Book Review

Three Commentaries on the Yerushalmi

Reviewed by: HESHEY ZELCER

Three new Hebrew commentaries on Talmud Yerushalmi have recently been published in the State of Israel.

The first commentary, the Toledot Yizḥak, was written in Moscow by R. Yizḥak Isaac Krasilschikov in the 1950s and early 1960s, and covers Orders Zera'im and Mo'ed. To date, the entire Zera'im has been published in ten volumes. The effort to publish additional tractates continues, and at least one new tractate on Order Mo'ed is currently available in Israel but not yet in the United States. R. Yizḥak Isaac Krasilschikov also wrote another commentary, Tevunah, but this review focuses only on his primary commentary, the Toledot Yizḥak.

The second commentary being reviewed was written by R. Zelig Leib Braverman based on the Yerushalmi lectures of his father-in-law, R. Ḥayyim Kanievsky. To date, the entire Zera'im and Mo'ed

are available in seven volumes. We hope that, over time, the commentary will be available on the entire *Yerushalmi*.

The third commentary, *Yedid Nefesh*, by R. Yechiel Avraham Bar Lev, covers the entire *Yerushalmi* and is available in fourteen volumes. A subset of the commentary is also available on the Internet at www.yedidnesh.com.

### The *Yerushalmi*

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* was compiled in the Academy of R. Yoḥanan in the Land of Israel, ca. 220–375. Like its counterpart, the *Bavli*, it is a comprehensive commentary on the *Mishnah* that is also rich in *aggadah*, non-legal material. It was written in a mixture of languages including *Mishnaic* Hebrew, Western Aramaic (*leshon sursit*), some Greek, and a touch of Latin.

After the completion of the two Talmuds, and for many years thereafter, each was authoritative in its own sphere—the *Yerushalmi* in Palestine, and the *Bavli* in Babylonia. In ca. 1038, however, due to the influence of R. Yizḥak b. Ya’akov Alfasi (the Rif), the supremacy of the Babylonian Talmud was established.

The *Yerushalmi* text that we have contains many corrupt passages. When a new *Yerushalmi* manuscript was written, errors crept in; and since very few people were learning the *Yerushalmi*, there was no one to correct them. As each subsequent manuscript was copied from the previous one, old errors were copied and new ones were added. This is the main problem with our current text of the *Yerushalmi*. Correcting these errors is very difficult and sometimes impossible, as our printed text of the *Yerushalmi* is based on the Leiden Manuscript, the only extant complete manuscript of the *Yerushalmi*. There are, however, various partial manuscripts that can help us reconstruct some corrupted texts.

Despite these problems, the serious student will quickly realize that it is easier to learn the *Yerushalmi* than the *Bavli*. Topics in the *Yerushalmi* are generally much shorter and less complicated.

### The Importance of the *Yerushalmi*

Except for *Talmud Bavli*, the *Yerushalmi* is our most important post-*Tannaic* source for determining *halakhah*. When a *halakhic* ruling is absent, in dispute, or unclear in the *Bavli*, and it is available in the
Yerushalmi, poskim generally rely on the Yerushalmi to determine the proper ruling.

In addition, the Yerushalmi contains a wealth of information about our religion, our culture, and why we do what we do. For example: What is the purpose of the Berachah Me'ein Sheva that we recite Friday night after the Amidah? Why are the Ten Commandments not recited daily? Why does K'revz li-Purim contain no insert in the Amidah for the blessing of Et Zemah?

**Studying the Yerushalmi**

How does one go about studying the Yerushalmi? The obvious starting point is the classic Vilna edition, which includes many of the well-known commentaries such as the Penei Moshe and Mar'eh ha-Panim by R. Moshe Margoliot, Perush Miba'al Sefer Ḥaredim by R. Eleazar Azkari, the Korban ha-Edah and Shirei Korban by R. David Fraenkel, and many others. This edition also contains variant readings from Yerushalmi fragments, the Vatican and other manuscripts, and of lesser importance, variant readings from other prior printed editions.

Also included toward the back of Order Zera'im of the Vilna edition is the commentary of R. Solomon Sirillio for Tractates Berakhot and Pe'ah, and what is perhaps even more important, the Yerushalmi manuscript of R. Solomon Sirillio for the same tractates.

With so many commentaries and variant readings, why does the Yerushalmi still feel like a mysterious, esoteric work? The purpose of this review is not to critique the commentaries included in the Vilna edition. They are, as a whole, a fine set of commentaries. They do, however, suffer from a major drawback, which is that the authors of the commentaries published in the Vilna edition did not have access to those same variant readings published therein.

The text of the Yerushalmi published in the Vilna edition follows the editio princeps, the first printed edition by Daniel Bromberg in Venice (1522–23), which, in turn, is based on the Leiden Manuscript of R. Yeḥiel Ano of Rome (1289). The text of the Leiden Manuscript has quite a few errors, and many of the commentators in the Vilna edition had no choice but to struggle with this single Yerushalmi text.

