

Codes of Jewish Law and their Commentaries: Historical Notes

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1. Introduction

Every single aspect of Jewish life is permeated by the demands and expectations placed on the Jew by the Torah and its Laws. Jewish Law is rooted in the Written Torah and fully expounded in the Oral Law as presented in the Mishnah and the Talmud. Indeed, it can be said that in their own way the Mishnah and the Talmud are themselves the first compilations or codifications of Jewish Law.

Extracting from the Talmud the practical laws applicable to the different aspects of one's life, however, poses quite a challenge. There are different reasons why that is the case. First, the Talmud does not read as a code of Jewish Law but rather as a flow of intertwined legal, aggadic, and other materials. Furthermore, often the presentation of halachic materials focuses on expounding possibilities and do not leave a clear ruling. Finally, since Torah is a way of life there is a constant need to apply Jewish Law to new situations which in itself creates a body of new jurisprudence. From all these reasons, almost from the moment the redaction of the Talmud was concluded the need arose to codify Jewish Law in a way to make it less unyielding for the Torah scholar and the common Jew alike. *Part I on these notes* focuses on such codes, in particular on the Rif, the Mishneh Torah, the Arbah Turim, and the Shulchan Aruch as well as many other contributions in-between these major codes.

One of the fascinating aspects of the codifications of Jewish Law, however, is that despite their intention of simplifying the halachic issues they tend to generate a vast body of halachic literature in the direct proportion to their success and acceptance. Much of this halachic literature is in the form of Shailot and Teshuvot (Questions and Answers). There are, however, a significant number of major commentaries on the main codes of Jewish Law that have reached such prominence that they are typically printed with the code they are a comment on. These commentaries are called in general Nosei Keilim, the Arm-Bearers. *Part II of these notes* provides a discussion of some of the major commentaries on the Rif, the Mishneh Torah, the Tur, and the Shulchan Aruch.

This work is a simple and superficial attempt to provide an overview of the most important efforts on codification of Jewish Law and how they fit together. There is no way, however, that it could be even remotely close to exhaustive. This is because the best halachic minds of generation upon generation of the best Jewish minds have poured their efforts of Limud Torah into writing codes, commentaries on the codes, or sometimes notes and clarifications, often hand-written, on all the codes and commentaries brought forth by the previous generations. This being the case one could not hope for more than scratching the surface of this vast ocean of vital efforts.

PART I – The Codes

OVERVIEW

A. *The early codes by the Babylonian Geonim*

Sefer HaSheilot, R' Achai of Shabcha (Bavel, c. 680-c.752)

Halachot Pesukot, R' Yehudai Gaon (Bavel, 700s)

Halachot Gedolot, R' Shimon Kayyara, (Bavel, c. 840)

B. *Sefer HaHalachot*, by R' Yitzchak Ben Yaakov Hakohen Alfasi, The Rif (Algeria, 1013-Spain, 1103)

C. *The Mishneh Torah* by R' Moshe Ben Maimon, The Rambam (Spain, 1135-Egypt, 1204)

D. *Codes before the Arbah Turim*

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HaEshkol, R' Avraham Ben Yitzchak of Narbonne, Raavad II (Provence, c. 1110-1179).

Sefer Halttim, R' Yehuda Ben Barzilai Al-Barzeloni (Spain, c. 1120-1193).

Sefer Halttur, R' Yitzchak Ben Abba Mari of Marseilles (Provence, c. 1122-c. 1193).

Sefer Avi Ezri and *Sefer Avi Asaf*, R' Eliezer Ben Yoel Halevi, The Raavyah (Germany, c.1140-c.1225).

Rokeach, R' Eleazar Ben Yehuda Of Worms (Germany, c. 1160-c.1237).

Sefer HaTerumah, R' Baruch Ben Yitzchak of Worms (Germany, 1170-1211).

Or Zarua, R' Yitzchak Ben Moshe Of Vienna (Germany, c.1180-1250).

Sefer HaTerumot, R' Shmuel ben Yitzchak Sardi (Spain, c.1190-c.1256).

Sefer Mitzvot Gadol, R' Moshe Ben Yaakov Of Couchy, The Smag (France, early 1200s-late1200s).

Sefer Mitzvot Katan, R' Yitzchak Ben Yossef Of Courbeil, The Smak, (France, early 1200 –1280).

Shibbolei HaLeket, R' Tzidkayah Ben Avraham Anav HaRofei (Italy, 1230-1300).

Torat HaBayit, R' Shlomo Ben Avraham Ibn Aderet, The Rashba, (Spain, c. 1235-c. 1310).

Mordechai, R' Mordechai ben Hillel HaKohen Ashkenazi, The Mordechai (Germany, c. 1240-1298).

Piskei HaRosh, R' Asher Ben Yechiel, The Rosh, (Germany, c. 1250 - Spain, 1327).

Meisharim and *Adam v'Chavah*, R' Yerucham Ben Meshulam, (Provence, c. 1280-Spain, c. 1350).

Orchot Chaim and *Kol Bo*, R' Aharon Ben Yaakov Hakohen Of Lunel (France, 1280-Spain, 1330).

D. *Arbah Turim* by R' Yaakov ben Asher, The Tur (Germany, c. 1270 – Spain. c. 1343)

F. *Codes before the Shulchan Aruch*

Abudarham, R' David Ben Yossef Abudarham of Seville (Spain, late 1200s-1300s).

Shaarei Dura, R' Yitzchak Ben Meir of Duren (Germany, late 1200s-1300s).

Aggudah, R' Alexander Suslin HaKohen (Germany, late 1200s-1348).

Zeida LaDerech, R' Menachem ben Zerach (France, c. 1310-Spain, 1385).

Minhagim, R' Yaakov Ben Moshe Halevi Molln, The Maharil, (Germany, c. 1365-1427).

Agur, R' Yaakov Baruch Ben Yehuda Landau (Italy, early 1400s-1493).

G. *Shulchan Aruch* by R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575)

H. *Mapah* by R' Moses ben Israel Isserles, the Rama (Poland, 1530-1572)

2. The early codes by the Babylonian Geonim

The earliest attempts to generate a systematic presentation of Jewish Law are the product of the Babylonian Geonim in the seventh to ninth centuries of the Common Era. These efforts are induced by the need to apply the rulings of the Talmud, to consider the decision of the later authorities and, ultimately to make Jewish Law more accessible to the Jewish masses. Furthermore, it presents a compilation of the halachic matters from the Talmud to facilitate its study. This was very important since the study of the actual text of the Talmud was often neglected at the time.

From a historical perspective, it has been conjectured that an important motivation behind the work of codification in the later part of the Geonic period was the struggle against the Karaite heresy, which started in the 8th century and quickly spread in the Middle eastern Jewish communities. The Karaites denied the authority of the Oral Law and advocated a rather literal reading of the Torah.

Sefer HaSheilot

R' Achai of Shabcha (Bavel, c. 680-c.752).

Sefer Sheilot (Book of Questions), it is mainly a compilation of homiletic texts typically starting with a question, hence the title. However, it also presents specific issues in Jewish Law in accordance to the Torah reading of the week and the order the 613 commandments are presented in the Torah. It is based on the rulings of the late Amoraim, the Saboraim, and the early Geonim. Since it is the first post-Talmudic text to be known to be used as a basis for future halachic decisions, it is considered the first attempt, albeit an indirect one, at codification of Jewish Law to appear after the completion of the Talmud.

Halachot Pesukot

R' Yehudai Gaon (Bavel, 8th century).

Halachot Pesukot (Halachic Decisions) is one of the first known attempts of codification in the post-talmudic period. It is essentially an abridged version of parts of the Talmud. It arranges the materials by topic and Talmudic treatise. This codification was apparently intended for practical purposes. Accordingly, it is confined to issues of direct applicability (omits issues of Temple ritual, ritual purity, and referring to Eretz Yisrael, for example) It quotes decisions, however, without quoting the sources. These are characteristics that would set the stage for many of the later attempts. This work forms the bases for later compilation in the Geonic period which often are just abridged or expanded versions of this work. This is the case of *Halachot Ketzuvot*, *Halachot Ketuvot*, and *Halachot Katannot*.

Halachot Gedolot

R' Shimon Kayyara, (Bavel, c. 840).

This is considered the greatest and most comprehensive halachic work of the period of the Geonim. It pretty much follows the general characteristics of exposition set out in the Halachot Pesukot.

3. The Sefer HaHalachot by the Rif

Sefer HaHalachot

R' Yitzchak Ben Yaakov Hakohen Alfasi, The Rif (Algeria, 1013- Spain, 1103).

Despite all the efforts it seems that toward the end of the Geonic period there was a growing opposition toward the whole endeavor of codification. This was based on the concern that the codes would make it even less likely for the people to study the Talmud itself. Accordingly, in the last couple of centuries of the Geonic period the halachic literature was mostly in the form of Responsa and ruling in isolated aspects of Jewish life. Furthermore, the decline of Babylon as the center of the Jewish world opened the door to North Africa and Europe as the new centers. In these areas, however, the knowledge of the rulings of the last few centuries of the Geonic period were not well known and neither were the earlier Geonic codes. In addition, the diversity of local customs and rulings in these communities was unsettling. The stage was set for a new effort toward codification of Jewish Law.

Sefer HaHalachot (Book of the Laws) was written at the end of the Geonic period, marks a transition to a higher sophistication in halachic codification. It is considered the first major codification of Jewish Law and remains a classic of codification to this day. It is greatly inspired in the codifications of the Geonic period. Indeed, it follows the order of the Talmud and it is in many aspects an abridged version of the Talmud, hence it is sometimes called Talmud Katan. It ignores all matters not relevant from an halachic perspective, i.e., it attempts to extract from the Talmud its halachic material. As the previous attempts at codification, however, it deals exclusively with topics of immediate practical relevance to Jewish life. It covers mostly the sederim Meod (Shabbat and festivals), Nashim (marriage and divorce) and Nezikim (damages) and masechtot Chulim (on the dietary laws) and Berachot (blessings). The rulings relevant that were included in Seder Kedoshim and Taharot, were compiled in a separate work under the name Halachot Ketanot.

In addition to extracting the relevant halachot from the Talmud, Sefer HaHalachot, occasionally, determines the relevant halachic rulings based on the Talmudic rulings and the rulings of the Geonic period on the discussions of the Talmud. An important feature is that it brings forth the rulings of the Yerushalmi when the Bavli is not applicable. When both are available he sides with the Bavli, the later of the two.

The Sefer HaHalachot and the Halachot Ketanot were primary sources for the Rambam and were the focus of great studies in the following centuries. They are considered as one the three pillars of halachah by R' Yossef Karo. The Sefer HaHalachot and several of its commentaries are included in the standard editions of the Talmud.

4. The Mishneh Torah by the Rambam

Mishneh Torah

R' Moshe Ben Maimon, The Rambam (Spain, 1135-Egypt, 1204).

The **Mishneh Torah** (The Repetition of the Torah) is a monumental and original code of Jewish Law and universally considered as one of the most important halachic works among Rishonim. The Mishneh Torah is the first complete code of Jewish law. It is a collection of legal opinions of the Talmud, but unlike the Talmud, is organized by subject. It is comprised of in 14 books hence, it is also known as *Yad Chazakah*, since *yad* (yud daled) has the numerical value of 14, which corresponds to the number of parts in this work.

The Mishneh Torah was completed in Egypt in 1178, when the Rambam was 43 years old. The stated objective of the work was to aid the study of the Talmud and make sense of the myriad of legal rulings in the centuries that followed. This is an objective that the Mishneh Torah has in common with other codes. The Rambam clearly perceives his compilation as authoritative and states that since everything is in it this would be the only book a Jew would need to read to know and decide the Law. That explains the name *Mishneh Torah*, a Repetition of the Torah. This, couple with some other original characteristics of this work (see below) led to the accusations that the Rambam was trying to replace the Talmud.

The Mishnah Torah has several important characteristics, which set it aside from the previous codification efforts and in some case from the ensuing codifying efforts. It is written in Mishnaic Hebrew not in Arabic as many of Rambam's works, or in Spanish, or Biblical Hebrew, or Aramaic of the Talmud as many other works of the time. This was unusual for the Rambam and difficult given state of the Hebrew language then. This may account for the crisp text not flourished as other of his writings. Nevertheless the Rambam is credited with effectively creating a Hebrew legal style which lasts to this day.

Second, the *Mishneh Torah* is innovative in its scope as well. It is an all-inclusive code, including civil, criminal, religious/ritual, ethical laws that were of practical relevance. It also includes laws of theoretical relevance, like the laws of the Temple service and sacrifices, Israel etc on grounds that their theoretical relevance will one day be practical and we need to know them.

Third, the Rambam introduces a rather different arrangement and classification of topics. It is a rather different order and organization compared to Talmud or even the Mishnah. As mentioned above it is organized in fourteen parts. These are *Sefer HaMada* (Knowledge) on ethics, Torah study, idolatry, repentance, etc, *Sefer Ahava* (Love of G-d) on prayer, blessing, tefillin, circumcision, etc, *Sefer Zemanim* (Seasons) on Shabbat and festivals, *Sefer Nashim* (Family) on marriage, divorce, adultery, etc, *Sefer Kedushah* (Holiness) on forbidden foods, ritual slaughter, etc, *Sefer Haflaah* (Sayings) on oaths, vows, nazir, etc, *Sefer Zeraim* (Seeds) on charity, tithes, first fruit, sabbatical year, etc, *Sefer Avodah* (Service) on Temple, vessels, sacrifices, etc, *Sefer Korbanot* (Sacrifices) on Passover, festivals, etc, *Sefer Taharah* (Purity) on dead, leprosy, mikveh, etc, *Sefer Nezikin* (Torts) on damages, theft, wounding, murder, etc, *Sefer Kynian* (Acquisitions) on sales, gifts, agency, slaves), *Sefer Mishpatim*

(Judgement) on hiring, borrowing, pleading, inheritances), and *Sefer Shofetim* (Judges) on Sanhedrin, witnesses, mourning, Kings, etc. In all these 14 parts are subdivided into 83 chapters with a total of about 15,000 paragraphs or halachot.

There are other unique characteristics that proved more controversial. Indeed, the Mishneh Torah presents only one point of view on the different halachic issues as a final decision. This is an innovation that would be followed in other later codes. What made it a controversial departure from the previous code, however, was the fact that the Rambam did not feel necessary to make reference or to the sources or reasoning behind the decisions. This is a complicated point since many of his views are controversial and some are not clear where they come from. This is particularly difficult in about 120 cases in which the Rambam is presenting his own ruling and 50 or so in which he arbitrates among earlier opinions. Finally, the Mishneh Torah is not a dry legal book. Rather, it mixes halacha, ethical principles and philosophical issues, a unique in a legal work.

