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HUC-JIR Text Immersion: B. Berakhot 2a-34b with Medieval and Modern Commentaries

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Abstract: This paper is the product of Jacob Leizman's senior project at HUC-JIR in New York under the direction of Dr. Alyssa Gray. While the text immersion project is from B. Berakhot 2a-34b, this written component focuses on two Talmudic excerpts, (*sugyot*), within those chapters. The first of these papers is a collection, translation, and analysis of medieval commentators, (*rishonim*), on a *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b that deals with the blessing for Torah study and a possible exemption from the obligation to recite it. The second paper is a modern, academic analysis of a *sugya* on B. Berakhot 4b that deals with the order and connection of two central Jewish liturgical units, the *Shema* and *T'filah*. Using methods of analysis from Shamma Friedman, this paper traces signs of potential *Stammaitic* editing (8th century CE) to critically analyze each statement and potential source of the *sugya*. Together, these papers demonstrate two essential eras and methods of commentary for Talmud study, medieval and modern.

Introduction

I set out to study the first five chapters of B. Berakhot with a one main goal in mind. Through months of study, I hoped to strengthen my facility with Talmud. I began studying from the beginning of Masekhet Berakhot using Rashi and Steinsaltz commentary. The commentary of Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki of 11th century France and Germany, is included in each page of the Babylonian Talmud. For Adin Steinsaltz, 20th century Israeli rabbi and Talmudist, I used the Steinsaltz edition of Masekhet Berakhot that includes his translations and commentary in Hebrew. After a first pass through the first five chapters, pages 2a-34b, I returned to review with an extra focus on certain passages. Once I felt that I had a grasp on the material within the Talmud itself, my advisor, Dr. Alyssa Gray, encouraged me to explore the world of Talmudic commentary, the interpretations, applications, and analysis of the Talmud. Those explorations directly led to this written component of my Text Immersion project. I traced the interpretations of two different Talmudic passages, called *sugyot*, according to two different eras and methods of Talmudic commentary, one for each *sugya*. This way, in addition to developing my skills studying the Talmud itself, I also gained familiarity with the discourse that emerges from the Talmud.

I first explored the era and methods of medieval Talmud commentary on a *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b. This included Rashi and Tosafot, whose commentary is included on a traditional Vilna Rom edition page of Talmud, and various *rishonim*, rabbis of the medieval

era. I studied and translated Rashi, Tosafot, Solomon ben Aderet (Rashba), Menachem Meiri (Meiri), and Asher ben Yehiel (the Rosh). With an understanding of what they were saying, I then tried to understand how and why they interpreted the *sugya* B. Berakhot 11b. Most immediately, the *sugya* in focus stated a normative behavioral practice that wasn't entirely clear. Tosafot and the *rishonim* sought to investigate this practice and what it meant for their communities, and ended up building a rich intellectual discourse centered around Talmudic interpretation. The *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b provided me with an example of how Tosafot and the *rishonim* interpret and write about Talmud. My findings turned into my first paper, entitled "B. Berakhot 11b: *Rishonim*'s Interpretations of *Birkat HaTorah*." As the first systematic commentators of Talmud, I found it essential to explore their perspectives and methods of analysis.

To complement this medieval era of Talmudic commentary, I entered into the world of modern, academic Talmud commentary that developed over the course of the 20th century. This field was most substantially founded by Hanokh Albek, a 20th century Jerusalem-based Talmudist, and sought to apply scientific methods of analysis to rabbinic literature. Significantly, this school of thought hypothesized around the transmission and editing processes of the Talmud and attempted to gain deeper understanding through structural, source, and literary criticism and analysis. I used these methods to analyze a *sugya* on B. Berakhot 4b. Specifically, I used contemporary Talmudist Shamma Friedman's 14 methodological principles to investigate the origins of Talmudic statements, trace statements back to their sources, compare the *sugya* in focus to a parallel *sugya* on B. Berakhot 9b, and to suggest potential motivations for what seem to be Talmudic editing choices. This investigation led to my second paper, entitled "*Stammaitic* Editing and Motivations in B.

Berakhot 4b.” I also found it essential to familiarize myself with this era and method of analysis, as structural, source, and literary criticism offered new understandings and insights into the Talmud text itself.

Each of these eras and methods of Talmudic commentary complemented each other and my Text Immersion into the first five chapters of B. Berakhot. In addition to building my skills and familiarity with Talmud study, I also gained an understanding of the layers of discourse borne out of any given excerpt of Talmud. This includes both traditional, medieval era commentary from Rashi, Tosafot, and other *rishonim* as well as modern commentary from academic Talmudists such as Hanokh Albek, Shamma Friedman, and David Weiss Halivni. Overall, my extended period of study of Masekhet Berakhot and its commentaries helped me understand and connect to a vital volume of literature in the Jewish tradition, the Babylonian Talmud.