Fortunately, today we have access to many partial manuscripts which often shed light on obscure and corrupt passages.
The first manuscript to which one should turn is the Vatican Manuscript. This manuscript is very corrupt and there is hardly a line without an error. The copyist who wrote the Vatican Manuscript had absolutely no knowledge of the text he was copying. He therefore made many obvious errors. For example, the letters ה are sometimes copied as ל. A י is copied as נ, and a ב as a כ, etc. These errors are easy to discern and interpret. But the weakness of this manuscript is also its greatest strength. The copyist never dared make any “corrections” to the text since he had no knowledge of it. He thus preserved, to a large extent, the integrity of the text of the manuscript from which he copied.

Another manuscript that sheds light on many corrupt passages is that of R. Solomon Sirillio, which survives in two manuscript versions known as MS. Paris 1389 (his earlier manuscript) and MS. London 403–405 (his later manuscript). These manuscripts contain many variant readings, some of which are found in the Rishonim. When reading these manuscripts, however, it is important to differentiate between variant texts that R. Sirillio copied from an older manuscript (which are more valuable), versus changes he made to the text himself.10

When studying the Yerushalmi, it is important to look up parallel Tannaic sources found, for example, in the Tosefta and Bereshit Rabbah. This helps the reader understand where the Tannaic quote ends and where the Yerushalmi commentary begins. Also, these parallel sources often contain variant readings that amplify and clarify the topic at hand.

To check the meaning of a word in the Yerushalmi, the reader is advised to acquire a good dictionary that contains definitions of Palestinian Aramaic words. Jastrow’s classic מלים ספר is an excellent choice, as is Sokoloff’s A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1990).

You may also want to acquire ירושלמי לתלמוד סינופס (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1991). This multi-volume work displays the texts of many Yerushalmi manuscripts and printed editions arranged side-by-side for easy cross reference. These volumes, however, are very pricey, but are available in many research libraries.

In summary, the classic printed Vilna edition suffers from many shortcomings: 1. The commentators do not make use of the variant readings to help establish the correct text. 2. The uninitiated reader is overwhelmed by the sheer volume of commentaries. 3. The
print quality is very poor, as the volumes sold today are an offset of an offset, etc. 4. Most of the commentators assume that the reader already has a great deal of knowledge of the language of the Yerushalmi and of the topic at hand. 5. The commentators sometimes try too hard to reconcile the rulings of the Yerushalmi with those of the Bavli.

Do any of the three commentaries we are reviewing resolve all or any of these problems? Let us examine them.

R. Krasilschikov

R. Yizhak Isaac b. Dov Ber Krasilschikov (1888–1965), also known as the Gaon of Poltava, wrote a dual commentary on the Yerushalmi, in Moscow, during the years 1952–1965.

Before World War II, R. Krasilschikov learned under R. Eliyahu Barukh Kamai, the rosh yeshivah of Mir. In 1926, in Poltava, he published Tevunah, the first volume of his commentary on the Rambam. This was the last Jewish religious work published in Communist Russia.

His commentaries on the Yerushalmi were written in secrecy due to fear of, and oppression by, the Communist regime, which had outlawed the study of Torah. Violators of this ban were subject to severe punishment and exile to Siberia. The work of R. Krasilschikov was done without the benefit of any formal academy, and with very few reference works.

On May 12, 1965, R. Yehudah Leib Levin, the chief Rabbi of Moscow, asked R. Harry Bronstein of the Al Tidom Association to accompany him to visit R. Krasilschikov, who was gravely ill. At that meeting, R. Krasilschikov confided that he had written a dual commentary on the Yerushalmi that will make it easier for those who wish to study the Jerusalem Talmud. The twenty-volume manuscript was, at that time, hidden in his daughters’ houses. On the following day, May 13, 1965, R. Krasilschikov passed away.

R. Bronstein made many attempts to smuggle the manuscript out of Russia. However, on June 5, 1967, he was arrested at the airport in Kiev, declared persona non grata, deported from the country, and forbidden to ever again enter any Soviet-controlled state. He then continued his efforts to smuggle the manuscript out through intermediaries.
During his first attempt to smuggle the manuscript out of the country, all twenty volumes were microfilmed and brought to the American Embassy in Moscow, from where they were to be taken out of the country via diplomatic pouch. However, on the night before they were to be flown out, a fire broke out on the eighth floor of the American Embassy and the microfilm was destroyed.

Finally, the first of the twenty volumes was successfully smuggled out of Russia by R. Ya'akov Pollack, the Rabbi of Congregation Shamrei Emunah of Borough Park, in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1980, the Mutzal Me'esh Institute published, in Bnai Brak, the first volume of R. Krasilschikov's commentary, tractate Berakhot. This and subsequent volumes were edited by a team of scholars headed up by R. Dov Weintraub, who also consulted with R. Ḥayyim Kanievsky.

