

BOOK REVIEW

NEW EDITIONS OF YALKUT SHIM'ONI

by MICHAEL KRUPP*

ילקוט שמעוני. צילום הדפוס הראשון, שאלוניקי רפ"א-רפ"ז. ירושלים, מקור, תשכ"ח-תשל"ג, 7 כרכים.

Yalkut Shim'oni, ed. princ. Salonika 1521-27. Photostatic reprint. Jerusalem, Makor, 1968-1972; 7 vols.

ילקוט שמעוני לרבנו שמעון הדרשן: ציוני מקורות דוב בן הרב ר' אהרון הימן; שנויי נוסחאות, השוואות והערות הרב דב נתן לרר; השלים וערך הרב יצחק שילוני.

D. Heimann, D.N. Lehrer, Y. Shiloni, eds. *Yalkut Shim'oni*. Jerusalem, Mosad HaRav Kook. Vols. 1-2: *Bereshit* (1973); Vol. 3: *Shemot* I (1977).

Jewish exegesis of Scripture is almost as old as the Bible itself. In Judaism especially, the Bible serves as a guide and instruction in all spheres of life, and this can only be the case when it relates constantly to the present and its problems. Therefore it is not surprising that the oldest *midrashim*, exegeses of scriptural passages and references in scripture, are found in the Bible itself, in the Prophets, the Psalms, and in the third part of the Hebrew Bible, the Hagiographa. In the time of the New Testament Jewish exegesis had reached its high point, finding written expression in the Apocrypha and the Pseudoepigrapha. Rabbinical exegesis began with the rise of Pharasaic Judaism, but was first set to writing in the days after the destruction of the Temple beginning in the second and third centuries after Christ. New *midrashim*, exegeses of single books of the Bible, were written into the Middle Ages, though their origins were often in the time of the New Testament. Thus it occurs that traditions which can be found in the New Testament first found their Jewish expression in the *midrashim* of the Middle Ages, free, most probably, of the influence of Christian tradition.

The Midrash is a product of everyday use in the house of study and the synagogue. Ideally every legal decision was grounded with a midrash, taken from the Scripture. The Midrash is the product of the free *tannaitic Midrash Halakha*, the Hebrew written legal explanation of the Books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, which originated in the first two centuries after Christ and were redacted in the third.

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The Midrash is also the result of and the explanation for the synagogue service, which serves as a special kind of exegesis of the narrative content of the five Books of Moses and the five *Megillot*. Exegeses of the prophetic sections, as well, are presented in periodic lessons accompanying the synagogue service.

With the end of the midrashic period in the thirteenth century large midrashic collections arose. These collections tried to present the available material in a way that would facilitate everyday use.

Among the best known and most important of these collections is the *Yalkut Shim'oni* and the *Midrash ha-Gadol*. The former which is discussed here, was compiled in Germany, the latter in Yemen. The tremendous value of these collections can be seen, foremost, in the fact that they include material from the earliest *midrashim* which had been thought of as lost. Original fragments of these lost works were first found near the end of the last century in the Cairo Geniza. It is through these fragments that the accuracy and, thereby, the importance of these midrashic collections became clear for the reconstruction of lost works. The earlier lost midrashic works quoted in the collections included *Sifre Zutta to Numbers*, which is parallel to the *Sifre to Numbers* which remained. *Sifre Zutta* originated to a great extent from the school of Rabbi Akiva. It contains a wealth of halachic material, otherwise unknown, and many traditions which distinguish it in many important ways from the parallel text which was preserved. A *midrash* from the middle period, *Deuteronomy Zutta* a parallel version to the *midrash*, *Deuteronomy Rabba*, is especially rich in parables. *Midrashim* from the later period include *Midrash Avkir*, which is quoted over fifty times in the *Yalkut*. It is an aggadic *midrash* from the eleventh century, most likely written in Germany (it is not cited in the Yemenite *Midrash ha-Gadol*). Over and above this, the collected works are of great importance also for the preserved *midrashim*, reflecting a textual tradition which is very old, and, for some *midrashim*, better than in the manuscripts (Mss.) which have come down to us.