Not surprisingly the innovations brought forth by the Mishneh Torah led to a great deal of controversy in the Jewish world, mostly because of the omission of sources and dissenting opinions in the Mishneh Torah. The Rambam seems to have accepted this criticism and seems to have intended to provide such information in a separate work, which however, he never produced. Clearly even his detractors recognized the genius of his work.

All the reasons that made the Mishneh Torah unique and maybe even more so the ones that make it controversial explain the enormous amount of halachic literature that this work generated. Given his intention of writing a definite presentation of Jewish Law, it has been said that the no author could not have had an objective that could backfire more than the Rambam.

5. Other Contributions before the Arbah Turim

Simultaneously with the development of the Sefer HaHalachot by the Rif in Spain and the Mishneh Torah by the Rambam in Egypt, which very much represented the Sephardic halachic tradition, the Ashkenazic communities, primarily in France and Germany, were also developing their own codes of Jewish Law. In many cases the influence of the Sefer HaHalachot and the Mishneh Torah were perceptible in these codes. This means that in some cases the codes were organized according to the order of the Talmud and in other cases by subject matter. Here are some of the most important codes, which were either produced by this school or were directly relevant for their development.

Even HaEzer

R' Eliezer Ben Natan, Ravan (Germany, c.1090-c.1170).

Even HaEzer (The Stone of Help, “even” spells the author’s name), sometimes referred to as **Tzfanat Paneiach**, is a collection of halachic materials from scattered sources. The work is divided in three parts – one with responsa, the second on topics in Berachot, Chulim, Avodah Zara and Niddah, and the third on other parts of the Talmud He

wrote in particular on Moed, Nashim and Nezikim). In these materials he tends to assume strict views and focuses on interpretations of earlier authorities rather than on presenting new views. It includes personal accounts and other important information on Jewish life at the time.

HaEshkol

R' Avraham Ben Yitzchak of Narbonne, Raavad II (Provence, c.1110-1179).

HaEshkol (The Cluster) is a compendium of halachot on daily observances, which is an abbreviated version of Sefer HaIttim by R' Yehuda ben Barzilai. Being the first major code to appear in Southern France it remained authoritative in France and Italy until the publication of the Arbah Turim and had great influence in works such as Orchat Chaim and Kol Bo.

Sefer HaIttim

R' Yehuda Ben Barzilai Al-Barzeloni (Spain, c.1120-1193).

Sefer HaIttim is a halachic codification on Shabbat, Festivals, and the calendar depending in large part on the Geonim, in particular Rabbeinu Chananel. It provides a straightforward summary of the Talmudic discussions.

Sefer HaIttur

R' Yitzchak Ben Abba Mari of Marseilles (Provence, c.1122-c.1193).

Sefer HaIttur (The Book of Separation) also known as **Ittur Soferim** (Scribal Separation), is a comprehensive code of civil and religious law, based on responsa from the Talmudic period and the period of the Geonim. The Sefer HaIttur has three parts. The first part is on jurisprudence, marriage and divorce, the second on tzizit, tefillin, circumcision, and forbidden foods, and the third on the festivals. This code was initially very successful but was ultimately overshadowed by the Arbah Turim, where it is frequently quoted.

Sefer Avi Ezri and Sefer Avi Asaf

R' Eliezer Ben Yoel Halevi, The Ravyah (Germany, c.1140-c.1225).

Avi HaEzri, is a halachic tractate organized according to the order of the Talmud.

Rokeach

R' Eleazar Ben Yehuda Of Worms (Germany, c.1160-c.1237).

Rokeach (The Perfumer), is a code of ethical laws focusing on ethics, piety, ritual, liturgy etc. In this code, halachah, aggadah and kabbalah are interwoven. It seems to reflect the views of the early Ashkenazic pietists.

Sefer HaTerumah

R' Baruch Ben Yitzchak of Worms (Germany, 1170-1211)

Sefer HaTerumah is a summary of halachot organized according to the chapter of the relevant Talmud Treatise, and which reflects the teachings of the school of the Ri. Written around 1200, this code gained widespread

acceptance in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain and is often quoted by later authorities of the period. Parts of it were inserted into the Machzor Vitry.

Or Zarua

R' Yitzhak Ben Moshe Of Vienna (Germany, c. 1180-1250).

Or Zarua (Light is Sown) is an halachic guide on religious but not civil and criminal law. Includes comments to all sections of the Talmud and provides extensive quotations of sources including the Yerushalmi and responsa from the Geonic period. It also includes information about Jewish life at the time.

Sefer HaTerumot

R' Shmuel ben Yitzhak Sardi (Spain, c. 1190-c. 1256).

Sefer HaTerumot, focuses exclusively on civil law. Work is divided into 70 gates each dealing with the specific subjects and chapters and paragraphs very much along the lines of the Mishneh Torah. Unlike the Mishneh Torah, however, it goes to the sources and different opinions.

Sefer Mitzvot Gadol

R' Moshe Ben Yaakov Of Couchy, The Smag (France, early 1200s-late1200s).

Sefer Mitzvot Gadol (The Great Book of Commandments) abbreviated as **Smag**, is an enumeration of the 613 Commandments. Besides the halachic aspects it contains a great deal of ethical discussions. It is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the 365 negative commandments and the second with the 248 positive ones. The work is largely based on Rambam's Mishneh Torah and marks the penetration of the Rambam in France. Unlike the Rambam, it presents lengthy discussions of the different interpretations and legal opinions. It also makes extensive use of other codes, and particularly of the commentaries of Rashi and the Tosefot, usually favoring the French and German traditions over the Rambam's views. The importance of the Smag was only surpassed by the publication of the Shulchan Aruch, and his author is regarded as one of the major halachic authorities of all generations.

Sefer Mitzvot Katan

R' Yitzhak Ben Yossef Of Courbeil, The Smak, (France, early 1200s–1280).

Sefer Mitzvot Katan (Small Book of Commandments), abbreviated as **Smak**, is a book of halachot applicable in the post-Temple period. It is based on the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol but targets a wider audience. To this effect, it includes few sources and focuses on the final decisions. Furthermore, it includes discussions of ethics and homiletics. The Smak is divided in seven parts one to be reviewed each day of the week.

Shibbolei HaLeket

R' Tzidkayah Ben Avraham Anav HaRofei (Italy, 1230-1300).

Shibolei HaLeket (Gleanings), are glosses on the first part of the Tur, describes rituals followed in Italy. Together with Sefer Issur V'Heter follows a order not too different from what the Tur would later adopt.

Torat HaBayit

R' Shlomo Ben Avraham Ibn Aderet, The Rashba, (Spain, c.1235-c.1310).

Torat HaBayit is made of two parts. The first part, **Torat HaBayit HaAroch**, deal with the sources and reasonings for the halachic decisions. The second part, **Torat HaBayit HaKatzar**, merely lists the halachic rulings. This system was designed to preserve the sources and reasoning behind the rulings while at the same time providing a short straight to the point ruling. His efforts cover only part of ritual law, dietary laws for example, and festivals.

Mordechai

R' Mordechai ben Hillel HaKohen Ashkenazi, The Mordechai (Germany, c.1240-1298).

Mordechai is a halachic digest of the Talmud and early authorities following the format of the Rif. It is printed in the back of the traditional editions of the Talmud.

Piskei HaRosh

R' Asher Ben Yechiel, The Rosh, (Germany, c.1250-Spain, 1327).

Piskei HaRosh (the Decisions of the Rosh), also known as Sefer Asheri, is the product of the Rosh's work as a rabbinical judge. He considered the Talmud alone as the basis for halachic rulings and was concern with not ruling on the basis of the Mishneh Torah alone. His decisions are known for their independence and rigor. Follows pattern of the Rif, i.e., follows the structure of the Talmud. It is a main pillar for later codifications, including the Tur.

Meisharim and Adam v'Chavah

R' Yerucham Ben Meshulam, (Provence, c. 1280-Spain, c. 1350).

This is a two-part code. The first part, **Meisharim**, is a halachic work on civil law. The second, **Adam V'Chava**, focuses on Jewish Law as it pertains to the lifecycle, Adam deals with laws from birth to marriage and Chava from marriage until death. Both works are cited frequently in the Beit Yossef.

Orchot Chaim and Kol Bo

R' Aharon Ben Yaakov Hakohen Of Lunel (France, 1280-Spain, 1330).

Orchot Chaim (Paths of Life) is a compilation of the opinions of earlier authorities on the laws of prayer, Shabbat, marriage, divorce, and kashrut etc., following and order similar to the Tur. **Kol Bo** (Everything in it), an abridged version of the Orchot Chaim (some say it was written before and dispute his authorship) which became even more popular than the extended version.

6. The Arbah Turim, by R' Yaakov ben Asher

Arbah Turim

R' Yaakov ben Asher, The Baal HaTurim or TheTur (Germany, c. 1270 – Spain. c. 1343).

The number of codifications that either overlapped or followed the efforts of the Rif and the Rambam represent only a small part of the halachic efforts of this period. Indeed, both in Ashkenazic and Sephardic lands a great deal of responsa literature was produced by giants like, Rabbeinu Tam and the Maharan M'Rotenberg or the Ramban and the Rashba. The two corollaries were that there was a growing need to codify in a unified manner this growing body of halachic literature and that differences of opinion on different matters between the traditions of the Sephardic and Ashkenazic lands were growing as well.

Arbah Turim (the Four Rows, see Shemot 28:17), refers in the Torah to the four columns in the breastplate of the Kohanim. In this case the name reflects the organization of this code in four major parts (more on this below). The Arbah Turim is a halachic code that marks in many respects the confluence of the Sephardic traditions of the Rif and the Rambam and the Ashkenazic traditions of France and Germany. The Tur inherited the Ashkenazic halachic tradition from his father, R' Asher ben Yechiel, the Rosh and Sephardic halachic traditions from the Rashba under whom he learned in Barcelona.

By design, the Arbah Turim, unlike the Rif and the Mishneh Torah, covers all views – Sephardic and Ashkenazic – and, in the tradition of the Rosh provides in great details all the sources for the different opinions prevalent at the time. In its p'sak halacha it typically follows the rulings of the Rif and when there is a disagreement between the Rif and the Rambam he follows the Rosh's decision on the dispute. Furthermore, it does more than providing the p'sak halachah. It presents the different views and leaves it to the reader to decide on the issues based on the information provided. Its sources include both the Bavli and Yerushalmi, as well as the responsa from the Geonic period and after, in particular, the responsa from his father, the Rosh. Typically, thereofre, a halachic decision is followed by other opinions. Furthermore, unlike the Mishneh Torah, this code covers only those areas of Jewish law that are applicable in the post-Temple period. So, it omits topics like agriculture, temple service and ritual purity, as well as criminal law, which are included in the Rambam.

One of the outstanding features of the Arbah Turim is the organization of topics. It is organized by topics not by Talmudic tractates as the Rif and the Rosh. In this sense it follows Rambam's approach in arranging his work in a topical order instead of following the Talmudic order. However, it greatly departs from the order introduced by the Rambam.

The Arbah Turim, introduces the division in four parts or rows, hence the name of the work. The first part, **Orach Chayim** (The Path of Life, see Psalms 16:11), deals with the laws of daily practice at home and synagogue throughout the year, including blessing, prayers, Shabbat and Holidays. The second part, **Yoreh Deah** (Teach Knowledge, see Isaiah 28:9), deals with the dietary laws, ritual slaughter, charity, purity, mourning and nidah. The third part, **Even HaEzer** (The Rock of the Helpmate, se 1 Shmuel 5:1 and interpretations of Genesis 2:18), deals

with marriage and divorce and other issue of family law. Finally, **Chosen Mishpat** (The Breastplate of Judgment, see Exodus 28:15) focuses on civil and monetary issues, such as witnesses, judges, loans, lost property, agency, sales, inheritances, etc. This organizational format was adopted by most Jewish scholars throughout the ages, starting with the Shulchan Aruch of R' Yossef Karo, down to the chapter and sometimes the paragraph.

7. Other Contributions before the Shulchan Aruch

For around two hundreds years after its completion and until the advent of the Shulchan Aruch, the Arbah Turim was the standard code of Jewish Law. Nevertheless, other codes were written in both Sephardic and Ashkenazic lands in this period, which in many cases were greatly influenced by the Arbah Turim and in all cases never achieved its prominence. Also in most cases they focused on issues relating to Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah, These are a few of such codes.

Abudarham

R' David Ben Yossef Abudarham of Seville (Spain, late 1200s-1300s).

Abudarham is a guide and commentary on the prayer book, liturgical poems, and the Haggadah. It deals with the regulations of prayer and blessings based on the Talmud and later responsa and describes different local customs.

Shaarei Dura

R' Yitzchak Ben Meir of Duren (Germany, late 1200s-1300s).

Shaarei Dura (Gates of Duren) is a code dealing with dietary and ritual laws.

Aggudah

R' Alexander Suslin HaKohen (Germany, late 1200s-1348).

Aggudah (Collection) is code on all areas of the Talmud arranged in the order of the Talmud. It is one of the very few known codes of the period to include topics in the area of Choshen Mishpat. This code includes earlier decisions as well as the decisions of the author. It served as an important source for the Rama's work in his Mapah.

Tzeida LaDerech

R' Menachem ben Zerach (France, c.1310-Spain, 1385).

Tzeidah LaDerech (Capture the Way) is a halachic compendium where ethics and philosophy are also included.

Minhagim

R' Yaakov Ben Moshe Halevi Molln, The Maharil, (Germany, c.1365-1427).

Minhagim (Customs) is a book where the ritual customs of the German Jews are documented. In many cases, the practices reported in this book were later incorporated by the Rama in his glosses to the Shulchan Aruch.

Agur

R' Yaakov Baruch Ben Yehuda Landau (Italy, early 1400s-1493).

Agur, is a compendium of halachot and minhagim as well as a collection of responsa on Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah based on the Tur and anthologizing German halachic scholarship. A new feature of this work is the inclusion of kabbalistic theory in halachic matters as a way to help reaching a decision. In addition the Agur is considered the first Hebrew book to contain *haskamot*/approbations from other Rabbis.

8. The Shulchan Aruch by R' Yossef Karo

Shulchan Aruch

R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575).

Since the time of the writing of the Arbah Turim, the Jewish populations were expelled from virtually all European countries, of the time, you can name - England (1290), France (1306 and 1394), Germany (1348, 1498), Austria (1421), Lithuania (1445, 1495), Spain (1492), Portugal (1497). Both Ashkenazic and Sephardic communities were uprooted one after the other and relocating in new homes in Eastern Europe in the case of the Ashkenazic communities and Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East, in the case of the Sephardic. In such an environment of turmoil and instability many halachic problems and confusions were inevitable setting the stage for a new effort of codification.