B. Berakhot 11b: *Rishonim*'s Interpretations of *Birkat HaTorah*

I. Introduction

In this paper, I will trace the interpretations and explorations of various medieval commentators, known as *rishonim*, on one liturgical issue on B. Berakhot 11b. The issue stems from two separate ritual obligations that the rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud attempt to synthesize. First, there is an obligation to say a blessing, called *birkat haTorah*, before one studies Torah. Second, there is an obligation to recite a blessing, either *Ahavah Rabbah* or *Ahavat Olam*, to commemorate the receiving of the Torah, known as revelation in the Jewish tradition, when one performs the obligation of reciting the *Shema* prayer. In this Talmudic passage, (“*sugya*”), Rav Yehuda cites Shmuel, who claims that one who fulfills their obligation to recite the revelation blessing during the *Shema* is exempt from the obligation to say *birkat haTorah* before Torah study.

This claim is problematic for the medieval commentators, who analyze and comment on Shmuel's claim from a variety of different angles. To illustrate the development of the *rishonim*'s intellectual culture and method of Talmudic commentary, I will translate and compare excerpts from the *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b, a parallel *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud 1:5 (PT), and commentaries from Solomon ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Tosafot, Solomon ben Aderet (Rashba), and Menachem Meiri (Meiri). In doing so, I hope to construct an image

of the nature of medieval Talmudic commentary and how the *rishonim* built a foundation for generations of Jewish legal (halakhic) and literary criticism that originate in the Talmud.

II. B. Berakhot 11b

i. *Ahavah Rabbah* Exemption

אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: השכים לשנות עד שלא קרא קריאת שמע, צריך לברך; משקרא קריאת שמע, אין צריך לברך, שקבר נפטר ב"אהבה רבה"

Rav Yehuda said that which Shmuel said: One who gets up early to study, until he recites *Shema*, must bless (over that which he is studying). One who recited *Shema* does not need to bless (over that which he is studying), since he is already exempt from (the recitation of) *Ahavah Rabbah*.

Rav Yehuda begins the *sugya* with Shmuel's statement about the relationship between *birkat haTorah* and *Ahavah Rabbah*. He states that which Shmuel said before him, that one needs to bless their act of studying if they are studying before their recitation of the *Shema*. If they study after they recite the *Shema*, however, they don't need to recite *birkat haTorah* for their act of studying because reciting *Ahavah Rabbah* during the *Shema* and its blessings exempts them. This statement leaves a few questions in its wake on which the *sugya* develops and the *rishonim* would later comment: What is the overlapping content between *birkat haTorah* and *Ahavah Rabbah* that makes one fulfill the other from Rav Yehuda and Shmuel's perspectives? What exactly is *birkat haTorah* and what specific activity or activities does it sanctify? What constitutes the kind of studying that requires the recitation of *birkat haTorah*? Is there a more specific time frame than "until he recites *Shema*" and "already recited *Shema*?" The *sugya* continues in response to some of these questions.

ii. The Torah in *Birkat HaTorah*

אמר רב הונא: למקרא צריך לברך, ולמדרש — אינו צריך לברך. ורבי אלעזר אומר: למקרא ולמדרש צריך לברך, למשנה — אינו צריך לברך. ורבי יוחנן אומר: אף למשנה נמי צריך לברך [אבל למלמוד, אינו צריך לברך]. ורבא אומר: אף למלמוד צריך (לחזור ולברך) [לברך]. דאמר רב חייה בר אשי: זימנין סגיאיין הנה קאימנא קמיה דרב למנויי פרקין ב"ספרא דבי רב", הנה מקדים וקא משי ידיה, ובריה, ומתני לן פרקין.

Rav Huna said, for scripture, one needs to bless, but for midrash, one doesn't need to bless. And Rabbi Eleazar said, for scripture and for midrash, one needs to bless, for Mishnah, one doesn't need to bless. And Rabbi Yohanan said, for Mishnah too, one needs to bless (but for talmud, one doesn't need to bless). And Rava said, even for talmud, one needs (to return and bless) [to bless]. That which Rav Hiyya bar Ashi said, many times I stood before Rav to study chapters in Sifra of the school of Rav—he would first wash his hands, then bless, then teach us our chapter.

