

CREATING A NEW RELIGION

PROPHECY OF CHRISTIAN ROME

Among the religious festivals of non-Jews listed by the Mishnah (*Avodah Zarah* 8a) was *Yom Ginusya*, and the Gemara attempts to identify this festival. The Gemara (10a) considers whether it relates to the inauguration of a king or his offspring, or perhaps his birthday. The quandary arose because the word *ginusya* has all these translations, as we see that the Latin/Greek word “*genus*” can be translated as birthday or offspring, and birth could be applied to his inauguration. Rav Yosef eliminates the option that it relates to the king’s son by quoting a Baraisa expounding a pasuk: “Behold, I have made you inferior among nations; you are most despised” (*Ovadiah* 1:2), as referring to the Romans. The previous pasuk indicated that this was prophecy concerning Biblical Edom, but the Baraisa is interpreting the inferior nation as referring to their descendants, the Romans. Abarbanel explains that a Caesar did not have total authority of royalty because the Romans did not consider the position of Caesar as hereditary – a Caesar was not necessarily succeeded by his son. The Baraisa continues to expound the second half of the pasuk: “you are most despised” – for they did not have their own script or language. Rashi explains that their script and language is from another nation and others establish their books. How can we understand this when there are ample ancient Roman classics written in Latin. What does Rashi mean when he says others wrote their books?

PAGAN OR CHRISTIAN?

Superficially, one might argue that the festivals listed were pagan Roman festivals, before Rome adopted the Christian religion. Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in 312 C.E., and it became the state religion of the Roman Empire in 380 C.E. Rav Yosef died in 324 C.E., so Christianity was hardly established in Rome in his lifetime. However, Rav Yosef was quoting a Baraisa based on *Ovadiah*’s prophecy as referring to the future Rome. Rashi understands this prediction as referring to Christianity, but that is not readily apparent because most of Rashi’s comment is missing in our *gemoros*. The *Oz VeHadar* edition in its *Hagahos Ve’tziyunim* has restored the omitted part of Rashi’s comment as it appears in the first edition of Ein Yaakov, printed in Salonika 1517. We shall provide some background to Rashi’s expanded comment, which is an eye-opener to understanding the Jewish relationship with early Christians. These comments are based on a lecture by Rav Shnayer Leiman and his article in The Jewish Quarterly Review, October 1983 about the fast of ninth of Teves. We shall see shortly why this date is relevant to our subject.

THE SECRET DATE

Shulchan Aruch records a list of fast days which are anniversaries of the deaths of selected personalities (*Orach Chaim* 580). The date of ninth of Teves is included, but instead of indicating its significance, *Shulchan Aruch* reports that the Rabbis did not write whom this date commemorates. This negative statement is found in the earliest sources going back to the Geonim, and *poskim* offer various interesting solutions, but none are convincing. The *Mishneh Berurah* brings the *Taz* and *Magen Avraham* suggesting that this date relates to the death of Ezra, but as noted by the *Birkei Yosef* here, Ezra’s *yahrzeit* is included in the source text *Megillas Taanis* independently after the anonymous date. If it would refer to Ezra, what is the secret and why not say so?

THE TOLDOS YESHU NARRATIVE

A gloss by Rav Baruch Fraenkel-Teomim in his comments printed at the end of *Shulchan Aruch* provides a new insight. He writes that he found a manuscript identifying the ninth of Teves anniversary as that of Shimon HaKalpos, who delivered the Jewish people from great misfortune during the period of the *peritzim* (Jewish Christians). It was ordained in Yerushalayim that the day of Shimon’s death be commemorated for all generations as a fast day. This manuscript reflects the account preserved in a *sefer* known as *Toldos Yeshu*, or *Teliyas Yeshu*, which dates from the time of the geonim but was suppressed because of its sensitive content. There are fragmentary pages of the *sefer* in Hebrew and Aramaic found in the Cairo Genizah collection. It was printed from an ancient manuscript in Leiden in 1705, which has since been lost, by a Christian J. J. Huldricus and called *Historia Jeschuae Nazarene, Sefer Toldos Yeshu HaNotzri*, and something similar is also found in *Otzar HaMidrashim*