R. Krasilschikov's Commentary

After struggling with the poor quality of the standard Vilna edition of the Yerushalmi, the reader quickly appreciates the beautiful and new typesetting and layout of the Toledot Yizhak Yerushalmi (fig. 1). The text of the Yerushalmi is in the middle of the page, the Toledot Yizhak (a Rashi-type explanation) is in the inner margin, and the Tevunah (a Tosefot-type commentary) is in the outer margin. On the extreme outer margin are references to halakhic works of the Rambam and the Shulhan Arukh. There are also cross references to parallel passages in other areas of the Yerushalmi, Bavli, and the Tosefta, and to variant readings in other manuscripts, Yerushalmi fragments, and other printed editions. On the bottom of each page is another commentary, which for Berakhot is that of the Sefer Haredim, and for other tractates in Zera'im is that of the Gr'a. At the end of the volume (or, in the case of Berakhot, in a separate volume) are all the standard commentaries of the Vilna edition—all freshly typeset and corrected. It is a joy to use these volumes. While the Toledot Yizhak and Tevunah commentaries were, of course, written by R. Krasilschikov, the editing and everything else that appears in this edition of the Yerushalmi was prepared by the group of scholars headed up by R. Dov Weintraub.
The entire Order *Zera'im* has been published in ten volumes, in two sizes (9 ½ x 13 ½ and 6 ½ x 9 ½), but only the smaller size is currently available in bookstores. The entire Order *Mo'ed* exists in manuscript form, and its earlier tractates are now in the process of being printed.

R. Krasilschikov lived in Russia, completely isolated from Torah scholarship. It is therefore not surprising that he was unaware of many facts that are now common knowledge to scholars of the *Yerushalmi*. Although variant readings from other manuscripts could have helped him come to different, and perhaps better, understanding of various statements in the *Yerushalmi*, he apparently chose not to make use of them. He was probably unaware of the *Genizah* fragments that were discovered in Fostat, and the two pages of the Rambam’s *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi* that were also discovered in the *Genizah*. This, however, did not prevent the *Toledot Yizhak* from changing certain phrases of the *Yerushalmi* as he saw fit. However, although the *Toledot Yizhak* may not have been aware of all the variant readings, the editors of his work were well aware of them and did an excellent job of documenting these readings on the extreme outer margin of the pages.

R. Krasilschikov was also apparently unaware that, despite its name, the *Yerushalmi* was compiled in the northern part of the Land of Israel, mostly in Tiberias and partially in Caesarea, but not in Jerusalem. What is more surprising, however, is that the editors of the *Toledot Yizhak* fail to note this error, even while they frequently object to other statements of the author.

**R. Ḥayyim Kanievsky**

During the year following the death of R. Ya’akov Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, his son R. Ḥayyim Kanievsky gave a daily lecture on the *Yerushalmi*, Order *Zera'im*. These lectures were recorded by his son-in-law, R. Zelig Leib Braverman, and are the basis for this commentary. R. Ḥayyim Kanievsky lives in Bnai Brak and is a revered leader of the haredi community in Israel.
R. Kanievsky’s Commentary

R. Hayyim Kanievsky writes, in his introduction to the first volume, that the lectures he gave were based on all the commentaries printed in the standard Vilna edition of the Yerushalmi, and that he also used many other sources from Rishonim and Ahronim. He notes, also, that his son-in-law, R. Braverman, added some of his own interpretations to the commentary.

R. Hayyim Kanievsky adds that his intent was not to establish halakhah, but, rather, to explain the Yerushalmi. He gives his qualified blessing for the printed edition, but notes that although he reviewed the entire work, he did not necessarily check everything thoroughly and that he cannot take full responsibility for the commentary.

R. Braverman writes in his introduction that R. H. Kanievsky studied all the commentaries on the Yerushalmi and analyzed the variant texts to pave a smooth road for those who would learn from his commentary; to help them easily understand the Gemara. When the commentators did not explain the topic adequately, R. H. Kanievsky added his own explanation. He also explained certain passages of the Gemara based on the works—some published, and others still in manuscript form—of his father, the Steipler Gaon.

The actual layout of this commentary has the text of the Yerushalmi on the top of the page, and the explanation on the bottom. Immediately below the text of the Yerushalmi are minor comments and revisions to the text of the Yerushalmi (fig. 2). The explanation does not attempt to translate every phrase of the Yerushalmi; a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the reader is assumed. Insights to difficult Gemaras are sometimes brilliant, but phrases which are not familiar to the average person learning the Yerushalmi are often ignored. For example, what does the Gemara mean by the word roke’a or the phrase emza ba-roke’a (p. 15)?

R. Yechiel Avraham Bar Lev

R. Bar Lev was born in Tel Aviv in 1943. He attended Ponevezher Yeshivah for four years, and in 1972 he received semikhah from R. Ovadia Yosef. In 1976, after receiving his doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Arizona, he returned to Israel. In addition to his commentary on the Yerushalmi, R. Bar Lev has also
published numerous books on Kabbalah, the Zohar, and other subjects. In the introduction to his commentary on the Yerushalmi, R. Bar Lev writes that his books have found acceptance in both the haredi kollelim and the Zionist yeshivot, and that they are being used throughout the world.