Yalkut Shim'oni, 'the collection of Simon,' is generally referred to simply as *Yalkut* -- 'the collection.' This is an indication of its standing among other, similar collections. *Yalkut Shim'oni* is the only collection which contains *midrashim* to all the books of the Bible. It contains well over fifty different *midrashim*, from the earliest times to the period of the collector himself. Shimon ha-Darshan (the commentator) from Frankfurt on Main, of whom nothing else is known, is generally credited as the writer. He probably lived in the thirteenth century, close to the time of the newest *midrashim* quoted. Since the only comparatively complete Ms. of the *Yalkut* of the five Books of Moses was written in 1307 a date is given *ad quem*. (Cf. Oxford Bodleian Library Ms. Heb. Vol. 6, Neubauer cat. no. 2637).

The work is divided into two parts; one for the Torah and the other for the remaining parts of the Hebrew Bible. Each of these parts is subdivided into paragraphs named by the collector according to section or passage, the divisions seeming rather capricious. Some of the paragraphs are only a few lines long, while others take up

several columns and deal with whole verses of the Bible. The divisions can skip over the boundaries of the pericopae and even over the bounds of the individual books. One has to assume that the paragraph beginnings follow according to some inner logic, in order to be able to locate citations through the references. Since the collector worked with such a mass of parallel material, he saw himself obliged to condense it and to refer the reader to the place in the complete text where the citation could be found. In the Ms. referred to above, the Hebrew paragraph numbers are found in the margin. Their placement in the text is not always unequivocal since they are not always at readily identifiable breaks in the text. It is according to these paragraphs that the *Yalkut* is generally cited.

It is also apparent from the enumeration that the order of the books of the Bible is a different one from that in use today. With one exception, the order is similar to that of the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Bava Batra* 14b. The first edition, which does not preserve the original sequence of the *Yalkut* at least uses the original enumeration, in which the first of the later prophetic books was that of Jeremiah, followed by Ezekiel and Isaiah. The Early Prophets end with paragraph 252, Isaiah follows with paragraph 385 and after Ezekiel, Jeremiah with paragraph 253. Later editions were corrected by each man after his own fashion, beginning with Venice 1566, which allows Isaiah to commence at paragraph 253, but does not correct the enumeration of Jeremiah, which then also starts with paragraph 253. That is not the only change in the later editions; most of these changes are capricious. The text was especially corrupted through the interference of Christian censorship.

THE SALONICA FIRST EDITION

The new printing of the first edition by the Makor publishing house is very welcome, since this is the only reliable text available up to now for the entire Midrash which can be used in scholarly work. This text will probably not become superfluous even with the completion of the new edition of the *Yalkut* which will be discussed below. The first edition included "Kontres Aharon" at the end of the first section containing homilies from the *Yelamdenu midrashim* and the *Palestinian Talmud*, divided into paragraphs. This important addition is missing in all the other editions as well as in all the manuscripts.

THE OXFORD MS.

The much discussed Oxford Ms. is, in actuality, the only Ms. written before the first edition. All the other mss. (Strasbourg 4058, Parma 1172, Vatican 98, Sassoon 41/4, Cambridge add. 396/1) are later, mostly from the 17th or even 18th centuries, and all of them — without exception — are fragmentary. This makes the Oxford Ms. all the more valuable. Since there is no description of it in the new edition, a few remarks will be allowed here. The Ms. has a colophon in which is written, among other things: "I the young Kolonymus, the son of Rabbi Jacob. wrote this book, the collection of Simon the commentator, on the five Books of Moses for Rabbi Nathan ha-Parnas, son of Rabbi Haim, and I have finished it here,

Thursday, the fifth day of the month of Tevet (= December 1, 1307) in the city of Rottenburg on the Tauber . . . the passages which are referred to in certain places in the book should be added here. When in "Kontres Aharon" (the last book) paragraph so and so is mentioned, the reader should understand that the number of the citation should be sought at this place, at the end of the Pentateuch. This section is called 'Kontres Aharon,' which is what the editor named it . . . " This "Kontres Aharon" which, as we have said, actually is found at the end of the Pentateuch in the first Salonica edition, is however, missing in the Ms. Either it was only mentioned by the copyist and not actually written, or it was separated from the whole at a later date.

