

ביאור שיטת הגר"א במספר חוטי התכלת שבציצית

מתוך משא ומתן בקובץ "ישורון"
חלק ז, כ"ה, כ"ו
עם הרבה הוספות שלא נדפסו בישורון

ישראל בארקין

Explaining the Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands in Tzitzis

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הסכמה שקיבלתי לקונטרס אחר שחיברתי

ב"ה

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הנה מו"ה ישראל בארקין נ"י הראה לי קונטרסו שחיבר על
קיום מצות תכלת בזה"ז ועברתי עליו ומה מאד מצא חן בעיני
כי שם עסק בעיקר על מספר החוטין של תכלת בתוך הד' חוטין
שבציצית, והראה בבירור שרוב רובן של רבותינו הראשונים
ס"ל דב' חוטין מתוך הד' יש לעשות מתכלת כדעת רבותינו
בעלי התוס' זצ"ל, ודעת הרמב"ם דבעי רק חצי חוט ר"ל א'
מח' של תכלת הוא דעת יחיד וכמעט כל אינך רברבין נקטו
בפשטות כרש"י ז"ל ובעלי התוס', גם פסק כן למעשה בספר
משנה ברורה, ומילתא דתמיהה לשנות מזה ואין זו דרך
ההוראה, אפריון נמטייה לבעל המחבר ויישר חיליה לאורייתא
וראו מאד ללובשי תכלת לעיין בזה.

יום ו' ט"ז אדר א' שנת ה'תשס"א
ישראל הלוי בעלסקי

Translation:

R' Yisroel Barkin showed me the kuntres he wrote concerning the fulfillment of the mitzvah of Techeiles nowadays. I went through it, and it found great favor in my eyes.

The main subject he deals with is the number of Techeiles strings among the four strings of the tzitzis. He demonstrates clearly that the overwhelming majority of the Rishonim hold that two of the four strings should be Techeiles, in accordance with the opinion of our Rabbeim, the Baalei Tosafos.

The Rambam's opinion, that only half of one string — meaning one out of the eight ends — should be Techeiles, is a daas yachid. Almost all the other major Rishonim understood the matter simply like Rashi and the Baalei Tosafos. The Mishnah Berurah also paskens this way l'maaseh.

It is therefore a matter of great wonder to depart from this, and this is not the normal derech of hora'ah. Yasher koach to the author, and may his strength in Torah continue. It is very worthwhile for those who wear Techeiles to study this kuntres.

Introduction

For many years I have heard and seen many serious talmidei chachamim who were unsure and confused about the Gra's shittah regarding the number of Techeiles strings. Many of them say that his view is the same as the Raavad's, but they say so without really going through the matter carefully and examining the sugya in depth.

In my opinion, the Gra's primary shittah is found in his Biur HaGra to Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 12. I am copying his words here in full, with punctuation, to make it easier for the learner to follow what he is saying:

“Tosafos cited above follows the explanation that if the Techeiles has been cut down, etc., it is still valid even if only enough remains to tie a knot. This is in accordance with their shittah that one puts four Techeiles ends and four white ends. See Menachos 38a, Tosafos s.v. HaTecheiles, etc., and 40a [41b], Tosafos s.v. Beis Shammai omrim arba, for the reasoning, etc. This is also the view of Rashi; see there, s.v. Meisivei, tallis, etc. The same appears in the Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei: ‘How many [strings make] a gedil?’ etc.; Beis Shammai say four of Techeiles and four of wool, etc., and the halachah follows Beis Shammai. The Gemara there likewise paskens like Beis Shammai. The Raavad, however, holds that only two of the hanging strands are Techeiles and six are white, while the Rambam writes that only one strand is Techeiles and seven are white. Their reason is the passage there in the Sifrei: ‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis’ — I might have thought that it should be made as a single separate string; therefore the Torah says ‘gedil.’ How many make a gedil? No fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel; Beis Shammai say, etc., as above. Tosafos cited above, s.v. Beis Shammai, also brings this. Since the Sifrei says ‘I might have thought...,’ it implies that the pesil Techeiles itself is only one. ‘Gedil’ was written only regarding the white. The Raavad understands this to mean one full string, while the Rambam understands it literally as one [hanging] strand. See Tosafos 38a at the end of s.v. HaTecheiles, ‘as is evident from the Sifrei in Parshas Shelach and Parshas Ki Seitzei,’ etc.; and see there at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai. This is why Tosafos had to struggle to establish the number of Techeiles strands, etc. Tosafos also had to find an explanation for the total of eight strands, since the Gemara only says four, from ‘gedil, gedilim,’ etc. They explain that ‘u’fesilo mi’tocho’ means that the strings are doubled over; see the Tosafos cited above. But the Sifrei itself still requires explanation: Beis Hillel says three, while Beis Shammai says eight, even though their machlokes is only whether the number is three or four. The explanation is as follows. Certainly, ‘pesil’ implies one, and ‘tzitzis’ of the white also implies one...

“Nevertheless, the two colors are always equal. Beis Hillel understands a gedil as three strands, and the same applies to the white. Beis Shammai understands ‘gedilim’ as four, as the Gemara says, ‘gedil, gedilim.’ Beis Shammai holds that ‘gedil’ implies two, unlike Beis Hillel, which interprets it as three and does not additionally darshen the plural form. The same rule applies to the Techeiles. When the Gemara speaks of four or three, it is speaking about one color alone — Techeiles or white...

“...and this is evident throughout the entire sugya. As for what Tosafos writes at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai, ‘However, in the Sifrei there is an opinion...,’ that wording is not actually found in the Sifrei. Rather, Tosafos derived it from the beginning of the Sifrei, ‘They shall make for themselves...,’ as explained above and as Tosafos writes at the end of s.v. HaTecheiles. One could perhaps explain that when Beis Hillel says three, it means three white strings plus one Techeiles string, so that Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel disagree only about Techeiles. But this cannot be correct, because the Gemara makes clear that their machlokes is over the total number of tzitzis strands.”

That is the end of the Gra's words in his Biur, which was printed from his actual handwritten manuscript. I copied it here from the first edition published by Rav Yisrael of Shklov.

Introduction

Since the Gra wrote this in extremely condensed language, and many people did not understand even the straightforward pshat in his words, I am including here a simple explanation that I wrote together with chaverim several years ago.

“Tosafos cited above follows the explanation that if the Techeiles has been cut down, etc., it is still valid even if only enough remains to tie a knot. This is in accordance with their shittah that one puts four Techeiles ends and four white ends. See Menachos 38a, Tosafos s.v. HaTecheiles, etc., and 40a [41b], Tosafos s.v. Beis Shammai omrim arba, for the reasoning, etc. This is also the view of Rashi; see there, s.v. Meisivei, tallis, etc.”

The Gra begins by bringing the shittah of Tosafos and Rashi that there are four Techeiles strands and four white strands, and he points to several places where they state this position.

“The same appears in the Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei: ‘How many [strings make] a gedil?’ etc.; Beis Shammai say four of Techeiles and four of wool, etc., and the halachah follows Beis Shammai. The Gemara there likewise paskens like Beis Shammai.”

He says that this is indeed what appears in the Sifrei in Parshas Ki Seitzei: Beis Shammai say there are four Techeiles and four white strands, and both the Sifrei and the Gemara state that the halachah follows Beis Shammai.

It is worth noting that the Gra specifically writes “Parshas Ki Seitzei.” In the edition before the Gra, the version in Parshas Shelach read “three white and a fourth of Techeiles,” like the Raavad. Tosafos, however, had the reading four-and-four in both places, and the Gra refers to this further on.

“The Raavad, however, holds that only two strands are Techeiles and six are white, while the Rambam writes that only one strand is Techeiles and seven are white. Their reason is the passage there in the Sifrei: ‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis’ — I might have thought that it should be made as a single separate string; therefore the Torah says ‘gedil.’ How many make a gedil? No

¹ The Gra writes “and so it is,” rather than “their reason,” the expression he uses when explaining the Raavad and Rambam based on the Sifrei. It occurred to me that perhaps the Gra did not mean to bring the Sifrei as a proof for Tosafos at all. As noted, there are two girsaos, and Tosafos could in principle have emended the Sifrei's text. (Although Tosafos had the four-and-four reading in both places, it is still possible that the alternate girsa was also known to them. This is especially plausible because they had the views of the Raavad and Rambam before them: Tosafos, Menachos 43b, quotes the same passage of the Aruch that presents the Raavad's position, and on 42b, s.v. Tefillin, they quote the Rambam's Sefer Ahavah.) This may be why the Gra does not say that Tosafos's “reason” comes from the Sifrei.

fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel; Beis Shammai say, etc., as above. Tosafos cited above, s.v. Beis Shammai, also brings this. Since it says ‘I might have thought...,’ it implies that the pesil Techeiles itself is only one. ‘Gedil’ was written only regarding the white. The Raavad understands this to mean one full string, while the Rambam understands it literally as one [hanging] strand.”

The Gra then brings the Raavad and Rambam, who require only one or two Techeiles strands, and explains the basis for their views from the opening words of the Sifrei. The Sifrei indicates that from the parashah of tzitzis in Parshas Shelach alone one would understand that there is only one string in the tzitzis [either one string half Techeiles and half white, or one full Techeiles string and one full white string, each according to his shittah]. (It still needs explanation why the Gra found it necessary to mention that Tosafos brings this in s.v. Beis Shammai.) The Gra then assumes — perhaps only as an explanation of the Rambam and Raavad — that the extra strings learned from “gedilim” in Parshas Ki Seitzei apply only to the white. According to this, the pesukim in Parshas Shelach give us one Techeiles and one white, while Parshas Ki Seitzei adds only to the white. That leads to the shittah of the Raavad and the Rambam.

“See Tosafos 38a at the end of s.v. HaTecheiles, ‘as is evident from the Sifrei in Parshas Shelach and Parshas Ki Seitzei,’ etc.; and see there at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai. This is why Tosafos had to struggle to establish the number of Techeiles strands, etc.”

Introduction

This passage can be understood in two ways:

A) The Gra is pointing out that Tosafos also made the inference just discussed from the beginning of the Sifrei. Tosafos wanted to say that “pesil” implies two, but they challenged that from the Sifrei’s wording: from “they shall make for themselves tzitzis” we would only have known of one string. That implies that “pesil” by itself would not have taught us more than one. Tosafos on 41b, at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai, also quotes this passage of Sifrei.

That is why Tosafos had to find another source for why there are two Techeiles strings; they could not simply say that “pesil” means two. ²(Based on Dammesek Eliezer.)

B) Alternatively, the Gra is returning to Tosafos's own shittah. He quotes their words, “as is evident from the Sifrei in Parshas Shelach and Parshas Ki Seitzei,” refers again to Tosafos 41b s.v. Beis Shammai, and says that this is why Tosafos had to give a forced explanation. His point would be that everything he wrote above to explain the Raavad is possible only according to the Raavad's version later in the Sifrei. Tosafos, however, had the reading four-and-four in both places, so they could not adopt the Raavad's text. That is why the Gra quotes Tosafos here: Tosafos's version was four-and-four in both places. He also points to Tosafos s.v. Beis Shammai, where Tosafos likewise quotes only this version of the Sifrei [and it seems there that they are quoting it from Parshas Shelach; see the Tosafos carefully]. Since that was their girsa, they had to explain the matter as they did. (According to the first approach, however, there is no need to say that Tosafos was relying only on the Sifrei. In fact, Tosafos does not sound as though the Sifrei was their sole source: they do not cite it as the source, but only bring it later when discussing the doubling of the strings.)

“Tosafos also had to find an explanation for the total of eight strands, since the Gemara only says four, from ‘gedil, gedilim,’ etc. They explain that ‘u'fesilo mi'tocho’ means that the strings are doubled over; see the Tosafos cited above. But the Sifrei itself still requires explanation: Beis Hillel says three, while Beis Shammai says eight, even though their machlokes is only whether the number is three or four.”

² This requires a little thought. The Gra does not seem to be addressing Tosafos's first answer here, in which they say that sevara dictates that the two colors be equal. Tosafos's question from the Sifrei is only against the answer that “pesil” implies two.

The Gra is now asking two additional questions, both of which will be answered by the new pshat he gives below:

A) What is the source for eight hanging strands — meaning, for doubling the four full strings? The derashah in the Gemara only gives a count of four. When the Gra writes, “and they explain that u'fesilo mi'tocho means that he doubles them,” his language suggests that he is not fully satisfied with that answer. Perhaps the reason is that the Gra is looking for a source in the pasuk itself, whereas Tosafos only gave a source from the Gemara according to their interpretation, without an actual derashah from the pasuk.

B) There is also a difficulty in the wording of the Sifrei, according to Tosafos's girsa. Why does Beis Shammai state the number after the strings have been doubled, and therefore say there are eight — four Techeiles and four white — while Beis Hillel states the number before doubling and says there are three?

“The explanation is as follows. Certainly ‘pesil’ implies one, and ‘tzitzis’ of the white likewise implies one; nevertheless the two are always equal. Beis Hillel understands a gedil as three strands, and the same applies to the other color. Beis Shammai understands ‘gedilim’ as four, as the Gemara says, ‘gedil, gedilim.’ Beis Shammai holds that ‘gedil’ implies two, unlike Beis Hillel, which interprets it as three and does not additionally darshen the plural form. The same applies to the Techeiles. When the Gemara speaks of four or three, it is speaking about one color alone — Techeiles or white — and this is evident throughout the entire sugya.”

Introduction

The Gra is now introducing a new way to understand the sugya. From the pasuk about the white tzitzis we only know that one string must be placed, and “pesil” likewise implies one. (Obviously, this is only because the Torah has not yet taught us more than one; it does not mean that the words “pesil” and “tzitzis” inherently mean exactly one.) Nevertheless, the two colors are always equal, because there is no reason to increase one more than the other. The Gra further explains that the derashah of “gedilim” adds to the Techeiles as well, not only to the white as he had assumed earlier. This is the heart of his chiddush. When he writes, “the two are always equal... gedil is three strings and the same applies to the white... gedil means two and the same applies to Techeiles,” he means that “gedilim” includes the Techeiles as well, and there is no basis to give one color more strings than the other. The Gra is therefore retracting the assumption he stated earlier that “gedil was written only regarding the white.”

This also answers the Gra's earlier question: what is the source for doubling the strings? According to the Gra's approach, there is actually no separate din requiring that four strings be doubled. Rather, the pasuk itself teaches that the basic requirement is four white hanging strands and four Techeiles hanging strands. The count is a count of half-strings, and folding the full strings over is simply the practical method used to place them through the garment so that eight ends emerge. (Accordingly, it would seemingly be perfectly valid to take four full strings and dye half of each one Techeiles, since after they are folded there will in any event be four ends of each color — similar to what is done according to Beis Hillel when one string is dyed only halfway.) This also answers the Gra's question, “It still requires explanation: Beis Hillel says three and Beis Shammai says eight, even though their machlokes is only three versus four.” He was bothered that Beis Hillel seemed to be speaking about full strings while Beis Shammai was speaking about half-strings. According to this pshat, both are counting the hanging ends.

This is the end of what I wrote several years ago.

The Gra's words are therefore clear. There should have been no need to search through other works of uncertain attribution, or through sefarim and hagahos

3 See Rashi's lengthy explanation in Parshas Pekudei (39:31). See also the Rif, Shabbos, Perek Bameh Ishah (26b in the Rif pagination), who writes that the pesil Techeiles of the tzitz was “woolen threads that were braided and made like a cord, two fingerbreadths wide.” The Raavad likewise holds that the tzitz contained several threads (Hasagos HaRaavad, Hilchos Klei HaMikdash 9:2). It therefore cannot be said that the Raavad's reason is that the word “pesil” inherently means only one. Rather, his reason is exactly as the Gra writes: “gedilim” was stated only regarding the white, leaving the Techeiles at one string.

that were not written as halachic rulings, in order to determine his shittah when his own handwritten Biur on Shulchan Aruch is explicit. As the Ridbaz wrote (Beis Ridbaz on Pe'as HaShulchan, Hilchos Shevi'is 8:11; I reproduced a photograph in the appendix to this kuntres): "It is well known that one cannot rely upon the explanations that were in the hands of members of the Gra's beis midrash after his passing, nor upon variant readings, when the matter is clear in the actual manuscript." We also do not find that the Gra crossed out what he wrote on Shulchan Aruch, even though this point has practical halachic consequences, as explained there.

According to the Chazon Ish as well (quoted in the appendix to this kuntres, p. 35), if the Gra had retracted what he wrote in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch, he should have deleted it — at least where the issue had practical consequences. Here it certainly does: the Gra is discussing the din of tzitzis strands that have become shortened, and the Rema writes that the minhag follows Rabbeinu Tam. If the halachah is not that there are two full Techeiles strings, there would be no reason to follow Rabbeinu Tam in this regard.

Still, I saw that HaRav Eliyahu Tavger shlita wrote at length on this subject, went deeply into the sugya, and concluded that the Gra's final shittah is that of the Raavad. Many people have relied on his conclusion almost blindly, without checking the matter themselves. I therefore wrote what, in my view, needs to be discussed in his argument, in the normal way of Torah learning and for the benefit of those studying the subject, so that a person can choose a position after seeing both sides.

The Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands in Tzitzis

Rabbi Eliyahu Tavger

Author of Kelil Techeiles — Kiryat Sefer

The question of how many strings tzitzis requires in general, and how many Techeiles strings in particular, is tied to difficult and somewhat closed sugyos that have produced different opinions among the poskim. According to Rashi, one takes two white full strings and two Techeiles full strings. After they are inserted through the garment and folded over, this gives four white hanging strands and four Techeiles strands. The Baalei Tosafos followed this view, as did nearly all of the Ashkenazi poskim. The Rambam, by contrast, holds that only half of one of the four full strings is Techeiles. Once the strings are attached to the garment, there are therefore seven white ends and one Techeiles end. No other authority is known to share this exact view, aside from his son Rav Avraham in HaMaspik LeOvdei Hashem (in the laws of tzitzis) and his talmid Rabbeinu Perachiah in his commentary to Shabbos 25b. The middle position is that of the Raavad: one of the four full strings is Techeiles and the other three are white. Once they are folded through the garment, there are six white ends and two Techeiles ends. This opinion is already cited by the Aruch (s.v. Techeiles) in the name of Rabbeinu Chanel, and it was adopted by the Meiri (Yevamos 4b), Piskei Riaz (Hilchos Tzitzis, p. 223), and the Chachmei Lunel, who addressed their question on this subject to the Rambam (Teshuvos HaRambam, no. 286, Blau edition). Rav Shmuel ben Chofni Gaon's comments in his work on Hilchos Tzitzis, which I published from manuscript, can be understood either like the Rambam or like the Raavad. The Semag brings both Rashi's and the Raavad's positions without deciding between them. When it comes to the Gra's own position, there appears at first glance to be considerable confusion. He addresses the number of Techeiles strings in three places, and seems to take a different position in each one. In his Biur to Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 12:5), he supports the view of Rashi and Tosafos and shows how it can be read into the Gemara and Sifrei. In his commentary to Sifra DiTzniusa (ch. 5, s.v. shiv'ah rehitin), he explains the matter like the Rambam. In his commentary to the

¹ Anyone who checks the Aruch carefully will see that what he cites there in the name of Rabbeinu Chanel refers to a different point. It is not proven that his statement about the number of Techeiles strings also comes from Rabbeinu Chanel. The Aruch HaShalem also records another girsa in the Aruch, reading "R' Daniel" instead of "R' Chanel," and the Aruch HaShulchan inclines to the view that this is the correct text.

Zohar, Yahel Or (2Parshas Pinchas 228b), he explains it like the Raavad and writes that this is the primary view. The first to point out the contradiction between the commentary to Sifra DiTzniusa and Yahel Or was the Radzyner Rebbe in Maamar Pesil Techeiles (p. 401). He also noted another apparent contradiction between the Gra's explanation and the Zohar's own explanation of the Sifra DiTzniusa. The Sifra DiTzniusa says: "Four kings go out to meet four; upon them they hang like grapes in a cluster; seven rehitin are bound to them..." The Gra explains: "The seven rehitin are the seven white strands, over which the Techeiles strand covers." Yet when this passage of Sifra DiTzniusa is quoted in Zohar, Parshas Shelach (175b), it is explained differently: "Bound to them..."

2 Regarding the attribution of the sefer Yahel Or, see my letter, note 9.

The Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands in Tzitzis

“...seven rehitin — these are the seven bindings of Techeiles with which one must wrap.” From this, together with several other observations, the Radzyner Rebbe argued that neither the words in Yahel Or nor those in the commentary to Sifra DiTzniusa actually came from the Gra himself, but from an erring talmid. When I raised this issue with Rav Yitzchak Shlomo Zilberman [zt”l], who was an expert in the Gra's Torah, he made it very clear to me that one cannot make such a claim about sefarim that are accepted as the Gra's own writings. The language of the passages itself, he said, bears the stamp of the Gra's characteristic wording. He also explained to me that the Zohar itself can contain different approaches, and the Gra could therefore explain one passage in one way and another passage differently. In fact, it can be shown clearly that there is either an internal contradiction or more than one shittah within the Zohar itself. The Zohar passage quoted above interprets the word “tzeririn” as knots and says that tzitzis has a minimum of seven knots and a maximum of thirteen. That corresponds to the Rambam's shittah regarding the knots of tzitzis, based on the straightforward understanding of Menachos 39a: “One who does fewer should not make fewer than seven, and one who adds should not add beyond thirteen,” as the Rosh explains in Hilchos Tzitzis (siman 15). Elsewhere in the Zohar, however, in Parshas Pinchas (227a), it says that tzitzis has five knots, regardless of the number of chulyos, as the Gra himself notes in Yahel Or there. That is the shittah accepted by most poskim and mefarshim; it is already found in Midrash Tanchuma (Korach 12) and is mentioned by the Geonim. According to this view, the passage of Sifra DiTzniusa cannot be explained the way the Zohar in Parshas Shelach explains it. The contradiction, then, is not something created by the Gra. It is already present in the Zohar itself, leaving room to understand Sifra DiTzniusa differently in a way that fits the Zohar in Parshas Pinchas. We can now turn to the Gra's words in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch, where he presents support for Rashi and Tosafos. Aside from the broader difficulty already mentioned, the Gra's wording there requires careful analysis. To understand it, we first need the Sifrei in Parshas Ki Seitzei (sec. 234): “‘You shall make gedilim for yourself’ — why is this stated? Since the Torah says, ‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis,’ I might have thought that one makes a single string by itself. The Torah therefore says, ‘gedilim.’ How many strings make a gedil? No fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel. Beis Shammai say: four strands of Techeiles and four strands of white... and the halachah follows Beis Shammai.” This is the reading in our Sifrei to Devarim, and it is also the text of Tosafos in Menachos 41b, s.v. Beis Shammai. Beis Hillel, unlike Beis

Shammai, does not explicitly state how many of the strings are Techeiles. Tosafos (Menachos 38a, s.v. HaTecheiles), however, infers from the beginning of the Sifrei — “I might have thought [one should make] one string on its own” — that the pesil Techeiles itself is one string. Since Beis Hillel does not introduce a new number specifically for Techeiles, but is only defining the gedil, it follows that according to Beis Hillel the Techeiles is only one string. If, on the other hand, the pesil Techeiles is included among the three strings of the gedil, as Tosafos in Menachos 38a seems to understand, then Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai disagree on two separate points: the total number of tzitzis strings and the number of Techeiles strings. This appears to be the Gra's intention at the beginning of his comments, when he quotes this Sifrei and sees it as a reliable source for the positions of the Rambam and Raavad discussed above. He does not mean that they pasken like Beis Hillel, as...

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...Rav Baruch Rakover shlita suggested in his sefer *Birchas Eliyahu*. The Sifrei itself explicitly says, “the halachah follows Beis Shammai”; the Gemara says the same, and the Gra himself quotes it in his *Biur*. Nor can he be referring here to the alternate girsa in Sifrei that will be discussed below, since there is not even a hint of that in these words of the Gra. Rather, his intent is that regarding the total number of tzitzis strings, the Rambam and Raavad rule like Beis Shammai, as the Sifrei and Gemara explicitly indicate; but with regard to the number of Techeiles strings, they follow Beis Hillel. It is also incorrect to read the Gra as saying that, according to Tosafos, Beis Hillel's Techeiles string is in addition to the three strings. The Gra only mentions that possibility at the end — “perhaps they explain...” — and rejects it. His own words, “But in the Sifrei there is still a difficulty, for Beis Hillel says three and Beis Shammai says eight,” clearly show that at first he understood the three of Beis Hillel to be the total number of strings. This is also compelled by his next statement: “What Tosafos writes at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai, ‘However, in the Sifrei there is an opinion...,’ is not in the Sifrei; rather, they learned it from the beginning of the Sifrei, ‘They shall make...,’ as above, and as they wrote at the end of s.v. HaTecheiles.” The “other opinion” quoted in Tosafos is “two white and one Techeiles.” The Gra explains that this is the same approach on which Tosafos relied at the beginning of his discussion. When he wrote just before this that “gedil was written only regarding the white,” he did not necessarily mean the color white alone, but the overall gedil — which can be called “white” because when Techeiles is absent, the entire tzitzis is white. ³ On this reading of Tosafos in the Sifrei, the Gra asks three questions. First, it is not clear what derashah would make Beis Shammai disagree with Beis Hillel over the number of Techeiles strands, since on the simple reading their machlokes concerns only the meaning of the word “gedilim.” Second, on this approach there is no source for our practice of doubling the four strings spoken of in the Gemara into eight hanging strands. Third, the Sifrei and Gemara do not line up: in the Sifrei the total according to Beis Hillel is three and according to Beis Shammai eight, while in the Gemara the numbers are three and four. Because of these difficulties, the Gra rejects Tosafos's explanation of the Sifrei and offers a new reading: according to Beis Hillel the number of Techeiles strands is also three, because the two colors are always equal. Whatever is derived from “gedilim” applies both to white and to Techeiles. Beis Hillel derives

³ See the introduction above, where we explained the Gra's three questions.

three from “gedilim”: three of white and likewise three of Techeiles. Beis Shammai derives four: four of white and likewise four of Techeiles. (There is, however, a slight imprecision in the Gra's wording. Regarding Beis Hillel he writes, “gedil is three strands, and the same applies to white,” implying that “gedil” was stated regarding Techeiles; while regarding Beis Shammai he writes, “gedilim is four... and the same applies to Techeiles,” implying that “gedilim” was stated regarding white. This requires explanation.) The Gra's explanation resembles one of Tosafos's own readings of the Sifrei (Menachos 41a, s.v. Beis Shammai): “If you analyze it, the Sifrei implies that Beis Hillel expounds ‘gedilim’ and applies it to every gedil, so that it now parallels Beis Shammai, who speaks of both Techeiles and white.” In truth, though, the two approaches differ in several important details. According to Tosafos, both Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai use the derashah “gedil, gedilim” brought by the Gemara (Menachos 39b). For Beis Shammai, “gedil” means two and “gedilim” means four; for Beis Hillel, “gedil” means three and “gedilim” means six. According to the Gra, however, Beis Hillel has no derashah of “gedil, gedilim” at all. Rather, based on sevara, the single gedil applies to both white and Techeiles.

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According to Tosafos, for Beis Shammai the phrase “gedil, gedilim” applies to the white and Techeiles together — one gedil of white and a second gedil of Techeiles. According to the Gra, by contrast, Beis Shammai's “gedil, gedilim” is said regarding the white alone, while the number of Techeiles strings is learned from the white because sevara dictates that the two colors be equal. It follows that, according to Tosafos, the number four stated in the Gemara for Beis Shammai is the count before the strings are folded; after folding there are eight. According to the Gra, the number four is the count after folding, and refers to one color alone. Add an equal number of the second color and the total is eight. The Sifrei, according to Tosafos, speaks of Beis Hillel before the strings are folded and counts only one color, but of Beis Shammai after folding and counts both colors. According to the Gra, the Sifrei speaks of Beis Hillel after folding and of one color, and of Beis Shammai after folding and of both colors. Everything the Gra writes in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch is built on Tosafos's text of the Sifrei, with no hint of another girsa. In his hagahos to the Sifrei, however, and likewise in Yahel Or, the Gra later retracted this and corrected the text of the Sifrei to the reading found in our Parshas Shelach: “I might have thought he should make a separate string; therefore the Torah says ‘gedilim.’ How many strings make a gedil? No fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel. Beis Shammai say: three of wool and a fourth of Techeiles.” The Gra writes in Yahel Or: “It is the fourth string, in accordance with the Raavad, as I wrote there that this is the correct reading, and so it is in our Sifrei.” This girsa matches precisely the baraisa in our Gemara and also has a strong internal logic: both Beis Hillel and Beis Shammai are discussing the derashah of “gedil,” which teaches three strings, and they disagree only whether the Techeiles string is included in that gedil or is added on top of it. The Radzyner Rebbe in Maamar Pesil Techeiles (p. 401), and Rav Moshe Sternbuch shlita in Hilchos HaGra UMinhagav (p. 35), understood the Gra's words in Yahel Or as coming only to exclude the position of Tosafos, not that of the Rambam; when the Gra says “like the Raavad,” they understand it as not necessarily exact. It seems more likely, however, that the Gra meant to exclude the Rambam as well, for three reasons. First, if not, he should have written explicitly “like the Raavad and the Rambam.” Second, the Rambam's shittah does not fit the derashah of the Zohar as the Gra explains it there in Yahel Or: “the only daughter is the

4 It should be noted that, for all the internal logic of this girsa, it runs against the Gemara's statement: “gedil” means two; “gedilim” means four.

Techeiles of tzitzis... included with three white strings, the fourth letter of the Name.” According to the Rambam, however, the tzitzis contains three and a half white full strings and only half a string of Techeiles. Third — and most importantly — there is a basic difference between the source the Gra uses for the Raavad and Rambam in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch and the source he uses in Yahel Or. In the Biur to Shulchan Aruch, the Gra follows Tosafos's girsa and infers from the opening of the Sifrei that one strand of Techeiles is required. According to that girsa, the primary count is of the strands after the strings are attached to the garment, as explained above, so there is room for the Rambam's position. In fact, the Rambam fits that girsa particularly well, as the Gra writes there: “the Rambam understands it as literally one strand.” But according to the Gra's corrected text of the Sifrei, the primary count is before the strings are folded — “three of wool and a fourth of Techeiles.” There is no room here for the Rambam's view: the entire fourth full string, before it is folded, is Techeiles. Rav David Pardo already made this point in his commentary to Sifrei, Parshas Shelach.

The Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands in Tzitzis

In conclusion, the Gra's final ruling in this sugya was in accordance with the Raavad: three full white strings and one full Techeiles string, based on the girsa of the Sifrei that the Gra himself established as correct.

Did the Gra See the Sifrei When He Wrote His Commentary on Shulchan Aruch?

Rabbi Eliyahu Tavger

The Sifrei to Bamidbar and Devarim was first printed in Venice in the year 5306 (1546). Almost 250 years passed before this Midrash Halachah was printed a second time, in Hamburg in 5549 (1789). In the Gra's Biur to Shulchan Aruch there are 115 references to the Sifrei, including seventy-five direct quotations. Because the Gra's general practice is to quote Chazal directly and omit the intermediate source from which the quotation was taken, the impression is created that when he wrote his Biur to Shulchan Aruch he had the Sifrei itself in front of him. My purpose in this article is to show that this was not the case: all of his Sifrei quotations were taken from secondary sources, and only late in his life — the Gra passed away in 5558 (1797) — did he obtain the Hamburg 1789 edition, on which he wrote his hagahos. Anyone familiar with the Gra's hagahos to Sifrei knows that although the Hamburg edition was based on the Venice edition, there are small textual differences between them, and the Gra's emendations fit the Hamburg text. The passages and references cited in the name of Sifrei in his earlier Biur to Shulchan Aruch were not revised on the basis of that edition; they remained his original formulation, a “first version” that was never displaced.

The first step, if this claim is to be established in a way that cannot simply be refuted, is to verify that every reference to Sifrei in the Gra's Biur has another, secondary source from which the Gra could have known it. In the overwhelming majority of cases, that secondary source is Yalkut Shimoni, which reproduces most of the Sifrei with remarkable regularity. In the remaining cases, it is found in the Rishonim or other mefarshim who mention or quote the Sifrei. The second step is to compare the wording. In those places where the printed Sifrei differs from the quotation of Sifrei in the secondary source, the Gra's wording in most cases turns out to be closer to the secondary source. Here are several examples:

A) Text of the printed Sifrei:

“They shall place upon the tzitzis of the corner a pesil Techeiles’ — spun and twisted. I only know that Techeiles must be spun and twisted; from where do I know white? You can reason as follows: since the Torah said to place Techeiles and to place white, just as Techeiles is spun and twisted, so too white must be spun and twisted.” (Sifrei Bamidbar 115)

Text of the Sifrei as quoted in the Gra's Biur:

“‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis’ — I might think that he makes it as it is; therefore the Torah says, ‘upon the tzitzis of the corner a pesil Techeiles,’ meaning spun and twisted. I only know that pesil Techeiles must be spun and twisted; from where do I know white? You can reason: since the Torah said to place Techeiles and to place white, just as Techeiles is spun and twisted, so too white is spun and twisted.” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 11:2, s.v. VeTzerichin Shezirah)

Text of the secondary source:

“‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis’ — I might think that it should be made just as it is; therefore the Torah says, ‘upon the tzitzis of the corner a pesil Techeiles,’ meaning spun and twisted. I only know that pesil Techeiles must be spun and twisted. From where do I know white? You can reason: the Torah said to place Techeiles and to place white; just as Techeiles is spun and twisted, so too white must be spun and twisted.” (Rosh, Hilchos Tzitzis, quoting Sifrei)

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B) Text of the printed Sifrei:

“‘When you sit’ — excluding [other positions], specifically while sitting.”
(Sifrei Devarim 257)

Text of the Sifrei as quoted in the Gra's Biur:

“‘When you sit’¹ — and not while standing.” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 43:1, s.v. Dehaynu, etc.)

Text of the secondary source:

“‘When you sit’ — excluding, and not while standing.” (Yalkut Shimoni, Parshas Ki Seitzei, remez 934)

C) Text of the printed Sifrei:

“From where do we know that one who demolishes even one stone from the Heichal, the Mizbeiach, or the azaros violates a prohibition? The Torah says: ‘You shall destroy their altars... You shall not do so to Hashem your God.’”
(Sifrei Devarim 61)

Text of the Sifrei as quoted in the Gra's Biur:

“From where do we know that one who demolishes one stone from the Heichal, from the Mizbeiach, or from the azarah violates a lav? The Torah says, ‘You shall destroy their name... You shall not do so to Hashem.’” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 152:1, s.v. VeAsur, etc.)

Text of the secondary source:

“From where do we know that one who demolishes one stone from the Heichal, from the Mizbeiach, or from the azarah violates a lav? The Torah says, ‘You shall destroy their name... You shall not do so to Hashem.’”
(Yalkut Shimoni, Re'eh, remez 878)

D) Text of the printed Sifrei:

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her. This teaches that an opening invites the thief.” (Sifrei Devarim 242)

Text of the Sifrei as quoted in the Gra's Biur:

¹ The Gra omits the word “chutz” (“excluding”) that appears in the Yalkut.