**R. Bar Lev's Commentary**

R. Bar Lev’s commentary Yedid Nefesh, written over a period of three years, is printed in two columns, with the words of the Yerushalmi in bold followed by his own explanation. On the bottom of each page are the halakhot of the Rambam and the Shulhan Arukh as they apply to the issues discussed on that page of the Gemara (fig. 3.) On the facing page he includes the corresponding page from the Vilna Yerushalmi. Selected tractates of his commentary are also available on-line at yedidnefesh.com.

**How the three commentaries address some difficult Gemara statements:**

Let us examine how the different commentaries handle some difficult passages in Tractate Berakhot. We will start with Yerushalmi, Berakhot 1:1, 2b/26.

R. [Yehudah ha-Nasi] says: When the moon is full, twilight begins when the sun begins to set and the moon begins to rise. R. Hanina says: Twilight begins when the sun is fully set and the moon begins to rise.

There are two difficulties with the above statements. The first is that R. Yehudah ha-Nasi seems to be saying that the period of twilight begins when the bottom of the sun is touching the horizon. It is unlikely, however, that R. Yehudah ha-Nasi meant to say this. There is no authority in the Talmud who says that twilight begins while the sun is totally above the horizon. The second problem is that even in the middle of the lunar month the sun and the moon do
not set and rise, respectively, at the same time. This can easily be verified by the layman, for example by checking the times of sunset and moonrise on the weather page of the *New York Times*. What, then, is R. Yehudah ha-Nasi saying?

**R. Krasilschikov** addresses the first question posed above. He says that R. Ḥanina is not arguing with R. Yehudah ha-Nasi, but, rather, that R. Ḥanina is saying that the statement of R. Yehudah ha-Nasi was corrupted and that R. Ḥanina is correcting it. R. Krasilschikov does not address the fact that even in the middle of the lunar month the sun and moon do not set and rise, respectively, at the same time.

**R. Kanievsky**, too, deals with the first question and answers similarly that R. Ḥanina is correcting the wording of the beraita and that R. Yehudah ha-Nasi is actually saying that twilight begins when the sun is totally below the horizon. R. Kanievsky, however, also fails to address the fact that the setting of the sun and the rising of the moon, even in the middle of the month, do not occur simultaneously. He does, however, write about the pattern of the rising of the moon as follows: “The new moon appears while it is still light and it remains in the sky for only a short while. The moon remains a bit longer each subsequent night until the middle of the month, when it rises at the beginning of the night, shines all night, and sets in the morning. Toward the end of the month, the moon does not appear until a bit before daybreak. Therefore [our *Gemara*] says that in the middle of the month, the moon rises at the beginning of the night at the time of twilight.”

**R. Bar Lev** addresses neither of the above difficulties. He says simply that in the middle of the lunar month the moon rises at sunset. He also says that R. Ḥanina argues with R. Yehudah ha-Nasi.

R. Bar Lev’s interpretation is troubling. It seems unusual that R. Yehudah ha-Nasi, the editor of the *Mishnah*, would say that twilight begins when the bottom of the sun is on the surface of the horizon (although in fact the *Yereim* is of the opinion that twilight starts approximately eighteen minutes before sunset). Furthermore, is it possible that R. Yehudah ha-Nasi, the most illustrious *Nasi*, who was responsible for declaring the new moon, was not aware that even in the middle of the lunar month the moon does not rise precisely when the sun sets?
R. Ḥazna said: From ayelet ha-shah20 until the eastern horizon is lit,20 a person could walk four mil21 (i.e., seventy-two minutes).22 From when the eastern horizon is lit until the sun [begins to] rise, [a person could walk] four mil (i.e., seventy-two minutes).

It turns out that R. Ḥiyya’s view is in accordance with that of R. Yudah, for we learned, in the name of R. Yudah, that the thickness of the roke’a 23 is a walking distance of fifty years. An average person can walk forty mil in a day. It would take a person fifty years to walk the distance through which the sun passes the roke’a. During the time the sun passes through the roke’a, a person [here on earth] could walk four mil. This proves that the width of the roke’a is one tenth of a day.

The name Ḥazna, as it appears in our statement above, is very unusual. Checking the name Ḥazna in R. Kosovsky’s concordance24 on the Yerushalmi shows that this is the only spot in the entire Yerushalmi that references the name R. Ḥazna. A parallel Gemara in Yerushalmi Yoma 3:2, 40b/29 shows the name as Ḥanina. Bereshit Rabbab 50 shows the same statement with the name R. Ḥanina. The Leiden Manuscript and the Vatican Manuscript also show the name as R. Ḥanina. It is also easy to imagine how a י and aך near each other as יך could be mistaken for a ז. It is therefore probable that the correct reading is חנינא.