וכאשר ראה ישוע שבני ישראל אינם כחברים אליו וקוראים לו בשם יוש כלומר יימח זכרו ויימח שמו אז אחר ששוע אין לי חלק באלו ישראל והלך ונילח פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה ויתלקטו אליו אנשים ריקים ופוחים וגם באו אליו הפריצים שמעון וכתבא ואליקים ונדרבי ותורה ויכב ישוע שםם ויקראם כך לשמעון פיטרוס על שם פטר כי הוא ראשון

Cum autem cerneret Iesua Filios Ifr. sodalitium ejus detrectare, cumque vocare 'nomine Iesus, quasi dicerent, deleatur memoria ejus & aboleatur nomen ejus, tacitus secum ita agebat, non mihi portio est in Deo Ifr. Abiit igitur & perfreca fronte, impudenter admodum Legem explicuit, non uti ex traditione Magistorum explicari debet. Affociabant autem se illi homines vani & futiles; jungabant se iudem ei + nebulones illi, Simeon, & Matchia, & Elikum, & Mardochai, & Toda; quibus Iesua nomina immutavit, & Simeonem quidam appellavit Petrus.

Extracts from Hebrew/Latin edition of *Toldos Yeshu* by Huldricus (Leiden 1705).

Note: יוש = יימח זכרו ויימח שמו

ועוד כתב להם ספרי כובים וקרא אותם ע"ן כליון והם סברו שהוא אומר אבן גליון כלומר אב וכן וגלוי רוח הקודש ועשרה להם שמעון ספרים מתלמידי יוש ומי'נוס ואמר שיוש כסר לו כל הדברים ויכתב שמעון ברקו את ספר יהוש והם סבורים שהוא סודות וחזקת הכל בכל ורעיון רוח כמו שכתב בספר יהוש פרק ג' שראה יהוש חיה

Conscripsit insuper in uolum illorum libros mendacissimos, eosque vocavit 'iniquitatem confunctionis'; putarunt vero illi, eum dicere 'filium', q. d. Pater & Filius & manifestatus Spiritus S.; & conscripsit illis etiam libros nomine discipulorum Iesu, & speciatim Iohannis; dixit vero Iesum omnia illa sibi tradidisse; nec absque intentione aliqua singulari concinnavit librum Iohannis; illi proin putabant, Mysteria ea esse; cum tamen omnia illa non sint, nisi vanitas & figmentum cordis; uti quae (v. g.) scripsit in libro illo Iohannis cap. 13. Ioh. vidis-

He wrote their books calling them “shameful sin” but also understood as evangelium - good news from angels - the gospels

(p.557). It relates the story of Yeshu from his birth and childhood and how the Jews suffered from his perversion of Judaism. It relates how at a meeting of the leading Tanaim, Shimon Kepha, described as a foremost Tanna, was directed to infiltrate Jewish-Christian circles and to solve the problem of religious confusion and mass exodus to the new form of Judaism. It was difficult to differentiate between the traditional and new religionists as they both kept the same *mitzvos*. The idea was to infiltrate the Jewish-Christian leadership and create a Gentile Christianity which would not be able to be confused with Judaism. He was tasked to pretend that he was embracing their beliefs, and with his powerful stature, he could innovate changes that would distinguish the new sect and also to dissipate the attacks of the new religionists on the other Jews. Shimon Kepha asked that the Tanaim guarantee that he would not lose his *Olam Haba* and they provided that assurance. Shimon was welcomed as a dynamic leader into the ranks of the Christian Jews, became Bishop of Rome and taught the abrogation of Jewish law, creating a Gentile Christianity. He is identified as Simon Peter, who became the first Pope, initiating the concept of the infallibility of the Pope so that no one would argue with his suggestions. He organized the composition of the New Testament to demonstrate a break from the Torah, calling it *avon kilayon*, shameful sin, plus the double meaning of “evangelium” (gospel) and *av, ben, giluy ruach hakodesh* (the Trinity).