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her; 2‘and he lay with her.’ This teaches that an opening invites the thief.” (Biur HaGra, Even HaEzer 73:4, s.v. VeIshah Lo, etc.)

Text of the secondary source:

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her there; ‘and he lay with her.’ This teaches that an opening invites the thief.” (Yalkut Shimoni, Ki Seitzei, remez 933)

And there are many more examples of the same kind.

2 The Gra omits the word “ba’ir” (“in the city”) that appears in the Yalkut.

Did the Gra See the Sifrei When He Wrote His Commentary on Shulchan Aruch?

References to Sifrei passages that are not found in our Sifrei

More than that: in four cases the quotation brought in the Gra's Biur does not appear anywhere in our Sifrei and is found only in a secondary source. Nevertheless, the Gra cites it simply in the name of “Sifrei,” not in the name of the source where it actually appears. The cases are:

“‘Your garment’ — excluding a pillow.” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 18:2, s.v. Sedinim, etc.) This is found in Yalkut Shimoni (Ki Seitzei, remez 933).

“‘And you shall know that your tent is at peace’ — this means, etc.” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 250:1, s.v. VeYesh). This is found in the Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 250), quoting the Kol Bo in the name of Sifrei: “‘And you shall know that your tent is at peace’ — this refers to sharpening one's knife.”

“‘Only,’ etc. — from here we learn that the rust must be removed.” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 451:3, s.v. VeKodem). This is found in the Rosh (Pesachim ch. 2) in the name of Sifrei: “‘Only the gold and the silver’ — from here we learn that the rust must be removed.”

“‘There shall not be a kedeshah’ — a warning against promiscuity, as it says, ‘There was no kedeshah here.’” (Biur HaGra, Even HaEzer 26:8). This is found in the Raavad's hasagos (Hilchos Na'arah Besulah ch. 2), where it is quoted in the name of Sifrei with the same wording.

In two additional places, the Gra brings derashos attributed to Sifrei by a secondary source, even though they are not found in the printed Sifrei, and he does not point this out:

“‘And the Ran, etc., in the name of the Raah, that the Sifrei derives Malchiyos, Zichronos, and Shofaros from this pasuk: Malchiyos from ‘I am Hashem your God,’ Zichronos from ‘and they shall be for you as a remembrance,’ and Shofaros from ‘and you shall sound the trumpets.’” (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 591:6, s.v. VeHaRan, etc.)

“‘And there are those who disagree. There [meaning the Raavyah, siman 193], in the name of Rav Ephraim, from what is stated in the Yerushalmi and the Tosefta cited above, Isi ben Akavya, etc.: ‘If regarding clothing... an animal...’ etc. With clothing, everyone agrees that no actual tying is needed, as stated in Shabbos 54a, and this is also implied by the Gemara there: if we are speaking of kilayim of a person, etc... rather... We see that regarding a

person's kilayim there is no difficulty from one who merely stitches, etc. And in Sifrei it expounds ‘together’ regarding kilayim of clothing to include one stitch, etc., whereas ‘together’ regarding plowing includes threshing and leading, etc.; it does not likewise say ‘one stitch.’” (Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 297, second se'if katan 27.) From the Raavyah it sounds as though the derashah “together — regarding kilayim of clothing — to include a single stitch” comes from Sifrei. Our Sifrei, however, contains no such derashah; it appears in Yevamos 5b. In the Dublitzky edition (note 24), the editor assumed that the Gra had the printed Sifrei before him and was therefore forced to search for a source within Sifrei, when in fact the Gra's source is simply the Raavyah's own words, not the Sifrei itself.

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References to Sifrei Zuta

The Gra follows a similar practice in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch with regard to the Midrash Sifrei Zuta — a work that was reconstructed and published many years after the Gra. He quotes it directly, without mentioning the secondary source from which he knew it:

“And so it is in Sifrei Zuta: ‘A woman,’ etc. Why does the Torah say it throughout the parashah? To include a widow for a Kohen Gadol, a divorcee and chalutzah for an ordinary kohen, and [various prohibitions] involving a mamzer, a non-Jew, and a chalal.” (Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 234:7.) This is found in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Naso, remez 709) in the name of Sifrei Zuta.

“And as it says in Sifrei Zuta: a mashal to a householder who would lend good wheat to all the people of the city, and they would return good wheat to him, etc.” (Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 248:7.) This is found in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Re'eh, remez 895) in the name of Sifrei Zuta. Since the Gra did not want to quote the whole Midrash at length, he stops in the middle and directs the reader to the source, writing later: “See Yalkut, siman 895.”

“Sifrei Zuta there: I only know of the maaser of Levi'im that they take from others, from Yisrael. From where do you include the Levi'im's own maaser — meaning that they are obligated to separate maaser and give terumas maaser to the kohen, as explained at the beginning there? I might have thought that one is only obligated in terumah [but not maaser]... Yisrael's maaser, the maaser of non-Jews and geirim, etc.; the Torah therefore teaches... I only know, etc.; the Torah says, ‘a tithe from the tithe.’”

(Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 331:111.) This is found in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Korach, remez 758) in the name of Sifrei Zuta.

From all this, it appears clear that there is no possibility that the Gra had the printed edition of Sifrei before him when he wrote his Biur to Shulchan Aruch. Every citation of Sifrei there came to him through secondary sources.

Arguments that appear to show that the Gra did have the Sifrei — and why they do not prove it

A) The point mentioned above about removing rust (Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 451:3, s.v. VeKodem) appears a second time in the Gra's Biur, in

Yoreh Deah (120:34). There he brings it in the name of the Mordechai and the Rosh and notes that this derashah is not found in our Sifrei but only in Yalkut Shimoni. At first glance, this seems to show that the Gra did indeed use the printed Sifrei rather than relying solely on a secondary source. I do not think it proves that. The Gra's point there is only that in the place where Yalkut Shimoni brings this derashah, it does not identify Sifrei as its source — which would ordinarily be expected when Yalkut quotes a derashah from Sifrei, as in the case of “your garment — excluding a pillow” mentioned above.

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B) In his Biur to Choshen Mishpat (28:8), the Gra does indeed distinguish between material from Sifrei itself and material found in Yalkut Shimoni in the name of Sifrei:

“‘And one witness,’ etc., but, etc. Based on [Sanhedrin] 113b and Sifrei, Parshas Shoftim; and see Yalkut siman 922: ‘One witness shall not rise against a man’ — I only know, etc.; see there.”

This seems at first to show that the Gra had Sifrei as a separate sefer in front of him and did not know it only through Yalkut. But this too is no proof. The Gra's intention is to hint that there is a difference between the Sifrei text quoted in Hagahos Maimoniyos (Hilchos Edus ch. 5): “I only know [this] regarding monetary cases; from where do we know capital cases?” and the version in Yalkut Shimoni: “I only know capital cases; from where do we know monetary cases?” It is specifically the Yalkut's version that serves as the source for the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch.

C) In his Biur to Yoreh Deah (331:54), the Gra writes:

“And so it is in Sifrei, Parshas Re'eh, except that in our Sifrei the beginning of the baraisa and the end of the baraisa are missing.”

His intent is only that the baraisa from Sifrei, as quoted in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Re'eh, remez 897), also appears in the Yerushalmi (Maaser Sheni 5:3), but the version in Yalkut is missing its opening and closing sections, while the Yerushalmi preserves the full passage.

Resolving one puzzling passage in the Gra's Biur

Based on this conclusion, we can resolve a striking difficulty in the Gra's Biur (Orach Chaim 12:1, s.v. U'leRabbeinu Tam, etc.) that has confused many:

“‘They challenged: a tallis does not...,’ etc. And so it is in Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei: ‘How many [strings make] a gedil?’ etc.; Beis Shammai say four of Techeiles and four of wool, etc., and the halachah follows Beis Shammai. The Gemara there likewise paskens like Beis Shammai. But the Raavad holds that only two strands are Techeiles and six are white, while the Rambam writes that only one strand is Techeiles and seven are white. Their reason is the statement there in Sifrei: ‘They shall make for themselves tzitzis’ — I might have thought they should make it as one separate string; therefore the Torah says ‘gedil.’ How many make a gedil? No fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel; Beis Shammai say, etc., as above. Tosafos cited above, s.v. Beis

Shammai, brings this. Since it says, ‘I might have thought...,’ it implies that the pesil Techeiles is only one.”

Why did the Gra not cite, as the source for the Raavad's position — “only two strands are Techeiles and six are white” — the explicit words of the Sifrei: “Beis Shammai say: three of wool and a fourth of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Shammai” (Bamidbar 115)? Instead he had to bring an indirect proof, based only on an inference from the wording. The reason, according to this approach, is that the Gra did not know the printed Sifrei and therefore had to obtain his information about it from secondary sources such as Yalkut Shimoni and the Rishonim. The version of this passage of Sifrei as quoted in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Shelach, remez 750) differs from the printed text: “Beis Shammai say three of wool and four of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Shammai.” That version cannot be used as a proof for the Raavad's shittah.

Response to “Did the Gra See the Sifrei When He Wrote His Commentary on Shulchan Aruch?”

And a Clarification of the Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands

Yisrael Barkin — Beth Medrash Govoha, Lakewood

**(This version contains several additions that were not printed in
Yeshurun.)**

To the editors of Yeshurun,

In the Elul 5771 issue of Yeshurun I saw an article by Rav Eliyahu Tavger shlita, in which he brought several proofs that, in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch, the Gra did not use the printed Sifrei itself. According to his argument, everything the Gra cites there from Sifrei came from Yalkut Shimoni and from the Rishonim. The Venice Sifrei, printed in 5306 (1546) and later difficult to obtain, was supposedly never before the Gra's holy eyes; only toward the end of the Gra's life did he receive the Hamburg edition, printed in 5549 (1789). The Gra passed away in 5558 (1797).

In my opinion, this cannot possibly be said. It is altogether implausible that the Gra did not see the Venice Sifrei until the end of his life. There is no doubt that he would have made every possible effort to obtain a printed copy of Sifrei even if it was difficult to find. This remains true even if we were to accept the proofs that, when he was younger, he had not yet seen it.

— A —

The author brings two kinds of evidence. First, there are places where the Gra quotes the wording of Sifrei exactly as it appears elsewhere — for example in Yalkut Shimoni or in the Rishonim — while that wording differs from the printed Sifrei. Second, there are a number of places where the Gra cites Sifrei even though the passage is not found in our Sifrei and appears only in the Rishonim.

I would respond that the first type of evidence does not prove that the Gra had never seen the printed Sifrei. Even where he quotes the version found in Yalkut or in the Rishonim, it is entirely possible that for some other reason he preferred that version and deliberately wrote according to what he considered

1 As the printers of the Hamburg edition (5549/1789) wrote on the title page of the Sifrei: not even one copy of the earlier Venice edition (5306/1546) could be found in the city. [But in a large city such as Vilna, there would certainly have been many copies.]

the correct nusach rather than copying the printed text. In fact, we sometimes find the Gra quoting Sifrei in wording that appears nowhere else at all; see below, note 2. This also explains why, in each of the four examples brought by Rav Tavger shlita, although the Gra's wording is in substance closer to the Yalkut or the Rishonim than to the printed Sifrei, it still differs from the secondary source itself. Compare: 1) the Gra: “as it is” / the secondary source: “as it is”; “spun and twisted” / “that is spun and twisted”; 2) “when you sit, and not while standing” / “when you sit, excluding, and not while standing”; 3) “from the Heichal, from the Mizbeiach, from the azarah” / “and from the Heichal and from the Mizbeiach and from the azarah”; 4) “and he lay with her” / “in the city, and he lay with her.” This points to what I have said: the Gra gave the version that appeared correct to him at the time of writing, rather than mechanically depending on the wording of any particular sefer.

2 Alternatively, it is possible that the Gra did not have a Sifrei in his house at the particular time he was writing, and for some reason preferred to copy from a written source rather than quote from memory. (For something analogous, see Megillah 18b: R' Yochanan said that it is forbidden to write, etc.)

Response to “Did the Gra See the Sifrei When He Wrote His Commentary on Shulchan Aruch?”

And a Clarification of the Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands

It would also have been appropriate to check whether the Gra treats quotations from the Mechilta, Sifra, Tosefta, and Yerushalmi the same way — namely, whether he sometimes gives the wording found in Yalkut rather than the printed original. I checked a few examples. In Orach Chaim 306:8, the Gra quotes the Mechilta as follows (I have copied the wording exactly as it appears in the first edition of the Biur HaGra):

“Six days you shall work and do all your work. Is it possible for a person to do all his work in six days? Rather, rest as though all your work has been done.”

The printed Mechilta in Parshas Yisro reads:

“Six days you shall work and do all your work. Is it possible for a person to do his work in six days? Rather, rest as though your work has been done.”

The exact wording quoted by the Gra is found only in Pesikta Zutresa there in Parshas Yisro, and something close to it appears in Yalkut Shimoni, except that the Yalkut omits the second occurrence of the word “all.” Rashi on the Torah there (Shemos 20:9) writes, “as though all your work has been done.” There can be no serious doubt that the Gra had the printed Mechilta, so this supports what I am saying: it was the Gra's way to quote a version found elsewhere when he considered that wording more correct.

I found another example in Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 201:3, where he writes:

“In Tosefta, the beginning of the third perek of Zavim: a zav has a stringency over a zavah in that a zav requires mayim chayim, while a zavah does not require mayim chayim. Rashi and Tosafos bring this in Shabbos 65b, Tosafos in Bechoros 55b, the Rash in the fourth perek of Zavim, and other poskim.”

Here too the Gra preferred the version as quoted by those Rishonim rather than the wording in our printed Tosefta:

3 The Mechilta had already been printed twice before the Gra's time (Venice 5305/1545; Amsterdam 5472/1712). Anyone who still insists otherwise should see Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 1:5, s.v. U'Parshas HaMan, where the Gra gives a page reference to the Mechilta — evidently to the Amsterdam edition.

“There is a stringency in a zav that is not in a zavah, and [a stringency in] a zavah that is not in a zav: the zav requires immersion in mayim chayim, while the zavah does not require immersion in mayim chayim.”

This is despite the fact that he simply writes, “in the Tosefta, beginning of the third perek of Zavim,” which creates the impression that he is quoting the Tosefta directly, and only incidentally notes that Tosafos brings it.

I also noticed in the same siman, se'if katan 34, that the Gra cites the Yerushalmi in the third perek of Yoma as quoted by Tosafos, Pesachim 109b, regarding the sea that Shlomo made. According to that quotation, the Yerushalmi asks, “But they are drawn water!” The Gra does not point out that in our Yerushalmi the wording is instead, “But is it not a vessel?”

And in the same siman, se'if katan 29, the Gra quotes the Sifra, Parshas Shemini (parashah 9), in the following wording:

“If [the Torah had said only] a pit, I might include even a pit in a ship. Therefore it says ‘a spring’: just as a spring has its source in the ground, so too a pit must have its source in the ground.”

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The printed Sifra has a slightly different girsa:

“If [the Torah had said only] a pit, I might say that even a pit in a ship is tavor. Therefore it says ‘a spring’: just as a spring has its source in the ground, so too a mikveh must have its source in the ground.”

A talmid chacham also pointed out to me that in Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 423:2, the Gra quotes Maseches Sofrim 17:9 without qualification, although in reality his wording follows his own hagahos there. This is what he writes in the Biur:

“On Rosh Chodesh itself, three people read from the korban tamid. The first reads ‘Vayedaber,’ ‘Tzav,’ and ‘Ve’amarta.’ The second reads ‘Es hakeves ha’echad,’ ‘Va’asiris,’ ‘Olas,’ ‘VeNisko,’ and ‘Ve’es hakeves.’ The third goes back and reads ‘Olas tamid,’ ‘VeNisko,’ ‘Ve’es hakeves,’ ‘Uveyom haShabbos,’ and ‘Olas Shabbos,’ because they said that one may not read fewer than three pesukim in a parashah; and some say that one may not leave fewer than three pesukim in a parashah. See there.”

Anyone who looks at Maseches Sofrim together with the Gra's hagahos will see that the words I emphasized are not part of the printed text of Maseches Sofrim at all; they come from the Gra's own emendations. True, here the Gra writes “see there,” and perhaps he meant to hint to this. But in any event we again see that his normal practice was to quote according to his own nusach.

This is exactly my point. The Gra did not insist on reproducing the printed text word for word. At times he changes a girsa on the basis of the Rishonim, another source, or his own sevara, without calling attention to it — even in sefarim that were unquestionably in front of him.

Afterward I found almost these exact words in the rules for understanding the Biur HaGra that the author of Pe'as HaShulchan gives in his introduction to the Biur HaGra on Orach Chaim. In rule 5 he writes: “With the Tosefta, Yerushalmi, Pesikta, Midrash, and other works that are not commonly available, it is his way to establish them in their proper wording; and if there is a scribal error there, he copies them in the clean, remarkable girsa that he established.” There is nothing more to add.

The second type of proof — places where the Gra cites Sifrei although the passage is found only in the Rishonim — is also not conclusive. Once the Rishonim state that such a Sifrei exists, there is no obligation to doubt them, and one may simply cite the matter as being found in Sifrei. There is a clear proof of this. In Orach Chaim 263:5, the Gra twice cites Yerushalmi, Perek HaRoeh, as the source for the berachah over Shabbos candles and Yom Tov candles, even though the passage is not found in our Yerushalmi. It appears only in the Raavyah, Shabbos siman 199 (p. 205 in the new edition), and in other Rishonim quoted by the Beis Yosef there. The Gra did not see any need to note this.