In the second statement above, the Vatican Manuscript reads R. Ḥanina instead of R. Ḥiyya. This is definitely a much better reading, because in the second statement the Gemara is making the point that the view of R. Ḥiyya (read, R. Ḥanina) is consistent with
the view of R. Yudah. Both of the above statements are indeed consistent. In the first statement, the Gemara says that in the period from ayelet ha-shahar until ya’ir ha-mizrah, a person can walk four mil— which was known to be one-tenth of a day (seventy-two minutes), and that from then until sunrise a person could also walk four mil. The second statement states that over a day (a twelve-hour period, which is 720 minutes), a person could walk forty mil. The two statements are thus consistent. In 72 minutes a person walks four mil, and in 720 minutes a person walks forty mil.

With all of the above in mind, it would make the most sense to say that the author of both statements is R. Ḥanina. How do our three commentaries compare to this analysis?

R. Krasilschikov, in the first statement above, emends R. Ḥazna to read R. Ḥanina. In the second statement he is silent and makes no change.

R. Kanievsky, in the first statement, leaves the name as Ḥazna, and in the second statement he changes R. Ḥiyya to R. Ḥazna. In other words, he recognizes that the Gemara is equating the two statements, but instead of correcting the names of both to R. Ḥanina, he leaves the erroneous name R. Ḥazna in the first statement, and he substitutes one error for another when, in the second statement, he changes R. Ḥiyya to R. Ḥazna.

R. Bar Lev seems oblivious to all of the above issues. He leaves R. Ḥazna in the first statement and leaves R. Ḥiyya in the second statement. He misses the point the Gemara is making by equating the two statements, and he misses the errors in the names R. Ḥazna and R. Ḥiyya.

We learned, the tree of life is one-sixtieth the size of the Garden, and the Garden is one-sixtieth of Eden. It also says (Bereshit 2:10): A river issued from Eden to water the garden. After watering land that needs a kor25 of water, you still have three kav26 of water left. Therefore if it takes a person
forty days to walk across Egypt, it would take a person seven years and more to walk across Kush.

If it takes forty days to walk across Egypt, it would take 2,400 (40 x 60) days to walk across Kush, which is sixty times the size of Egypt. 2,400 divided by 365 days equals 6 years and 210 days. The Gr’\textsuperscript{a} therefore says that the reading of our Gemara, \(\text{שבוע שנים ושעון} \), should actually read \(\text{שבוע שנים ושעון} \), implying that it takes approximately seven years to walk across Kush. R. Shlomo Goren says: If you divide 2,400 by 354 days (the number of days in a lunar year), you come up with 6, remainder 276. He therefore says that \(\text{שעון} \) should read \(\text{ועור} \), and that the 1 denotes six years and that the numerical value of \(\text{שנים} \) indicates 276 days. What probably happened is that the Yerushalmi originally stated \(\text{שבוע שנים} \). A person who was reading the manuscript put a note on the margin indicating that it is not exactly seven years but rather 6 years and 276 days. Someone who later copied the manuscript did not understand the comment but he nevertheless inserted it erroneously into the text of the Yerushalmi.\textsuperscript{27}

R. Krasilschikov follows the explanation of the Sefer Ha\textsuperscript{h}aredim which does the arithmetic and says the correct version should be \(\text{שש ושעון} \), six years plus.

R. Kanievsky does not do the arithmetic and just repeats the phrase of the Gemara that it is seven years plus.

R. Bar Lev says that according to his calculations, it should be a bit less than seven years.

Bekhotot 3:5, 6d/31

רב בFILES:Zora\textsuperscript{1}\

R. Ze'eira and R. Ya'akov b. Zavdi were sitting when they noticed some excrement [near them]. R. Ya'akov b. Zavdi got up and spit upon it whereupon R. Ze'eira said: [The spitting helps only for a short time, as] from \(\text{yamma li-tigna} \).

The phrase \(\text{min yamma li-tigna} \) is mentioned in Yerushalmi Gittin 6:2, 48a/21, in Yerushalmi Kiddushin 2:1, 62b/12, and also in Bavli
Kiddushin 44a. Rashi in Kiddushin explains that it refers to the amount of time from when a fish is pulled out of the water until it is put into the frying pan. Tosefot, however, quotes Rabbeinu Hananel, who says that it refers to two cities that are near each other. I, personally, prefer Rashi’s interpretation.

R. Krasilschikov follows Rabbeinu Hananel’s explanation and says it refers to two cities that are near each other, and that the Gemara implies that the effect of the spitting will not last long.

R. Kanievsky follows Rashi’s explanation that it refers to a very short time span, from when a fish is pulled out of the sea until it is put into a frying pan.

R. Bar Lev explains as follows: “He [R. Ze’eira] is saying that the saliva does not help because in a short while the saliva will evaporate and the excrement will be uncovered. And he [R. Ze’eira] is saying that just as the distance from Yamma to Tigna is short, so, too, the saliva will evaporate quickly.” R. Bar Lev definitely explained our Gemara correctly and perhaps he is implying, like R. Hananel, that Yama and Tigna are two cities—but he does not say so explicitly. Sometimes, when a Hebrew/Aramaic paragraph is translated into Hebrew and a word or two is unclear, it is easiest to just repeat the same words in the Hebrew translation. It is easy—but it leaves the reader in the dark.