The next topic of the *sugya* addresses what kinds of studying require the recitation of *birkat haTorah*. While “Torah study” in a contemporary context can refer to a variety of different texts, the rabbis of the Talmud specified what they thought constituted the “Torah” in *birkat haTorah*. Rav Huna suggests that *birkat haTorah* is only necessary for studying scripture, מקרא; Rabbi Eleazar suggests that it's necessary for scripture and for midrash; Rabbi Yohanan suggests it's necessary for scripture, midrash, and Mishnah; and Rava finally suggests that it's necessary for scripture, midrash, Mishnah, and talmud, which according to Rashi's commentary on this statement refers to analytic and halakhic inquiry into other texts, not the Talmud itself. By including the opinions of various rabbis here, the gemara illustrates the variety of understandings and applications of *birkat haTorah*. The follow statement from Rav Hiyya bar Ashi provides an example of the kind of studying that requires *birkat haTorah*. According to his past experience, he saw Rav say the blessing (Rashi specifies that it was indeed *birkat haTorah*) before teaching Sifra, a midrashic work that might also be characterized as talmud. This precedent gives support to a more expansive understanding of what *birkat haTorah* covers beyond the most literal understanding, which would be limited to Rav Huna's opinion that it's only for scripture itself.

iii. Contents of *Birkat haTorah*

מאי מברך? אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: "אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה". ורבי יוחנן מסיים בה הכי "הערב נא ה' אלהינו את דברי תורתך בפנינו ובפיפיות עמך בית ישראל ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל כלנו יודעי שמך ועוסקי תורתך ברוך אתה ה' המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל". ורב המנונא אמר: "אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים ונתן לנו את תורתו. ברוך אתה ה' נותן התורה". אמר רב המנונא: זו היא מעולה שבברכות. הלכך לימרינהו לכולהו.

What does one bless? Rav Yehuda said that which Shmuel said: "Who sanctified us with God's commandments and commanded us to engage with words of Torah." And Rabbi Yohanan concludes (the blessing) thusly: "Adonai our God, sweeten the words of your Torah in our mouths and the mouths of Your people, the House of Israel, and we will, along with our offspring and the offspring of Your people, the House of Israel, all of us, know Your name and engage with Your Torah. Blessed are You, Adonai, the One who teaches Torah to His people Israel." And Rav Hamnuna said: "Who chose us from all peoples and gave us His Torah. Blessed are you, Adonai, the Giver of Torah. Rav Hamnuna said: This is the greatest of the blessings. Therefore, let us say all of them.

After the *sugya* introduces the *Ahavah Rabbah* issue, and then investigates what constitutes the kind of study that requires *birkat haTorah*, the next order of business is discussing the contents of *birkat haTorah*. What are the actual words one is supposed to recite? Rav Yehuda in the name of Shmuel suggests one blessing, Rabbi Yohanan suggests another, and Rav Hamnuna suggests a third. Each of these suggestions approach a different aspect of Torah study. The blessing that Rav Yehuda introduces is centered around the commandment and obligation to study Torah. The blessing that Rabbi Yohanan introduces the generational commitment to Torah and refers to God as the teacher of Torah. Lastly, the blessing that Rav Hamnuna introduces frames Torah as a distinguishing factor of Jewish people and refers to God as the giver of Torah. In an effort to include all of these ideas, the Talmud harmonizes these three different blessings with the conclusion that we recite all three of these blessings together.

While the *sugya* ends after the discussion around the contents of *birkat haTorah*, several questions remain. Does *Ahavah Rabbah* really exempt someone from *birkat*

haTorah? If it does, why? And in what circumstances would it exempt someone from the obligation to begin their studies with *birkat haTorah*? Since these questions are left unexplored in the gemara itself, Rashi and other *rishonim* focus exclusively on this line of the *sugya* in their commentaries. Through the commentaries of Rashi, Tosafot, Rashba, and Meiri, we can better construct the relationship between *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah* and understand the obligatory nature of each. The next source on this textual reconstruction is a parallel *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud to which later commentators refer.

III. Text Parallel: Yerushalmi Talmud Berakhot 1:5

B. Berakhot 11b	Y. Berakhot 1:5
אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: השכים לשנות עד שלא קרא קריאת שמע, צריך לברך; משקרא קריאת שמע, אין צריך לברך, שכבר נפטרה ב"אהבה רבה".	שמואל אמר השכים לשנות קודם קרית שמע צריך לברך. לאחר קרית שמע אין צריך לברך. אמר רבי בא והוא ששנה על אתר.
אמר רב הונא: למקרא צריך לברך, ולמדרש — אינו צריך לברך. ורבי אלעזר אמר: למקרא ולמדרש צריך לברך, למשנה — אינו צריך לברך. ורבי יוחנן אמר: אף למשנה נמי צריך לברך [אבל לתלמוד, אינו צריך לברך]. ורביא אמר: אף לתלמוד צריך (לתזור ולברך) [לברך].	רבי חונא אמר גראין הדברים מדרש צריך לברך. הלכות אין צריך לברך. רבי סימון בשם רבי יהושע בן לוי בין מדרש בין הלכות צריך לברך.
דאמר רב חייא בר אשי: זימנין סגיאיני הנה קאימנא קמיה דרב לתנניי פרקין ב"ספרא דבי רב", הנה מקדים וקא משי ידיה, ובריה, ומתני לן פרקין.	אמר רב חייא בר אשי נהגין הוינן קומי רב בין מדרש בין הלכות וקקינן למברכה.
Rav Yehuda said that which Shmuel said: One who gets up early to study, until he recites <i>Shema</i> , must bless (over that which he is studying). One who recited <i>Shema</i> does not need to bless (over that which he is studying), since he is already exempt from (the recitation of) <i>Ahavah Rabbah</i> . Rav Huna said, for scripture, one needs to bless, but for midrash, one doesn't need to bless. And Rabbi Eleazer said, for scripture and	Shmuel said, one who gets up early to study before he recites <i>Shema</i> needs to bless (<i>birkat haTorah</i> over his studying). After he recites <i>Shema</i> , he doesn't need to bless. Rabbi Abba said that's if he studied immediately in the same place. Rabbi Huna said, it appears that words of <i>midrashic</i> exegesis require the blessing. Study of practical Jewish law does not require the blessing. Rabbi Simon in the name of Rabbi