R' Yossef Karo started by writing a commentary on the Tur, the Beit Yossef, (The House of Joseph), where he discusses the halachic literature in detail. This work took over twenty years to complete. He carefully examined every law in the Tur, showing the sources in the Talmudic and the Rishonim, and comparing the interpretations and rulings of the leading Rishonim. Altogether 32 halachic authorities are referred to by name in the Beit Yossef.

In general, R' Yossef Karo based his decisions on three leading pillars of Jewish codification in the previous generations: the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh. In case of agreement the common view is accepted as binding. In cases of disagreement among those three, R' Yossef Karo usually followed the majority position. Finally, if only two of the three pillars address a given issue and they disagree then the author considers the views of the Ramban, the Rashba, the Ran, the Smag, and the Mordechai .

The Beit Yossef served as the basis for his shorter code, the Shulchan Aruch where its conclusions are summarized. This was designed to provide a more practical reference guide for the people leaving the Bayit Yossef to the halachic authorities. The **Shulchan Aruch** (Prepared Table), presents the Jewish Laws relevant for his time in a concise manner in clear Hebrew. It follows the order of the Tur. It is divided up into the same four main topics, each of which is divided into numbered paragraphs. The Shulchan Aruch, however, has an additional subdivision into numbered sub-paragraphs. It includes 1700 chapters (*simanim*) to which the author gave a title, and 13,350

paragraphs (seifim). Ultimately, the author divided the work up in thirty parts one to be studied every day so that the whole work could be learned every month. The Shulchan Aruch itself does not include the sources and omits any ethical or homiletic references.

After its completion in 1563, the Shulchan Aruch gained widespread acclaim. Because of its Sephardic bent, however, the Shulchan Aruch was initially opposed in the Ashkenazic world. Nevertheless, and especially after the addition of the glosses of the Rama (see below) reflecting the Ashkenazic views, the Shulchan Aruch soon became the standard code of Jewish, and forms the base of traditional Jewish law and practice to this day.

9. The Mapah on the Shulchan Aruch by R' Moshe Isserles

Mapah

R' Moses ben Israel Isserles, the Rama (Poland, 1530-1572).

Maybe the strongest initial opposition to the Shulchan Aruch came from the Ashkenazic communities of Germany and Poland. Here the traditions had been against codifications out of concern for neglect of the sources or excessive legalism. Although some of the concerns behind these views never disappeared completely, the work of the Rama did a lot to allow for the overwhelming success of the Shulchan Aruch also in the Ashkenazic world.

The **Mapah** (Tablecloth), are supplementary glosses to the Shulchan Aruch. They are included in all editions of the Shulchan Aruch, in *Ktav Rashi* (Rashi script) introduced by the word *hagahah* (gloss) and interspersed with the original text. Therefore, nowadays when we talk about the Shulchan Aruch we think about the text that combines the Shulchan Aruch of R' Yossef Karo proper, with these glosses of the Rama.

The Mapah had its origin in his commentary on the Tur, the Darchei Moshe which was the Ashkenazic counterpart of the Beit Yossef. It represented a reaction to the fact that the Bayit Yossef ignored the Ashkenazic rulings as well as the fact that it was based on the rulings of the Rif, the Rambam, and the Rosh, to the detriment of more recent halachic authorities. The Rama was at the same time an admirer of R' Yossef Karo, whom he calls the Light of Israel, and a critic, for the reasons noted above, of some aspects of his work.

The importance of the Rama's glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, derives exactly from the fact that, the Shulchan Aruch itself was essentially a Sephardic Code of Jewish Law. Indeed, as mentioned above, the major sources for the Shulchan Aruch were the Rif, the Rambam, both quintessential Sephardic, and the Rosh, who although Ashkenazic wrote a great part of his work in Spain. This fact obviated a wider acceptance of the Shulchan Aruch in the Ashkenazic world. The Rama set out to write the glosses that would incorporate the rulings, the interpretations, and customs, of the Ashkenazic Jewry. In doing so the Rama not only delivered a fundamental service to the Ashkenazic communities but also ensured that the Shulchan Aruch would remain the central reference in Jewish Law. In this sense the choice of the name for his work Mapah (tablecloth) to the Shulchan Aruch (Set Table) could not have been more appropriate.

Part II – Major Commentaries on the Codes

OVERVIEW

A. Commentaries on the Sefer HaHalachot

Commentaries on Sefer HaHalachot, R' Yossef Ben Meir Halevi Ibn Migash (Spain, 1077-1141).
Sefer HaMaor, R' Zerachyah Ben Yitzchak Halevi of Lunel, Baal Hamaor (Provence, c.1125-1186).
HaSagot HaRaavad, R' Avraham Ben David of Posquieres, Raavad III (Provence, 1120-1198).
Sefer HaHashlamah, R' Meshulam Ben Moshe (Provence, c.1175-1238).
Milchamot Hashem, R' Moshe Ben Nachman, Ramban (Spain, c.1194-Israel, c.1270).
HaRan, R' Nissim Ben Reuven Of Gerona, Ran (Spain, c.1290-c.1380).
Nimukei Yossef, R' Yossef Chaviva (Spain, late 1300s-1400s).

B. Commentaries on the Mishneh Torah

HaSagot HaRaavad, R' Avraham Ben David of Posquieres, Raavad III (Provence, 1120-1198).
HaGahot Maimuniot and Teshuvot maimuniot, R' Meir ben Baruch HaKohen of Rothenburg (Germany, 1215-1293).
Migdal Oz, R' ShemTov ben Abraham Ibn Gaon, (Spain, 1282-c.1340).
Maggid Mishneh, R' Vidal Yom Tov of Tolosa, (Spain, c.1360).
Yekar Tiferet, R' David ben Shlomo ibn Abi Zimra (Spain, 1480-Israel, 1574).
Kessef Mishneh, R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575).
Lechem Mishneh, R' Abraham ben Moshe de Boton of Salonika (Turkey, 1545-1588).
Mishneh LeMelech, R' Yehudah Rosanes (Turkey, 1657-1723).

C. Commentaries on the Arbah Turim

Beit Yossef and Bedek HaBeit, R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575).
Darchei Moshe, R' Moshe Isserles, The Rama, (Poland, 1525-1572).
Vayigash Yehudah and Chidushei HaGaon Maharlich, R' Yehudah Leib ben Meir Channeles (Posen, early 1500s-1596).
Drisha and Prisha, R' Yehoshua ben Alexander HaKohen Folk (Poland, 1555-1614).
Beit Chadash, R' Yoel ben Shmuel Yaffe Sirkes, The Bach (Poland, 1561-1640).
Chidushei Tiferet Shmuel, R' Aharon Shmuel ben Yisrael Kaidonover (1614-1676).
Sefer HaAruch M'Shach, R' Shabbetai ben Meir HaKohen, The Shach (Lithuania, 1621-Moravia 1662).

D. Commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch

- Sefer Meirat Einayim*, R' Yehoshua ben Alexander HaKohen Folk (Poland, 1555-1614).
Turei Zahav, R' David ben Shmuel HaLevi, the Taz (Ukraine, 1586-Poland, 1667).
Beer HaGolah, R' Moshe ben Naftali Hertz Rivkes (Lithuania, c.1600-Holland c.1672).
Chelkat Mechokek, R' Moshe ben Yitzchak Yehuda Lima (c. 1605-1658).
Ateret Zekeinim, R' Menachem Mendel Auerbach, (Austria, 1620-1689).
Siftei Kohen and Nekudot HaKessef, R' Shabbetai ben Meir HaKohen, The Shach (Lithuania, 1621-Moravia 1662).
Beit Shmuel, R' Shmuel ben Uri Shagra Faivish, (Poland, 1630-1700).
Magen Avraham, R' Abraham Abeli Gombiner HaLevi, The Magen Avraham (Poland, c. 1637-1683).
Pri Chadash, R' Chizkiyah ben David da Silva (Italy, 1659-1698).
Neitiv Chaim on Orach Chaim, R' Natanel ben Naftali Tzvi Weil, The Korban Natanel (Czechoslovakia 1687-1769).
Urim veTumin and Kereti uFeleti, R' Yonatan Eibeschutz (Poland, c.1690–Germany, 1794).
Degel Mervavah and Shulchan HaTahor, R' Yechezkel ben Yehudah HaLevi Landau (Poland 1713-Czechoslovakia, 1793).
Beur HaGra and HaGahot on Beur HaGra, R' Eliahu ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilna, HaGra (Lithuania, 1720-1797).
Mechatzit HaShekel, R' Shmuel ben Natan HaLevi Kelin, (Germany, 1724-1806).
Pri Megadim, R' Yossef ben Meir Teomim (Poland, 1727, Germany, 1792).
Beer Heitev on Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer, R' Yehudah ben Shimon Ashkenazi (Germany, 1730-1770).
Baer Heitev on Choshen Mishpat and Yoreh Deah, R' Zechariah Mendel ben Arie Leib (Poland, middle 1660s-after 1707).
Ketzot Ha-Choshen and Avnei Miluim, R' Arie Leib ben Yossef Ha-Kohen Heller (Poland, 1745-1813).
Levushei Serad, R' David Shlomo Eibeschutz (Israel, 1816).
Shaarei Teshuvah, R' Chaim Mordechai Margoliot, (Poland, middle 1700s-1818).
Netivot HaMishpat and Chavat Deat, R' Yaakov ben Yaakov Moshe of Lissa (c.1759-1822).
Yad Ephraim, R' Ephrayim Zalman ben Menachem Margoliot, (Galicia, 1760- Russia 1828).
Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger, R' Akiva ben Moshe Eiger (Austria, 1761- Poland, 1837).
Hagahot Chatam Sofer and Even HaOzer, R' Moshe Sofer Schreiber, The Chatam Sofer (Germany, 1762-Hungary, 1839).
Eshel Avraham, Ezer Mikodesh, and Kessef HaKodashim, R' Abraham David Wahrman (Galicia, 1771-1841).
Chochmat Shlomo, R' Shlomo Kluger (1789-1869).
Pitchei Teshuvah, R' Abraham Tzvi Hirsch ben Yaacov Eisenstadt (Russia, 1813-1869).

10. Commentaries on Sefer HaHalachot

The following are some of the best-known commentaries on Hilchot HaRif, which in many cases are included along the Hilchot HaRif in the back of the corresponding Talmud volumes.

Commentaries on Sefer HaHalachot

R' Yossef Ben Meir Halevi Ibn Migash (Spain, 1077-1141).

The work of the Rif was greatly promoted in the early years after his death by R' Ibn Migash. R' Ibn Migash studied under the Rif for fourteen years and succeeded him as Rosh Yeshiva. He was a teacher of R' Maimon, Rambam's father and through him greatly influenced the work of the Rambam himself. His influence reached the whole Spain and France. Although most of his work has been lost he is known to have authored extensive commentaries on Sefer HaHalachot.

Sefer HaMaor

R' Zerachyah Ben Yitzchak Halevi of Lunel, Baal Hamaor (Provence, c. 1125-1186).

Sefer HaMaor is a commentary in which some of the rulings of the Rif are disputed and which elicited opposition from among other the Raavad and the Ramban. Includes **Sefer HaMaor HaKatan** on Moed and **Sefer HaMaor HaGadol** on Nashim and Nezikim.

HaSagot HaRaavad

R' Avraham Ben David of Posquieres, Raavad III (Provence, 1120-1198).

HaSagot HaRaavad, argues with the Baal HaMaor in defense of the Rif. The Raavad was somewhat critical of codifications being afraid that they would detract from studying the Talmudic sources.

Sefer HaHashlamah

R' Meshulam Ben Moshe (Provence, c. 1175-1238).

Sefer HaHashlamah, complements the Rif in the areas not discussed in the Rif, in which case it became part of the traditional version of the Rif.

Milchamot Hashem

R' Moshe Ben Nachman, Ramban (Spain, c. 1194-Israel, c. 1270).

Milchamot Hashem (The Wars of G-d) is a halachic work in defense of the views of the Rif.

HaRan

R' Nissim Ben Reuven Of Gerona, Ran (Spain, c. 1290-c. 1380).

HaRan is a commentary on Sefer haHalachot, written in the traditions of the school of the Ramban and the Rashba. The author clarifies the text of the Rif and considers the opinions of earlier authorities. The Ran is printed in the back on many Talmudic tractates together with the Rif.

Nimukei Yossef

R' Yossef Chaviva (Spain, late 1300s-1400s).

Nimukei Yossef is a commentary on Hilchot HaRif, which is included in the traditional edition of the Talmudic volumes for which no Ran exists, including Moed Katan, Yevamot, Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia, Bava Basra, Sanhedrin and Makkot.

11. Commentaries on the Mishneh Torah

The Mishneh Torah engendered a large body of literature attempting to clarify sources and rulings. The following are some of the best-known commentaries that are generally printed in the standard editions of the Mishneh Torah.

HaSagot HaRaavad

R' Avraham Ben David of Posquieres, Raavad III (Provence, 1120-1198).

HaSagot HaRaavad (Glosses of the Raavad) are brief critical notes to the Mishneh Torah, which are known for their abrasive quality. Indeed, the author is considered one of the fiercest opponents of the Rambam in his lifetime. The author objected to the Rambam's endeavor of presenting the normative rulings without indication of their sources or rationales, a policy, which he feared would severely limit the ability of subsequent authorities to exercise independent judgment. This explains the sharply worded glosses. The Raavad's glosses begin with "Said Abraham," and are concise to the point of being cryptic. Despite everything, the Raavad recognized the genius of the Mishneh Torah and the Rambam acknowledged the criticism of the Raavad.

HaGahot Maimuniot and Teshuvot Maimuniot

Rabbi Meir ben Baruch HaKohen of Rothenburg (Germany, 1215-1293).

HaGahot Maimuniot (Glosses on Maimonides), is not really a commentary, but an anthology of traditions, interpretations, decisions and responsa from French and German rabbis that are relevant to the rulings in the Mishneh Torah. In particular, the responsa is often found in separate appendices entitled **Teshuvot Maimuniot** (Responsa on Maimonides). The Hagahot Maimuniot is a valuable source for the halachic literature of central European Jewish scholarship during the middle ages.

Migdal Oz

R' ShemTov ben Abraham Ibn Gaon, (Spain, 1282-c. 1340).

Migdal Oz (A Strong Tower, see Mishpatim 9:51), was the first work to systematically identify the sources for Maimonides' rulings. It defends the Mishneh Torah from attacks by critics, especially the Raavad, cites from Rambam's responsa, and corrects textual errors that crept into the manuscripts, including changes introduced by the Rambam.

Maggid Mishneh

R' Vidal Yom Tov of Tolosa, (Spain, c. 1360).