Berakhot 6:1 10a/37

R. Ya’akov b. Aha says: R. Nehemiah and the Sages disagree [with each other]. R. Nehemiah says: [Before eating bread] he recites, *Who brings forth bread from the earth.* The Sages say, however, that he says, *brings forth bread from the earth.* The end result is that the above argument is based on the same reasoning as the following argument. R.
Hinana b. Yizhak and R. Shmuel b. Immi (Ammi) disagree over the implication of the word for vegetables, lefat. One says lefat implies, ‘Was not bread just like it?’ The other says lefat implies, ‘Will not bread be just like it?’ [In Psalms 72:16 it states:] Let abundant grain be in the land, to the tops of the mountains.

The ambiguity of the above Gemara revolves around the words המוציא and מוציא. One implies the past and the other implies the future. To properly understand our Gemara, it is necessary to refer to a parallel passage in Bereshit Rabbah 15:7 which states: רבי נחמיה אמר המוציא לחם מארץ שעבד הוזא לחם מארץ. R. Nehemiah says the correct reading is that Hashem already extracted bread from the earth. והרבנן אמרו מוציא לחם שלום אמרו מוציא לחם המוציא שלום אושה אמרו מוציא לחם לשלו חמש. The Sages say that the correct reading is מוציא, which implies that Hashem will—in the future—take out bread from the earth.

Before the sin in the Garden of Eden there was no need to process grain, since bread itself grew directly from the earth. This is consistent with the view of R. Nehemiah, who says that the blessing should contain the word המוציא, which implies that Hashem, in the past, took out bread from the earth.

Psalms 72:16, however, is saying that in the future, there will be an abundance of grain that will reach the top of the mountain, and that, literally, ‘bread will arise from the ground at the top of the mountains.’ This is consistent with the view of the Sages who say that the correct word is מוציא, which implies that Hashem will cause bread, in the future, to come out of the earth.

R. Krasilschikov reinterprets our Gemara to be consistent with Bavli Berakhot 38a: Both R. Nehemiah and the Sages hold that the word מוציא implies only the past. R. Nehemiah, however, is unsure whether the blessing should contain the word המוציא or מוציא. R. Krasilschikov then goes on to say that in Bavli, R. Nehemiah holds that it is better to say מוציא which implies only the past and is consistent with all other blessings. Here in the Yerushalmi, however, R. Nehemiah holds that it is better to say המוציא, even though it also implies the future, so that the letter מ at the end of המוציא does not get ‘swallowed’ into the letter מ of מוציא. The Sages say, however, that either המוציא or מוציא may be said because they both imply the past.
R. Krasilschikov forces the meaning of our Gemara and ignores the wording of Bereshit Rabbah 15:7.

R. Kanievsky explains that [R. Naḥman] holds that the proper word is "המוציא" because it implies the future. The [Sages] hold that the proper word is "מוציא" because it implies the past. R. Kanievsky’s explanation is contrary to Bereshit Rabbah 15:7.

R. Bar Lev explains that R. Naḥman holds that the proper word is "המוציא," which implies the past, and the Sages hold that one should say "מוציא" because "מוציא" implies the past. The first part of R. Bar Lev’s interpretation matches the Midrash Rabbah. The second part does not.

**Summary**

R. Krasilschikov’s commentary is elaborate, clear, and to the point. He is very honest and questions those Gemaras that seem illogical, even if he is not always able to provide a convincing solution. If someone is new to the Yerushalmi and will be purchasing only one set, then this is definitely the one to buy. The only shortcoming of this commentary is that the author had no access to some manuscripts and chose to ignore references to others. This shortcoming is partially rectified by the editors who note variant readings in the outer margins of each page.

R. Kanievsky’s commentary is good and occasionally brilliant, but it suffers from two shortcomings. One is that it is too concise, and he sometimes assumes that the reader already has a lot of knowledge about the Yerushalmi. Someone who never learned the Yerushalmi will come across many phrases that will seem puzzling and which will not be addressed in his commentary. The other shortcoming is that he, too, does not make adequate use of other manuscripts and fragments that have been discovered in the past century. When he does note variant readings, it is more likely a reading found in the Rishonim or one that was emended by the Gr’ya. He also occasionally notes variant readings in the Amsterdam edition.

The Bar Lev edition, although it is the only one of the three to cover the entire Yerushalmi, is the weakest of all. Like the others, it does not take variant readings into account. Unlike the others, however, it does not even stop to ask the questions that should bother anyone trying to understand the Yerushalmi. It does, however,
discuss at the bottom of each page the actual halakhah pertaining to the issues discussed in the Yerushalmi. It also has the advantage of having selected tractates available on the Internet.\footnote{29}

The defect that is common to all of the above commentaries is that they fail to take into account the modern scholarly research that has been done on the Yerushalmi\footnote{30} and variant readings in other manuscripts. Sometimes they even fail to take into account parallel texts in the Tosefta and Midrash Rabbah.