<p>for midrash, one needs to bless, for Mishnah, one doesn't need to bless. And Rabbi Yohanan said, for Mishnah too, one needs to bless (but for talmud, one doesn't need to bless). And Rava said, even for talmud, one needs (to return and bless) [to bless]. That which Rav Hiyya bar Ashi said, many times I stood before Rav to study chapters in Sifra of the school of Rav—he would first wash his hands, then bless, then teach us our chapter.</p>	<p>Yehoshua ben Levi said both <i>midrashic</i> exegesis and practical Jewish law require the blessing. Rav Hiyya bar Ashi said, when we were accustomed to stand before Rav, he obligated us to bless (the study of) both <i>midrashic</i> exegesis and practical Jewish law.</p>
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This excerpt from the Palestinian Talmud includes three main points relevant to our inquiry into *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*. First, Shmuel introduces the same idea that begins the parallel *sugya* in the Babylonian Talmud, that one needs to recite *birkat haTorah* over his studies if he hasn't yet recited the *Shema*, wherein we can assume *Ahavah Rabbah* or *Ahavat Olam* is included. Second, Rabbi Abba introduces a concept that is not replicated in the Babylonian Talmud, namely that one doesn't need to say the blessing after the *Shema* if he studies immediately afterward. This idea becomes a major point of interest for Tosafot and the *rishonim*. Third, the *sugya* establishes what kind of studying requires the blessing of *birkat haTorah* and similarly to the Babylonian Talmud, arrives at a point of harmony in which multiple opinions are accepted. This parallel in the Palestinian Talmud is significant for a number of reasons, including an example of shared intellectual culture between the rabbis of Israel and Babylonia, potential evidence at piecing together source criticism regarding the origins of this topic, and for our purposes, it serves as a fruitful source text for Tosafot and *rishonim* who attempt to explicate the *sugya* in the Babylonian Talmud.

IV. Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rashi), 1040-1105, France

שכבר נפטר באהבה רבה – שיש בה מעין ברכת התורה ותן בלבנו ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות ולקיים את כל דברי תלמוד תורתך ותלמדם חקי רצונך

“Since he is already exempt (from the recitation of) *Ahavah Rabbah*.” (*Ahavah Rabbah*) has in it a kind of *birkat haTorah* (Torah blessing): “And gives in our hearts, to learn, to teach, to preserve, to do, and to fulfill all the words of Your Torah teaching and teach them, the laws of Your will.”

Rashi picks up on the question of why *Ahavah Rabbah* might exempt someone from *birkat haTorah* and comments about their overlapping content. He writes that *Ahavah Rabbah* contains a similar essence to *birkat haTorah*, citing specific phrases from *Ahavah Rabbah* about receiving, teaching, and keeping the words of Torah. On this level, both *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah* deal with the gift and study of Torah, which is often referred to in Jewish tradition as “revelation.” While there are only a few word duplications between *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*, Rashi points out that they share the underlying theme of Torah. The overlap in theme serves as the justification for *Ahavah Rabbah* exempting someone from *birkat haTorah*. While Rashi makes this connection, however, the other *rishonim* delve further into the specific circumstances in which we say each prayer and when *Ahavah Rabbah* may or may not provide exemption for *birkat haTorah*.

V. Tosafot on B. Berakhot 11b

i. Studying Immediately

שכבר נפטר באהבה רבה - עד הלכך נימרינהו לכולהו. בירושלמי יש הא דאמרי' שכבר נפטר באהבה רבה והוא ששנה על אתר פירוש לאלתר שלמד מיד באותו מקום. ונשאל להרב ר' יצחק כגון אנו שאין אנו לומדין מיד לאחר תפלת השחר שאנו טרודין והולכים כך בלא למוד עד אמצע היום או יותר אמאי אין אנו מברכין ברכת התורה פעם אחרת כשאנו מתחילין ללמוד.