Likewise, in Biur HaGra to Orach Chaim 8, he quotes the Orchos Chaim in the name of the Yerushalmi: “All berachos [are recited] standing.” This is not found in our Yerushalmi, and the Gra does not point that out. This case is not quite identical to the ones where the Gra cites a source without qualification, because here he explicitly says that the quotation comes from Orchos Chaim. Still, we see that he did not feel obligated to alert the reader whenever a passage attributed to Yerushalmi was absent from the printed Yerushalmi.

Response to “Did the Gra See the Sifrei When He Wrote His Commentary on Shulchan Aruch?”

And a Clarification of the Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands

— B —

Up to this point I have shown that none of the proofs offered to establish that the Gra did not possess the printed Sifrei is conclusive. From here on I will point out difficulties that remain even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that during some period of the Gra's life he did not have the Sifrei — although there is no actual proof of that.

The author treats his proofs as establishing that every single citation of Sifrei in the Biur HaGra must have come only from Yalkut or the Rishonim. Because of that assumption, he is forced at the end of his article to deal with three passages that contradict his thesis, and in my opinion his answers are very strained.

A) Regarding the removal of rust before kashering utensils, the Gra in Orach Chaim 451 (se'if 3, s.v. VeKodem) points to Sifrei as the source; his immediate source there would be the Rosh quoting Sifrei. In Yoreh Deah 120:34, however, the Gra returns to this derashah and writes that it is found in the Mordechai and Rosh in the name of Sifrei, but “it is not in our Sifrei, although it is found in Yalkut.” That sounds like direct evidence that the Gra did use the printed Sifrei when writing his Biur to Shulchan Aruch. The author wishes to answer that the Gra only meant that, in the Yalkut where the derashah appears, Sifrei is not identified as its source. But this is an obvious strain and does not fit the words “our Sifrei” at all. Nor is it reasonable that the Gra would infer from the Yalkut's failure to identify its source that the passage was absent from Sifrei.

B) The author raises another difficulty from Biur HaGra, Choshen Mishpat 28:8. The Rema there — based on Hagahos Maimoniyos — rules that a lone witness may not testify where his testimony cannot accomplish anything. The Gra cites Sifrei and Yalkut on the pasuk “one witness shall not rise against a man” as two separate sources. The author answers that the Gra's intent is to distinguish between the girsa quoted in Hagahos Maimoniyos, “I only know monetary cases; from where do we know capital cases?” and the wording in Yalkut, “I only know capital cases; from where do we know monetary cases?” He says that specifically the Yalkut's version is the source for the Rema's ruling. In my opinion this cannot be the Gra's intention. Had he meant that, he

would have had to say so explicitly, or at least hint that by “Sifrei” he meant the Sifrei as quoted in Hagahos Maimoniyos. It is one thing when the Gra simply cites “Sifrei” and the text is found only in a Rishon: there his meaning can be that the din originates in Sifrei. But if he is pointing to a textual difference between the Sifrei as quoted in two different places, he would have had to explain that. More importantly, the difference between the two versions has no *naftka minah* whatsoever for the Rema's ruling that a single witness should not testify where his testimony is useless. The two versions agree on the substantive din; they differ only in the order of the *derashos*. And in any event, Hagahos Maimoniyos is itself the Rema's source, and there the text is not like the Yalkut.

C) The author also raises the *Biur HaGra* to *Yoreh Deah* 331:54, where the Gra derives from the *Yerushalmi* the obligation of *maaser ani* in the third and sixth years, and then writes: “And so it is in Sifrei, *Parshas Re'eh*, except that in our Sifrei the beginning of the *baraisa* and the end of the *baraisa* are missing.” The author again answers that the Gra means that the beginning and end are missing in Yalkut. But that too does not fit the phrase “our Sifrei.” From a purely conceptual standpoint this answer is less forced than the others, since one could argue that it is unlikely that Yalkut would have omitted both the beginning and end of a Sifrei passage that it quotes. Still, the wording remains very difficult.

4 Incidentally, the continuation of the Sifrei as quoted in the *Biur HaGra* — “From where do we know lashes? The Torah says, ‘and for every sin’” — is not found anywhere. This itself appears to support what I wrote at the beginning: the Gra would write the Sifrei according to what he believed was the correct *nusach* and was not dependent on any one *sefer*. (In his *hagahos* to Sifrei the Gra gives a different *girsas*, so one must say that he retracted one version in favor of the other. Even here, however, we cannot know which one represented his final view.)

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In truth, all three difficulties can be resolved much more simply, even if we accept the author's basic premise. The key is what I said earlier: it is impossible to believe that the Gra did not see the printed Sifrei until almost the very end of his life. This can be combined with what Rav Yisrael of Shklov writes in his introduction to the Biur HaGra on Shulchan Aruch:

“The order of his writings was as follows. First, our great master, of blessed memory, wrote on all four sections of Shulchan Aruch in four volumes, arranged according to the order of the simanim and se’ifim. Afterward our holy master, of blessed memory, reviewed the material again, and new insights came to him in double measure, for he was like an overflowing spring from moment to moment. He then wrote three further mahaduros, in three volumes, on all four sections of Shulchan Aruch. He called these ‘Likkutim’ because he did not write them in order as he had the first time; rather, every thought that came into the net of his holy and pure mind was recorded by him in faithful writing. This was his holy way in these later mahaduros: wherever in the first version he had left a se’if without explanation, or only supplied a mareh makom, or had not decided between two conflicting opinions, in the later mahaduros he would raise his holy hand at that point with a broad explanation and deep pilpul, waging war with the authors and deciding between Rishonim and Acharonim, building or overturning, establishing their words or challenging them; the upright will see and rejoice. Many times, too, where in the first version he had left a matter with a tzarich iyun, in these later mahaduros he wrote his shittah after further study, sweeter than honey...”

Accordingly, even if we assume that when the Gra wrote the first version of his Biur he did not have the printed Sifrei, it is certainly possible — and quite likely — that by the time he wrote the Likkutim, which are later, she had already seen the printed Sifrei. Once this is granted, even passages that are not formally labeled as Likkutim could still have been written later: they may be

5 The Likkutim could have been written literally until the end of the Gra's life. Even according to what several of the Gra's talmidim wrote, that the Gra did not “write” after the age of forty, it is reasonable that this refers to composing orderly sefarim. He could still have kept unsystematic notes and likkutim. See Yeshurun vol. 4, p. 86 n. 7, and HaGaon [by Rav Dov Eliach], vol. 3, p. 4417.

later additions written in the margin, or passages written at a later point for some other reason. There is therefore no need to force explanations for places showing that the printed Sifrei was before the Gra. In fact, the latter two passages cited by the author are explicitly marked as Likkutim. The first may also be from the Likkutim, with the label lost through a printing error, or it may have been added later to the first mahadura, as I have suggested. (Or, more simply, we can reject the author's premise altogether — which in my opinion is in fact the truth.)

⁶ It was the Gra's practice to add notes later in the margins of his own sefarim. See Yeshurun vol. 4, p. 86 n. 7, and HaGaon, vol. 3, p. 4411.

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And a Clarification of the Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands

— C —

I will now turn to the end of the author's article, under the heading “Resolving one puzzling passage in the Gra's Biur.” This is a continuation of his earlier article in Yeshurun vol. 7, “The Gra's View on the Number of Techeiles Strands in Tzitzis.” There he noted an apparent contradiction in the Gra. The Rishonim dispute how many Techeiles strings there should be: Rashi and Tosafos require two of the four full strings, ⁷the Raavad requires one of the four, and the Rambam holds that only half of one full string is Techeiles — yielding one Techeiles end out of eight. In Shulchan Aruch siman 12, the Gra concludes in accordance with Rashi and Tosafos, ⁸whereas in his commentary to Raaya Mehemna, Pinchas 228b (Biur al Raaya Mehemna [Königsberg 5618/1858], later edition 9p. 421, also printed in Yahel Or), he writes that the

7 I think it is worth noting here that the Mishnah Berurah rules in accordance with Rashi and Tosafos both lekula and lechumra. See Mishnah Berurah, siman 9, se'if katan 14, and look carefully: according to the Raavad there would be a possible pesul in the solution he suggests for satisfying the Shulchan Aruch's safek, whereas the Mishnah Berurah clearly treats his solution as carrying no possible pesul at all. See also the Taz (siman 9:3 and siman 11:13), Machatzis HaShekel (beginning of siman 15), Shulchan Aruch HaRav (siman 11:1), Artzos HaChaim (siman 9, Lev HaAretz 5; siman 11, HaMeir LaAretz 9), and other places in the Mishnah Berurah (siman 9:7; siman 11:58). [Incidentally, none of the poskim I have cited is discussing the din of gardumin. As for gardumin itself, I do not know what disadvantage there would be in using it as evidence.]

8 The Gra's words there are: “But the explanation is as follows. Certainly ‘pesil’ implies one, and ‘tzitzis’ of the white likewise implies one; nevertheless the two are always equal. Beis Hillel interprets a gedil as three strands, and the same applies to white. Beis Shammai interprets gedilim as four, as the Gemara says, ‘gedil, gedilim’; Beis Shammai holds that gedil implies two, unlike Beis Hillel, which interprets it as three and does not additionally expound the plural form. The same applies to Techeiles. When the Gemara says four or three, it is speaking of one type alone — Techeiles or white — and this is evident throughout the entire sugya.”

9 The “later edition” consists of likkutum that the printer, Rav Shmuel Luria z”l, did not find in the Radvil's copy, but only in other copies; see there p. 12 and the photographs at the end. [It requires investigation whether those likkutum ultimately derive from the Gra's own handwriting, or whether material written by talmidim is mixed in — things they heard directly from the Gra, heard second-hand, or added on their own. Even the main body of the sefer contains writings of talmidim, as stated on the title page. Similar things have happened with other Gra manuscripts printed by Rav Shmuel Luria in the Gra's name, where it later emerged that some passages were not from the Gra at all. See the appendix, where I quote the Ridbaz; in that instance the text came from the Radvil's copy.]

primary view is that of the Raavad.¹⁰ Likewise, in his hagahos to Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei, he emends the text in accordance with the Raavad. Yet in his commentary to Sifra DiTzniusa, chapter 5, he explains the passage according to the Rambam.¹¹ The author therefore concluded in his earlier article that the Gra retracted what he had written in the Biur to Shulchan Aruch. There, the Gra quoted only Tosafos's girsa in Sifrei — four Techeiles and four white — and did not mention another version. Even when explaining the Rambam and Raavad, he seems to explain them within Tosafos's version of the Sifrei. It would follow that the Gra's later hagah to Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei, and his statement in Yahel Or that the correct reading in Sifrei is one full Techeiles string, reflect his final view after he emended the text of Sifrei. That was the substance of the author's argument. But the original difficulty still remains: why, in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch, did the Gra not cite as the source for the Rambam and Raavad the explicit Sifrei in Parshas Shelach: “Beis Shammai say three of wool and a fourth of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Shammai”? Why was he forced to rely only on an indirect inference? The author therefore argues that the Gra did not have Sifrei before him at all, and this solves the problem. In my opinion, however, the difficulty is still not resolved, for two reasons. First, the Gra could have cited Yalkut, Parshas Shelach, in the name of Sifrei, where it says: “Beis Shammai say three of wool and four of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Shammai.”

¹⁰ His words there are: “It appears more correct not to read ‘chulyah’ at all. Rather, the text should read: ‘The only daughter is the Techeiles of tzitzis’; this is the fourth string, in accordance with the Raavad, as I wrote there that this is the primary view and so it is in our Sifrei; it is included with three white strings, the fourth letter of the Name. This is the primary explanation.”

¹¹ His words there are: “Seven rehitin... are the seven white strands and one Techeiles strand, corresponding to the covering of the eye.”

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That passage could certainly serve as a source for the Raavad. Any sensible reader — certainly our master the Gra zt¹ — could understand that this wording points to the Raavad, with only a minor textual difference between “a fourth” and “four.” There is no reason in the world why the Gra could not have cited it. (A talmid chacham pointed out to me that perhaps there is no need even to emend the text. The expression “three... and four” can itself mean three and a fourth, much as the pesukim say in Amos, chapters 1 and 2, “For three sins of Yisrael, and for four I will not reverse it,” and in Mishlei 30:18, “Three things are wondrous to me, and four I do not know.”¹² In fact, the girsa of Yalkut is also found in Pesikta Zutresa¹³ on Parshas Shelach, and it is quite possible that this is a valid original reading that accords with the Raavad.) Second, the passage itself proves that it cannot have been written before the Gra saw the printed Sifrei. At the end of this very section the Gra writes: “What Tosafos says at the end of s.v. Beis Shammai, ‘However, in Sifrei there is an opinion...,’ is not in Sifrei...” How could he write “it is not in Sifrei” about something that Tosafos explicitly attributes to Sifrei unless he had access to a complete Sifrei? According to what I explained above, however — that the Gra's Likkutim were written later — the second difficulty is readily answered even if we accept the hypothesis that most of the Biur HaGra was written before he saw the Sifrei. This entire section of the Gra on the number of strings comes from the Likkutim.¹⁴ In Orach Chaim, the

12 I was also shown Rashi, Sanhedrin 102a, s.v. Hachi Garsinan, “from then on they would nurse from three calves.” Rashi writes: “According to the reading in the sefarim, ‘two and three calves,’ it works well — meaning the two that Yeravam made and a third that had been made in the Midbar. ‘Three’ means ‘the third,’ as in ‘Three things are wondrous to me, and four I do not know.’” We see that Rashi understood this usage to be possible even in Chazal; it is not limited to the style of Tanach.

13 Pesikta Zutresa is also called Midrash Lekach Tov, and most of it is a compilation from Chazal. I have seen articles stating that the Rome manuscript of Sifrei — the oldest surviving Sifrei manuscript — also has this girsa. That is incorrect. I saw a photograph of the manuscript. In Parshas Shelach it reads: “They shall make for themselves tzitzis — I might have thought that he should make one string by itself; therefore it says gedilim. I might have thought, how many gedilim does one make? No fewer than three, according to Beis Hillel. Beis Shammai say three of wool and four of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Hillel. When is this said? At the beginning; but what remains, and gardumin, any amount is sufficient.” In Parshas Ki Seitzei the manuscript says nothing at all about the number of strings, contrary to one article that claimed that the Tosafos version appears there in Ki Seitzei.

14 R' Tzvi Hertzig shlita called this to my attention.

printed edition does not mark which passages come from the Likkutim and which do not, but in Yeshurun vol. 5, p. 38, Rav Avraham Kosman published a manuscript copy of the Likkutim to Orach Chaim, and this passage appears there. Thus the Gra could already have had Sifrei before him when he wrote “it is not in Sifrei.”¹⁵ As for the first difficulty, the gates of explanation are not closed. I saw one approach that explains the matter differently: toward the end of his life the Gra concluded that Tosafos's girsa was the correct one. Since the Rambam's shittah in any event does not fit smoothly with the Sifrei's version in Parshas Shelach, the Gra may have assumed that the Rambam himself also had Tosafos's girsa.¹⁶ Once the Gra explained the Rambam according to Tosafos's text — namely, that the halachah follows Beis Shammai only regarding the total number of strings...

¹⁵ Even according to the author's assumption that the Gra first saw a printed Sifrei only in 5548/1788, this Likkut could still have been written after that point.

¹⁶ A talmid chacham showed me something remarkable. In Yesod Mishneh Torah on the Rambam (Hilchos Tzitzis 1:4), by Rav Yehudah son of Rav Moshe Albottini z”l, one of the leading rabbanim of Yerushalayim, who began writing the work in the year 5275/1515, the Sifrei is quoted with Tosafos's girsa both in Shelach and in Ki Seitzei. Evidently he did not see that girsa as contradicting the Rambam's shittah. This fits what was explained above.