There are, however, superior commentaries on individual tractates. These include: For Tractate Berakhot (Chapters 1-5), R. Shlomo Goren (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1961). For Tractate Pe’ah, R. Adin Steinsaltz (Jerusalem: The Israel Institute for Talmudic Publications, 1987). For Tractate Shevi’it, R. Yehuda Feliks (Jerusalem: Zur-Ot, 1980). The quality of any new commentary should be measured against these.
Three Commentaries on the Yerushalmi:

Fig. 2, R. Kanievsky
Fig. 3, R. Bar Lev
NOTES

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1 The *Talmud Yerushalmi* is also known as the Jerusalem Talmud, *Talmud* or *Gemara of the Inhabitants of the West*, *Talmud de-Erez Yisrael*, or, more recently, as the Palestinian Talmud.

2 On *Bavli Eruvin* 104b, the Rif writes as follows, “Since the suga of our *Gemara* (the Babylonian Talmud) permits it, it is of no concern to us that the *Gemara of the Inhabitants of the West* forbids it, because we rely on our *Gemara* since it is later in time, and they (the Sages in Babylonia) were more versed in the *Gemara of the Inhabitants of the West* than we are. Were they not convinced that this statement of the *Gemara of the Inhabitants of the West* is not to be relied upon, they would not have permitted it.”

3 The Leiden Manuscript was written in 1289 by R. Yeḥiel (Ano) b. R. Binyamin ha-Rofeh of Rome, a well-known scholar, poet, copyist, and the author of a book on piety, *Ma'alot ha-Middot*.

4 See *Yad Malachi*, *Kelalei ha-Shas*, pp. 177–178.

5 Contrast the reason provided in *Bavli Shabbat* 24b, מוקם שאיתין ממקום, with that provided in *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 8:1, 11d/55 שילוח צמר עמר ולפי החשך אומר בהרא אתןılmış. R. Krasilschikov explains that *Berachah Me'Ein Shera* serves as an abridged לשון שורט for *Ma'ariv* because it is רשות and therefore we are not concerned that one who is unable to recite the *Amidah* will not fulfill his obligation. On Friday night, however, if there is no wine for *Kiddush*, then one who is unable to recite the *Amidah* will also not fulfill his biblical obligation of *Kiddush*. We therefore recite an abridged version after the *Amidah* in the synagogue which enables all those who hear it to fulfill their biblical obligation of *Kiddush*.

6 In *Yerushalmi Berakhot* 1:5, 3c/28 it states: “It would have been proper to recite the Ten Commandments every day. Why then do we not recite it? Because of the complaints of the *minim* (Christians?); they should not say that only [the Ten Commandments] were given to Moshe at Sinai.”

7 A footnote on p. 788 of the *ArtScroll Nusach Ashkenaz Siddur* states as follows: “The *Kvetz* is recited during *Shacharis* on Purim. It consists of poetic stanzas that are inserted just before the conclusion of the blessings of *Shemoneh Esrei* during the *chazzan’s* repetition. The only blessing where
this is not done is הָאָרֶץ הָדָע, The offspring of David, since the Purim miracle came about through descendants of King Saul.” The real reason why there is no insert for the blessing of הָאָרֶץ הָדָע on Purim is because that blessing did not exist at that time in the Land of Israel. It was combined with the blessing of יִרְמָיווֹנָה הָרְשֵׁיָם. See Yerushalmi Berakhot 2:4, 5a/8. See also Tosefta Ry’d on Bavli Ta’anit 13a.

8 *Yerushalmi Fragments from the Genizah* was published by Prof. Louis Ginzberg in 1909 and reprinted in 1970. These fragments are referred to as שרדיי ורשהָלמי.

9 The Vatican Manuscript is referred to as רומי יד כתב.

10 For example, in the Vilna edition, the text at the beginning of Berakhot 1:1 reads: "שנה וותיר לילה רחמים, it is an hour or two into the night." In R. Sirillio’s manuscript it reads: "שנה וותיר מעורר לילה רחמים, an hour and two-tenths (72 minutes) into the night." This is a very significant difference. However, in his commentary R. Sirillio writes: "שנה וותיר לילה רחמים an hour and two-tenths, אומרים מחמת nhựaリアル נייעו. In other words, the version from which R. Sirillio was copying had the same text that we now have in the Vilna edition, and R. Sirillio, on his own, decided to emend the text.

11 See *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud*, pp. 21–22, for a discussion of where the *Yerushalmi* was compiled.