“Since he is already exempt (from the recitation of) *Ahavah Rabbah* -- therefore, we say all of them.” In the (Talmud) Yerushalmi, there are those who say that one who is already exempt by reciting *Ahavah Rabbah* then repeats immediately—which is explained that he learned immediately in the same place. It was asked to Rav Yitzchak, for those like us who

can't learn immediately after the morning prayer service, who are busy and can't go learn until the middle of the day or later—why don't we bless *birkat haTorah* another time when we begin learning?

Tosafot on B. Berakhot 11b outline the *sugya* that they comment on, starting with the phrase about the *Ahavah Rabbah* exemption, *שכבר נפטר באהבה רבה*, and concluding with the statement establishing the words of *birkat haTorah*. Tosafot begin by citing the passage from Palestinian Talmud Berakhot 1:5 about the relationship between *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*, specifically where Rabbi Abbi says that *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah* when they start studying immediately after the recitation of the *Shema*. It isn't clear whether that means directly after the *Shema* or after morning prayer service in general, a question into which commentators later inquire, but the *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud creates the condition that Torah study must be soon after *Ahavah Rabbah* for the person to be exempt from *birkat haTorah*. Even if studying immediately, *על אחר*, isn't an exact timeframe, it opens the discussion for more specificity around when before the *Shema*, after the *Shema*, or other Torah study times throughout the day might be. This further inquiry into the timeframe ambiguity takes shape in a question to Rav Yitzchak of 11th century Ashkenaz, as Tosafot recounts the question of what happens when someone doesn't study immediately after the *Shema* and instead begins their studies later in the day. In addition to timeframe, this investigates different circumstances in which *Ahavah Rabbah* might or might not provide exemption from saying *birkat haTorah* at the beginning of one's studies.

ii. Rav Yitzchak of 11th Century Ashkenaz

והשיב ר"י דלא קיימא לן כאותו ירושלמי הואיל וגמר' שלנו לא אמרו ואין צריך לאלתר ללמוד. ועוד אפי' לפי הירושלמי דוקא אהבה רבה דלא הוי עיקר ברכה לברכת התורה דעיקר אהבה רבה לק"ש נתקן ובשביל היא אינו נפטר מברכת התורה אלא אם ילמוד מיד וגם לא יעשה היסח הדעת. אבל ברכת אשר בחר בנו וברכת לעסוק בדברי תורה שהן עיקר לברכת התורה פוטרת כל היום.

Rav Yitzchak responded that we don't fulfill the same (obligations) as the (Talmud) Yerushalmi since our gemara (Talmud) doesn't say that one must learn immediately in the same place. And further, even according to the Yerushalmi, the essence of *Ahavah Rabbah* isn't exactly the essence of the blessing for *birkat haTorah*. *Ahavah Rabbah* is for the recitation of the *Shema* as it was established and therefore it doesn't make one exempt from *birkat haTorah*, unless one learns immediately after and his mind isn't distracted. But, the blessing "who chose us" and "to engage with words of Torah" is intended for *birkat haTorah* and exempts one all day.

Tosafot continues with the answer that 11th century Ashkenaz sage Rav Yitzhak provides to the question about interruption between *Ahavah Rabbah* and Torah study. The Tosafot assert that the Babylonian Talmud doesn't follow the condition that Torah study immediately follow the recitation of the *Shema* that the Palestinian Talmud stipulates. Rav Yitzchak then responds to the query about if someone who is busy or must go to work and can't study Torah until later in the day has to say *birkat haTorah* when they begin to learn. He says that they don't hold the same position in their Talmud, referring to the Babylonian Talmud, and one doesn't need to learn directly after the morning prayer service. He goes onto distinguish between *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*, saying that each has a different designation. Despite the overlap about the gift and study of Torah that Rashi points out, Rav Yitzchak states that *birkat haTorah* is for Torah while *Ahavah Rabbah* is for the *Shema*. Further, Rav Yitzchak continues by suggesting that saying *birkat haTorah* once exempts one from saying it for the rest of the day, even if they study discontinuously, answering the original question about returning to study Torah later in the day.

iii. Torah Blessing vs. Sukkah Blessings

וא"ת מאי שנא מסוכה שצריך לברך על כל סעודה וסעודה לישיב בסוכה. וי"ל דשאני תורה שאינו מייאש דעתו דכל שעה אדם מחוייב ללמוד דכתיב והגית בו יומם ולילה והוי כמו יושב כל היום בלא הפסק. אבל אכילה בסוכה יש שעה קבועה. וא"ת מפני מה אין אנו מברכין לישן בסוכה. וי"ל דברכה דאכילה שמברכין לישב פוטרנו. א"נ משום שמא לא יישן והוי ברכה לבטלה שהרי אין בידו לישן כל שעה שירצה. והיה אומר ר"ת כשאדם עומד ממטתו בלילה (בשחרית) ללמוד שא"צ

לברך ברכת התורה מפני שברכת התורה של אתמול שחרית פוטרת עד שחרית אחרת ולא נהירא. והצרפתים נהגו לומר פסוקים וברכת כהנים וגם אלו דברים שאין להם שיעור שהיא משנה (פ"א דפאה) ואלו דברים שאדם אוכל פירותיהן כו' שהיא ברייתא (מס' שבת קכז). מפני הירושלמי דבעי שילמוד על אתר. אבל א"צ כמו שכתבתי כבר.