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...which is four, while for the number of Techeiles strands he relied on the implication at the beginning of the Sifrei that there is only one — and once he had concluded that Tosafos's girsa was correct, it is possible that the Raavad likewise had that girsa and derived his own shittah from it. 17

I would add another possibility. Perhaps the Gra is not discussing the competing Sifrei readings of four-and-four versus three-and-four at all. The fact that there are two versions was well known, and as explained above it

17 A talmid chacham wrote me the following addition: We already find elsewhere that the Gra related only to the girsa of the Rishonim and not to the text in our printed editions. In Orach Chaim 32:36, the Biur HaGra discusses at length the machlokes between the Rambam and Rosh concerning the definitions of an open and closed parashah. The Rambam holds that whenever the new parashah begins at the start of a line it is pesuchah, while one that begins in the middle is setumah. The Rosh holds that whenever there is an open space at one side — and certainly at both sides — it is pesuchah; when the blank space is in the middle, or an entire blank line which for him is equivalent to a central gap, it is setumah. The Gra writes that the Rambam's shittah is built on Maseches Sofrim. The Rosh, however, brings a proof from Yerushalmi, first perek of Megillah, which says: “Open at its beginning — open; open at its end — open.” The simple meaning is that if the present parashah begins in the middle of the line it is pesuchah, and if the previous parashah ends in the middle of a line and the next begins at the beginning of the following line it is pesuchah. This fits the Rosh, whereas according to the Rambam a parashah “open at its beginning” should be setumah. The Rosh was troubled, however, by the Yerushalmi's conclusion: “Open on both sides — setumah,” which on the simple reading means that if the previous parashah ends in the middle of one line and the new parashah begins in the middle of the next, it is setumah. That seems impossible: if an opening on one side makes it pesuchah, all the more so an opening on both sides. He therefore gives a forced alternative explanation. The Gra writes that the Rambam explained the Yerushalmi differently: “open at its beginning” means open from beginning to end — an entire blank line was left between the parshiyos and the new parashah began at the beginning of the next line, which according to the Rambam is pesuchah; “open at its end” likewise fits the Rambam; and “open on both sides” means exactly what it says, that the new parashah begins in the middle of the line, which the Rambam calls setumah. That is the substance of the Gra's discussion. Yet our Yerushalmi has a different girsa: “Open at its beginning — setumah; open at its end — pesuchah; open on both sides — setumah.” According to our girsa there is an explicit proof for the Rambam, and the entire Yerushalmi reads naturally. There is no need for the Gra's new explanation according to the Rambam. It is striking that the Gra says nothing about our Yerushalmi's girsa, which directly supports the Rambam, and does not say that the Rambam built his shittah on this corrected version — even though the Rosh's version does not read naturally, as the Rosh himself noted. We must therefore say that because all the Rishonim quoted the Yerushalmi with the Rosh's girsa, as the Gra himself notes, the Gra understood that to be the correct text and assumed that the Rambam had the same reading but interpreted it differently. End of quotation. A talmid chacham later told me that the Rama MiPano (Responsa, siman 106, s.v. VeHaShelishi), the Maadanei Yom Tov (on Hilchos Sefer Torah, siman 13, os 40), and the Mareh HaPanim (the Gra's rebbe, Megillah 1, s.v. Is Tanei Tanei Pesuchah, etc.) all cite our Yerushalmi's text as a source for the Rambam.

may not make much practical difference for the point under discussion. The Gra's main purpose may simply be to show the reasoning behind the Rambam and Raavad from the Sifrei — how their din is derived from the pesukim — without taking a position here on which exact ending of the Sifrei they had. If so, there was no need to cite that alternate girsa. This fits the Gra's wording precisely. Regarding the Rambam and Raavad he writes, “Their reason is from what is stated in Sifrei... since it says ‘I might have thought,’ etc., it implies that the pesil Techeiles itself is only one, and ‘gedil’ was written only regarding white.” By contrast, regarding Tosafos he simply writes, “And so it is in Sifrei, Parshas Ki Seitzei.” In other words, for the Rambam and Raavad he is explaining the taam and sevara of their view; for Tosafos, at the beginning, he is merely noting that the Sifrei has the same position, and only later does he explain its reasoning.

There may be another way to understand the matter as well. But the author's approach seems very far-fetched to me. The reader can judge between the possibilities.

The author did, however, point out to me that the Gra in his Biur quotes the Sifrei as saying, “Beis Shammai say four of Techeiles and four of wool.” This exact wording is not found anywhere ¹⁸except in Tosafos, Menachos 41b s.v. Beis Shammai (first answer). That would seem to support his point: in this passage the Gra knew the Sifrei through Tosafos and did not know the Raavad's girsa.

¹⁸ I checked many sources — Tosafos in several places, Mordechai, Rosh, Itur, Sefer HaPardes, Machzor Vitry, Rabbeinu Hillel, the Venice Sifrei, Yalkut Shimoni, and others — and found that this is indeed the case.

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But in light of what I brought and explained above from Yalkut, Parshas Shelach, this does not really change anything, because the Gra must in any event have been familiar with a version that read three white and four Techeiles. Beyond that, it is possible that for some reason he preferred Tosafos's wording to the printed Sifrei's wording (“four strands of Techeiles and four strands of white”), particularly if this was toward the end of his life, after he had concluded that Tosafos's girsa was correct, as suggested above. The Gra was not bound to any printed edition, as I explained in section A. See also what I write below, which supports this.

— D —

Rav Yedidya Bassier shlita showed me a newly discovered hagahah of the Gra on Sifrei that has never been printed, and it sheds a great deal of light on this entire issue. There is a Hamburg edition of Sifrei in which someone copied hagahos from the Gra's handwritten notes on Sifrei, including material that was not available to the printer of the standard Hagahos HaGra on Sifrei. In Parshas Shelach, next to the text “No fewer than three, according to (Beis

19 See HaGaon, vol. 3, p. 4471, which reports that an inscription in this sefer states that it belonged to R' Yaakov Dov son of R' Avraham Shereshevsky of Horodna. I reproduced a photograph at the end of the letter.

20 As that R' Yaakov Dov wrote in the newspaper HaMaggid, Adar I 5630/1870, p. 99. The relevant portion reads: “I will answer briefly. In the Sifrei in my possession there is a copy of hagahos from the handwriting of our great master the Gra z”l, with which Hashem in His mercy privileged me [from the estate of the righteous Rav Heshel Reines of Horodna z”l]. In Sifrei, Parshas Naso, section 26, he emended as follows: ‘But regarding his son and daughter, there is no need’ — meaning that no additional limud is required. In this explanation of his, a new light shines. In 5626/1866 the Sifrei was printed in Vilna by Rav Shemaryahu Zuckerman with the Gra's hagahos, but this hagahah was printed incorrectly: only the two words ‘was not said’ were placed in brackets, when in truth the five words ‘was not said that minors become nezirim’ must be bracketed, as the Gra explains there. Since Rav S. Z. who published that Sifrei asked to be informed if anyone possesses a handwritten copy of the Gra's notes, I consider it a great and holy obligation to make this known publicly and to copy the wording of the Gra manuscript in my possession...” He then reproduces another hagahah in Sifrei Ki Seitzei, section 283, and concludes that it resolves the difficulties that had puzzled scholars and the publisher alike: the truth follows the manuscript hagahah that Hashem placed in his hands, whose words are clear as sapphire. “May the merit of our great master stand for us, so that we guard all the words of Torah and fulfill its laws and mitzvos in the Holy Land. Yaakov Dov Shereshevsky of Horodna.” We see explicitly that the Vilna printers did not have this manuscript; they had only other copies. They did not possess the Gra's original handwriting, as is also stated at the end of the Vilna 5626/1866 edition. [See the photographs at the end.]

Shammai and) Beis Hillel; [and Beis Shammai] say three of wool and a fourth of Techeiles,” the following note is written in the margin: “²¹See Menachos 41b, Tosafos s.v. Beis Shammai. The girsa there [in Tosafos] is [the correct one]; here it is corrupt, while later in Parshas Ki Seitzei the girsa is correct.”

²¹ It is worth noting that anyone who examines the photograph of the Gra's hagahos reproduced at the end will see that the note written between the columns, “see the kuntres,” refers to what is written on the left side of the Sifrei: “and you shall see it and remember [all the mitzvos of Hashem and perform them]...” The Gra circled this text [the circle closes on the following page] and placed a symbol directing the reader to the hagahah on the right. Beside that hagahah he wrote “see the kuntres” and placed a corresponding symbol showing that the note belongs to the text on the left. [In that kuntres the Gra wrote at length to emend the Sifrei there, as printed in Hagahos HaGra to Sifrei, os 11. He changes almost the entire passage and substitutes a genuinely new girsa. Because of the length, he did not write the full emendation in the margin, but in a separate kuntres. I found that hagahah in the manuscript mentioned above, on a blank leaf in the binding, and copied it at the end of the letter.]

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We see, then, that here the Gra decided that Tosafos's girsa — which is the same as the Sifrei in Parshas Ki Seitzei — is the authentic reading. ²²It is possible that this was in fact his view at the very end of his life, and it is exactly the approach he develops in Biur HaGra, Shulchan Aruch siman 12. This also fits what I suggested above: the Gra concluded that Tosafos's girsa was correct, and therefore explained both the Rambam and Raavad within that text. It also makes sense that in this newly discovered hagahah he points specifically to Tosafos on 41b, rather than Tosafos on 38a where Sifrei is also quoted: as I wrote above, the Gra specifically preferred the wording found in Tosafos 41b, “four of Techeiles and four of wool.”

It is quite possible that this represents the Gra's final view at the very end of his life, after he retracted what he had written in his commentary to Raaya Mehemna and in his hagahos 23to Parshas Ki Seitzei. That would be

²² It should be noted that one could theoretically explain this hagahah as referring not to the number of Techeiles strings but only to the textual error that swapped the names of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. The mark indicating the hagahah is in fact placed over the words “Beis Shammai.” But this cannot be correct for several reasons. A) That is not the sort of error that would require such an elaborate note. There are many textual corruptions in Sifrei that the Gra corrects with little fuss. Here, because the matter has halachic consequences and the Gra was retracting what he had previously thought, he wrote at length. A swap of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel is obvious and has no practical nafka minah, because the Amoraim already ruled in Menachos 41b, “Rav Pappa said: the halachah is four.” B) It makes no sense to send the reader to Tosafos to see the correct girsa if Tosafos itself would then contain a major error in the very next word, in Beis Shammai's own statement. C) If the error were merely which name belonged where, the Gra should have cited the Gemara in Menachos 41b and Bechoros 39b, where the same machlokes of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel is recorded. Why point only to Tosafos and to the Sifrei in Ki Seitzei? D) He should have cited the Yalkut here in Shelach, where the names of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel appear in the proper order, providing a direct parallel to this Sifrei passage. There would have been no reason to bring proofs from other parshiyos instead. It is therefore clear that the hagahah concerns the substantive din. The mark is placed over “Beis Shammai” only because that is where the corrupt passage begins. The reason the correction was not inserted into the body of the text is that it was not written in sequence together with the earlier hagahos, but added later after the Gra retracted the position he had initially taken elsewhere in his hagahos in accordance with the Raavad.

²³ Some people mistakenly set limits on the Gra's Torah and say it is impossible that he ever retracted one of his hagahos. Their answer can be found in Yeshurun vol. 4, p. 51; HaGaon vol. 3, p. 4417; and the Ridbaz's letter, quoting the Gra's grandson, that “he retracted several hagahos,” which I reproduce in the appendix. Some also point to the introduction of Pe'as HaShulchan, which says that the Biur HaGra was written before the Gra's hagahos and that in a number of places he later retracted the Biur in his hagahos. That does not decide our case for several reasons. Pe'as HaShulchan did not state an absolute rule for every passage; here the

consistent with the firm halachic conclusion he set down in the Likkutim to his Biur on Shulchan Aruch, where he writes in clear and forceful language: “But the explanation is as follows. Certainly ‘pesil’ implies one, and ‘tzitzis’ of the white likewise implies one; nevertheless the two are always equal. Beis Hillel interprets a gedil as three strands, and the same applies to white. Beis Shammai interprets gedilim as four, as the Gemara says, ‘gedil, gedilim’; Beis Shammai holds that gedil implies two, unlike Beis Hillel, which interprets it as three and does not additionally expound the plural form. The same applies to Techeiles. When the Gemara says four or three, it is speaking of one type alone — Techeiles or white — and this is evident throughout the entire sugya.”

Biur HaGra passage comes from the later Likkutim. One must also establish that the particular hagahah is genuinely attributable to the Gra, since material was printed in the Gra's name that later proved not to be his at all (see note 7). One must also know that the purpose of the hagahah was to decide the halachah, since there is substantial evidence (see the appendix) that some of the Gra's hagahos merely record how a particular Rishon read the text and were not meant as psak. All the more so, once we have found the new manuscript hagahah discussed above, other earlier hagahos cannot simply be treated as decisive. There is another major problem with the hagahah in Parshas Ki Seitzei: it yields the very novel result that according to the Sifrei a gedil is three strings and the Techeiles string is outside the gedil — as the author himself wrote in Yeshurun vol. 7. That contradicts the Gemara, which says “gedil” is two and “gedilim” four. A talmid chacham also pointed out that the hagahah contains eight deletions and five separate emendations — check it carefully and you will see. Whenever it is possible to say that the Gra later retracted that hagahah, that seems preferable.

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On this understanding, the Gra agreed with the overwhelming majority of the major Rishonim, 24 who hold this way. And even if one says that it cannot be proven that this was his final view, there is certainly no basis to declare that the Gra's final view was definitely that of the Raavad.

24 They come from Ashkenaz, France, Provence, Italy, and Spain. They include: Rabbeinu Gershom Meor HaGolah (quoted in the new Shitah Mekubetztes at the beginning of Perek HaTecheiles); Rashi (Menachos, beginning of Perek HaTecheiles); Tosafos in five places (Berachos 9b s.v. Ela; Yevamos 4b s.v. DeAfilu; Kesubos 40a s.v. Kegan; Menachos, Perek HaTecheiles; Bechoros 39b s.v. Kamah) [and, as is well known, Tosafos incorporates the views of many Baalei Tosafos, including Rabbeinu Tam, whose name appears explicitly in Tosafos Menachos 38b s.v. Ela and in the Kesubos 40a passage cited above]; Yereim (siman 401, p. 222); Itur (Hilchos Tzitzis, sha'ar 1, part 2); Semak (mitzvah 31); Rabbeinu Peretz (Tosafos at the beginning of Berachos 9b); Maharam MiRothenburg (Responsa, Prague ed., vol. 4, siman 444; see also Artzos HaChaim siman 9, HaMeir LaAretz 26); Rosh (Hilchos Tzitzis siman 6; Responsa klal 2, os 12; Tosafos HaRosh to Yevamos 4b and Sanhedrin 89b); Rabbeinu Yerucham (Nesiv 19, part 3); Mordechai (beginning of Perek HaTecheiles); Tur (siman 11); Nimukei Yosef (beginning of Hilchos Tzitzis); and this also appears to be the view of Raavyah (Menachos no. 1152), Rabbeinu Yonasan MiLunel [of Provence] (Berachos 9b and Hilchos Tzitzis), Rabbeinu Yeshayah the First [of Italy] (Piskei Rid, Hilchos Tzitzis p. 481; Sefer HaMachria, ch. 8; Responsa Rid, siman 61, s.v. Tallis Shel), and the Rashba [of Spain] (Yevamos 4b). Several less famous Rishonim also hold this way. I did not trouble to list them because, for practical halachah, their additional number does not change much. Compare Beis Yosef, Yoreh Deah 105, os 9(a): “It appears to me that we rule like Maharam... because he is more famous than Rabbeinu Nesanel.” By contrast, the famous Rishonim who clearly follow the Raavad are essentially only the Aruch, Meiri, and Rabbeinu Yeshayah the Later. Even the Raavad's own view is subject to some doubt, because the Beis Yosef had a girsa in the Raavad that agrees with Rashi and Tosafos. Although there are several reasons to think our girsa is more likely correct, the matter is not entirely free of safek. The Aruch is in truth a different shittah anyway, since he holds that the windings are made only with Techeiles, somewhat analogous to the Rambam. There is much more to say about all this, but this is not the place. See also above, note 7, regarding the Mishnah Berurah and other Acharonim.

כד

[illegible]

שייך להערה 21

82 ביאור חלק ג' קרה רע"ט

[illegible]

אח"כ. י"ן הליקוטים על סדרה פנקס שנשלחו שבי העתקת
אלמני (נכרך נביע, ובספרו בהעתיקה הנדל"ל) דנו
סוד בכל הסדרה על כל דף ועוד, עד שלא יתכן לכנות כ"ח
בס' ליקוט אלא כלום גם מתדוורא בחרא יקרא, ע"כ סדרתים
נמצ' מסוף סדרה כסדר הדפוס לעיני הקורא, לעיני כולם
דף ועוד כל יקוטי ההנהגות וביאורים שאלו הם:

126 ביאור מהדורא בתרא פנחס רע"מ

השפיעו ג' אלקים ג' סעודות הכל בג': בת יחיד חוליא
חבלת שפיעה ריל דחוליא הראשונה לבן ג' כריסות צ'
חבק זאחא חוליא דחבלת ג' כליל מנהון, ויחיד נראה
דלג כל חוליא אלא כלי בת יחיד חבלת שפיעה, והוא
חוט הרביעי ברעת הראבד וכמשי: שכי' עיקר ובי'
בספרי שלט כליל מנ' חוסיך לבן חות ד' בשם וכן עיקר:
זכא

שייך להערה 19

1944-1945
1946-1947

שייך להערה 20

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תש"ז שמואל לוריא

Rabbi Tavger's Reply to the Above

To the editors of Yeshurun, shalom u'vrachah.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to R' Yisrael Barkin of Lakewood, who wrote a response to my article that appeared in the most recent Elul issue of Yeshurun.

The main arguments raised in his response are:

A. It is simply impossible that the Gra did not see the Venice printed edition of Sifrei until the end of his life.

B. The Gra preferred to quote the version of Sifrei found in Yalkut or in the Rishonim, rather than the wording of the printed Sifrei that was supposedly before him.

C. The Biur HaGra to Shulchan Aruch contains later additions that were written after the Gra obtained the printed Sifrei.

I will address these claims one by one:

A. It is well known, and hardly needs proof, that in earlier generations sefarim were often rare and difficult to obtain. ¹Not every work was available to every mefaresh or posek, and saying so is no slight to the honor of the Rishonim. The assertion in the response that “it is absolutely impossible to say this, and it cannot be that the Gra did not see the Venice Sifrei until the end of his life” has no factual basis. As a general methodological point, we should not build our picture of the past on feelings and assumptions, ²but on a careful examination of the evidence. What seems obvious and natural to us under today's conditions was not necessarily obvious or natural in earlier generations.

B. Had the printed Sifrei been before the Gra, he should first have recorded its girsa and then noted that the Sifrei as quoted in Yalkut or in a particular

¹ There is a very large difference between the period of the Rishonim and that of the Acharonim. Only before the invention of printing were sefarim so extraordinarily rare. By the Gra's time, many sefarim were already available — all the more so in a major Torah city such as Vilna, full of chachamim and sofrim. Anyone who wants a concrete sense of this should look at Rav Pe'alim by R' Avraham, the Gra's son, which he wrote when he was eighteen. One can see the extraordinary range of his familiarity with many kinds of sefarim, including very old printed editions.