Maggid Mishneh (I Will Give Double to You, see Zechariah 9:12) covers only six of the fourteen books of the Mishneh Torah. It provides a thorough explanation of the Rambam' rulings, tracing them back to their sources, explaining the reasons for the decisions, and defending them against critics, especially the Raavad. Occasionally Rabbi Vidal expresses disagreement with Maimonides.

Yekar Tiferet

R' David ben Shlomo ibn Abi Zimra, The Radbaz (Spain, 1480-Israel, 1574).

Yekar Tiferet, is a commentary on the Mishneh Torah that seems to complement the Maggid Mishneh.

Kesef Mishneh

R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575).

Kesef Mishneh (Double Money, see Bereishit 43:12) is a comprehensive commentary on the Mishneh Torah. Many passages are identical to those in R' Yossef Karo's other works, the Beit Yosef and the Shulhan 'Arukh. The Kesef Mishneh makes extensive use of the Maggid Mishneh commentary and has a similar purpose.

Lechem Mishneh

R' Abraham ben Moshe de Botton of Salonika (Turkey, 1545-1588).

Lechem Mishne (Twice as Much Bread, see Shemot 16:22) traces the sources of Maimonides' rulings, and attempts to resolve apparent contradictions between the Mishneh Torah and the Talmud. After starting his work the author came in contact with the Kesef Mishneh and after that he avoided duplicating the material already included in the Kesef Mishneh.

Mishneh LaMelech

R' Yehudah Rosanes, (Turkey, 1657-1727).

Mishneh LeMelech (Second to the King, see Esther 10:3), is a collection of original interpretations on a variety of Talmudic issues that were attached to the Mishneh Torah.

12. Commentaries on the Arbah Turim

The following are some of the best-known commentaries on the Arbah Turim, which are typically included in the standard editions of the Arbah Turim.

Beit Yossef and Bedek HaBeit

R' Yossef Karo, (Spain, 1488- Israel, 1575).

Beit Yossef (The House of Joseph, see, for example, Bereishit 50:8; Amos 5:6; Obadiah 1:18; Zechariah 10:5, etc.), is considered as the first step in R' Yossef Karo's effort at halachic codification. The Tur was a natural starting point since it already included a comparison of many opinions and sources. In the Beit Yossef, R' Yossef Karo analyzes the rulings in the Tur, relates them to the Talmud and other sources, explains the decisions on disputed questions; and addresses the difficulties raised by the Tur. Ultimately, the Beit Yossef reaches a halachic decision on the different issues based on the majority view among the Rif, Rambam, and the Rosh. R' Y. Karo's own notes and proofreading of the Beit Yossef are called the **Bedek HaBeit**.

Darchei Moshe

R' Moshe Isserles, The Rama, (Poland, 1525-1572).

Darchei Moshe (The Ways of Moses), is a commentary to the Tur which in some respects share the same objectives of the Beit Yossef. Indeed, the Beit Yossef was concluded while the Rama was still working on his Darchei Moshe and the author took pains not to duplicate the effort. The Darchei Moshe, therefore, strives for conciseness and to broaden the spectrum of halachic authorities whose views were considered, in particular to include the Ashkenazic perspectives. The version of Darchei Moshe printed in the Tur is an abridged version, the full commentary being published separately.

Vayigash Yehudah and Chidushei HaGaon Maharlich

R' Yehudah Leib ben Meir Channeles (Posen, early 1500s-1596).

Vayigash Yehudah is a commentary on the Tur which is designed to complement the Beit Yossef, and seems to be based on a slightly different version of some parts of the Tur. In turn, **Chidushei HaGaon Maharlich** on Orach Chaim includes include many portions of his work but were compiled by printers from other sources as well after his death.

Drisha and Prisha

R' Yehoshua ben Alexander HaKohen Folk (Poland, 1555-1614).

Drisha and Prisha, is a twin commentary known together as the **Beit Israel** (The House of Israel). Prisha focuses primarily on the literal and superficial meaning of the Tur in an attempt to clarify its rulings. The Drisha is a deeper discussion on specific issues devoted to extensive analysis and comparison of the various interpretations and

decisions proposed by various Talmudic authorities. A third part of this work consists of glosses to Darchei Moshe, where R' Yehoshua Falk includes recent decisions from the responsa literature.

Beit Chadash

R' Yoel ben Shmuel Yaffe Sirkes, The Bach (Poland, 1561-1640).

Beit Chadash, (The New House), known by its acronym **Bach** is a systematic commentary on the Tur and its primary commentaries, the Beit Yossef and the Darchei Moshe tracing sources in the Talmud and traces the development of the different laws through generations of the different opinions before deciding between conflicting positions. The Bach paid particular attention to the determining of correct text of the Tur. This commentary reflects the view that the existence of codes of Jewish religious law should not be allowed to supercede study of the original. Indeed, he seems to have preferred the earlier codes like the Rif, the Mishneh Torah and the Rosh.

Chidushei Tiferet Shmuel

R' Aharon Shmuel ben Yisrael Kaidonover, The Tiferet Shmuel (1614-1676).

Chidushei Tiferet Shmuel, are comments on Orach Chaim, Yoreh Deah, Choshen Mishpat included at the end of the respective sections of the standard editions.

Sefer HaAruch M'Shach

R' Shabbetai ben Meir HaKohen, The Shach (Lithuania, 1621-Moravia 1662).

Sefer HaAruch M'Shach, on Yoreh Deah, printed at the end of the section with its glosses **HaGahot Mechamat Aharon** by R' Aharon ben Moshe.

13. Commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch

The following are some of the best-known commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch, which are typically included in the standard editions of the Shulchan Aruch.

Sefer Meirat Einayim

R' Yehoshua ben Alexander HaKohen Folk (Poland, 1555-1614).

Sefer Meirat Einayim, (Enlightening of the Eyes), on **Choshen Mishpat** also referred to as the **Sma**, is a continuation of the efforts by the author on the Tur. His views were that the author of the Shulchan Aruch did not mean it to be used as the only source of the Law. In this sense he prefers the Beit Yossef to the Shulchan Aruch. Given the concern with the neglect of the original sources that may be induced by the existence of Codes of Jewish Law, the focus is to draw attention to the sources of the rulings in the Shulchan Aruch as well as other more recent rulings. He occasionally disagrees with both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rama and often attempts to harmonize

conflicting decision in both. To this he adds more recent decisions, including some of his own. He worked to establish an accurate text of the Shulchan Aruch, and especially of the Mapah.

Turei Zahav

R' David ben Shmuel HaLevi, the Taz (Ukraine, 1586-Poland, 1667).

Turei Zahav (Rows of Gold), also referred to as the **Taz** or **Magen David**, is a commentary on **Orach Chaim**, **Yoreh Deah**, **Choshen Mishpat**, and **Even HaEzer**, although only the sections on Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah were initially printed and are the ones who received the greatest acclaim. The remaining sections, which were published many years after his death. The Turei Zahav does not provide a running commentary to the whole Shulchan Aruch, but focuses on specific issues. He attempts to re-establish the original decisions of the Beit Yossef, refuting subsequent criticisms and bringing order to the commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch. It contains many disagreements with Sefer Meirat Einayim and the Shach. His works on Yoreh Deah include also HaGaot HaTaz, Zahav Mezokek, and Daf HaAcharon where he argues with the Shach.

Beer HaGolah

R' Moshe ben Naftali Hertz Rivkes (Lithuania, c.1600-Holland c.1672).

Beer HaGolah (The Well of the Exile, see Mishnah Eruvin 10:14) on **Orach Chaim**, **Yoreh Deah**, **Choshen Mishpat**, and **Even HaEzer**. The main purpose of the Beer HaGolah is to provide cross-references to the Talmud, law codes, commentaries and responsa, though occasionally (especially in the section on Choshen Mishpat) the author added his own explanatory comments.

Chelkat Mechokek

R' Moshe ben Yitzchak Yehuda Lima (c. 1605-1658).

Chelkat Mechokek (A Portion of a Ruler, see Devarim 33:21) was the first commentary to be written on **Even HaEzer**. It provides explanations and resolves seeming contradictions in the Shulchan Aruch, and between it and other works. It concludes at Paragraph #126 due to the author's death.

Ateret Zekeinim

R' Menachem Mendel Auerbach, (Austria, 1620-1689).

Ateret Zekeinim, are glosses on Orach Chaim.

Siftei Kohen and Nekudot HaKessef

R' Shabbetai ben Meir HaKohen, The Shach (Lithuania, 1621-Moravia 1662).

Siftei Kohen (The Lips of a Cohen, see Malachi 2:7) is a commentary on **Yoreh Deah** and **Choshen Mishpat** provides extensive discussions and interpretations of the Shulchan Aruch and its sources and, in particular, to the halachich works not considered in the Shulchan Aruch. This commentary makes extensive use of the Sefer Meirat Einayim, which is often supplemented with his own explanations, which includes attempts to rule on issues where the

Mechaber and the Rama differed. Author of **Nekudot HaKessef on Yoreh Deah**, a response to the Taz, with whom he conducted a sharp controversy. Includes **Kunterim HaAcharon** on Yoreh Deah

Beit Shmuel

R' Shmuel ben Uri Shagra Faivish, (Poland, 1630-1700).

Beit Shmuel (The House of Samuel) is a commentary on Even HaEzer (can be found in the inner part around the text). This commentary is characterized by its clear style and by its independence of opinion. It is frequently in disagreement with the decisions of the Shulchan Aruch, the Mapah, as well as Chelkat Mechokek.

Magen Avraham

R' Abraham Abeli Gombiner HaLevi, The Magen Avraham (Poland, c. 1637-1683).

Magen Avraham (The Shield of Abraham) is a detailed explanatory and critical commentary to **Orach Chaim**. It attempts to harmonize the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch and the Mapah, favoring the views of the Rama when no compromise was possible. He differs from others in that he relies on Kabbalistic traditions and interpretations.

Baer Heitev on Choshen Mishpat and Yoreh Deah

R' Zechariah Mendel ben Arieh Leib (Poland, middle 1600s-after 1707).

Beer Heitiv (Explain Well) provides summaries of varied halachic rulings and responsa related to the decisions of the Shulchan Aruch. Focuses on **Yoreh Deah** and **Choshen Mishpat** and follows a format similar to the Beer Heitev on Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer.

Pri Chadash

R' Chizkiyah ben David da Silva (Italy, 1659-1698).

Pri Chadash (New Fruit) is a commentary on **Orach Chaim**, **Yoreh Deah**, and **Even HaEzer**. It contains sharp criticisms of the Shulchan Aruch as well as earlier codes, with the seeming exception of the Mishneh Torah. This commentary seems at times to attempt to undermine the Shulchan Aruch as the source of halachic decisions and the current version is said to be a somewhat toned down version of the strongly worded original. The pri Chadash seem often to favor more lenient positions.

Neitiv Chaim

R' Natanel ben Naftali Tzvi Weil, The Korban Natanel (Czechoslovakia 1687-1769).

Neitiv Chaim is a commentary on **Orach Chaim**.

Urim veTumin and Kereti uFeleti

R' Yonatan Eibenschutz (Poland, c.1690–Germany, 1794).

Urim veTumin (Lights and Perfections, see Shmot 28:30) is a commentary on **Choshen Mishpat** which is divided into two sections. The first, **Urim**, provides a concise summary of the laws in the Shulchan Aruch accompanied by

rulings of other authorities, and a condensation of his own conclusions in the Tumim. The second, **Tumin** is composed of complex analyses of related Talmudic sources and later writings. In turn, the **Kereti and Peleti** (Cherethites and Pelethites, see 2 Shmuel 15:18) is a commentary to **Yoreh Deah** which follows a similar format.

Degel Mervavah and Shulchan HaTahor

R' Yechezkel ben Yehudah HaLevi Landau Noda BuYehudah (Poland 1713-Czechoslovakia, 1793).

Degel Mervavah, annotations and commentaries on **Orach Chaim, Yoreh Deah, Even HaEzer**. In turn **Shulchan HaTahor** incides on **Yoreh Deah**.

Beur HaGra and HaGahot on Beur HaGra

R' Eliahu ben Shlomo Zalman of Vilna, HaGra (Lithuania, 1720-1797).

Beur HaGra, commentaries on **Orach Chaim, Yoreh Deah, Choshen Mispat**, and **Even HaEzer** / in a style that is concise, full of abbreviations. He subjected every ruling in the Shulchan Aruch to comparisohn with sources from Talmudic literature. In doing so, he made use of the full range of ancient rabbinic texts, including many that were not standardly consulted by contemporary scholars. Contrary to the prevailing attitude in Polish Judaism, he had little respect for local custom; and it has been suggested that his ultimate quest was for a uniform system of religious law that would transcend all differences. In many cases he was able to find support for later practices in the early sources, but he often was led to reject popular observances.

Mechatzit HaShekel

R' Shmuel ben Natan HaLevi Kelin, (Germany, 1724-1806).

Mechatzit HaShekel is a comprehensive commentary on the Magen Avraham.

Pri Megadim

R' Yossef ben Meir Teomim (Poland, 1727, Germany, 1792).

Pri Megadim is a two-part commentary including **Mishbetzos Zahav**, commentary to the Taz and **Eshel Avraham**, commentary to the Magen Avraham.

Beer Heitev on Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer

R' Yehudah ben Shimon Ashkenazi (Germany, 1730-1770).

Beer Heitiv (Explain Well) provides sumamries of varied halachic rulings and responsa related to the decisions of the Shulchan Aruch. It focuses on Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer and follows a format similar to the Beer Heitev on Choshen Mishpat and Yoreh Deah.

Ketzot Ha-Choshen and Avnei Miluim

R' Arieh Leib ben Yossef Ha-Kohen Heller (Poland, 1745-1813) .

Ketzot Ha-Choshen (The Ends of the Breastplate) is a commentary on **Choshen Mishpat** that is devoted to the theoretical examination of the material, rather than to practical legal decisions. In turn, **Avnei Milluim** (Stones to be Set, Shemot 25:7) is a commentary on **Even HaEzer**.

Levushei Serad

R' David Shlomo Eibenschutz (Israel, 1816).

Levushei Serad (Robes of Office) are glosses to **Orach Chaim** and **Yoreh Deah**.

Shaarei Teshuvah

R' Chaim Mordechai Margoliot, (Poland, middle 1700s-1818).

Shaarei Teshuvah (Gates of Repentance/ Responsa), provides a digest of responsa as a supplement to the Shulchan Aruch **Orach Chaim**, including the responsa composed after the publication of the Shulchan Aruch.

Netivot HaMishpat and Chavat Deat

R' Yaakov ben Yaakov Moshe of Lissa (c.1759-1822).

