

The Other Daf Yomi...

Let me clarify something up front: I am not a Gerrer Chassid.

You see, generally, when I tell people that I teach a *shiur* in *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi*, the first question they ask me is whether I am a Gerrer Chassid. After I assure them that I am not, they then ask if I have any Gerrer *yichus* at all. When I deny even remote affiliation to *Gerrer Chassidus*, they seem somewhat bewildered. Let me explain.

Like many of you, I was thrilled to be in Madison Square Garden and participate in the recent *Siyum HaShas* of the *Daf Yomi* in *Talmud Bavli*. For me, it was the first time through *Shas*. It was an even greater *zechus* to do so as *maggid shiur*.

As we began to draw near the end of *Shas*, I began to feel the urge to learn *Talmud Yerushalmi*. After all, aren't we encouraged as *bnei Torah* to learn *kol haTorah kulla* (the entirety of the Torah — *shebichsav v'shebe'al peh*)? I knew that the *Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah*, at the last *Knessia Gedolah* in 1980, at the urging of the then Gerrer *Rebbe*, the *Lev Simcha*, זצ"ל, had initiated a cycle in *Talmud Yerushalmi* (thus, the association of *Yerushalmi* study with Gerrer Chassidus). At first, I found it difficult to even find a *luach* for the *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi*. When I finally got one, it was just before the *Yerushalmi* cycle began *Seder Nashim*. I tried to start a *shiur*. No luck.

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This past year, the *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi* made its fourth *Siyum* — on Thursday, 4 Adar II, 5757. I eagerly awaited that day, hoping the accompanying publicity would spark some real interest on the study of *Yerushalmi*, as I was intent on beginning a *shiur* that night, with the new cycle. You probably missed all the publicity. So did I. Not a single essay, even a notice or advertisement, in any English language Orthodox periodical or newspaper.

Nevertheless, the *shiur* began — and it continues! To the best of my knowledge, we are the only English language *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi shiur* in the world at the moment — although I will be very happy if someone can refute that assertion.²

Talmud Bavli achieved prominence over *Talmud Yerushalmi* because the *Amoraim* in Bavel had access to the previously completed *Yerushalmi* and incorporated its wisdom in their deliberations. (The "Amoraic" period ended earlier in *Eretz Yisroel* because of terrible Roman persecutions.) The *Rambam* (in the footsteps of *Rabbeinu Chananel*), however, often *paskens* like the *Yerushalmi* over the *Bavli*. Where the *Bavli* is silent, the *Yerushalmi*, as the repository of *Chazal's* opinions, is the primary source of *dvar Hashem*.³

THE YERUSHALMI DISTINCTION

A few words on the study of *Yerushalmi*: First, I was embarrassed to say that it had been downright easy. There are so many aids to the study of *Seder Zera'im*, that there is no need to ever get stuck. These include, besides the classic *peirushim* of

the *Pnei Moshe* and *Ridbaz* זצ"ל, the extraordinarily lucid and simple running commentary based on the *shiurim* of Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky שליט"א (the series currently extends well into *Seder Mo'ed*, and the writers are in the process of producing further volumes),⁴ and the more scholarly *Kav v'Naki* series, co-authored by Rabbis Aryeh Carmel, Leo Levi and Gershon Metzger. Interestingly, one of the most helpful *sefarim* on the entire *Yerushalmi*, one that the *Chofetz Chaim* זצ"ל described as indispensable to the study of *Yerushalmi*, is the *Mashbiach*, written by the first (and I think the last) Chief Rabbi of Pittsburgh, Rabbi Sivitz זצ"ל, in the early twentieth century and published here in America. The study of *Yerushalmi* is easy enough, and, more significantly, its *blatt* are so much shorter, that we can generally cover two *blatt* in an hour.

To disabuse a common misperception, *Yerushalmi* is not *sisrei Torah*! You will not drown in a sea of mysterious ideas. After traversing *Seder Kodashim* and *Mesechta Nidda* in the *Bavli*, even *Zera'im* is nothing to be afraid of. There is also far less *Agaddata* in the *Yerushalmi*, and it is no more mystical — often less so — than the *Agaddata* in the *Bavli*. (Of course, we haven't been further than the middle of *Shevi'is* yet. I am extrap-

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olating from what we have seen so far and from what I read in overviews.)