12 On p. 15, in the beginning of the introduction to Berakhot, the Toledot Yizhak writes, “The saying of our Sages, may their memory be a blessing, in Zohar, Naso, ‘Everything depends on luck, even a Torah in the Ark,’ proves true, as witnessed by all, in the Talmud Yerushalmi that was established in the city that was once referred to as ‘She that was great among nations, the princess among states,’ a multitude of people in our land, the ‘Land of Israel,’ in the city of Jerusalem, which is the great city in which R. Yoḥanan cast a great light on the Mishnayot that the Sages taught in their concise style.”

13 See, for example, the notes of the editors of the Toledot Yizhak on Berakhot, pp. 5, 6, 21, 22, 35, 38, and many more.

14 Contrast the mere three years spent by R. Bar Lev on the entire Yerushalmi with the fifteen years spent by R. Krasilschikov on just Zera’im and Mo’ed, and the difference in depth between the two commentaries is readily understood.

15 The Vilna edition is actually printed two different ways. One version contains references to variant readings (שנים ומשאות), and the other does
not. It is unfortunate that R. Bar Lev chose to include the version of the Vilna edition that does not include the variant readings—especially since he does not deal with variant readings in his own commentary.

16 On his web site it states, “Rav Bar Lev has been privileged to be the first to publish a commentary on the entire Yerushalmi.” This, of course, is inaccurate. R. Moshe Margoliot, in the late 1700s, wrote a dual commentary on the entire Yerushalmi which he titled Penai Moshe and Mar‘eb ba-Panim.

17 All references to the Yerushalmi are usually provided in two ways: 1. To chapter and ruling (משנה, e.g., 3:5 which stands for Chapter 3, Ruling 5, and 2. To the page, column, and line number in the editio princeps (first edition, Venice, 1522–23). Each page of the editio princeps has four columns, two on the front and two on the back, and are referred to as columns: a, b, c, and d. For example, 6d/31 stands for page 6, column d, line 31. See A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud, pp. 214–235, for a cross reference from the Vilna Edition to the editio princeps.

18 Both Prof. L. Ginzberg and R. Shlomo Goren deal with this issue extensively. They both point out that for the moon to rise as the sun sets, the sun, earth, and moon, at that moment, would need to be in perfect 180-degree alignment. (The moon at that point would not be visible because it would be eclipsed—but that is a separate issue.) R. Goren explains that if we take into account parallax (the distortion based on viewing the sun and moon from the surface of the earth, as opposed to viewing them from the center of the earth) and refraction (the distortion based on the fact that light bends), then, when we see the sun touching the bottom of the horizon, it is actually totally below the horizon—from an astronomical point of view (i.e., from the perspective of a theoretical person who is standing in the center of the earth). There is no question that the effect of parallax was understood by astronomers at the time of R. Yehudah ha-Nasi. There is no evidence, however, that the effect of refraction was understood—but perhaps a case can be made from our Gemara that indeed it was understood by R. Yehudah ha-Nasi.

19 Two hours and twenty-four minutes (2 times 72 minutes) before sunrise, the first light of dawn is visible.

20 עלית השחר, or seventy-two minutes before sunrise.

21 The Arukh equates the word מיל with the Roman/Greek mile, which is one thousand steps, or two thousand cubits. The term mile as it is used today is 1,760 yards. However, the halakhic mil as defined by the Hazon Ish
(who defines a cubit as 22.7 inches) is 1,258 yards, and according to Naéh (who defines a cubit as 18.9 inches), a mil is 1,049 yards.

22 An average person, walking at an average pace, can walk a mil in 18 minutes. To walk four mils is thus the equivalent of 72 minutes.

23 An approximate translation of roke’a is heaven, and the Sages account for seven such heavens.

24 *Concordance to the Talmud Yerushalmi*, by Moshe Kosovsky (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1979).

25 According to Naéh, a kor is 248 liters, and according to the *Hazon Ish*, 430 liters. If a certain quantity of water (a kor) is needed to water a certain amount of land (Kush) then it would be natural for one-sixtieth of that amount to be left after usage. This leftover water could then be used for another purpose.

26 The word תרקב is interpreted as וקב תרי “two and a kav,” or three kav, the volume displaced by 72 eggs. This is one-sixtieth of the volume of a kor which is the volume displaced by 4,320 eggs.

27 It is also possible that the word ועוד is a סמן, or mnemonic marker, that identifies the four statements that are about to follow. This type of marker is quite common in *Talmud Bavli*, and according to Prof. Louis Ginzberg (*Some Abbreviations Unrecognized or Misunderstood in the Text of the Jerusalem Talmud* [New York: JTS, 1914]) this marker is misunderstood in various places in the Jerusalem Talmud. In our case, perhaps, the word ועוד is a signpost for the four following statements which begin, ווכשם, עוביו, ומיכולו, and ד’ אשומת.


29 On R. Bar Lev’s web site it states, “With Heaven’s help, all 14 volumes will be on the web site for the benefit of students.”

30 I suspect that the authors are unfamiliar with the works of such modern scholars as Prof. L. Ginzberg, R. Saul Lieberman, R. Shlomo Goren, and Prof. D. Sussman.