² This is neither a feeling nor an intuition. The claim is simply that the Gra would certainly have gone to some effort, at some point before his old age, to obtain a Sifrei. Even if copies were scarce, with a degree of effort it would surely have been possible to find one.

Rishon has a different reading, adding that the latter is the primary text. ³The absence of the printed Sifrei is especially striking in the Gra's references to Sifrei passages that do not appear in our Sifrei. ⁴In those cases, had he possessed the printed Sifrei, he should have written something like, "This is not in our Sifrei, but it is found in Yalkut," or in one of the Rishonim — as is his normal practice throughout ⁶this Biur.

³ I have already added in the body several places showing that the Gra did not feel bound to follow that procedure — examples involving the Mechilta, Yerushalmi, Tosefta, Sifra, and Maseches Sofrim. I also found this stated explicitly in Rav Yisrael of Shklov's introduction to Biur HaGra. [See also the additions to this kuntres.]

⁴ I have already added in the body a complete refutation of this claim: the Gra followed the same practice with Yerushalmi passages found only in the Rishonim.

⁵ Very often the Gra is extraordinarily brief. We cannot formulate rules about what the Gra "should have" written based on what seems necessary to us.

⁶ How many places are there really?

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C. Even if there are occasional later additions in the Biur HaGra that were written after he obtained the printed Sifrei, that does not alter the central conclusion of my article. The unqualified quotations from Sifrei in the Biur are not direct quotations from the printed Sifrei, despite the impression they create. In the overwhelming majority of cases, if not all of them, they are second-hand citations taken from Yalkut Shimoni or from Rishonim who quote the Sifrei. These citations remained in place, unchanged and unrevised, as the Gra's earlier formulation — a “first version” that was never displaced — even after he later became acquainted with the Sifrei itself.

We can now address the two questions raised in the response against my explanation under the heading “Resolving one puzzling passage in the Gra's Biur”:

A. One might claim that even the text of Sifrei as quoted in Yalkut Shimoni (Parshas Shelach, remez 750), which differs from the printed Sifrei, can be used as a proof for the Raavad. The Yalkut reads: “Beis Shammai say three of wool and four of Techeiles, and the halachah follows Beis Shammai.” This would work if we assume that the word “four” is a corruption of “a fourth.”

The answer is straightforward. It is not the Gra's way ⁷in his Biur to establish sources on the basis of conjectural emendations, ⁸but rather on the basis of definite readings actually preserved in our sources. If conjectural readings were enough, one could just as easily prove the Raavad's shittah from the Sifrei's text in Parshas Ki Seitzei, “Beis Shammai say four of Techeiles and four of wool,” ⁹by assuming that “four of Techeiles” really means “a fourth [string] of Techeiles,” and that “four of wool” is a corruption of “three of wool.” In fact, that is essentially the way the Gra emends the Sifrei in hagahos that were written late in his life.

7 That was certainly his practice, as I added in the body. It is especially clear from the passage he quotes from Maseches Sofrim according specifically to his own girsa, where the difference has practical halachic consequences.

8 This is not a merely conjectural girsa. The interchange between “four” and the abbreviation for “fourth” is obvious to anyone with ordinary sense. And as I wrote in the body, there may be no need to emend the girsa at all, since this is the language of the pesukim. Someone told me that a Tanna would not use a Biblical turn of phrase; he should have looked at Mishnah Peah 2:2. As I explain in note 42, this style also appears elsewhere in Chazal.

9 There is a major difference. The girsa in Ki Seitzei explicitly states the shittah of Tosafos, so it cannot be brought as proof for the opposing shittah. The girsa in Yalkut on Parshas Shelach, by contrast, plainly fits the Raavad, as I explained in the text and in the preceding note.

B. It was argued that the Gra could not possibly have written “it is not in Sifrei” about something that Tosafos quotes in the name of Sifrei unless he had a complete Sifrei in front of him.

The answer is very simple: the extensive Sifrei material preserved in Yalkut Shimoni could serve, for this purpose, as a “complete Sifrei.”¹⁰ The Gra relied on it and could use it to determine what was or was not present in the Sifrei material known to him.

The alternate explanation suggested in the response is not reasonable. How can one say that the Gra knew the Sifrei's version in Parshas Shelach that supports the Raavad, yet simply ignored it and did not cite it as a source for that shittah¹¹ because he disagreed with the girsa? If so, he should have brought that reading and then rejected it in favor of another version that he considered preferable.

¹⁰ With due respect, this claim seems extremely far-fetched. How can Yalkut be treated as a “complete Sifrei”? Is it really conceivable that every maamar in Sifrei appears in Yalkut? I checked and found that even the very first passage in Sifrei, Parshas Naso, is not quoted in Yalkut.

¹¹ See above, note 5. I also brought a proof in the body, note 47, from the Gra's treatment of open and closed parshiyos showing that this was the Gra's method, and no answer was given to that proof.

Rabbi Tavger's Reply to the Above

I do not intend here to decide what the Gra's final position was on the number of Techeiles strings in tzitzis. That is a subject for a separate article, and the present discussion is not about that question.

I conclude with a tefillah and hope

that the holy words of our master the Gra, zy”a, will become clear and properly understood.

Eliyahu Tavger

ואולם עתה בענין דבר הזה, שהקב"ה בילע את הגדול, חמה אני אם יש בידו הזה שימסור נפשי לעלות לעליה לדרשן או אפי' להשיב עינו לאשכנזי טעמא, ולא אשום דברתי במתים החפשים מן התורה, אנשי בלי עול, המשמינים לבם לכל ידעו ויבינו אור חכמת הריב הדומה למלאך ה' צבאות, וכלתי לבוזה רבנו קדישין ענינים, עליהם הכתוב אומר ויבין מות יבאיש יביע שמן רוקח, דמה המבנים ת"ח לזבובי מות, כמי הזבובים שמוסרים עצמם לפול בהשמן חוקק המחזות ואך להבאיש ולהביע השמן, כן המבנים ת"ח יודעים זה הרכב בין האפיקורסים שא"ל חלק לעית"ב ברחשבי' להו בפרק חלק, ובסל למי יסתירין עצמן למיתה ומבאשים ומבנים ת"ח, ושמים אל ניל ישישו כי ימצאו מקום בדברי רבה"נ לדרות בו ע"ד ונחתי ממשלים לפניו, ומדברים עתק בנאזה ובוז על צדקו של עולם, יתחרשו, ישתקו, אלא אפילו הראים והשלמים שמענו גם בעינינו ראינו, אשר הריבו דים ללבוש נאות ועו לאמר כי השיג דים להשיג על דברי רבינו הגדול וממנו ליה בוד שיחה קלה, אשר בעידו ח, לא היה להם פ"פ לפניו, וכל הנה כסופתא דחמרא לבניה, וז"ה כי שקלו למטרספיהו, כי בכל אשר ראנו ושמענו השתם, הן הם העידו על עצמם נבחות לבם כי כד ניימו ישיבו אמרו לרא מילתא, ואין כדאי להעלות על הסב לדראות טעותם כי במקומי הוא מוכרע: ואם כך עלתה לנו בהשיות משימותיו אשר כמעט מפורשים המה, כ"א במעט עין וחפש משכרנו מתגלתא, ומה נעשה לשימותיו החמורות בש"ע הצריכים עין וחפש רב, ומה גם להנחותיו העמוקים מני ים וסתומים וחומים המת, מי יציל בעמקי תהום דעתי הרחבה וידלם לנו, ובפרט כי הנחותיו נרשמים בקצה מאד מאד, לפעמים בחלוקה תיבה אחת או אות אחת או מחק אח' ואפילו נקודה אחת, השלים כונתו לפי עיסק דעתו הרחבת, כי לא דשם אלא לעצמו, כי הוא הבין דרכם שאין דודו ראו להשתמש בהם, ע"כ הישב אשר דברו גדולי תלמידיו כי ראוי לגנון, והנה כל זה אם היו גדולי המדינה ההיא מופלגי תורה והחרדים לדברי רבינו הגדול, להשיב עיניהם על דרכי המדפסים והמסדרים, למען לא ישלחו בעולתה ידהם, ולא יזוה שבת הרשע על גורל הצדיקים, כראוי לאבנים יקרות כאלה למנות ריש מורחא, היוודע לפרסם ולשמין שלא יעלה אבק ענן גל נאות, היוודע ע"ד יקר אבנים טובות לשמדם שלא יפגד אפילו חרקה שבריקה, אך יז קשה מראשונה, כי הנחותיו הן הן גופי הלכות ומסברו לע"ה ולמי מרפס:

עיקר מה שאני רוצה להביא מכאן הוא אזהרה לגדול הזהירות שצריך לנהוג בלימוד דברי הגר"א, וגם שהגהותיו נכתבו בקיצור לצורך עצמו, ולכן זהירות ובדיקה גדולה צריך לעשות אם יש להוכיח כלום להלכה, ואם יש כוונה אחרת בדבריו, או שכתבם רק אליבא דראשון אחד וכו'.

Appendix — Baal Pe'as HaShulchan zt"l, introduction to Taklin Chadatin.
The main point being cited here is his warning about the great care required when learning the Gra's writings. The Gra's hagahos were written very

concisely for his own use, and one must therefore examine them very carefully before drawing halachic conclusions: the Gra may have had another intention, or may simply have been recording the girsa or approach of one particular Rishon.

ירושלמי ממסכת פאה⁶ מאחורי השער הוא כותב 'הודעה רבה' וכך מתחיל:

“בשנת תרנ”י נדפס הגהות ירושלמי מס’ זרעים בשם הגר”א ז”ל והובא לביט
הדפוס ע”י ר’ שמואל לוריא ז”ל. ע”כ הנני מודיע בשער אשר אין לסמוך על
הגהות אלו כי הגהות אלו נדפסו מהגליון שבירושלמי דפוס אמשטרדם שנדפס
בשנת ת”ע והגר”א ז”ל למד בו והג’ בכ”י קדשו הגות שהן קילורין לעינים
ואח”כ נתוסף על הגליון כו”כ (כמה וכמה) הגהות מכ”י אנשים וזלתי ואח”כ
הדפיס הרב המנוח רש”ל ז”ל הכל בשם הגר”א ז”ל. וכאשר זכיתי בע”ה אשר
גוף הירושלמי הזה הוא תחת ידי והראתי זאת להרב המנוח רש”ל ז”ל נתירדה
ואמר והוא רחום יכפר עון, כי לא ראה גוף הירושלמי רק ה” לפניו בכתב כל
מה שה” על הגליון באין הברל בין מה שנמצא מהגר”א ז”ל להגהות מאנשים
וזלתי. ע”כ הנני מפרסם זאת בישראל אשר רוב הגהות שנדפסו שם אינם מהגר”א
ז”ל. והתגרות האמיתיות שנכתבו בכ”י קדשו יבואר בספרי רידיב”ש בע”ה. ולא
לחנם הרעישו גאונים ההיא שכל יויד שום אדם להדפיס בשם הגר”א ז”ל וזלתי
בכרים הידועים בכ”י קדשו ממש...”⁷

דו"ר חיים שניידר

[illegible]

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המחבר: ריצבז ותולס תשנ"ד

מתוך ישורון חלק יח

הוודעה רבה של הריזב"ז, ברדיסשוב תרנ"ה

Appendix — the Ridbaz zt”l, from Yeshurun vol. 18. Facsimile of the original source quoted in the discussion above.

[illegible][illegible]

שחוס תכלת חופה עליהם כמו שכתב הרמב"ם ז"ל ו' חושין של לבן וחוס
 אחד של תכלת שהוא עגד כסוי הפין, וכן לא קיימין בדוכתייהו ,
 שכן פתיל, וז"ש בזה"ק (שלה קשה) תאמא ברזא דסד"ל ארבע מלכין
 כו' ושם הכל ברזא דז"ית פכ"ל, הרי להדיא דמחליט בדעת הוה"ק
 כשיטת הרמב"ם, אחת שביאורו בזה מרפסין איגרי שהרי ממקום
 שבא להוכיח שהענין רומז בל"ית מזה"ק (שלה קשה) הרי הוה"ק
 נופיה (שם :) מבאר קך ברייתא דסד"ל בזה"ל ארבע מלכין נפקין
 לקדמות ארבע, ארבע שהדי קשוס דמלכא תליין מארבע זיווין,
 ותליין בזה כענבים בתכלת, מה תכלת דליהו חד ותליין ביה כמה
 ענבין מהאי ספר ותהאי ספר, קך האי מזה חדא ותליין ביה כמה
 ענבים אצין וזמורין, לירין בזה שבפס רהיטין, אלין איטן שבפס
 לירין דתכלתא דכעי לכרכא ביה בכל חד וחד או לאבגאש עד פליסר
 כו' שהדין סהדותא ולא קיימו בדוכתייהו, בגין דליהי מזה ותגינן
 תשמישי מזה נורקן יע"ש, הרי להדיא דקך דסד"ל לענין כריכות
 ושכפ חוליות שבתכלת תתמר ולא לענין שכפ חושין של לבן ועי' בס'
 ראשית חכמה הקדוש (שער הקדושה פ"ו) וחז' נומר דאשתמיט ליי
 להגרי"א ז"ל כל קך ובודאי איזה תלמיד קושה כחבה על שמו כידוע אשר
 ידי זרים שלטו בכחביו, וא"כ אפשר דהאי דעל רע"מ (פ' פנחס הג"ל)
 דברי הגרי"א ניגהו וסבירא ליה להלכה בדעת הוה"ק כשיטת הראב"ד .
 אכן דא עקא דהרי עלה דאיתמר ברע"מ (שלה קשה) כתיב ונתנו על
 ז"ית הכנף פתיל תכלת ונתנו על הכנף לא כתיב אלא ונתנו על ז"ית
 הכנף פתיל תכלת דא איזה דחסי על שאר חושין ביאר הגרי"א שכן ו'
 חושין ו' ספרות דכלילן בבית שכפ מלטה פ"כ הרי דהגרי"א ז"ל מחליט
 בפשיטות להלכה בדעת הוה"ק כהרמב"ם, ובאמת דברי הביאור שעל
 הרע"מ פ' פנחס הג"ל תמוה דמה שפי' תכלת ר"ל דחוליא הראשונה
 של לבן ג' כריכות ג' אבן ואח"כ חוליא דתכלת כו' והייט דלא כשיטת
 הרמב"ם שיבאר לקמן (פרט השביעי) והרי בלשון הוה"ק הג"ל (שלה
 קשה :) אלין איטן שבפס לירין דתכלתא דכעי לכרכא ביי' בכל חד וחד
 כו' מבואר להדיא כהרמב"ם ז"ל דכלהו כריכין דתכלת ניגהו אפי' חוליא
 ראשונה וחוליא אחרונה דמתחיל. בלבן ומסיים בלבן חיוב תכלת גמי
 יס בזה . וגם באמת בחנם נחלבט בפי' הלשון בת יחידה חוליא תכלת
 שבל"ית כי עיקר הגירסא היא בת יחידה מליא מן תכלת שבל"ית כמו
 שגרסם

נספח

מרן החזון איש זצ"ל

לחקר ביאורי הגר"א

שיש סתירה בין דברי הגר"א לשרע ובין דבריו בפירושו לירושלמי עלינו לסמוך על דבריו בביאורי הגר"א לשרע. הדברים באים לידי ביטוי ברור בקשר לנשנה בערלה פ"א מ"ה לפי גירסתנו שם זקנה ש.הבריכה שנה אחר שנה ונפסקה מונה משעה שנפסקה שנות ערלה של הבריכה שנפסקה. והנה ב.שנות אליהו בפירוש הארוך גורס „מונה משעה שנברכה“. וכן מגיה בביאורו לירושלמי, וכן מוכח מהפירוש הקצר של הגר"א למשנה. בעל השרע בירד סי' רצ"ד סעיף ט"ז סתם, שמונה משעה שנפסקה, כגירסא דידן, והגר"א לא ציין לזה ולא כלום. הגה בחזקת ערלה סי' ב' ס"ק ה' נאמר: „וכן [כלומר: משעה שנפסקה] סתם בשרע סי' רצ"ד סט"ז והגר"א ז"ל שתק לי דבריו הגר"א בביאורו הן עיקר שהן כתי הגר"א ז"ל.

רואים אנו, שלדעת החזקת יש לנו ללמוד אף משתיקתו של הגר"א לשרע ולבכר הגירסא המתבררת מהשתיקה על הגירסא שנמסרה בפירוש ע"י תלמידיו בספרים שחיברו בשם הגר"א. וגישה זו נובעת גם מהסברת דרכו של הגר"א בפירושו לשרע, אשר הסביר בעל החזקת באחד ממכתביו שנתפרסמו ב.צדקת הצדיק (ירושלים תשי"ד) ושם נאמר לענין זה בע. קל"ז כדלהלן:

„הגר"א ז"ל בבהגר"א אינו מסתפק בביאור מקורו של השרע אלא נכנס תמיד לקבוצ מסמרות בהכרעת ההלכה ומגלה תמיד דעתו ז"ל במקום שנוטה מדברי השרע ודבריו ז"ל תמיד במלול ברור בלהבת אש... ומעולם לא עבר בשתיקה אם נטחה דעתו ז"ל להלכה לנטות מדבר השרע, ואם נמצאים מקומות מספר שהגיה מלחוק, יש באלו מקומות טעם, או משום שאין הדבר מוכרע כל כך, או שאין הגידון אלא בהידור מצוה ולא בעיקר הלכה, סוף דבר לפי מנהגו של הגר"א, לא יתכן שיכוון לחלוק על השרע ויכחד תחת לשונו ויכתוב בלשון כמראה מקור הלכה ויכוון לחלוק אלא היה מפרש כוונתו ז"ל בגלוי...“.