Netivot HaMishpat (The Paths of Justice, see Mishlei 8:20) is a commentary to **Choshen Mishpat** that is organized in a manner similar to Urim veTumim, with one section called Beurim devoted to a straightforward explanation of the Shulchan Aruch, and another section called Chidushim, including extensive discussions of various topics. It includes discussion and disagreements with Ketzot HaChoshen. In turn, **Chavat Deat** focuses on **Yoreh Deah**.

Yad Ephraim

R' Ephrayim Zalman ben Menachem Margoliot, (Galicia, 1760-Russia 1828).

Yad Ephrayim (The Hand of Ephraim) is a commentary on **Orach Chaim**, **Yoreh Deah**.

Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger

R' Akiva ben Moshe Eiger (Austria, 1761- Poland, 1837).

Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger, are glosses to **Orach Chaim**, **Yoreh Deah**, **Choshen Mishpat**, and **Even HaEzer**, which consist largely of brief cross-references to other works that shed light on the current passage.

Hagahot Chatam Sofer and Even HaOzer

R' Moshe Sofer Schreiber, The Chatam Sofer (Germany, 1762-Hungary, 1839).

Hagahot Chatam Sofer, are glosses on **Orach Chaim**, **Choshen Mishpat**, and **Even HaEzer**, and **Even HaOzer** are commentaries on the Pri Chadash

Eshel Avraham, Ezer Mikodesh, and Kessef HaKodashim

R' Abraham David Wahrman (Galicia, 1771-1841).

Eshel Avraham are glosses to **Orach Chaim**, **Ezer Mikodesh** are glosses to **Even**, and **Kessef HaKodashim** are glosses to **Choshen Mishpat**.

Chochmat Shlomo

R' Shlomo Kluger (1789-1869).

Chachmat Shlomo (The Wisdom of Salomon, see 1 Malachim 5:10, 14, etc) are glosses on **Orach Chaim**, **Choshen Mishpat**, and **Even HaEzer** comparing the views of different authorities and seeks to resolve apparent contradictions between them. Included in the outer margin of the Shulchan Aruch.

Pitchei Teshuvah

R' Abraham Tzvi Hirsch ben Yaacov Eisenstadt (Russia, 1813-1869).

Pitchei Teshuvah (Opportunities for Repentance/Responsa) follows the same approach and format of Shaarei Teshuva as it provides a digest of responsa as a supplement to the Shulchan Aruch, including the responsa composed after the publication of the Shulchan Aruch. It covers the three volumes not covered by Shaarei Teshuva, i.e., **Even HaEzer** (including also **Kunteirim HaShamot Al Mekomo**), **Choshen Mishpat** (including also **Nachalat Tzvi**), and **Yoreh Deah** (including also **Nachalat Tzvi**).

PART III – Later Codes and Commentaries

OVERVIEW

Later Contributions:

Shulchan Aruch HaRav,

R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Graz (Russia, 1747-1812).

Chayeie Adam and Chochmat Adam, Nishmat Adam

R' Avraham Ben Yechiel Michael Danzig (Lithuania, 1748-1820).

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch,

R' Shlomo Ganzfried (Hungary, 1804-1886).

Aruch HaShulchan and Aruch HaShulchan HeAtid

R' Yechiel Michel Ben Aharon Halevi Epstein (Bielorussia, 1829-1908).

The Mishnah Berurah, Biur Halacha, and Shaar Hatziun

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen Kagan, The Chofetz Chaim (Lithuania, 1835-1933).

14. Later Contributions

The overwhelming prominence of the Shulchan Aruch (with the Mapah) as the standard code of Jewish law virtually accepted by all Jewish communities led as we discussed above to a large body of complementary halachic literature. At the same time it is fair to say that the efforts of codification at the same high level of sophistication and comprehensiveness were somewhat forestalled.

Furthermore, the historical changes undergone by the Jewish communities made further codification efforts more difficult. In earlier centuries, the persecutions and massacres in Eastern Europe (e.g. Chmielnicki in 1648) proved too disruptive even for the efforts of commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch. In later centuries the emancipation allowing for a greater integration of the Jewish population into the general non-Jewish society, also meant a reduction in the legal autonomy of the Jewish communities and reduced the scope of the connection between the Jewish population and Jewish Law. This together with the development of the hashkalah philosophies led to a segment of the Jewish population rejecting the authority of Jewish Law.

Despite these facts there are some highly respected attempts at renewed codifications of Jewish law. These are typically, however, less comprehensive in scope and less widespread in their acceptance. It would seem fair to say that despite these great contributions of later Achronim, they have not challenged the central place of the Shulchan Aruch in Jewish Law.

Shulchan Aruch HaRav

R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Graz (Russia, 1747-1812).

Shulchan Aruch HaRav, is a major code of law following the framework of the Shulchan Aruch and incorporating later authorities. It focuses mostly, but not exclusively, on Orach Chaim.

Chayei Adam, Chochmat Adam, and Nishmat Adam

R' Avraham Ben Yechiel Michael Danzig Of Vilna (Lithuania, 1748-1820).

Chayei Adam (Life of Man), is a halachic work on the laws of Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, while **Chachmat Adam** (Wisdom of Man) focuses on Yoreh Deah. In turn, **Nishmat Adam** (The Soul of Man) details his justifications for the halachic decisions.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch

R' Shlomo Ganzfried (Hungary, 1804-1886).

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Abridged Shulchan Aruch) is as the name suggested an abridged version of the Shulchan Aruch mostly Orach Chaim. It distills from the Shulchan Aruch the laws and customs that every Jew should be familiar with, interspersed with homiletic notes. This book soon achieved unprecedented popularity and remains to this day an ideal text for practical guidance for the regular Jewish life.

Aruch HaShulchan and Aruch HaShulchan HeAtid

R' Yechiel Michel Ben Aharon Halevi Epstein (Bielorussia, 1829-1908).

Aruch HaShulchan (Preparation of the Table), is a halachic compendium following the order of the Shulchan Aruch, which analyzes the issues through the perspectives of the Rishonim. It is an exception among the later codes in that it covers all sections of the Shulchan Aruch. This work is complemented by **Aruch HaShulchan HaAtid**, which covers the sections on vows, agriculture and ritual purity. These codes are regarded as following lenient views, when that is at all possible.

The Mishnah Berurah, Biur Halacha, and Shaar Hatziun

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen Kagan, The Chofetz Chaim (Lithuania, 1835-1933).

Mishna Berura (Clear Teaching) is a six-volume commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim which is considered authoritative in Jewish Law by most to this day. It is usually printed with **Shaar Hatziun**, sources and notes to the Mishnah Berurah, and **Biur Halacha**, additional comments and more detailed commentaries on the Mishna Berura, both by the Chofetz Chaim. The typical print of the Mishnah Berurah includes in addition to the above, the Shulchan Aruch and Rama plus commentaries on Shulchan Aruch **Beer Heiteiv** by R' Yehuda Ashkenazi, **Shaarei Teshuva** by R' Mordechai Margoliot and **Beer HaGolah** by R' Moshe Rivkes containing the sources at the margin of the Shulchan Aruch.

15. Concluding Remarks

It is inconceivable to think about Yiddishkeit without having the codes of Jewish Law as a reference point. This is true because the life of a Jew is framed in its minutia by the understandings and requirements these codes provide. Importantly, they provide a view on what the requirements and expectations of a traditional Jewish life are in a way far more systematic and therefore, more accessible to the common Jew than the Talmud. It is also true the Yiddishkeit would be inconceivable without these codes at deeper level. Indeed, throughout the last millenium history witnessed countless cases in countless countries of burnings and senseless destructions of the Talmud. Also because of this, these codes as projections of the Talmud and as repositories of the responsa throughout the generations, played a critical role in keeping and shaping traditional Judaism.

APPENDIX

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

(organized by date of birth)

ר' יצחק בן יעקב הכהן אלפסי - R' YITZCHAK BEN YAAKOV HAKOHEN ALFASI **ר"ף - RIF**

Born: Kila Chamad, Algeria, 1013.

Died: Lucena, Spain, 1103.

Notes: Talmudist and first halachic codifier. Student of R' Chananel and R' Nissim in Kairouan. Active in Fez, Morocco until age 75, when he fled to Spain. Settled in Lucena where he founded a yeshiva. He was instrumental in bringing Jewish knowledge into Spain as he was the first major Rabbi there. Author of hundreds of Responsa in Arabic, author of **Sefer HaHalachot**, a Talmudic code representing the early rulings on the discussions of the Talmud and which was a primary source for the Rambam and the focus of great rabbinical studies in the following centuries. Composed on Moed, Nashim, and Nezikin and tractates Berachot and Niddah. His students include R' Yehuda HaLevi and R' Yossef Ibn Migash. He was considered with Rashi as the two leading Torah giants of the period.

ר' יוסף בן מאיר הלוי אבן מגאש - R' YOSSEF BEN MEIR HALEVI IBN MIGASH

Born: Spain, 1077.

Died: Spain, 1141.

Notes: Talmudist. Studied under the Rif for fourteen years and succeeded him as Rosh Yeshiva. He was a teacher of R' Maimon, Rambam's father and through him greatly influenced the work of the Rambam himself. His influence reached the whole Spain and France. Although most of his work has been lost he is known to have authored extensive commentaries on the Talmud, on Hilchot HaRif.

ר' אליעזר בן נתן - R' ELIEZER BEN NATAN

ראב"ן - RAVAN

Born: Mainz, Germany, c. 1090.

Died: Mainz, Germany, c. 1170

Notes: One of the first German Tosafists, halachic codifier, and religious poet. Student of the Riva kept an active correspondence with the Rashbam and Rabbeinu Tam. Author of **Even HaEzer/The Stone of Help**, sometimes referred to as **Tzfanat Paneiach**, a collection of halachic materials. In these materials he tends to assume strict views and focuses on interpretations of earlier authorities rather than on presenting new views. It includes personal accounts and local customs. The work is divided in three parts – one with responsa, the second on topics in Berachot, Chulim, Avodah Zara and Niddah, and the third on other parts of the Talmud He wrote in particular on Moed, Nashim and Nezikim). Author also of commentaries on the prayers, religious poetry and a history of the persecution in his time. Among his student is his grandson, the Raavyah.

ר' אברהם בן יצחק מנרבונה - R' AVRAHAM BEN YITZCHAK OF NARBONNE

ראב"ד השני - RAAVAD II

Born: Montpellier, Provence, c. 1110.

Died: Narbonne, Provence, 1179.

Notes: Halachist and early kabbalist. Rosh Yeshiva, Rav and Av Bet Din in Narbonne, hence the name Raavad, i.e., Rav Avraham Av Bet Din. He studied in both Spain and Narbonne and is reputed as having been a student of R' Yehuda Ben Barzilai Al-Barzeloni. Author of **HaEshkol/The Cluster**, a compendium of halachot on daily observances, which is an abbreviated version of Sefer Halittim. Being the first major code to appear in France it remained authoritative until the Tur and had great influence in works such as Orchat Chaim and Kol Bo. Author also of a commentary on the Talmud of which only on Bava Batra is known and numerous responsa of which only a small part is extant. His students include the Raavad III, his son-in-law, and **R' Zerachyah Ben Yitzchak Halevi Of Lunel**.

ר' אברהם בן דוד מפוסקירש - R' AVRAHAM BEN DAVID OF POSQUIERES

ראב"ד השלישי - RAAVAD III

Born: Narbonne, Provence, c. 1120.

Died: Posquieres, Provence, 1198.

Notes: Talmudic and Halachic scholar, he was the foremost authority of his time in France. Being of great personal wealth he is known to have lived a very modest life and have personally supported many needy students in his Yeshiva in Posquires. Author of **Temim Deim/Perfect knowledge**, a compendium of responsa, of **HaSagot HaRaavad**, glosses to the Rambam where he lists sources for the laws, a book where he argues with the Baal HaMaor in defense of the Rif, of commentaries on Sifra and on Mishna Eduyot and Kinnin, of **Baalei HaNefesh/The Book of the Scrupulous**, on family purity. He was somewhat critical of codifications being afraid that they would detract from studying the Talmudic sources.

ר' יהודה בן ברזילאי אלברצלוני - R' YEHUDA BEN BARZILAI AL-BARZELONI

Born: Barcelona, Spain, c. 1120.

Died: Barcelona, Spain, 1193.

Notes: Talmudist active in Barcelona, Spain. Author of **Sefer HaIttim**, a halachic codification on Shabbat, Festivals, and the calendar depending in large part on Rabbeinu Chananel.

ר' יצחק בר אבא מרי מרשייליש - R' YITZCHAK BAR ABBA MARI OF MARSEILLES

Born: Provence, c. 1122.

Died: Marseilles, Provence, c. 1193.

Notes: A French codifier. Author of **Hilchot Shechitah V'Treifot** on ritual slaughter and post-mortem examination and **Hilchot Tzitzit**. Author of **Ittur Soferim/Scriptural Separation**, a code of civil and religious law, where the previous works were incorporated. The Ittur has three parts, the first on jurisprudence, marriage and divorce, the second on tzitzit, tefillin, circumcision, and forbidden foods, and the third on the festivals. This code was initially very successful but was ultimately overshadowed by the Arbah Turim, where it is frequently quoted.

ר' זרחיהו בן יצחק הלוי מלוניל - R' ZERACHYAH BEN YITZCHAK HALEVI OF LUNEL

BAAL HAMAOR - בעל המאור

Born: Gerona, France, c. 1125.

Died: Lunel, Provence, 1186.

Notes: Talmudist. Author of **Sefer HaMaor** (which he completed by the age of 19), in which some of the rulings of the Rif are disputed and which elicited opposition from among other R' Raavad and the Ramban in his *Milchamot Hashem*. Includes **Sefer Hamaor Hakatan** on seder Moed and **Sefer Hamaor HaGadol** on Nashim and Nezikim.

ר' משה בן מיימון - R' MOSHE BEN MAIMON

רמב"ם - RAMBAM

Born: Cordova, Spain, 1135.

Died: Cairo, Egypt, 1204.

Notes: Also known as Maimonides. Great Talmudic commentator, Halachic codifier and philosopher. Born in Spain, he had to flee right after his Bar Mitzvah and lived most of life in Egypt. A physician to the Caliph. Author of **Peirush HaMishnayos**, commentary on the Mishna, **Sefer HaMitzvot**, an enumeration of the 613 commandments and an introduction to **Mishneh Torah**, a monumental and original code of Jewish Law also known as **Yad Chazakah**, Yad having the numerical value of 14 the number of parts in this work, and **Moreh Nevuchim/Guide for the Perplexed**, a philosophical treatise. Possibly the most important halachic authority among Rishonim and the greatest Jewish scholar ever. His epithet reads "From Moses to Moses there is no one like Moses", the first Moses referring to Moses Rabbeinu.