The Oxford catalog in its description of the Ms. states; "The text agrees generally more with the Salonica edition than with that of Venice, but neither of the two was made from the present Ms. . . . The copy is not made skillfully, there are many omissions supplied by the copyist himself, but more frequently by an Italian owner. The latter gives also variant readings from another Ms. and others which are of his own suggestion. There are also many corrections on the margins by the copyist, and by the Italian hand."

In spite of this, one must say that this Ms., in comparison with the others, particularly German Mss. is accurate and contains very few normal copying errors and inadvertant mistakes. In this respect it is more reliable than the Salonica first edition.

Since only the Oxford Ms. and the Salonica first edition are available as independent texts for a critical exegesis of *Yalkut Shim'oni*, and the new edition does not mention them, some remarks are appropriate here. A comparative study must, of course, be limited in its choice of texts. The interpretation of the Biblical story of the sacrifice of Isaac, ('*Akeda* in Hebrew), was chosen as such a text here. It takes up 26 pages in the new edition (Vol. 1, pp. 430-456). Every thing which will be said in the following about the two texts is in reference to this section only.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY OF THE BINDING OF ISAAC IN THE *YALKUT*

The structural basis for the *Yalkut* is the *midrash Bereshit Rabba*. Almost the entire text was taken up by the *Yalkut*, and in the same order as in the *Bereshit Rabba*. As with many Mss. of the *Bereshit Rabba*, the *Yalkut* condenses sections which were cited earlier and refers to the relevant paragraphs. Only two parts of the *Bereshit Rabba* are entirely missing in the *Yalkut*; one is the comparison of the 'Akeda with the sacrifice of the King of Moab (*Parasha* 55,5 end, ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 588) and the *halakhic* piece *Parasha* 56,6 end (ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 602). It is possible that the collector intentionally omitted these pieces, as they may have seemed offensive to him and his contemporaries, or he considered them to be less important. Perhaps they were missing from the text, from which he worked, though all the Mss. of *Bereshit Rabba* known to us include these passages.

The story of the 'Akeda takes up two *Parashot* in *Bereshit Rabba* (55-56) which must have together comprised one homiletical pericope. This is evident in the way the introduction (*petiḥta*) of *Parasha* 55 is brought together. In this introduction the basic theme of the 'Akeda is sketched out, Abraham and his seed are justly chosen, since he successfully resisted all temptations and proved his righteousness. This is also the only vindication of the temptation. A detailed explanation follows, verse by verse, which we cannot go into here for reasons of space. Only the salient features can be mentioned: Isaac increasingly becomes the actual hero of the story after he learns, early on, what his father, acting on divine command, intends to do with him. He, like his father, accepts God's will. All attempts to interrupt this process, especially that of Satan are doomed to failure. Since both are obedient "unto death" their behavior is counted as expiation for posterity.

This is, in a few words, the plan of *Bereshit Rabba*. What did the compiler of the *Yalkut* do to this? He apparently took great pains to give as complete a summary as possible of the legal and halakhic precedents which were decided on the basis of this passage. Most are taken from the *Babylonian Talmud*. Despite his search, this material is naturally somewhat sparse and much aggadic, narrative material is quoted, especially from the Talmud. This is especially true of *Sanhedrin* 89b, so important for the 'Akeda.