דבריו של החוקר לוי גינצבורג ב„פירושים וחיידשים לירושלמי“ ח"ד ע' קכ"ו (אשר הבאתי אותם במאמרי בהמעין ב' ע. 64 הערה 8), שמדגיש את אבטנטיות דברי הגר"א בפירושו לשרע מול הדברים שהובאו שראר ספרים מתאשרים בזה ע"י בעל ה.חזון איש. ודיעה זו המבכרת את הגר"א לשרע על הגר"א לירושלמי ולמשנה מנוגדת לדעת „פאת השולחן המובאת לעיל. שביאוריו לשרע הם קודמים לביאוריו האחרים ואלה האחרים מביעים את דעתו הסופית, ששינה דעתו הקודמת שהיתה לו בעת כתיבת ביאורו לשרע.

בנוגע לדעת בעל פאת השולחן,
ע"י בפנים במכתבי הע' 23

— כג —

Appendix — the Chazon Ish zt"l. Regarding the position of the Baal Pe'as HaShulchan, see the discussion in the main text and the cited note. Facsimile of the original source.

אשר כללו בין השאר גם הגהות לשרע. ולדברי המהדירים היו שש שנים בין כתיבת ההגהות לשרע והקונטרסים שממנו נחתברו ה"לקוטים", אך לא מצאנו סתירות שכאלה בין ה"לקוטים" ובין החבור לשרע. וגם זו כעין ראיה שאין להניח שינוי דעתו של הגאון במקרים כה רבים.

דרך מיוחדת להסביר שינויים אלה בחר לו הרב שלמה גורן". גם הוא אינו מסכים לדיעה. שיש כאן מהדורות בדברי הגר"א. ונמוקיו עמו. אך לדעתו הקסיד הגר"א יותר בגירסתו לירושלמי שחידש בביאורו לשרע ובחר לו יד חפזית יותר לגרוס גירסות חדשות בירושלמי עצמו שלא בקשר לשרע. לנו נדמה שקשה להבדיל בין שניהם. כל תורתו של הגר"א היתה "לאסוקי שמעתתא אליבא דהלכתא", ובמיוחד כשהמדובר בגירסאות חדשות קשה להניח שחידש גירסא כשלא ראה הכרח בה, וכשלא היה מוכן להסיק ממנה מסקנא גם להלכה. וגם אין הפרדה זו שמציע הרב גורן מספיק להסביר את כל ההבדלים. ויש שההגה נזכרה דווקא בחבור לשרע ובחבורו על הירושלמי לא נזכרה, וכפי שציין כבר הר"ש גורן, נקח לדוגמא את ההגהה הראשונה שבמס' פאה, הנמצאת בביתגר"א ליור"ד סי' רצ"ה ס"ק ה', ונמצאת בה גם הנהגה בביאורו לירושלמי.

בפאה פ"א ה"ד נאמר: תני: זורעין זרעים זרעין אילן כאחד והזורע מן החרצנים לוקה ארבעים. אמר ר"ז: כתיב "לא תזרע כרמך כלאים" — עיקר כרמך לא תזרע כלאים. אמר ר' יוחנן קפודקיא בעאי קומי ר' יוסי: תמן אמרין זרעי אילן קרויין זרעים. וכא את אמר זרעי אילן אינן קרויין זרעין. אמר ליה: תמן מיעט הכתוב, שאין דרך בני אדם להיות קרוין אותם זרעים. ברם הכא ריבה הכתוב "על כל זרע זרע אשר יזרע".

גמרא זו מובאת בביתגר"א ליור"ד במקום שצינו. השינוי היחיד. שבין הגוסס המובא ובין גוססת הגר"א הוא בברייתא, ולשונה הוא: "תני זורעין זרעים זרעין אילן כאחת. והזורע חרצנים עם החטים לוקה ארבעים". תיקון זה הוא ע"פ התוספתא כלאים פ"א ה"י. בסוף ההבאה מוסיף הגר"א: ר"ל לענין הכשר. לפי זה מפרש הוא את האיבעיא של ר' יוחנן קפודקיא כפירושו של "פני משה", והשאלה היא, למה בנוגע להכשר זרעים נתרבו גם זרעי אילן, לעומת זאת בקשר לפסוק "לא תזרע כרמך כלאים" אין זרעי אילן כלאים בכרם. והתשובה היא, כי בהכשר זרעים יש ריבוי. לעומת זאת בהגהות הגר"א לירושלמי נשנית הברייתא. והזורע עם

26 עין ב.ספר הגר"א בעריכת הרב י. ל. הכהן סימון (ירושלים תשי"ד) חלק ד' ע. ס"ה ולהלן.

החרצנים לוקה ארבעים" ולא נזכרו חטים. וכפי מה שמתברר מהגהות הגר"א ומביאוריו כ"י א' וכן מהמובא מהגר"א ברידב"ז מוחק הגר"א את המלים האחרונות. על כל זרע זרע אשר יורע". ומפרש שהאיבעיא היא על ההבדל שבין הפסוק המובא לפני זה. ובקצרכם את קציר ארצכם לא תכלה פאת שדך לקצור" שבו מרבה הוא מהמלה "שדך" גם אילנות לחיוב סיאה לעומת זאת בכלאי כרם אינם כלולים האילנות.

מה הנפקותא בין שתי הגירסאות? לפי מה שגורס הגאון בשריע מזכיר הירושלמי מלקות ארבעים רק בזרע חטים עם החרצנים ולא במינים אחרים — לעומת הגירסא בירושלמי עצמו הנותנת מקום למלקות גם בזרעים אחרים עם החרצנים. הגר"א "העיו" בזה יותר בתיקנו שבשריע מאשר בתקנו שבירושלמי. בקשר לתיקון השני הנמצא רק בהגהות לירושלמי ולא בש"ע. הרי לפי המוגה בירושלמי אין כל נפקותא להלכה. כי הלמוד ש"שדך" מרבה אף אילנות לפיאה נזכר גם קודם לכן. לעומת זאת. הרי לפי הגירסא שלנו וכן לפי גירסת הירושלמי נזכר כאן הלמוד שאף בזרעי אילן יש דין הבשר לטומאה — למד שלא נזכר כלל לפי ההגה של הגאון לירושלמי עצמו.

אם לפי שיטתו של הרב גורן. הרי היינו מחכים להיפוכם של דברים. כלומר לכן. שהגירסאות שבשריע תהיינה "מתונות יותר" ותבואנה לפי המוגה בהגהות לירושלמי. ובהגהות לירושלמי תהיה "העזה" יתרה ויובאו הדברים לפי שמוגה בשריע.

ואולי אפשר להבדיל בין גירסאות שקבע הגאון בספר לאלה. אשר לא קבע בספר. אף כי העובדא שמזכיר הגר"ח מרלווין. שהחיבור על הירושלמי היה ביד הגאון. סותרת במדת מה גם הסבר זה.

ויש גם מקום לאמר שחלק מהסתירות שבגירסאות הגר"א השונות יש לזקוף על כך, שבמקום אחד הביא גירסא המטבירה שיטת ראשון אחד ובמקום אחר גרס כפי שיטת ראשון אחר. ואם נתחשב בכך. שפירושו של הגר"א השונים — מלבד לשריע — נאספו ע"י תלמידיו ממה ששמעו מדבריו. הרי אין תימא שכך קרה. ובהסבר זה נראה שיש לקבל את דבריו של הרב צורן שהזכרנו לעיל. בביאורי הגאון לשריע מובאת הגירסא בירושלמי לא לפי שיטה זו או אחרת ואפשרית, אלא לפי ההלכה שמצא הגר"א לנכון לקבוע; לעומת ביאוריו לירושלמי וב"שנות אליהו" שיכולים הם לבוא להסביר לנו שיטה זו או אחרת בראשון. וכדאי לציין כאן, שגאון עוזנו בעל ה"חזון איש" צ"ל חושב. שבמקום

מח. וכתב בהקדמת תקלין חדתי: "העידו כל תלמידיו וגאוני וגדולי זמנינו, כי לא מלאו לבו לחדש איזה שיטה חדשה נגד הראשונים, או להגיה איזה הגהה חדשה כי אם אחר עמד בדבר אשר נתקשה בו כמה ימים וכמה לילות בגדל יגיעה ורוב עמל... עד אשר משמים חסו עליו, ונחה עליו רוח דעת ה', אז קרן עור פניו, והיה לו לשמחת לבבו כמוצא שלל רב, או אז תחזקנה ידיו לעשות הגהה או שיטה חדשה כאשר הראה לו משמיא... כאשר שמעתי מפי קדשו של תלמידו המובהק הגאון האמיתי מוהר"ר חיים [וואלאוין] ג"י הנ"ל, אשר קיבל מהודו ושמע מפס קודש הקדשים, כי כל שיטה או הגהה שחידש בגלה לא קבעה עד אשר עלתה ארוכה ע"פ אותה הגהה או שיטה ללא פחות מט"ו עד עשרים סוגיות בכל דברי התנאים ואמוראים הנמצאים אתנו".

ושפתותיו ברור מליל, שרק ב"שיטה חדשה" או "הגהה חדשה" נגד הראשונים והמקובל הוצרך לכל הראיות הנ"ל, כי לא מלאו לבו לעשות "מהפכה" ולשנות הלכות קבועות בפחות מזה. אך במקום שמצא הנוסח מתוקן לפניו במקום אחר¹⁰⁰, או שמצא עדות הראשונים עליו¹⁰¹, או שאין בזה נפקא מינה להלכה¹⁰², או שאין בזה נפקא מינה למקום אחר ורק בא ליישב הסוגיא¹⁰³, לא הוצרך להמון ראיות. וכן כמובן במקום שאין הגהותיו אלא הערות כנ"ל. ואנחנו לא נדע איזה הן ההגהות שקבע בהן מסמרות ע"פ ט"ו ויותר ראיות. וגם באלו מתבאר, שעיך הראיות אינן אלא כב' וג' ראיות¹⁰⁴, אלא דכנסוף לראיות אלו, ע"פ שיטתו או הגהתו נתיישבו עוד חרבה סוגיות. והרי זה דוגמת מחלוקת הראשונים שייסדו שיטתם ע"פ כמה ראיות ויישבו עוד סוגיות רבות ע"פ שיטתם.

מח. הרי ברור שאי אפשר לקבוע שהגהות וחידושי הגר"א המה דברים שאין עליהם תשובה¹⁰⁵, אלא הרבה מהם המה שיטה חדשה ע"פ שיקול דעתו הגדולה¹⁰⁶, ונהוג בהם

100 כדלעיל אות ח.

101 כדלעיל אות כ וצ"י מפי שמחות פרק ד' הגה אות ז.

102 כגון שבת כ"ג ע"ב: "דמוקיר רבנן הוה ליה תחתותא רבנן". והגיה הגר"א: "ידחיל מרבנן". והגיה כן ע"פ הסוד כפי מה שכתב בפאת השלחן בהקדמתו. הרי שאין על הגהה זו ט"ו ראיות ע"פ הנגלה.

103 כדלעיל אות לא ואות לח. ולא שייך בהם ליישבן עם ט"ו סוגיות, שהרי אין ט"ו סוגיות הנוגעות להגהתו.

104 ע"י הערה 99. ובתקדמת פאת השלחן כתב: "ואם לא נתגלה לנו כל טעמו, נקוט מיהא חדא או תרין טעמי ברורי הנגלות לנו וממקומנו מוכרע".

105 כדברי הרמב"ן המפורסמים בהקדמתו לספר מלחמת ה': "ידע כל לומד תלמודנו שאין במחלוקת מפרשי ראיות גמורות ולא ברוב קושיות חלוטות, שאין בחכמה הזאת מופת ברור כגון חשבונות התשבורות ונסונו התבונה...". ע"ש.

106 לדוגמא שיטת הרמב"ם שהמיל הוא ב' חומשי שעה עולה עם נוסח הגמ' שבידינו לפי רבינו יהונתן מלגול המעוני יו"ט — ואילו לדעת הגר"א אי אפשר ליישבה לנוסח הגמ' שלנו דאיתותב עולא, ובהכרח להגיה הגמ' לפי הרמב"ם, ועל פי זה החזירא (אריה סי' י"ג סק"ד) הציע גירסא חדשה בגמ'. ע"י לעיל הערה 58.

יג. וכיצא בו מצינו גם בהגהות הגר"א על הכבלי — רבברכות דף ס' ע"ב על ברכת אשר יצר בהגהות הגר"א: "לעמוד לפניך. נ"ב אפילו שעה אחת." ואילו בביאור הגר"א בשו"ע או"ח סי' ר' ס"א ד"ה שאם יסתם כתב: "וכל זה דחקם גירסת ואפילו שעה אחת, אבל בגירסא שלנו ליתא ואין צריך לכל זה... וכן עיקר." [וכ"כ בדמשק אליעזר סוף סק"ו ובפסקי הגר"א, וכ"כ בשית אליהו סי' ר': "העיקר בגירסא שלנו דלא גרסינן אפילו שעה אחת עיי' ביאוריו"].

הרי נראה שבהגהות על הכבלי לא בא הגר"א לתקן נוסח הגמ' אלא להעיר על נוסח אחר — והגר"א עצמו סובר שהעיקר בגמ' דידן, ולמדנו מזה שאין הכרח מהגהות הגר"א [היכא שלא כתב בעצמו "כצ"ל"²⁶] שכן הוא העיקר — אלא שרק בא להעיר ולהודיענו על נוסח האחר. ולפי ענין ההגהה יש לשפוט אם יש כאן גילוי דעת שכן עיקר או אין כאן הכרעה ורק שינוי נוסח.²⁷

בביאוריו לפעמים הגר"א מעתיק כפי הגהותיו בלי להעיר על זה

יד. לפעמים מצינו שהגר"א בביאוריו מעתיק גירסת הגהותיו בפשיטות בלי להעיר שהוא עצמו הגיה הנוסח הישן, כגון באו"ח סי' תכ"ג ס"ב לענין סדר הקריאה בראש חודש, נקט לשון מסכת סופרים כפי הגהותיו [עיי' אות לד.], וכן בסי' תנ"ט ס"ב העתיק לשון הירושלמי בברכות פ"א ה"א [דפוס ווילנא דף ד'] "אדם בינוני מזהלך ארבעה מילין..." כפי נוסח הגהותיו.

סיבת הסתירות שכנוסחאות הגר"א

טו. בהגהות הגר"א ע"פ העתקת הרד"ל למעשרות פ"ג ה"ד [בספרים אחרים ה"ט] לדרך יז ע"ב דפוס ווילנא: "ה"ד ר"ז בשר"י דר"ט כר"א ועבד עוקצות. כן רשם אדמו"ר תחלת הגירסא ואח"כ חזר בו ואמר שגירסת הספר דווקא אמיתית." ושם פ"ה ה"ב [בס"א היג] לדרך כג ע"א דפוס ווילנא: "ואין אחראין לרמאין. גרשם בכ"י אדמו"ר למוחקר ובלמדו עמנו קיים גירסת הספר."²⁸

טז. ובברכות כט ע"ב על נוסח תפלת הדרך הגיה הגר"א: "ותסמכני לשלום. ג"ב ותחזירני לביתי לשלום." אך ב"חילופי גרסאות ע"פ ג"י במסכת ברכות" הנדפס בסוף ברכות בש"ס ווילנא כתב: "בהגהות הגר"א שנ"ב (ותחזירני לביתי לשלום) כ"ה בכתיבת יד קדשו בגליון הש"ס שלו אחר כתבו הגהה זו הסגירה בעגולים. כלומר דהדר ביה. וכ"ה בחדושי אגדות של רה"ג מבאר שאין לומר בה רק ג' שלומות."

26 לאופקי ממעתיק או מדפיס שהוסיף כן בדבריו מדעתו.

27 עיי' לקטן אות מט.

28 ועיי' במסכת מעשרות בהוצאת בית מדרש גבוה להלכה בהתיישבות כדף נב ע"א בהערה לברכת ישראל אות יד.

Additions

“With Tosefta, Yerushalmi, Pesikta, Midrash, and other works that are not commonly available, it is his way to establish them in their proper wording; and if there is a scribal error there, he copies them in the clean, remarkable girsas that he established.” (From the rules for understanding Biur HaGra given by the author of Pe'as HaShulchan in his introduction to Biur HaGra on Orach Chaim, rule 5.)

The whole subject deserves further study, with a range of examples, in order to understand the Gra's method more deeply. We need examples of several different types — both from this issue and from related matters — so that we do not reach an incorrect conclusion on the basis of too narrow a sample.

A) Places where the Gra quotes Chazal in wording that differs from our printed editions

1) Four examples where he quotes according to a girsas found in another source

These examples show that when the Gra quotes the Yerushalmi or Midrashim, he quite often gives the wording found in some other source — such as a Rishon who quotes the passage, or a collection such as Pesikta Zutresa. In some examples the alternate wording changes the meaning substantially; in others it is merely a stylistic difference. Either way, the Gra apparently regarded the version he quoted as the more authoritative one — otherwise, why not quote the wording actually printed in the source, when the entire Torah was spread before him like a garment? Sometimes he notes that the Midrash is quoted by a particular Rishon; at other times he simply quotes the Midrash itself, even though his wording follows another source. The common denominator is that in all of these places the Gra does not feel any need to note that the version he is quoting differs from the text in our printed editions.

A. In Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 27:7, he quotes Yerushalmi Berachos 2:3 as follows:

“From what we say in Yerushalmi, second perek of Berachos: R' Yochanan, in the summer when his head did not feel heavy, would wear both [tefillin]; in the winter, when his head felt heavy, he would wear only the one on his arm.”