ר' אליעזר בן יואל הלוי - R' ELIEZER BEN YOEL HALEVI

ראב"ה - RAAVYAH

Born: Mainz, Germany, c.1140.

Died: Wurzburg, Germany, c. 1225.

Notes: A **Tosefist**. Author of **Avi HaEzri**, a halachic tractate organized according to the order of the Talmud. Studied with his grandfather the Yereim. His students include the Or Zarua and the Rokeach.

ר' אלעזר בן יהודה מוירמייזא - R' ELAZAR BEN YEHUDA OF WORMS

רוקח - ROKEACH

Born: Mainz, Germany, c. 1160.

Died: Worms, Germany, c. 1237.

Notes: Kabbalist, Talmudist and religious poet. A Tosefist. Student of R' Yehuda HaChasid and the Raavyah. Author of **Rokeach**, an ethical work on piety, ritual, liturgy etc. One of the Chassidei Ashkenaz, he was responsible for popularizing the customs of the German pietists. Among his students are the Ramban and R' Menachem Recanati.

ר' ברוך בן יצחק מוירמייזא - R' BARUCH BEN YITZCHAK OF WORMS

Born: Worms, Germany, 1170.

Died: Israel, 1211.

Notes: Tosefist. A student of of R' Yitzchak ben Shmuel of Dampieres, the Ri. Upon the death of his teacher, he spend a considerable amount of time in France with R' Yehuda ben Yitzchak. Maybe because of this, and although he seems to have lived much of his life in Germany, he is sometimes referred to as Ha-Tzarefati. Author of **Sefer HaTerumah**, a summary of halachot organized according to the chapter of the relevant Talmud tractate, and which reflects the teachings of the school of the Ri. Written around 1200, this sefer gained widespread acceptance in France, Italy, Germany, and Spain and is often quoted by later authorities of the period. Parts of it were inserted into the Machzor Vitry. Author of tosefot on several Talmud tractates, of which only those on Zevachim are extant. He moved to Eretz Yisrael, in the early 1200s where he died.

R' MESHULAM BEN MOSHE - ר' משולם בן משה

Born: Lunel, Provence, c. 1175.

Died: Belziers, Provence, 1238.

Notes: Talmudist. He was one of the most prominent scholars of his time in Provence. He is known to have opposed the focus on Kabbalistic studies and to have corresponded with the Ramban on issues related to Tractate Eruvin. Author of **Sefer HaHashlamah**, which complements the Rif in the areas that were not discussed in it and quickly became part of the traditional version of the Rif.

R' YITZCHAK BEN MOSHE OF VIENNA - ר' יצחק בן משה מווינא

OHR ZARUA - אור זרוע

Born: Bohemia, Germany, c. 1180.

Died: Vienna, Austria, c. 1250.

Notes: Halachic codifier. Student of R' Yehuda HaChasid, Raavyah, and the Rokeach. Author of **Ohr Zarua/Light is Sown**, an Halachic guide on religious but not civil and criminal law, which extensive quotations of sources as well as information about Jewish life at the time. Among his students is the Maharam MRotenberg.

R' SHMUEL BEN YITZCHAK SARDI - ר' שמואל בן יצחק סרדי

Born: Spain, c. 1190.

Died: Spain, c. 1256.

Notes: Author of **Sefer HaTerumot**, focuses exclusively on civil law. Work is divided into 70 gates each dealing with the specific subjects and chapters and paragraphs very much along the lines of the Mishneh Torah. Unlike the Mishneh Torah, however, it goes to the sources and different opinions.

R' MOSHE BEN NACHMAN - ר' משה בן נחמן

RAMBAN - רמב"ן

Born: Gerona, Spain, c. 1194.

Died: Israel, c. 1270.

Notes: Also known as Nachmanides. Great Biblical and Talmudic commentator, Kabbalist, and Jewish leader, and a physician and linguist by trade. Scion of a renowned rabbinical family, he was a relative of R' Yonah of Gerona, and was a student of R' Yehuda ben Yakar. R' Natan ben Meir and a disciple in Kabbalah of R' Meir Abulafia, R' Ezra of Gerona, and R' Ezriel of Gerona. He opposed the rationalism of the Rambam while not opposing his halachic rulings. Participated in the Disputation of Barcelona in 1263 in the presence of King James I of Aragon and wrote **Sefer HaVikuach**, with a detailed account of this disputation. Banned from Spain in the aftermath of the disputation, he settled in Eretz Yisrael in 1267. Having been the first major authority to pronounce the resettlement of the land of Israel as a Biblical commandment, he spent the last years of his life trying to rebuild Jewish life, which had been devastated by the Cruzades. He is the author of a major commentary on Chumash, printed in the Mikraot Gedolot, which integrates midrashic and kabbalistic elements, a commentary on the Talmud, **Milchamot Hashem**, a halachic work in defense of the views of the Rif, and **Toras HaAdam**, on the laws of the sick and dead. His students include the Raah and the Rashba.

R' MOSHE BEN YAAKOV OF COUCHY - ר' משה בן יעקב מקוצי

SMAG - סמ"ג

Born: France, early 1200s.

Died: Spain, middle/late 1200s.

Notes: Tosefist. Talmudist and Preacher. Student of R' Yehuda HaChasid. Author of **Tosefot Yeshanim** to Yoma. Participated in the Paris Disputation on the Talmud of 1240. He preached pietism in Southern France and Spain. Author of **Sefer Mitzvot Gadol/SMAG**, an enumeration of the 613 mitzvot based on Rambam's Mishneh Torah and which marks the penetration of the Rambam in France. The importance of the Smag was only surpassed by the publication of the Shulchan Aruch, and his author is regarded as one of the major poskim of all generations.

R' MEIR BEN BARUCH HAKOHEN - ר' מאיר בן ברוך הכהן

MAHARAM MROTENBERG - מהר"ם מרוטנבורג

Born: Worms, Germany, c. 1215

Died: Ansishein, Alsace, 1293

Notes: One of the last and most influential **Tosefists**. Student of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris. Rabbi in Wurzburg, Augsburg, Worms, Mayence, Nuremberg, and Rotenberg. The most important German rabbi of his day he was also the recognized Ashkenazic authority of his time. Spent the last 7 years of his life in prison where he died having refused to allow himself to be redeemed for extortionary amounts of money. His body was released for burial only 14 years after his death. Author of the Tosefot on Yoma and commentaries on Zeraim and Taharot. Author of **HaGahot Maimoni**, a commentary on the Rambam and **Teshuvot Maimoni**, responsa related to the rulings of the Rambam. He also wrote religious poetry some of which is included in the Tisha B'Av service. His students include the Rosh and the Mordechai.

R' YITZCHAK BEN YOSSEF OF COURBEIL - ר' יצחק בן יוסף מקורב"ל

SMAK - סמ"ק

Born: France, first quarter of 1200.

Died: Courbeil, France, 1280.

Notes: Son-in-law and student of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris. **ATosefist.** Author of **Sefer Mitzvot Katan-Smak/Small Book of Precepts**, a book of halachot applicable in the post-Temple period, interspersed with ethics and homiletics inspired by the Sefer Mitzvot Gadol. The Smak is divided in seven parts one to be reviewed each day of the week. Among his students is Rabbeinu Peretz.

ר' TZIDKAYAH BEN AVRAHAM ANAV HAROFEI - צדקיה בן אברהם עניי הרופא

Born: Italy, 1230.

Died: Rome, Italy, 1300.

Notes: Author of **Shibolei HaLeket/Gleanings**, glosses on the first part of the Tur, describes rituals followed in Italy. Student of R' Yaakov of Wurzburg, R' Avigor Katz, and R' Daniel of Rome.

ר' SHLOMO BEN AVRAHAM IBN ADERET - שלמה בן אברהם אבן אדרת

RASHBA - רשב"א

Born: Barcelona, Spain, c. 1235.

Died: Barcelona, Spain, c. 1310.

Notes: Student of Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi and the Ramban. Rabbi of Barcelona and leader of the Spanish Jewry. Author of **Chidushei HaRashba**, a commentary on the Talmud. Author of **Teshuvot HaRashba**, 8 volumes containing about 16,000 Responsa, the most extensive of any Rishon, which are of great important to psak halacha and lay the foundation of the later codes like the Tur and Shulchan Aruch. He also wrote a commentary on rabbinical legends, works on the laws of Shabbat and festivals. He defended the Rambam in renewed controversies over his philosophy but opposed excessive rationalism or mysticism. He allowed secular studies but issued a ban on such studies until age 30. His students include the Ritva and Rabbeinu Bachya.

ר' MORDECHAI BEN HILLEL HAKOHEN ASHKENAZI - מרדכי בן הילל אשכנזי

MORDECHAI - מרדכי

Born: Germany, c. 1240.

Died: Nuremberg, Germany, 1298.

Notes: A relative of the Rosh, son-in-law of R' Yechiel of Paris, brother-in-law and student of the Maharan MRotenberg and a student of Rabbeinu Peretz. Died with wife and five children in the Rindfleisch Massacres. Author of **Mordechai**, halachic digest of the Talmud and early authorities following the format of the Rif.

ר' ASHER BEN YECHIEL - אשר בן יחיאל

ROSH - רא"ש

Born: Germany, c. 1250.

Died: Toledo, Spain, 1327.

Notes: Talmudist and Halachist, one of the most important in Jewish history. He was a descendent of the Meor HaGolah and a leading student of the Maharam Mrotenburg and his successor as the leader of Germany. Left Germany in 1303 in the aftermath of the Rindfleisch massacres and was welcomed by the Rashba in Barcelona. Became Rav and Av Bet Din of Toledo in 1305 and became the leading authority in Spain after the death of the Rashba. In this capacity he introduced in Spain the methods of the Tosefists and Ashkenazic minhagim. Opposed any attempt to give precedence to secular learning having prohibited such studies under 25 year of age. Author of a commentary on the Mishneh, **Peirush HaRosh**, a commentary on the Talmud patterned after the Rif, **Hilchot HaRosh** (also known as **Piskei HaRosh**), a compilation of halachas which is the basis for subsequent compilation including the Tur, **Tosefot HaRosh**, where he clarifies the Tosefot, Teshuvot Ha Rosh, a compilation of his responsa, and **Orchot Chaim**, on Ethics. Among his students are his son, the Tur.

ר' YAAKOV BEN ASHER - יעקב בן אשר

TUR - טור

Born: Cologne, Germany, c. 1275.

Died: Toledo, Spain c. 1349.

Notes: Torah commentator, Talmudist and Halachic codifier. The third son of the Rosh and a student of his father, his older brother Yechiel, and the Rashba. A pietist who refused to take a position as Rabbi and only became member of the Toledo Bet Din after his father's death. Author of **Arba Turim/The Four Rows**, Code of Jewish Law that bridged the gap between the French and Spanish schools and formed the basis for the Shulchan Aruch. Unlike the Rambam in Mishneh Torah he includes all sources. Also, he only deals with the laws that are still applicable in the post-Temple period. Introduces the division in four parts - **Orach Chayim**, on the laws of daily practise throughout the year, including Shabbat and Holidays, **Yoreh Deah**, on the laws of kashrut and purity, morning and niddah, **Chosen Mishpat**, on civil and monetary issues, and **Even HaEzer**, on marriage and divorce. Author of two commentaries on the Torah, the **Baal HaTurim**, a short commentary based on gematria as well as a longer commentary, of a commentary on Rambam's Mishneh Torah, and of **Kitzur Piskei HaRosh**, compiling halachic conclusions of the Rosh. His students include R' Abudarham.

ר' YERUCHAM BEN MESHULAM - ירוחם בן משולם

RABBEINU YERUCHAM - רבינו ירוחם

Born: Provence, c. 1280.

Died: Toledo, Spain, c. 1350.

Notes: Halachist. He was exiled from Provence in 1306 and settled in Toledo where he studied under the Rosh. He is the author **Meisharim**, a halachic works dealing with financial matters as well as **Toldot Adam V'Chava**, on Jewish Law as it pertains to the lifecycle, Adam deals with laws from birth to marriage and Chava from marriage until death. Both works are cited frequently in the Beit Yossef.

ר' AHARON BEN YAAKOV HAKOHEN OF LUNEL - ר' אהרן בן יעקב הכהן מלוניל - KOL BO -

Born: Narbonne, France, 1280.

Died: Majorca, Spain, 1330.

Notes: Halachic codifier. Exiled from France to Spain in 1307. Author of **Orchot Chaim/Paths of Life**, a compilation of the opinions of earlier authorities on the laws of prayer, Shabbat, marriage, divorce, and kashrut etc., following and order similar to the Tur. Author of **Kol Bo/Everything in it**, an abridged version of the Orchot Chaim (some say it was written before and dispute his authorship).

ר' ALEXANDER SUSLIN HAKOHEN - ר' אלכסנדר זוסלין הכהן -

Born: middle/late 1200s

Died: Frankfurt, Germany, 1348.

Notes: Author of **Aggudah** (Collection) a code on all areas of the Talmud arranged in the order of the Talmud. It is one of the very few known codes of the period to include topics in the area of Choshen Mishpat. This code includes earlier decisions as well as the decisions of the author. It served as an important source for the Rama's work in his Mapah.

ר' SHEMTOV BEN ABRAHAM IBN GAON - ר' שם טוב בן אברהם אבן גאון -

Born: Spain, 1282.

Died: Spain, 1340.

Notes: **Migdal Oz** (A Strong Tower, see Mishpatim 9:51), was the first work to systematically identify the sources for Maimonides' rulings. It defends the Mishneh Torah from attacks by critics, especially the Raavad, cites from Rambam's responsa, and corrects textual errors that crept into the manuscripts, including changes introduced by the Rambam.

ר' NISSIM BEN REUVEN OF GERONA - ר' ניסים בן ראובן גירנדי -

RAN - ר"ן

Born: Gerona, Spain, c. 1290.

Died: Barcelona, Spain, c. 1380.

Notes: Talmudic commentator and Halachist. Royal physician, lived most of his life in Barcelona where he was Rav, Dayan, and Rosh Yeshiva. He was recognized as the foremost halachic authority of his time. He wrote in the traditions of the school of the Ramban and the Rashba. Author of **HaRan** a commentary on the Rif which is printed in the back on many Talmudic tractates, **Chidushei Ha-Ran**, a commentary to the Talmud (many question his authorship on Shabbat, which is the Ritva). Also wrote **Drashot HaRan** on the basis of faith and philosophy and his responsa of which only 77 are known are collected in **Teshuvot HaRan**. Among his students were R' Barfat, R' Chasdai Crescas, and Yossef Chaviva.

ר' VIDAL YOM TOV OF TOLOSA - ר' וידאל יום טוב די טולושא -

HARAV HAMAGGID - הרב המגיד -

Born: Tolosa, Spain, late 1200s/early 1300s.