The aggadic sources shall be examined below. The second borrowing is a citation from the above mentioned lost *Midrash Avkir*, which will be translated in its entirety owing to its peculiarity. It is an allegory on the readiness of Abraham for sacrifice. "There was once a king who loved a poor man. Said the king to the man, 'I will make you rich,' and he gave the poor man money with which to become a merchant. After some days the poor man came to the castle. His enemies asked the king why he was admitted. The king said to them, 'because I love him and he is faithful.' Said they to him, 'if that be true, command him to return your money to you.' So the man commanded the poor man to give the money back forthwith, and the man did not deny him. At that the palace courtiers were shamed, but the king swore to increase the man's riches."

The other texts can only be summarized here. They deal with quotations from the *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, the various *Tanḥuma* text which contain many variances with the texts we know; the *Pesikta de-Rabbi Kahane* and the *Tanna deBe Eliyahu*. Many passages are simply labeled "midrash," leaving the source unclear. This is in apparent reference to an anonymous *midrash* which was transmitted during the lifetime of the compiler. Most of these texts can be found today in the *Tanḥuma midrashim* in *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati* and most of all, in the *Midrash of Vayesha* and in a *midrash* labeled *Midrash 'Akedat Yitzḥak*. This last *midrash* has been published by M. Higger in *Halakhot ve-Aggadot* (New York 1933, reprint by Makor, Jerusalem 1971, pp. 69-73) according to an Oxford Ms. Another version of this *midrash* is found in the Darmstadt Ms. 25, which is very similar to this material. This *midrash* has not been previously published.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE OXFORD MANUSCRIPT AND THE SALONICA FIRST EDITION

Considering the marked differences inherent in print and manuscript, the similarities between these two texts is astounding. Most of the differences are due to the fact that the first edition uses more particles, prepositions, and pronouns than the Oxford Ms. does. When one compares only the two *Bereshit Rabba* texts, the two *Yalkut* texts express throughout the same special tradition, with similar omissions, expansions and transpositions. One should note here that, when the Oxford and the Salonica differ, the Oxford tends to agree with the bulk of *Bereshit Rabba* Mss. This is especially true of the smaller transpositions. The deviations of the Oxford Ms. appear to be arbitrary, or, in any case, not to have any support in the Ms. material of *Bereshit Rabba*. A special characteristic of the *Yalkut* text is the omission of the authors' names. Exceptions are generally only in disputed cases. In a few places, especially where the two texts differ in content, one can clearly determine their dependence on the various *Bereshit Rabba* Mss. This can best be explained by assuming that one of the Mss. or its reference text were changed to match a given version. Two examples: the city of Tadmor took part in the war against Jerusalem during the first destruction of the Temple, according to Rabbi Huna, with 4,000 bowmen in *Yalkut Salonika*. This is also found in the *Bereshit Rabba* Ms. of Paris and Oxford A. The *Yalkut Oxford*, however, refers to 40,000 bowmen, as is found in most of the Mss. of *Bereshit Rabba* (BerR Par. 56,17; ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 610). In the first elucidation to the phrase, "according to these things (words)" (BerR Par. 55,3, ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 587) the author of a certain opinion is given as the Rabbi Eleasar found in most of the Mss., including the *Yalkut Oxford*. The *Yalkut Salonica*, however, reads Rabbi Eliezer, as does the Munich Ms. of *Bereshit Rabba* and the *Midrash Hakhamim*.

The differences between the two *Yalkut* texts can be identified, first and foremost, in the different arrangement of the material. The framework for the *Yalkut* is, as we have already said, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba*. Here there are no differences between the two texts whatsoever. The distinction lies in the order of the parts of the materials that do *not* come from *Bereshit Rabba*. The first edition is more original and more correct, though it too is not free of errors. This is apparently the case in the first divergence in order, the piece from *Tanna de Be Eliyahu*, p. 444 in the new edition, which links the *Tamid* sacrifice with the binding of Isaac. In the first edition it is found in the middle of a section from *Bereshit Rabba* at the place "on the third day," with the continuation of *Bereshit Rabba*. It remains without any source reference. In the Ms. this fragment is found in the context of the sacrifice, between the quotation from *Bereshit Rabba* and *Tanḥuma*, while the framework of references continues uninterrupted. Not only the contextual matching but also the uninterrupted, error-free system of references is an indicator of the primacy of the first edition compared to the Ms. in the following textual displacement: *Talmud Bava Kamma* 49a, a halakhic comment to the verse "sit yourselves down here with the donkey" set between a passage from the Kiddushin and a piece from *Bereshit Rabba* in the first edition; in the Oxford Ms. it is found in