Yerushalmi sugyos are shorter than those of the *Bavli*. The *Yerushalmi* is usually content to raise a question and let it remain unresolved, rather than pursue proofs and disproofs. The language of the *Yerushalmi* itself is terser, and it often contracts words, a phenomenon the *Bavli* (*Bava Kamma* 6b) recognizes and brands as “*lishna kelile*” (light manner of expression). This applies even to names. For example, the *Amora* known in *Bavli* as Rabbi Ilo’oh (עילעא) is known in the *Yerushalmi* as Rabbi Lo. This often leads novices (like me) to incorrectly read a statement attributed to Rabbi Lo as if it is *Rebbe* (Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi) saying *no* (*amar Rebbe: Lo*).

The *girsas* (the text) of the *Yerushalmi* is often inaccurate. This is due both to the horrific persecutions in *Eretz Yisroel* that impeded proper editing of the original text and to subsequent sloppy transcriptions. The *Gra* זצ”ל, however, did much to clarify the proper readings, and the later commentaries (particularly the *Ridbaz*) constantly quote his emendations. The inaccuracy of the *girsas* attracted many *Acharonim* to write on the *Yerushalmi*, as it continues to provide fertile ground for creative interpretation. (The *Rishonim* generally did not write running commentaries on the *Yerushalmi*.)

We have been taught to aspire to learn, in the course of our lifetimes, as much *Toras Hashem Yisbarach* as possible. The *Yerushalmi* includes countless *inyanim* that are brand new, even to those who have learned through the entire *Bavli*, new vistas of *Dvar Hashem* to explore and

experience. Now that many of us have finished *Bavli* (at least once), it is an opportune time to *also* take up the adventure of *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi*. *Luchos* and other materials are available from *Mosdos Gur*, 1310 48th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11219, (718) 435- 8989.⁵ The next *mesechta*, *Ma’asros*, begins on 15 Kislev, December 14; the next *sefer*, *Moed*, on 17 Nissan, April 13. Perhaps the next *siyum* on *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi* won’t take place in the Garden — but let’s ensure it gets noticed! ■

¹ The cycle lasts approximately 51 months. Unlike the *Daf Yomi Bavli* cycle, the *Yerushalmi* cycle skips both Yom Kippur and Tisha B’Av — a great relief for those who are perpetually behind in *both* cycles.

² There was once a *shiur* in Australia, but it disbanded sometime during the first cycle. I understand that there are other English language *shiurim* in *Yerushalmi*, but not as part of the *Daf Yomi* framework. I would like to publicly acknowledge the three “regulars” in the *shiur*: Rabbi Meyer Magence, Dr. David Spindel, and Mr. Joel Zuger. All three are also *chaveirim* of my somewhat more popular morning *shiur* in *Daf Yomi Bavli*, and Dr. Spindel has been with me

through all of *Shas*. May the *zechus* of sustaining the study of *Yerushalmi* be a source of *beracha* for them! We do record all the *shiurim*, and Rabbi Apfelbaum of Torah Tapes and Reb Fivel Smiles of <http://www.613.org> (RealAudio on the World Wide Web) have graciously agreed to make the material available. Unfortunately, they will obviously not be current with the cycle until the next cycle begins.

³ *Tesh. Maharik* 100; *Rash Sirilei’o* (an early — he was exiled from Spain in 1492 — and most important *peirush* on *Yerushalmi*) in his introduction; *Mareh HaPonim, Bava Metzia* 8:3; *Doros HaRishonim* v. 3 p. 112.


⁴ I am greatly indebted to Rabbi Kalman Redisch of Lakewood, NJ, for introducing me to this series. Without it, *Kilayim* would have been very difficult. It would be remiss not to mention the monumental *Toldos Yitzchak* on the *Yerushalmi*, written by the last Chief Rabbi of Moscow under the Soviet Union rule. The stirring tale of the rescue and publication of the work by the *Al Tidom* Foundation, recounted by Rabbi Bronstein ז”ר, can be found in translation on the World Wide Web at <http://www.geocities.com/Hearthland/Plains/6147/toldos.html>

⁵ As *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi* is under the auspices of Agudath Israel, some information including a list of existing *shiurim* in *Daf Yomi Yerushalmi* is available from the Agudah office in New York, as well.

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