Died: Spain, late 1300s.

Notes: Rabbi and commentator on the Rambam. A student of the Rashba. Author of **Maggid Mishneh**, a commentary on Rambam's Mishneh Torah including sources for laws, explaining why some laws preceded others and why some were omitted. Defended the Rambam in particular against R' Avraham ben David of Posquieres. He is credited with having died a martyr's death.

ר' DAVID BEN YOSSEF ABUDARHAM OF SEVILLE - ר' דוד בן יוסף אבנדרהם די שיבול -

Born: Spain, early 1300s.

Died: Spain, late 1300s.

Notes: Talmudic and halachic scholar and liturgist. Student of the Tur. Author of **Sefer Abudarham**, a guide and commentary on the siddur and regulations of prayer and blessings, motivated by the lack of understanding among Jews of the synagogue services and based on the Talmud and later commentators.

ר' YITZCHAK BEN MEIR OF DUREN - ר' יצחק בן מאיר מדורא -

Born: 1300s.

Died: 1300s.

Notes: Halachic codifier. A student of the Maharam M'Rotemberg. Lived in Duren, Germany. Author of **Shaarei Dura/Gates of Duren** or **Issur VeHeter/Prohibition and Permission**, dealing with dietary laws and which was authoritative until the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' MENACHEM BEN ZERACH - ר' מנחם בן זרח -

Born: France, c. 1310.

Died: Spain, 1385.

Notes: Born in France he settled in Spain after the expulsion, only to have his parents and four siblings die in a massacre there in 1328. He moved to Toledo where he studied with R' Yehudah ben Asher, a son of the Rosh and brother of the Tur. He eventually became the Rabbi of Halcala de Henares and Toledo. Author of **Tzeidah LaDerech**, a halachic compendium where ethics and philosophy are also included.

ר' YAAKOV BEN MOSHE HALEVI MOLLN - ר' יעקב בן משה הלוי מולין -

MAHARIL - מהרי"ל -

Born: Mainz, Germany, c. 1365

Died: Worms, Germany, 1427

Notes: Leading Ashkenazic halachic authority of his time. Active in Austria and Germany. Author of **Minhagim**, where he reports on the customs of the German Jews, in particular in rituals, which are often incorporated by the Rama in his glosses to the Shulchan Aruch. Among his students is the Terumas HaDeshem and the Mahariv.

ר' יוסף חביב - R' YOSSEF CHAVIVA

Born: Spain, late 1300s.

Died: Spain, 1400s.

Notes: **Nimukei Yossef** is a commentary on Hilchot HaRif, which is included in the traditional edition of the Talmudic volumes for which no Ran exists, including Moed Katan, Yevamot, Bava Kamma, Bava Metzia, Bava Basra, Sanhedrin and Makkot.

ר' יעקב ברוך בן יהודה לנדא - R' YAAKOV BARUCH BEN YEHUDA LANDAU

AGUR

Born: Germany, early 1400s.

Died: Italy, 1493.

Notes: Halachist. Author of **Agur**, a compendium of halachot and minhagim as well as a collection of responsa on Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah based on the Tur and anthologizing German halachic scholarship. A new feature of this work is the inclusion of kabbalistic theory in halachic matters as a way to help reaching a decision. In addition the Agur is considered the first Hebrew book to contain haskamot/approbations from other Rabbis.

ר' דוד בן שלמה אבן זמרא - R' DAVID BEN SHLOMO IBN AVI ZIMRA

רדב"ז - RADBAZ

Born: Spain, 1480.

Died: Safed, Israel, 1574.

Notes: Halachist. Chief Rabbi of Egypt for 40 years. He wrote extensive responsa, about 2400, which is compiled under the name Radbaz. He tended to favor leniencies in halachic interpretation. Author of a commentary on the Rambam's Mishneh Torah.

ר' יוסף קארו - R' YOSSEF KARO

בית יוסף - BEIT YOSSEF

Born: Toledo, Spain, 1488.

Died: Safed, Israel, 1575.

Notes: Also known as the Mechaber (the Author). He is one of the most authoritative Talmudists and codifier of Halacha whose decisions have been accepted as binding in Jewish Law. Born in Spain just before the Expulsion, he was exiled with his family in 1492. He moved to Lisbon, Portugal, and then to Turkey, where he served as the Rav of Adrianopolis and Nicopolis for many years. He moved to Eretz Yisrael in 1536 where he settled in Safed, where he ultimately became Av Bet Din. Here he got involved with the efforts to revive semicha. Author of **Kesef Mishneh**, a commentary on the Rambam's Mishneh Torah, **Beis Yossef**, a commentary on the Tur which took him twenty years to complete, **Bedek HaBeis**, Rabbi Karo's own proofreading of Beis Yossef, **Shulchan Aruch/Prepared Table**, first published in 1569, contains the halachic decisions derived from longer discussions in the Beit Yossef. His students include among others R' Moshe Cordovero and R' Moshe Alshich.

ר' יהודה ליב בן מאיר חנליש - R' YEHUDAH LEIB BEN MEIR CHANNELES

מהרל"ח - MAHARLACH

Born: early 1500s.

Died: Posen, 1596.

Notes: A leading scholar in Posen. **Vayigash Yehudah** is a commentary on the Tur which is designed to complement the Beit Yossef and seems to be based on a slightly different version of some parts of the Tur. In turn, **Chidushei HaGaon Maharlich** on Orach Chaim includes include many portions of his work but were compiled by printers from other sources as well after his death.

ר' משה בן ישראל איסרלש - R' MOSHE BEN YISRAEL ISSERLES

רמ"א - RAMA

Born: Cracow, Poland, 1525.

Died: Cracow, Poland, 1572.

Notes: Talmudic commentator and Halachist. Descendent of a wealthy and illustrious family from Cracow, he served as Rabbi of Cracow where in 1552 he founded a prestigious Yeshiva that he led until his death. Leader of Polish Jewry he is a major halachic authority for the Ashkenazic world. Author among others of **Darchoi Moshe**, glosses on the Beis Yossef, **Shaalot u'Teshuvot HaRama**, a compendium of Responsa, **Torat Chattos**, a compendium on the dietary laws, **Torat Ha-Olah**, a work on the symbolic meaning of the sacrifices, as well as several works on Kabbalah, including a commentary on the Zohar. Arguably his most famous work is **Mapah**, Glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, where he brings the Ashkenazic views into what is otherwise mostly a Sephardic work thereby making it into an universal Code of Jewish Law. His tombstone bears the inscription "From Moses to Moses there was no one like Moses", the first Moses referring to the Rambam and indeed sometimes he is referred to as the Rambam of the Polish Jewry.

ר' AVRAHAM BEN MOSHE DI BOTON - משה די בוטן

LECHEM MISHNEH - לחם משנה

Born: Salonika, c. 1545.

Died: Salonika, 1588.

Notes: Author of **Lechem Mishneh**, a commentary on Rambam and its early commentaries. **Lechem Mishne** (Twice as Much Bread, see Shemot 16:22) traces the sources of Maimonides' rulings, and attempts to resolve apparent contradictions between the Mishneh Torah and the Talmud. After starting his work the author came in contact with the Kessef Mishneh and after that he avoided duplicating the material already included in the Kessef Mishneh.

ר' YEHOSHUA BEN ALEXANDER HAKOHEN FALK - יהושע בן מאלקסנדר הכהן פאלק

SMA - סמ"ע

Born: Lublin, Poland, c. 1550.

Died: Lemberg, Germany, 1614.

Notes: Talmudic scholar and Rosh Yeshiva in Lemberg. Author of **D'risha uPrisha**, twin commentaries on the Tur, **Sefer Me'iras Einayim/SMA/The Book that Enlightens the Eyes**, a commentary on Shulchan Aruch Chosen Mishpat, included in the standard editions of the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' YOEL BEN SHMUEL SIRKES - ר' יואל בן שמואל סירקש

BACH - ב"ח

Born: Lublin, Poland, 1561

Died: Cracow, Poland, 1640

Notes: Served as Rav of Beltz, Brest-Litovsk, and Cracow where he became Av Bet Dina and Rosh Yeshiva in 1619. Author of **Beis Chadash/The Bach**, a major commentary on the Tur, where he establishes the source of the laws in the Talmud and traces their developments through the interpretations of the different generations, **HaGahot HaBach**, emendations on the Talmud included in the traditional versions of the Talmud. Two major volumes of his responsa were published after his death, **Shealot v'Teshuvot Beit Chadash** and **Shealot v'Teshuvot Beit Chadash HaChadashot**. He is known to have had controversial views in some areas, namely on the payments to rabbis, sale of chametz to non-Jews, and the reading of non-Jewish materials. He was however, very stringent in the area of Issur v'heter. Also he seems to have preferred the earlier codes like the Rif, the Mishneh Torah and the Rosh. Furthermore, he strongly opposed the study of philosophy and a supporter of kabbalah within the confines of halachah. Among his students was the Taz who later became his son-in-law.

ר' DAVID BEN SHMUEL HALEVI - ר' דוד הלוי בן שמואל הלוי

TAZ - ט"ז

Born: Ludmir, Volhynia, 1586

Died: Lemberg, Poland, 1667

Notes: Halachist. Son-in-law of the Bach, he was the Rav of Posen, Ostrow, where he founded a major Yeshiva. After a few years on the run from persecutions he became the Rav of Lemberg. Author of **Turei Zahav/Taz/Golden Rows**, a major commentary on all sections of the Shulchan Aruch, of which the ones on Orach Chaim and Yoreh Deah gained greatest acclaim. He attempts to re-establish the original decisions of the Beit Yossef, refuting subsequent criticisms and bringing order to the commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch. He often disagreed with the Shach.

ר' MOSHE RIVKES - ר' משה רבקהש

BEER HAGOLA - באר הגולה

Born: 1600s.

Died: Volva, 1672.

Notes: Ancestor of the Vilna Gaon. Wrote **Beer HaGola**, sources in the Talmud for all decisions in Shulchan Aruch, which is included with the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' MOSHE LIMA - ר' משה לימא

CHELKAT MECHOKEK - חלקת מחוקק

Born: c. 1605.

Died: 1685.

Notes: Author of **Chelkat Mechokek**. **Chelkat Mechokek** (A Portion of a Ruler, see Devarim 33:21) was the first commentary to be written on **Even HaEzer**. It provides explanations and resolves seeming contradictions in the Shulchan Aruch, and between it and other works. It concludes at Paragraph #126 due to the author's death.

ר' AHARON SHMUEL KAIDONOVER - ר' אהרן שמואל קאידונוור

Born: 1614.

Died: 1676.

Notes: Talmudist. Author of **Birchat HaZevach** and **Tzon Kodashim**, commentaries on Seder Kodashim and **HaGahot Tzon Kodashim**, emendations to Kodashim. **Chidushei Al Tur** and **Tiferet Shmuel** on the Rosh.

ר' מנחם מענדל אויערבאך - R' MENACHEM MENDEL AUERBACH

עטרת זקנים - ATERET ZEKEINIM

Born: Vienna, Austria, 1620.

Died: 1689.

Notes: Halachist. A student of the Bach. Author of *Ateret Zekeinim*, glosses which appears in the margins on some printings of the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' שבתי בן מאיר הכהן - R' SHABBETAÏ BEN MEIR HAKOHEN

ש"ך - SHACH

Born: Amstibov, Lithuania, 1621.

Died: Hollischau, Bohemia, c. 1663.

Notes: Halachist. Lived in Vilna until he had to flee due to persecution. He then settled in Dresnitz and Hooischau, Bohemia. Author of *Siftei HaKohen/Shach/Lips of a Kohen*, a major commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah and Choshen Mishpat, which includes attempts to rule on issues where the Mechaber and the Rama differed. Author of *Nekudot HaKesef*, a response to the Taz, with whom he conducted a sharp controversy.

ר' אברהם אבלי הלוי - R' AVRAHAM ABELI GOMBINER HALEVI

מגן אברהם - MAGEN AVRAHAM

Born: Gumblin, Poland, 1637.

Died: Kalish, Poland, 1683.

Notes: Talmudic scholar. A very humble scholar, he was brought to prominence by the Shach. Author of *Magen Avraham/The Shield of Avraham*, a commentary to the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, which attempts to reconcile the views of the Beis Yossef and the Rama. Author of a commentary on the Tosefot on Nezikin and *Zayis Raanan*, a commentary on the Yalkut Shemoni.

ר' שמואל בן אור שאגרא פיביש - R' SHMUEL BEN OR SHAGRA FAIVISH

בית שמואל - BEIT SHMUEL

Born: c. 1630.

Died: Lemberg, c. 1700.

Notes: Author of *Beit Shmuel*, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch. *Beit Shmuel* (The House of Samuel) is a commentary on Even HaEzer (can be found in the inner part around the text). This commentary is characterized by its clear style and by its independence of opinion. It is frequently in disagreement with the decisions of the Shulchan Aruch, the Mapah, as well as *Chelkat Mechokek*.

ר' זכריה מנדל בן אריה ליב - R' ZECHARIAH MENDEL BEN ARIEH LEIB

Born: Cracow, Poland, middle 1600s.

Died: Poland, after 1707.

Notes: Rabbi and author Rav of Cracow, Tvrobin and from 1691-1770 of betz. Author of *Beer Heitiv* (Explain Well) which provides summaries of varied halachic rulings and responsa related to the decisions of the Shulchan Aruch. Focuses on *Choshen Mishpat* and *Yoreh Deah* follows a format similar to the Beer Heitev on Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer.

ר' יהודה רוזאניס - R' YEHUDA ROSANNES

משנה למלך - MISHNEH LEMELECH

Born: c. 1657.

Died: 1727.

Notes: Author of *Mishneh LeMelech*. *Mishneh LeMelech* (Second to the King, see Esther 10:3), is a collection of original interpretations on a variety of Talmudic issues that were attached to the Mishneh Torah.

ר' חזקיה בן דוד די סילוא - R' CHIZKIYAH BEN DAVID DA SILVA

פרי חדש - PRI CHADASH

Born: Livorno, Italy, 1659.

Died: Israel. 1698.

Notes: Halachist. Author of *Pri Chadash*, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch. *Pri Chadash* (New Fruit) is a commentary on *Orach Chaim*, *Yoreh Deah*, and *Even HaEzer*. It contains sharp criticisms of the Shulchan Aruch as well as earlier codes, with the seeming exception of the *Mishneh Torah*. This commentary seems at times to attempt to undermine the Shulchan Aruch as the source of halachic decisions and the current version is said to be a somewhat toned down version of the strongly worded original. It seem often to favor more lenient positions.