Genizah fragment of Toldos Yeshu in Aramaic

THEIR SCRIPT AND BOOKS – RASHI’S EXPLANATION

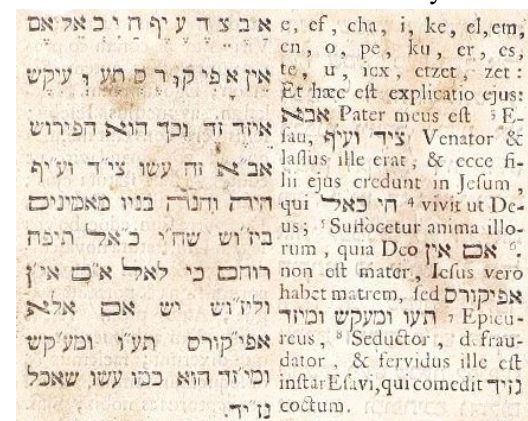
With this introduction let us return to our Rashi. In the uncensored version Rashi writes: “The script and language of the Romans were borrowed from another nation. Others wrote their books for them, namely John, Paul and Simon Peter, all of them Jews. Language refers to grammatica, i.e. the Latin spoken by priests. These Jews transformed their Roman language into an obscure one, in order to separate them from Israel. These Jews were no apostates; rather they acted from the best intentions in order to benefit the Jews. When they saw that the Jews were oppressed by the deceitful acts of the followers of Yeshu, they impersonated priests and ordained all (the Christian laws, customs and books) as it is stated explicitly in *Sefer Teliyas Yeshu*.” Clearly Rashi was in possession of a manuscript with a version similar to the Leiden 1705 print as illustrated. Rashi applies this narrative as the understanding of the Baraisa’s Tanaim – that their New Testament was written by others, namely the Jews.

אלמנ: (ח) וכו' נכון: (ט) חשדיון, וכו' צט"ו וצלקוט עוצדים: רש"י ד"ה כחז ולשון צרש"י שצט"ו הרששון אחרים תקנו להם [כל ספרי טעוהם יוחנן פאולוס פיטרו] וכו' יהודים היו: לשון הוא גרמטיקא הוא הלשון שחזרים צו סגלחים הם שנו ועמקו הלשון ועשו להם הכל להשגם צפני עתהם ולסלק חטל ישראל ולא שפירו כי לטוען של ישראל נחבנו חלל מפני שראו ישראל צאגד וצדוקה תהרומתי יסו עשו עתהם כאלו הם עמו צקדשות ולוו עליהם הכל כמפורסם בצפור הלית יסו, ע"כ פירש"י: חוס' ד"ה שאין להם (ועוד) י"ל כדלמא כ"י עד

Original text of Rashi as printed in Dikdukei Soferim translated in the text

THE RELEVANCE OF THE SCRIPT

See the extract from Toldos Yeshu illustrated which shows how their alphabet was manipulated to conceal hidden truths. The letters of the alphabet are given names, which can be read to convey a message. ABCDEF is interpreted (according to the Latin translation) – AB, Aba, referring to Esav, CDEF – CD (tzayid) EF (v'ayef) was a hunter and thief, and his descendants believe in Yeshu who lived as a god, may their souls be suffocated. LMN reads *E-l eim ein*, that G-d has no mother, but Yeshu does have a mother. The letters OPQRSTU are read APIQUORUS TAU, an apikoros who seduces. XYZ is read EKS MY'ZED – one who is me'akesh and mei'zed, a fraudster and fervent like Esav who ate cooked food. Rav Yehudah Barzilai in his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah* (p.146) relates to this Baraisa regarding the Roman script and notes that LMN are the three middle letters of the alphabet, representing the central essence, which symbolizes truth.



Shimon taught the Latin alphabet – the letters L M N, pronounced *E-l em en*, meaning *G-d has no mother*, but Yeshu does have a mother.

THE ANONYMOUS TZADDIK

Shimon Kepha (Peter, meaning rock) or HaKalpos, built a tower in Rome where he studied and had bread and water passed up to him each day for six years until he died. *Sefer Chassidim* (191) describes him as a *tzaddik*. He is accredited as writing the Yom Kippur *Eten Tehillah* service and some say he is the author of *Nishmas* (*Siddur Avodas Yisrael*, p.206). We now understand why his death anniversary of the ninth of Teves had to remain anonymous.