If you ask, what's different (about this) from the Sukkah that you need to bless every meal dwelling in the Sukkah? There are those who say that Torah (study) is different in that it doesn't leave one's mind—one is obligated to learn every hour as it's written “and you shall study it day and night.” It's like one who sits all day without a break. But eating in the Sukkah has a fixed time. And if you say, why don't we bless sleeping in the Sukkah? There are those who say that the blessing for eating also blesses sleeping and makes one exempt. Alternatively, because one may not fall asleep, it would become a blessing in vain, since indeed it's not in everyone's control to sleep every hour that they wish. Rabbeinu Tam would say when someone gets up from their bed in the night to learn, they don't need to bless *birkat haTorah* because the *birkat haTorah* from the day before's morning prayer service exempts someone until the next morning prayer service, but it's not clear. The French were accustomed to saying verses of the Priestly Blessing and “these are the things for which there is no limit” as it's a Mishnah, and “these are the things that one eats of their fruits” as it's a beraita, because the Yerushalmi required that one learn immediately after (the blessing). But that's not necessary as I wrote already.

Tosafot then compare *birkat haTorah* to the blessing for having a meal in the Sukkah during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, known as *Lasheiv BaSukkah*,¹ to investigate whether reciting a blessing once can exempt someone from reciting it again upon the same behavior later that day. The issue in question regarding *birkat haTorah* is how one remains exempt after an interruption between the blessing and the Torah study. This is contrasted to *Lasheiv BaSukkah*, wherein one must recite the blessing at the beginning of every meal in the Sukkah. The reason behind this difference, according to Tosafot, is that while one comes and goes from their fixed mealtimes in the Sukkah, Torah never fully leaves one's mind and therefore constructs a thread of continuity despite interrupted periods of study. Tosafot then go on to reject an opinion from Rabbeinu Tam that exemption from one *birkat haTorah* can

¹ Upon eating in the sukkah, the blessing is: *בְּרִכָּה אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לֵישֵׁב בַּסֻּכָּה* – “Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Sovereign of all: who hallows us with mitzvot, commanding us to dwell in the sukkah.”

last more than one day. Tosafot finish their commentary on this *sugya* by mentioning a custom in France to say *Birkat Kohanim* from scripture, *Eilu Devarim* from Mishnah,² and *she'adam ochel peiroteihen* from Talmud³ after *birkat haTorah*. This custom satisfies the brief discussion in the *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b about which texts one must say *birkat haTorah* before by giving a little bit of each as study material directly following the blessing. Tosafot reiterate in conclusion, however, that there is no obligation to study directly after the morning prayer service in their tradition as there is in the Palestinian Talmud.

VI. Solomon Ben Aderet (Rashba), 1235-1310, Barcelona

i. *Shanah* vs. *Karah*

וגרסינן עלה בירושלמי (ה"ה): אמר רבי בא והוא ששנה על אתר. וכתב הראב"ד ז"ל שיש גירסאות שגורסים והוא שקרא על אתר. ולאותה גירסא כל שקרא ק"ש סמוך לאהבה רבה יצא ידי ברכה כל היום לפי שכבר בירך עה"ת פעם אחת בבוקר, אבל לספרים דגרסי והוא ששנה על אתר אין הברכה מוציאתו אלא ידי אותה קריאה הסמוכה לחברתה, הא אם הפסיק וחזר וקרא צריך הוא לחזור ולברך.

We learned about this in the Yerushalmi. “Rebbi Abba said one that repeats immediately.” The Ra’abad wrote, there are those who learned that it’s one who recites immediately. To learn this, all who recite the *Shema* connected to Ahavah Rabbah fulfill the obligation of blessing all day since they already blessed upon the Torah once that morning, but the books teach that one who repeats immediately doesn’t fulfill the obligation of blessing unless the recitation is directly connected. If there’s a break and he returns to recite, he needs to bless again.

Since Tosafot are part of the Rashba’s intellectual background, the Rashba arrives at the same findings as Tosafot, although he takes a slightly different route of getting to those conclusions. He also starts by citing the parallel *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud and how the rabbis before him responded, but he singles out a specific word to create a further distinction as to whether one must learn directly after Shacharit as the Palestinian Talmud suggests. The

² Mishnah Peah 1:1.