the middle of the piece from *Bereshit Rabba*. This small piece is not in its textual place here, and the piece from *Bereshit Rabba* is not documented. Both texts had difficulties in determining the right place for a double passage from the *Tanḥuma* and *Pesikta*. The citation from the *Tanḥuma* deals with the problem of whether the sacrificial offering could have been ordered by God or an angel. The Ms. places this passage in the middle of a piece from *Bereshit Rabba*, which is where the familiar distortions come in. The Ms. also sees itself obliged at this point to write in the formula *davar aher* (= a different version), in order to achieve a smoother transition. In the first edition both of the passages from *Tanḥuma* and *Pesikta* are placed at the end of the same passage from *Bereshit Rabba*. At the transition part of the text is missing and the references are displaced.

The differences between the texts are apparently traceable to the fact that both texts or their source texts tried to solve the problems of the original Ms. in different ways. These disputed passages were undoubtedly entered into the margins by the compiler or by a later reviser. Those who copied these texts tried to incorporate the notes into the text. The copyists solved the problem with varying degrees of success. The fact that in the main, the first edition or its source text is more satisfactory than the Oxford Ms. should be taken into account when answering the question, asked regarding every critical text, as to which text should be seen as the primary one.

The Oxford Ms. also contains one piece which is missing from the first edition, a *Sugya* (section) on the binding of the sacrificial animal and 'Akeda from the tractate *Tamid* of the *Babylonian Talmud* (p. 445 of the new edition). This serves also as an indication that the first edition is based on an earlier text than that of the Oxford Ms.

THE NEW EDITION OF *YALKUT SHIM'ONI*

This detailed presentation of the problems of *Yalkut Shim'oni* was necessitated by the fact that the new edition says nothing about these problems. In the 1¼ page introduction the *Yalkut* is presented in very concise terms. The remainder is translated here.

"With the appearance of the first volume of *Yalkut Shim'oni* in a scholarly, critical edition, a larger plan begins its realization. This plan was conceived by the founder of our Institute, Rabbi J.L. Ha-Cohen Maimon, of blessed memory.

Our edition is based on the Oxford Ms. (Bodleiana 2637), the only complete Ms. (with the exception of some missing passages . . .) compared to the other fragmentary Mss. and early printed editions, especially the Salonica first edition of 1526 and Venice, 1566 which are at variance with this Ms. in several places.

The sources in this edition have been specified by the learned physician and eminent scholar Rabbi Dr. Dov Heimann. Rabbi Dr. Dov Nathan Lehrer has checked the variants, compared each version, added notes, and Rabbi Yitzhak Shiloni, from the staff of our Institute made the final corrections, divided the text into sections, undertook the

punctuation and attempted to improve the style of the text as much as was possible in the spirit of the original.

Our completed edition will comprise ten volumes, including a detailed introduction which will appear, with the help of God, at the end of our work. The introduction will contain detailed expositions about the author and his times, the sources of the text, the author's method, the Mss. and printed works, a list of the midrashim which were unknown to us and to other sources, and specific indexes.

Our teacher, Rabbi J.L. Ha-Cohen Maimon of blessed memory undertook a very intensive analysis of the *Yalkut*. In the margins of the copy of the book with which he studied, he noted not only his observations and interpretations of the content but also the sources with an excellent commentary. He began also composing a special study of the *Yalkut* with an emphasis on finding the sources. The first pages of this work and the Rabbi's personal copy of the *Yalkut* were available to the editor of the present work. Many of the observations have been incorporated into the general commentary. Only a few of his shorter observations are parenthesised under his name.