The printed Yerushalmi has the opposite girsas:

“R' Yochanan, in the winter when his head felt heavy, would wear both; but in the summer, when his head did not feel heavy, he would wear only the one on his arm.”

The Oz Vehadar edition of Yerushalmi cites Shaarei Yerushalmi as saying that the Gra had the opposite girsa from the printed text. If so, it is perfectly understandable that in his Biur the Gra quotes the Yerushalmi according to his own girsa and does not bother to say that it differs from our editions. Interestingly, the newly published Teshuvos HaRashba, siman 3, also has the girsa found in our printed text. The Rashba writes there that he wanted to reverse the girsa — as the Gra later did — but sent people outside the country to check several manuscripts, and all of them had the standard reading, so he refrained from emending it. The Mordechai, Hilchos Tefillin s.v. “zeh lashon haRif,” likewise has our girsa. On the other hand, some Rishonim read it as the Gra did: the Itur in Hilchos Tefillin and Tashbetz, vol. 1, siman 30. The Rashba himself also has the Gra's reading in Teshuvos HaRashba vol. 7, siman 409. The apparent contradiction within the Rashba requires further study.

B. Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 128:2:

“Yerushalmi: R' Shimon ben Pazi, when his head felt heavy, would stand behind a pillar; R' Elazar would go outside.”

Additions

The printed text (Yerushalmi Berachos 5:4) reads:

“R' Yehudah ben Pazi, when he was weak and his head felt heavy, would stand behind a pillar; R' Elazar would go outside.”

Tosafos, Menachos 44a, beginning of the second amud:

“R' Shimon ben Pazi, when he was weak, would stand behind the pillars; R' Elazar would go outside.”

Rosh, Megillah, chapter 3, siman 20:

“R' Ada bar Pazi, when his head felt heavy, would stand behind a pillar; R' Elazar would go outside.”

C. In Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 188:10, the Gra quotes the wording of Yerushalmi Berachos, chapter 4, halachah 1, as follows:

“Yerushalmi — also quoted by the Rosh at the end of siman 20 in the eighth perek of Yoma: the maternal brother of Rav Ada would watch Rav's cloak. He said to him, ‘When you see...’ The shittah of Rav appears to contradict itself, etc. R' Masna said: because Rav would daven at great length, when he reached... etc.”

This is the wording quoted by the Gra.

Our Yerushalmi has the following girsa:

“The maternal brother of Rav Ada would fasten / bind / arrange Rav's cloak on the great fast day. He said to him: ‘When you see the sun by the tops of the palm trees, give me my cloak so that I can daven,’ etc.”

This is the printed Yerushalmi's wording.

The wording quoted by the Gra is copied from the Rosh in Yoma, whom the Gra himself cites.

D. Biur HaGra, beginning of Orach Chaim siman 293:

“Yerushalmi, beginning of Berachos, regarding the definition of night: R' Yosi b'Rebbi Bun said, provided that there are three stars that appear like one star.”

The printed Yerushalmi (Berachos 1:1) reads:

“R' Yosi b'Rebbi Bun said: provided that three stars are visible besides this star.”

See the Oz Vehadar Yerushalmi (p. 3), which cites the Gra's hagahos to Yerushalmi as reading “stars like one.” In the textual-variant notes there, they bring a number of Rishonim with readings close to the Gra's wording in his Biur to Shulchan Aruch.

E. In Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 306:8, he quotes the Mechilta as follows (I have copied the wording exactly from the first edition of Biur HaGra):

“Six days you shall work and do all your work. Is it possible for a person to do all his work in six days? Rather, rest...

...as though all your work has been done.”

Our Mechilta in Parshas Yisro reads:

“Six days you shall work and do all your work. Is it possible for a person to do his work in six days? Rather, rest as though your work has been done.”

The wording quoted by the Gra is found only in Pesikta Zutresa there in Parshas Yisro, and something close to it appears in Yalkut Shimoni, except that the Yalkut omits the second “all.” Rashi on the Torah there (Shemos 20:9) writes, “as though all your work...

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...has been done.”

F. Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 13:11:

“And in Yerushalmi, eighth perek of Terumos: one who shechts an animal and finds a pig inside it — it is permitted to eat; if he finds a dove — it is forbidden to eat, as the pasuk says, ‘an animal within an animal you may eat,’ but not a bird within an animal.”

The printed Yerushalmi (Terumos, chapter 8, end of halachah 1) reads:

“One who shechts an animal and finds a pig inside it — it is permitted to eat. R' Yonah said: if [he finds a bird], it is forbidden to eat. What is the reason? ‘An animal within an animal...

...you may eat,’ but not a bird within an animal.”

The Gra's girsa is also found in the Rokeach (siman 464), Rabbeinu Yerucham (Nesiv 15, part 5), and Teshuvos Maharam MiRothenburg (siman 112). In his Biur on the Yerushalmi and in his hagahos to the Yerushalmi, the Gra likewise deletes the words “R” and “said.”

G. Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 201:3.

“In the Tosefta, beginning of the third perek of Zavim: a zav has a stringency over a zavah in that a zav requires mayim chayim and a zavah does not require mayim chayim. Rashi and Tosafos bring it in Shabbos 65b, Tosafos in Bechoros 55b, the Rash in the fourth perek of Zavim, and other poskim.”

Here too the Gra preferred to quote the wording as it appears in those Rishonim rather than the version in our Tosefta:

“There is a stringency in a zav that is not in a zavah, and [a stringency in] a zavah that is not in a zav: the zav requires entering mayim chayim, while the zavah does not require entering mayim chayim.”

He copied the wording exactly as it appears in Rashi and Tosafos without noting the difference, even though he simply writes, “In the Tosefta, beginning of the third perek of Zavim,” which makes it sound as though he is quoting directly from the Tosefta and merely noting incidentally that Tosafos brings it.

H. Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 201:34.

The Gra brings the Yerushalmi in the third perek of Yoma as quoted by Tosafos, Pesachim 109b, regarding the sea that Shlomo made. According to

the quotation, the Yerushalmi asks, “But it is drawn water!” The Gra does not see any need to point out that in our Yerushalmi the question is, “But is it not a vessel?”

2) Two examples where he quotes a girsa that, to the best of my knowledge, is not found anywhere else

A. In Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 201:29, the Gra quotes Sifra, Parshas Shemini (parashah 9), as follows:

“If [the Torah had said only] a pit, I might include even a pit in a ship. Therefore it says ‘a spring’: just as a spring has its source in the ground, so too a pit must have its source in the ground.”

The printed Sifra has a slightly different girsa:

“If [the Torah had said only] a pit, I might say that even a pit in a ship is tahor. Therefore it says ‘a spring’: just as a spring has its source in the ground, so too a mikveh has its source...

...in the ground.”

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B. Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 295:5:

“And in Yerushalmi, first perek of Peah, it teaches: one may sow seeds and tree seeds together, and one who sows grape seeds together with wheat receives...

...forty lashes.”

The printed Yerushalmi, Peah 1:4, reads:

“It teaches: one may sow seeds and tree seeds together, and one who sows from the grape seeds receives forty lashes.”

C. In Biur HaGra to Orach Chaim 423:2, the Gra quotes Maseches Sofrim 17:9 without qualification, but in reality the wording follows his own hagahos there. This is what he writes in the Biur:

“On Rosh Chodesh itself, three people read from the korban tamid. The first reads ‘Vayedaber,’ ‘Tzav,’ and ‘Ve'amarta.’ The second reads ‘Es hakeves ha'echad,’ ‘Va'asiris,’ ‘Olas,’ ‘VeNisko,’ and ‘Ve'es hakeves.’ The third goes back and reads ‘Olas tamid,’ ‘VeNisko,’ ‘Ve'es...

...hakeves,’ ‘Uveyom haShabbos,’ and ‘Olas Shabbos,’ because they said that one may not read fewer than three pesukim in a parashah; and some say that one may not leave...

...fewer than three pesukim in a parashah. See there.”

Anyone who looks at Maseches Sofrim together with the Gra's hagahos will see that the words I emphasized are not part of the printed text of Maseches Sofrim; they come from the Gra's own emendations. Here the Gra does write “see there,” and perhaps he intended that as a hint. Even so, this again shows that his practice was to quote according to the nusach he himself established.

D. Biur HaGra, Even HaEzer 73:4, s.v. VeIshah Lo, etc.:

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her; ‘and he lay with her.’ This teaches that an opening invites...

...the thief.”

The Gra's girsa is a combination of the printed Sifrei and Yalkut Shimoni. The printed Sifrei (Devarim 242) reads:

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her there. This teaches that an opening invites the thief.”

Yalkut Shimoni (Ki Seitzei, remez 933) reads:

“‘And a man found her in the city’ — had she not gone out into the city, he would not have encountered her there; ‘and he lay with her.’ This teaches that an opening invites...

...the thief.”

E. In Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 658:2, the Gra quotes the Tosefta at the end of Sukkah, chapter 2:

“And in the Tosefta, end of chapter 2: on the first day of Yom Tov of Sukkos that falls on Shabbos, once he has fulfilled his obligation with it, it is forbidden to move it.”

He quotes the same wording in Biur HaGra, Yoreh Deah 266:3. The words “that falls on Shabbos” are an addition made by the Gra to the text in the printed editions, and he does not call attention to the fact. [In the Gra's hagahos to the Tosefta he makes no emendation here.]

F. Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 3:3:

“It teaches: judges may always be added until the din is concluded, and the dayanim may retract. Once the din is concluded, they may no longer retract...

...their ruling.”

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Biur HaGra, Choshen Mishpat 13:10, in the Likkut:

“Yerushalmi there, halachah 3: it was taught that judges may always be added until the din is concluded, and they may retract. Once the din is concluded, they may not retract.” (See the article “The Gra and the Yerushalmi,” pp. 95–96.)

G. Biur HaGra, Choshen Mishpat 28:8:

“Sifrei, Parshas Shoftim: ‘One witness shall not rise against a man’ — I only know [this] regarding capital cases; from where do we know monetary cases? The Torah says, ‘for every iniquity.’ From where do we know korbanos? The Torah says, ‘for every sin.’ From where do we know lashes? The Torah says, ‘and for every sin.’ From where do we know raising someone to the kehunah or removing him from the kehunah? The Torah says, etc.”

The printed Sifrei reads: “‘One witness shall not rise against a man’ — I only know capital cases; from where do we know monetary cases? The Torah says, ‘for every iniquity.’ From where do we know korbanos? The Torah says, ‘for every sin.’ From where do we know lashes? The Torah says, ‘for any sin that he may commit.’ From where do we know raising someone to the kehunah or removing him from the kehunah? The Torah says, ‘for every iniquity and every sin.’”

Yalkut, siman 922, has only: “I only know capital cases; from where do we know monetary cases?”

Hagahos Maimoniyos (Hilchos Edus, chapter 5) has: “I only know monetary cases; from where do we know capital cases?”

B) Places where the Gra quotes a statement of Chazal that is not found in our sefarim

1) Four examples where he simply cites a source that is not found in the texts before us

A. In Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 263:5, the Gra twice cites Yerushalmi, Perek HaRoeh, as the source for the berachah over Shabbos candles and Yom Tov candles, even though this is not found in our Yerushalmi. It appears only in the Raavyah, Shabbos siman 199 (p. 205 in the new edition), and in other Rishonim brought by the Beis Yosef there. The Gra does not point this out.

2) Two examples where he quotes wording in the name of Chazal although it is not found in our texts

A. At the end of Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim siman 583, the Gra cites “Yerushalmi: one who sleeps at the beginning of the year, his mazal sleeps.” The quotation comes from the Darkei Moshe and is not found in our Yerushalmi. It would seem that the Gra relied on the Darkei Moshe and saw no need to note that the statement is absent from our printed Yerushalmi.

B. In Biur HaGra, siman 591:6, he writes: “And so it is implied by the Yerushalmi, chapter 4: they asked the Rabbanan, what is the din about mentioning Rosh Chodesh on Rosh Hashanah? R' Yaakov bar Acha said in the name of R' Yosi: one who leads the davening on Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah does not need to mention Rosh Chodesh. This follows R' Chiya, who says that one remembrance counts for both. If so, perhaps Rosh Chodesh should be omitted from the tefillah entirely? Since at the end of Shofaros he says, ‘And on the day of your rejoicing, on your festivals, and on your new moons,’ he has fulfilled the requirement. See the Rosh there.” This passage is not found in our Yerushalmi. It is copied from the Rosh, Rosh Hashanah chapter 4, siman 3, who quotes it in the name of the Yerushalmi. (The Korban Nesanel there also notes that it is not found in our Yerushalmi.) It is also quoted in Or Zarua, Hilchos Eruvin siman 140, sec. 3, in the name of Yerushalmi Yoma. The Gra does not feel any need to remark that it is absent from our Yerushalmi.

C. In Biur HaGra to Orach Chaim siman 8, the Gra quotes the Orchos Chaim in the name of the Yerushalmi: “All berachos [are recited] standing.”

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This statement is not found in our Yerushalmi, and the Gra does not point that out. This case is admittedly not quite the same as the places where he cites a source without qualification, since here he explicitly says that his source is the Orchos Chaim. Still, we see that he did not feel required to call attention to the fact that a statement attributed to Yerushalmi is absent from the printed Yerushalmi.

D. Biur HaGra, Orach Chaim 290:2, brings a Tanchuma that is not found in our editions. He writes: “In Tanchuma, Parshas Vayakhel: the baalei aggadah would say, from the beginning of the Torah to the end there is no parashah whose opening uses the language of gathering except..., etc. The Beis Yosef brings it, and so it is in Midrash Avkir, quoted by Yalkut there.”

E. Orach Chaim 56:1, Biur HaGra s.v. VeYesh Laamod: “Yerushalmi: ‘I have a word of God for you.’ From here R' Elazar said that when one answers Yehei Shmei Rabbah and every davar shebikdushah, one must rise to his feet.” Although this looks as though the Gra is quoting directly from Yerushalmi, his actual source is the Darkei Moshe, quoting a Hagahas Mordechai in the name of Yerushalmi. (See also the notes in the Shiras Devorah edition of the Tur for what they bring from the Arizal on this point.)

From all of this we see that even though the Gra certainly possessed the Yerushalmi, he did not consider it necessary to write that a passage was “not found in our Yerushalmi.”

The same can therefore be true of Sifrei. When he brings something in the name of Sifrei that in reality reached him through the Rishonim, even if he had the printed Sifrei, he did not necessarily see a need to say that the passage was absent from “our Sifrei.”

C) Places where the Gra retracted his own hagahos

A. In Yeshurun vol. 4, p. 51, Rav Zalman Menachem Koren shlita published a hagahah of the Gra on which the Gra himself later drew a line and then corrected the text again. B. See the sefer HaGaon, vol. 3, p. 4417, for another example. C. Berachos 29b gives the text of Tefillas HaDerech, and the Gra added in his hagahos, “and return me to my home in peace.” I was shown that in the Hagahos VeChiddushim printed at the back of the Gemara it is reported that, in the Gra's handwritten margin, the Gra later enclosed this addition in parentheses — meaning that he retracted it. The same is indicated by the Gra's Chiddushei Aggados, which says that only three expressions of shalom should be recited.

D. In the Gra's hagahos to the Rash on Maseches Peah (in the additions printed in the Vilna Shas at the end of Mishnayos Zeraim, after Maseches Bikkurim, p. 67), on chapter 4, the printers write: “With our own eyes we saw in the margin that afterward he erased and scraped out this hagahah.”

E. In the introduction of Rav Yaakov Moslan, z”l, a grandson of the Gra, to Biur HaGra on the Yerushalmi, he writes: “I possess a Yerushalmi... in it are several hagahos that were erased, and different hagahos were written over the erased areas; there are places that were erased with no new hagahah written there at all; and in a few places there are hagahos in the actual handwriting of my grandfather, the Gaon zt”l. I then looked again at his commentary on Mishnayos Zeraim, printed in Shenot Eliyahu, Lvov 5559, in which...

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...there are hagahos and explanations different from what is written in the work mentioned above and in the Yerushalmi mentioned above. It also prints a long commentary and a short commentary: some matters are repeated in both, while in other places the long version differs from the short one. When I came with the sefer to clarify and arrange the material, my heart suggested that these four different forms of the hagahos all came from the mouth of my grandfather, the Gaon...

...zt”l, and that they represent one mahadura after another...” See there at length.

F. See also the letter of the Ridbaz that he printed in the Yerushalmi Peah edition he published; it is reproduced in the appendix. G. In the sefer Sukkas Chaim on Hilchos Pesach, vol. 2, p. 394, the following question was asked of Rav Chaim Kanievsky shlita: The Tosefta (Pesachim, chapter 10, sec. 8) states, “A person is obligated to occupy himself with the halachos of Pesach the entire night — even by himself with his son, even by himself, even by himself with his talmid. There was an incident with Rabban Gamliel and the elders who were reclining...” See the Gra's hagahos, where he deletes the words “to occupy himself with the halachos of Pesach” and reads instead, “to tell the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim.” This appears difficult, because the Rema (siman 476:1) writes: “He should not eat or drink excessively, so that he will not eat the afikoman in a state of achilah gasah, or become intoxicated and immediately fall asleep.” In Biur HaGra, the Gra comments on “and immediately fall asleep”: “It is taught in the Tosefta that a person is obligated to occupy himself with the halachos of Pesach the entire night.” This explicitly shows that he accepted the very reading that he deleted in his hagahos to the Tosefta. Rav Chaim Kanievsky answered: “There are a number of cases like this; in the Biur HaGra he retracted.”