³ B. Berakhot 127b.

Rashba points out that Rabbi Ba in the Palestinian Talmud uses a word that literally means “repeat,” שנה, which connotes to the repetition of rabbinic text, to describe the learning in question. The Rashba compares this to the word that the Rabad, 12th century rabbi from Provence, uses to describe the learning. That word means scripture, קרא, and suggests that the studying in question was specifically the study of scripture. This makes all the difference for the Rashba. If the word were indeed קרא, referring to scripture, then *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah* for the day because the *Shema* is technically scripture and would therefore fulfill the obligation of blessing one’s study of scripture. If the word were “to repeat,” שנה, however, referring to rabbinic text, then one must study directly after the morning prayer service as the Palestinian Talmud suggests and one would need to bless again if they took a break and returned to their studies later. The Rashba here is investigating the circumstances in which *Ahavah Rabbah* would exempt someone from *birkat haTorah* according to the Palestinian Talmud, creating a further distinction between what kind of study to which the blessing refers and linking the contents of one’s study to the potential exemption and duration of their *birkat haTorah*.

ii. Following Tosafot

ובתשובה לרבותינו הצרפתים השיבו שלא הצריכו בירושלמי לחזור ולברך בשלא שנה על אתר, אלא בשנפטר באהבה רבה לפי שהיא אינה נראית ממש כברכת התורה, אבל במברך אשר בחר בנו יצא ידי חובת כל היום, ואפילו הפסיק והלך למלאכתו וחזר לקרוא, והיינו שהוצרך להשמיענו בירושלמי בברכת אהבה רבה ולא השמיענו כן בעלמא ואנן ידעינן דכל שכן בשנפטר באהבה רבה. ואפשר נמי דבירושלמי פליגא אגמרינן מדלא אמרו כן בגמרא, ומכל מקום במי שרגיל לקרות ולעסוק בתורה והולך למלאכתו קצת ודעתו על הלימוד למהר ענינו ולחזור (על) [אל] למודו אין צריך לחזור ולברך אפילו לדעת הירושלמי. והביאו ראיה מרבנו תם ז"ל שלא היה מצריך ברכה לישב בסוכה אלא מסעודה לסעודה, ואפילו הלך לעסקיו ולאחר מכן נמלך לישן אינו חוזר ומברך, וכל שכן כאן שאינו מסיח דעתו מן הלימוד, ועל כן נהגו שלא לברך.

The answer for our Rabbis, the French responded that one doesn’t need the Yerushalmi (position) to return and to bless if one doesn’t study immediately after the (morning service),

only if they are exempt with *Ahavah Rabbah* since it isn't exactly like *birkat haTorah*, but in blessing "who chose us," one fulfills their obligation all day, even if they stop and go to work and return to study. As it was required to understand in the Yerushalmi, *Ahavah Rabbah* doesn't generally exempt us (from *birkat haTorah*). It's also possible that the Yerushalmi disagrees with our Talmud since our Talmud doesn't say it. In any place, one who regularly recites and engages with Torah and goes to work a little bit and his mind is on studying, then he will return quickly to his studies and doesn't need to bless again, even according to the Yerushalmi. Rabbeinu Tam brought that one doesn't need to bless dwelling in the Sukkah (every time), only from meal to meal, and even if one goes to his business and afterward goes to sleep, he doesn't need to bless again, and all who aren't distracted in their minds from studying, don't need to bless again.

The Rashba continues with what is close to a duplication of ideas from Tosafot. He references the rabbis in France and establishes that *Ahavah Rabbah* isn't specifically for the study of Torah the way *birkat haTorah* is, and if one says *birkat haTorah* once, then they are exempt for the day. He acknowledges that this is a departure from the *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud, which confirms that the Babylonian Talmud is the primary Talmudic text for the Rashba and other *rishonim*. The Rashba then uses the same comparison between *birkat haTorah* and *Lashev BaSukkah* to further illustrate that one doesn't have to repeatedly recite *birkat haTorah* throughout the day despite interrupted study sessions because one's mind is never fully distracted from their studies. From the customs in France, to the specific designations of *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah* and the duration of the exemptions they provide, the Rashba replicates the opinions of Tosafot in this part of his commentary.

iii. Departure from Tosafot

ובשם רש"י ז"ל אמרו תלמידיו כשהיה משכים לקרות היה מברך לקרות בתורה וכשהוא הולך לבית הכנסת חוזר ומברך כמו אותן הימים שלא השכים לקרות. ונותן טעם לדבריו כמו שהקורא בתורה מברך ברכת התורה ולא חשיבא ברכה לבטלה ואף על גב שכבר בירך קודם פרשת קרבנות ואיזהו מקומן ורבי ישמעאל, והוא הדין דהכא לא חשיבא ברכה לבטלה. והשיבו עליו בתוספות דלא דמי לקורא בתורה דהתם אפילו בירך על עסק התורה שעסק בפני עצמו, צריך הוא לחזור ולברך על קריאתו בצבור, שכך תקנו לברך שם אשר בחר בנו כמו שנתקנה ברכה לאחריה, וכמו שנתקנה ברכת אשר בחר בנביאים טובים על ההפטר, ועוד דאפילו במקום דשייכא ברכה אפילו

בספר תורה הקפידו שלא לגרום ברכה שאינה צריכה כדאמרין ביומא (סח, ב) ובעשור שבחומש הפקודים קורא על פה.