ר' נתנאל נפתלי צבי בן ווייל - R' NETANEL BEN NAFTALI TZVI WEIL

קרבן נתנאל - KORBAN NETANEL

Born: Germany, 1687

Died: Prague, 1769

Notes: Talmudic and halachic scholar. Rosh Yeshiva in Prague and then Rabbi of Schwarzwald and Karlsruhe. Author of *Korban Netanel*, a commentary on the Rosh on Seder Moed and Nashim and Netiv Chaim on Orach Chaim and Torat Netanel a compilation of responsa and sermons.

ר' יונתן אייבשיץ - R' YONATAN EIBESHUTZ - YAAROT DEVASH - יערות דבש

Born: Cracow, Poland, c. 1690.

Died: Hamburg, Germany, 1764.

Notes: Talmudist, Kabbalist and Rav of Altona/Hamburg/Wandsbeck. Founder of a Yeshiva. Author of **Ahavat Yonatan**, homiletical interpretations of Haftorot. Author of **Creiti U'Pleiti** on Yoreh Deah, **Urim V'tumim** on Choshen Mishpat. Accused by many, including R' Yaakov Emden of being a secret follower of Shebatai Zvi, he gathered strong support from Polish and other Eastern European Rabbis.

ר' יחזקאל בן יהודה הלוי לאנדו - R' YECHEZKEL BEN YEHUDAH HALEVI LANDAU - NODA BIYEHUDA - נודע ביהודה

Born: Opataw, Poland, 1713.

Died: Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1793.

Notes: A scion of distinguished scholars he was a descendent of Rashi. He studied in the Broder Kloiz, which attracted the elite of the Torah scholars and became a member of the Brod Bet Din at age twenty. At thirty he became Rav of Yampola where he opened a Yeshiva and concentrate on pilpul. During that he tried to mediate in the controversy between R' Emden and R' Eibeschutz. Finally, he became the Rav of Prague in 1755, where again he found a Yeshiva but concentrated mostly on mussar. He is the author, among others, of **Noda BiYehuda**, a two-volume classical responsa named in honor of his father, **Tzelach/Tziyun LeNefesh Chayah**, a commentary on several Talmudic treatises named in honor of his mother. In addition, he wrote **Doresh LeZion**, on ethics, **HaGahot HaRi Landau**, emendations included in the traditional edition of the Talmud, and **Dagul Mervavah**, annotations and commentaries on Shulchan Aruch. A saintly man, he spurned the comforts of life and is said never to have slept in a bed until growing quite old. Ultimately he became a highly respected halachic authority for generations to come, accepted and respected by Mitnagdim and Chassidim alike. His students include the R' Avraham Danzig.

ר' אליהו בן שלמה זלמן מוילנא - R' ELIYAHU BEN SHLOMO ZALMAN OF VILNA - THE VILNA GAON, GAON RABBEINU ELIYAHU/GRA - גר"א

Born: Vilna, Lithuania, 1720.

Died: Vilna, Lithuania, 1797.

Notes: Arguably the greatest Torah scholar of the past two centuries and one of the most marking figures in halachic Judaism since the Beis Yossef he is revered throughout the Jewish world for his vast knowledge and saintly character. He devoted every minute of his life to Torah study never having slept more than two hour a day. He never took any position as a Rav or Rosh Yeshiva. He is the author of countless seforim, many recorded and published by his students. He was the author, among others, of **Aderet Eliyahu**, a commentary on the Torah, a commentary on Ecclesiastes, **Divrei Eliyahu**, a commentary on Neviim, **Shenos Eliyahu**, a commentary on the Mishneh, a commentary on the Mishneh Torah, **Beyur HaGra**, glosses on the Shulchan Aruch, **Hagahot HaGra**, emendations on the Talmud included in all the traditional editions. He is also the author of a commentary on **Sefer Yetzirah**, one of the main seforim in kabbalah. In turn, the **Siddur HaGra** is based on his rulings. His students include R' Chaim of Volozhin, the founder of the Yeshiva of the same name which greatly contributed to the spread of the methods of Torah learning of the Gra.

ר' שמואל בן נתן הלוי קעלין - R' SHMUEL BEN NATAN HALEVI KELIN - MECHATZIT HASHEKEL - מחצית השקל

Born: Cologne, Germany 1724

Died: Germany 1806

Notes: Author of **Mechatzit HaShekel**, a comprehensive commentary on the Magen Avraham.

ר' יוסף בן מאיר תאומים - R' YOSSEF BEN MEIR TEOMIM - PRI MEGADIM - פרי מגדים

Born: Lemberg, Poland, c. 1727

Died: Frankfurt, Germany, 1792

Notes: Author of **Pri Megadim** a two-part commentary including **Mishbetzos Zahav**, commentary to the Taz and **Eshel Avraham**, commentary to the Magen Avraham. Author of **Rosh Yossef**, chidushim on several Talmud treatises.

ר' יהודה בן שמעון אשכנזי - R' YEHUDA BEN SHIMON ASHKENAZI - BEER HEITIV - באר היטב

Born: Frankfurt, Germany, 1730.

Died: Frankfurt, Germany, 1770.

Notes: Maggid of Lvov and Rav of Frankfurt. Author of **Beer Heitev**, a commentary on Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim and Even HaEzer.

ר' אריה לייב בן יוסף הכהן הלר - R' ARYEH LEIB BEN YOSSEF HAKOHEN HELLER - KETZOT HACHOSHEN - קצות החושן

Born: Kalish, Poland, 1745.

Died: Ostrow, Poland, 1813.

Notes: Talmudist. Author of **Ketzot HaChoshen**, a commentary on Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat which is one of the basic seforim learned in yeshivas and **Avnei Meluim** on Shulchan Aruch Even HaEzer, and **Shev Shmatsa**, chidushim on the Talmud.

ר' שניאור זלמן מלאדי - R' SHNEUR ZALMAN OF LIADI
גר"ז - GAON RABBEINU ZALMAN/GRAZ

Born: Liazna, Russia, 1745.

Died: Kursk, Russia, 1813.

Notes: Founder of Chabad, also known as the Alter Rebbe of Lubavitch and as the Ba'al HaTanya. Author among other works of **Shulchan Aruch Ha'Rav**, a major code of law following the framework of the Shulchan Aruch and incorporating later authorities, of **Tanya**, a major treatise of kabbalah and chassidic philosophy, and of **Torah Or**, a collection of chassidic discourses on the weekly parshas and Festivals, published by his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek.

ר' אברהם מוילנא - R' AVRAHAM BEN YECHIEL MICHAEL DANZIG OF VILNA
חיי אדם - CHAYEI ADAM

Born: Danzig, 1748.

Died: Vilna, 1820.

Notes: Halachist. Student of the Noda BiYehuda. Author of **Chayei Adam/Life of Man**, a halachic work on the laws of Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim, **Chachmat Adam/Wisdom of Man** on Yoreh Deah, **Nishmat Adam/The Soul of Man**, detailing his justifications for the halachic decisions, **Zichru Toras Moshe**, a brief on the laws of Shabbat. and glosses on Zeraim.

ר' חיים מרדכי מרגליות - R' CHAIM MORDECHAI MARGOLIOT

Born: 1700s.

Died: Poland, 1818.

Notes: Author of **Shaarei Teshuva** a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch. **Shaarei Teshuvah** (Gates of Repentance/ Responsa), provides a digest of responsa as a supplement to the Shulchan Aruch **Orach Chaim**, including the responsa composed after the publication of the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' יעקב בן יעקב משה מליסא - R' YAAKOV BEN YAAKOV MOSHE OF LISSA
חוות דעת - CHAVAT DEAT

Born: Loberbaum, Poland, c. 1759.

Died: Loberbaum, Poland, 1832.

Notes: Author of **Chavat Daat**, **Derech HaChayim**, a prayer book with a compilation of laws about daily life, a commentary on the Codes as well as at least 15 other books. **Netivot HaMishpat** (The Paths of Justice, see Mishlei 8:20) is a commentary to **Choshen Mishpat** that is organized in a manner similar to **Urim veTumim**, with one section called **Beurim** devoted to a straightforward explanation of the Shulchan Aruch, and another section called **Chidushim**, including extensive discussions of various topics. It includes discussion and disagreements with **Ketzot HaChoshen**. In turn, **Chavat Deat** focuses on **Yoreh Deah**.

ר' דוד שלמה אייבשיץ - R' DAVID SHLOMO EIBESCHUTZ

Born:

Died: Israel, 1816.

Notes: **Levushei Serad** (Robes of Office) are glosses to **Yoreh Deah**.

ר' אפרים זלמן בן מנחם מרגליות - R' EPHRAYIM ZALMAN BEN MENACHEM MARGOLIOT

Born: Galicia, 1760.

Died: Brody, Russia, 1828.

Notes: Author of **Yad Ephrayim**, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, **Beis Ephrayim**, a collection of responsa.

ר' עקיבא בן משה איגר - R' AKIVA BEN MOSHE EIGER

Born: Eisenstadt, Austria, 1761

Died: Posen, Poland, 1837

Notes: Great halachic authority, Torah leader of his generation, and fierce opponent of secular education and reform ideas. Rabbi of Markish Friedland and Rav of Posen after 1814 and founder of the Posen Yeshiva. Author of **Tosefot R. Akiva**, a commentary on the Mishneh, **Gilyon HaShas**, comments on the Talmud, Rashi, and Tosefot, which is included in the traditional editions of the Talmud, **Chidushei Rabbi Akiva Eiger**, a commentary on the Talmud and **Teshuvot R' Akiva**, a three-volume compendium of Responsa.

ר' משה סופר - R' MOSHE SOFER SCHREIBER

חתם סופר - CHATAM SOFER

Born: Frankfurt, Germany, 1762.

Died: Pressburg, Hungary, 1839.

Notes: Commentator and Halachist. A son-in-law of R' Akiva Eiger, his family traced its roots to Rashi. He was appointed Rav of Mattersdorf, Hungary, in 1798 and Rav and Rosh Yeshiva in Pressburg in 1807, he ultimately became one of the most influential poskim of his time. He became an outstanding leader of Hungarian Jewry and led the struggle against Reform under the banner of "Chadash assur min HaTorah"/Torah Law forbids innovations. Author of **Torat Moshe**, a commentary on the Chumash, **Chatam Sofer**, a commentary on the Talmud, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, and **Teshuvot Chatam Sofer**, a large collection of Responsa. Among his students is his son the Ktav Sofer.

ר' אברהם דוד - R' ABRAHAM DAVID WAHRMAN

Born: Galicia, 1771.

Died: Galicia, 1841.

Notes: Eshel Avraham are glosses to Orach Chaim, Ezer Mikodesh are glosses to Even HaEzer, and Kessef HaKodashim are glosses to Choshen Mishpat.

ר' שלמה קלוגר - R' SHLOMO KLUGER

Born: 1789.

Died: 1869.

Notes: Chachmat Shlomo (The Wisdom of Salomon, see 1 Malachim 5:10, 14, etc) are glosses on Orach Chaim comparing the views of different authorities and seeks to resolve apparent contradictions between them. Included in the outer margin of the Shulchan Aruch.

ר' שלמה גאנצפריד - R' SHLOMO GANZFRIED

קיצור שולחן ערוך - KITZUR SHULCHAN ARUCH

Born: Ungvar, Hungary, 1804.

Died: Ungvar, Hungary, 1886.

Notes: Talmudist and Halachist. Rabbi of Resevitz and then Rav and Av Bet Din of Ungvar. Author of **Kitzur Shulchan Aruch/Abridged Shulchan Aruch**, mostly on Orach Chaim, which distills from the Shulchan Aruch the laws and customs that every Jew should be familiar with, interspersed with homiletic notes. This book soon achieved unprecedented popularity and remains to this day an ideal text for practical guidance for the regular Jewish life. Author also, among others, of **Lechem V'simla** on hilchot Niddah.

ר' אברהם צבי הירש בן יעקב אייזנשטאט - R' AVRAHAM TZVI HIRSCH BEN YAAKOV EISENSTADT-

פיתחי תשובה - PITCHEI TESHUVA

Born: Grodno, Russia, 1813.

Died: Kovno, Russia, 1868.

Notes: **Rav of Utian. Author of Pirchei Teshuva, a running commentary on the Shulchan Aruch. Pitchei Teshuvah** (Opportunities for Repentance/Responsa) follows the same approach and format of Shaarei Teshuva as it provides a digest of responsa as a supplement to the Shulchan Aruch, including the responsa composed after the publication of the Shulchan Aruch. It covers the three volumes not covered by Shaarei Teshuva, i.e., **Even HaEzer** (including also **Kunteirim HaShamot Al Mekomo**), **Choshen Mishpat** (including also **Nachalat Tzvi**), and **Yoreh Deah** (including also **Nachalat Tzvi**).

ר' יחיאל מיכל בן אהרן הלוי עפשטיין - R' YECHIEL MICHEL BEN AHARON HALEVI EPSTEIN

ערוך השלחן - ARUCH HASHULCHAN

Born: Bobroysk, Bielorrussia, 1829.

Died: Navardok, Bielorrussia, 1908.

Notes: Rav of Navardok. Author of **Aruch HaShulchan**, a halachic compendium following the order of the Shulchan Aruch, which analyzes the issues through the perspectives of the Rishonim. This work is complemented by **Aruch HaShulchan HaAtid**, which covers the sections on vows, agriculture and ritual purity. He is regarded as being meikel, one who holds by more lenient views. He was the father and teacher of the Torah Temimah. Is known as having been a close friend of R' Menachem Mendel, the third Rebbe of Lubavitch.

ר' ישראל מאיר הכהן - R' YISRAEL MEIR HAKOHEN KAGAN

חפץ חיים - CHOFETZ CHAIM

Born: Zhetel, Lithuania, 1835

Died: Radin, Lithuania, 1933

Notes: Halachist, the spiritual leader of his generation, and one of the best known Rabbinical figures of the last two centuries. A leader of great saintliness, he lived most of his life in poverty. He studied mostly in Vilna and moved to Radin where in 1869 he founded a Yeshiva that attracted students from all over Europe. Later he became a leader of Agudat Israel. He is the author of **Mishna Berura/Clear Teaching**, a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim which took him twenty five years to write. In this work, which is considered authoritative in Jewish Law by most to this day, he explains the halachas and their application to present day situations. In turn, in **Shaar Hatzion**, sources and notes to the Mishna Berura, of **Biur Halacha**, additional comments and more detailed studies on the Mishna Berura. Author also among others of **Likutei Halokhot**, on Masechet Kedoshim, of **Mahanei Yisrael** a code of law for Jewish soldiers, of **Nidchei Yisrael**, for Jewish immigrants to America. Author of **Chofetz Chaim/Desireous of Life**, a halachic tractate on loshon hara, the laws of gossip and slander which achieved such success that he became known by its name. He authored a second book on the same topic, but now from an ethical perspective, **Shemirat HaLashon**.