These ten volumes will become part of a larger plan to publish the entire midrashic literature in a scholarly, critical edition. This work will comprise 100 volumes. With God's help we have diligently undertaken this work."

So much for the preface. Unfortunately there is no practical help in the use of the book. If this is to be a "scholarly, critical work," we should not have to wait until the tenth volume is published to get it. Therefore a short introduction concerning the usefulness of the work and its reliability is called for here as well. The random checks and examinations will be taken, again, from the section on the binding of Isaac.

The new edition is structured in a straightforward and clear manner. The text is placed at the beginning. As we know from the preface, it is the text of the Oxford Ms. The page and line divisions of the original Ms. are not mentioned, making verification difficult. The line are numbered continuously starting with one at the paragraph sign in the manuscript, until line 99. At this point the enumeration begins again with the number one. Every paragraph number appears twice in the new edition, once in large type and once in small type at the point where the printed sources (but not necessarily the first edition) place the paragraph sign. The locations of the Biblical citations are worked into the text, parenthesised and set in smaller type. These are, of course, absent in the original, but they are very useful.

The edition contains two apparatuses alongside the text. The first is a source index. the second a commentary which consists mainly of the text of parallel passages, along with references, observations and critical notes to the text. There is no actual critical apparatus, which is astounding in a scholarly edition. At any rate this makes it very difficult to gain a quick overview of the transmission of the text.

In spite of this, the edition retains its worth simply because it reproduces a text which, next to the first edition, is invaluable in understanding the *Yalkut* and which, until now, was not accessible to the scholar. The new edition is, on the whole, quite reliable in its reproduction of the Ms. In a few places there are outright

mistakes, such as defective rather than *plene* spelling. Some abbreviations are rendered in the short form and some in the long, and some words are abbreviated in the edition which are not abbreviated in the text. Another inaccuracy of the edition is worse still. The editors have given the Biblical quotations correlated to the Masoretic text. Their procedure was to set countless numbers into parenthesis, while missing letters of passages have been set into brackets. Nothing can be said against this, as the text remains legible. However, the same brackets are used by the editors to bring into the text notations written in the margins of the Ms., and this renders the text unrecognizable. This is especially aggravating since most of the marginal notes come from the hand of the first copyist and can probably be traced to pure carelessness on his part. In other cases where the copyist made a typographical error, noticed it and crossed it out, the editors make no mention of this. Many of the marginal notes, especially those of the second, Italian hand, mostly addenda from the other Mss., are not even mentioned by the editors. They are also not referred to in the commentary.

Another unfortunate disadvantage of the new edition is that the original source references of the Oxford Ms. are not communicated. Even if the source references of the first apparatus are as accurate and exact as can be, they, indispensable though they are, do not replace the original references given by the Ms., even if these are inaccurate. Only through mistakes or the lack of references in the Ms. or first edition is it possible to trace later additions or confused arrangement, as we have tried to do above. The lack of particulars in the present edition makes this impossible.

Not only is the reproduction of the main text most unsatisfying and inappropriate for a scholarly edition, but also the reporting of variants from other texts is entirely capricious. The variants in the Salonica first edition, the most important text, were checked by me. Some variants are mentioned while others of the same importance are not. It is incomprehensible why at times a single word and sometimes a whole passage are quoted, even when the passage contains only a few variants. In the latter case, at least, one gains a chance glimpse into the textual tradition of the first edition.

The new edition of the text of *Yalkut Shim'oni* is not a scholarly, critical edition, as is promised by the all too short preface. But it is, together with the Salonica first edition, indispensable for scholarly study. It contains the more important, if not the most important hitherto inaccessible textual evidence. Since this new edition is still in its beginning stages — not even a third of the whole has yet been published — it is to be hoped that the editors, by revising their methods, still can come to produce a scholarly edition.