, “Ha-im haya lifne rabbi shlomo Sirilio ktav yad shel yerushalmi le-masekhet @hala?,” in *Studies in Talmudic and*

Midrashic Literature, 247–63. Dablitzy also discovered an additional, more minor passage, in which a similar transfer took place. See *Talmud- 'Eduyot*, 44–48.

³⁰ SifreDt §80. The very beginning of the introduction is missing because of a deterioration of the paper.

³¹ The introduction survived only in one manuscript: BL 2822. It was first published by Lehmann in the nineteenth century and again in *Talmud- 'Eduyot*, 69–73. Both editions include numerous errors and unnecessary corrections. I translated the paragraphs according to my transcription from the manuscript.

³² Ephraim Kupfer, “Kuntres erets yisra’el (mi-genizat kahir),” *Kovetz 'Al Yad*, n.s., 7 (1967): 101–16; Elchanan Reiner, “Pilgrims and Pilgrimage to Eretz Yisrael 1099–1517” (Hebrew; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1988), 95–98, 129–33; Simcha Emanuel, “Pages from the Halakhic Notebook of a Thirteenth-Century Pilgrim” (Hebrew), *Ginze Qedem* 7 (2011): 145–65.

³³ *Talmud- 'Eduyot*, 70.

³⁴ Maimonides’ introduction to *Mishneh torah* (Simon Glazer translation [1927]; courtesy of Sefaria.org. For an analysis of this passage in its cultural context, see Omer Michaelis, “Crisis Discourse and Framework Transition in Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah*,” *Open Philosophy* 3 (2020): 664–80.

³⁵ *Talmud- 'Eduyot*, 71.

³⁶ Israel M. Ta-shma, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1999), 40–56; Israel M. Ta-shma, “Rashi-Rif Commentary and Rashi-Rosh Commentary,” in *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, vol. 4, *East and Provence* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2010); Eliav Shochetman, “The Commentary of R. Obadiah of Bertinoro on the Mishna—a Source for

Halakhic Ruling?” (Hebrew), *Pe ‘amim* 37 (1987): 3–23. Marjorie Lehman, *The En Yaaqov: Jacob ibn Habib’s Search for Faith in the Talmudic Corpus* (Detroit, 2012).

³⁷ In his commentary to tractate *Shekalim*, Sirilio referred to Ibn Habib’s commentary in *En Ya ‘akov*, referring to the author as “my teacher”; see *Talmud- ‘Eduyot*, 14n13.

³⁸ For the Ashkenazi Fragments, see Yaacov Sussmann, “Yerushalmi Fragments—an Ashkenazi Manuscript: Notes toward a Solution to the Riddle of Sefer Yerushalmi” (Hebrew), *Kobez Al Yad* 12.22 (1994): 1–120; Yaacov Sussmann, “The Ashkenazi Yerushalmi MS—‘Sefer Yerushalmi’” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 65.1 (1995): 37–63. For *Shekalim* version B, see Yaacov Sussmann, “The Scholarly Tradition and Textual Tradition of the Jerusalem Talmud: An Enquiry into the Textual Versions of the Jerusalem Talmud, *Shekalim*,” in *Studies in Talmudic Literature in Honor of Saul Lieberman* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1983), 12–76; Binyamin Elizur, “A Genizah Manuscript of Yerushalmi *Sheqalim* According to Its Recensions” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 81 (2012): 295–325; Mayer, *Editio Princeps*, 152–62.

³⁹ *Talmud- ‘Eduyot*, 69–70.

⁴⁰ *Talmud- ‘Eduyot*, 70.

⁴¹ The surprising exception to this pattern is Tractate *Berakhot*, which is the only tractate on which both Rashi and Sirilio commented. Sirilio did not explain why he wrote a commentary on *Berakhot*, but we can assume that he started with it because this is the first tractate.

⁴² *Talmud- ‘Eduyot*, 70–71.

⁴³ Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London, 1969); Paula Findlen, “Historical Thought in the Renaissance,” in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, ed. L. Kramer and S. Maza (Malden, Mass., 2002), 99–122. Anthony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of*

History in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, 2007); Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, trans. D. Britt (Los Angeles, 1999).

⁴⁴ Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Rome, 1973); Anthony Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study of the History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford, 1983), esp. “Scaliger’s Festus: Classical Philology and Legal Humanism,” 1:134–60; Brian Richardson, *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy: The Editor and the Vernacular Text* (Cambridge, 1994); Lucia A. Ciapponi, *Filippo Beroaldo the Elder, Annotationes Centum: Critical Edition with Commentary* (Binghamton, N.Y., 1995). Grafton also described the blurred line between the critical rethinking of the original form of lost text and the actual attempts to fabricate it. See Anthony Grafton, *Forgers and Critics: Creativity and Duplicity in Western Scholarship* (Princeton, N.J., 2019).

⁴⁵ N. G. Wilson, ed. and trans., *Aldus Manutius: The Greek Classics* (Cambridge, 2016), 40–43.

⁴⁶ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 70.

⁴⁷ *Ve-khule hai ve-ulai*, an Aramaic expression based on b@Hag 4b, meaning that even after a great effort, we still cannot be sure what will be the result.

⁴⁸ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 70.

⁴⁹ *Talmud-‘Eduyot*, 70.

⁵⁰ Yaakov Shmuel Spiegel, *Chapters in the History of the Jewish Book: Scholars and Their Annotations*, 2nd ed. (Hebrew; Ramat-Gan, 2005), according to the index; Aharon Ahrend, *Rashi’s Commentary on Tractate Rosh Hashana: A Critical Edition* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2014), 73.

⁵¹ bShab 71b.

⁵² bSuk 40a.

⁵³ b@Hag 19b.

⁵⁴ Assis, *A Concordance*, 217–19.

⁵⁵ yShev 10.1.

⁵⁶ Sirilio added here to the Venice edition version the words כ"י דאמר ("as he said"), as he did in many other places.

⁵⁷ MS BL Or. 2823 99r; Dinkels, *Talmud Yerushalmi, Shevi'it* 162a; Samuel, "Rabbi Solomon Sirilio," 138 c7; Assis, *A Concordance*, 217, no. 2; in the modern edition of Ribmatz, *Perush ha-ribmats* (Jerusalem, 1975), 206, we can find the right version ט"א that stands for טעם אחר ("another explanation," not "in other books"). It is unknown which MS of Ribmatz was in Sirilio's hands, but it is reasonable that he read ט"א (ספרים אחרים, "in other books"), instead of ט"א.

⁵⁸ Both Samuel and Assis suggested that the plural form of the word *ha-sefarim* indicates that Sirilio used another manuscript of the *Yerushalmi*. This suggestion led to the assumption that this unknown manuscript is identical in every detail to the Venice edition.

⁵⁹ Sirilio's commentary was mentioned few years after his death by Joseph Karo in his commentary to Maimonides' *Mishneh torah* (*Kesef mishneh*, Laws of Gifts to the Poor, 3.13, 17), but he never cited him in *Bet Yosef*.

⁶⁰ bShab 13b and Rashi *al loc*. This is another example of Sirilio's retelling the content of the text. In the printed Rashi, we find למאור ולמזונות, and here Sirilio quotes ולהדליק ולמזונות.

⁶¹ This is, of course, said ironically.