In the name of Rashi, his students said that when one gets up early to study and blesses their Torah study, when they go to synagogue, they bless again like the days they don't get up early to study. He gives the reason to his statement, that the (public) reading of the Torah requires *birkat haTorah* and doesn't think that it's a blessing in vain even though one already blessed *Parashat Korbanot* (in morning prayers) in whichever place. And Rabbi Yishmael, he ruled that this isn't a blessing in vain. Tosafot responded to him that it's not similar to the public reading of the Torah, even if one blesses matters of Torah with which he himself engages, he needs to bless again for the reading in public, and thus they established a blessing there "who chose us" that was fixed as the blessing after the reading, and similarly a blessing was established, "who chose the good prophets," for the haftarah reading. Further, even in a place where it belongs, the blessing over the Torah scroll is shortened so it doesn't cause an unnecessary blessing we say that day (Sifrut D'bei Rav Yoma 68:2). And on the readings of the Torah, remember to recite orally.

The Rashba's interpretation of Rashi and following analysis of Torah blessings distinguishes his commentary from Tosafot even more. He cites Rashi, whose students said when someone gets up in the morning and recites *birkat haTorah*, they must recite it again when they get to synagogue. He defends against this being a blessing in vain and invokes Rabbi Yishmael who ruled in accordance with his opinion. This all leads to the distinction between the kind of Torah study *birkat haTorah* precedes and public recitation of Torah, which the Rashba connects to the public reading of Torah and Haftarah. The Rashba's inclusion of the public Torah service introduces another form of the overlapping content of Torah that requires a different set of blessings. Zooming out from the immediate behavioral implications, the Rashba's mention of the public Torah service illustrates an important function of Talmudic commentary, whether it's from Tosafot or the *rishonim*, contextualizing elements of a *sugya* and bringing in further relevant connections that go beyond the Talmud page and broaden the interpretation of a given Talmudic discussion. The public Torah service and its blessings are distinct from Torah study and its blessings, both of which are also distinct from *Shema* and its Torah-related blessing (*Ahavah Rabbah*). This

additional context is one of the Rashba's big contributions to the *rishonim*'s inquiry into the relationship between *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*.

VII. Menachem Meiri (HaMeiri), 1249-1315, Catalonia

i. *Ahavah Rabbah* vs. *Ahavat Olam*

ומכל מקום אם קרא את שמע בברכותיה אין צריך לברך עוד למשנתו שכבר נפטר באהבת עולם שברכת התורה היא שהרי אמר ותן בלבנו להבין ולהשכיל.

From any place, if one recited the *Shema* and its blessings, he doesn't need to bless his studies further since *Ahavat Olam* exempts one from *birkat haTorah*, since he already said "and gives our hearts understanding and discernment."

In his work *Beit HaBechirah*, the Meiri takes up the same question about whether the blessing for revelation that precedes the *Shema* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah*. He summarizes the line from the Talmud that says one doesn't need to bless their studies if they've already recited the *Shema* with its blessings, most importantly including the blessing for revelation. Interestingly, however, while the Babylonian Talmud, Rashi, the Tosafot, and Rashba all write about *Ahavah Rabbah* in this scenario, the Meiri writes about *Ahavat Olam*, the *Shema*'s blessing for revelation that is contemporarily recited in the evening prayer service whereas *Ahavah Rabbah* is contemporarily recited in the morning. Although the morning prayer service is the Talmud's, Rashi's, Tosafot's, and the *rishonim*'s focus for the relationship between *Ahavah Rabbah/Ahavat Olam* and *birkat haTorah*, and this remains the case for the Meiri, he will use *Ahavat Olam* in place of *Ahavah Rabbah*. Considering that the Meiri specifically mentions the morning prayer service, his choice of words for the blessing for revelation in the morning could be due to a difference in prayer custom in Spain where the Meiri lived. According to Lawrence Hoffman and Marc Brettler, there is a custom in the Sephardic prayer tradition to begin *Ahavah Rabbah* with the words *Ahavat Olam*, which would explain why the Meiri refers to the morning blessing for revelation as *Ahavat Olam*,

even if it is actually *Ahavah Rabbah*.⁴ Despite the difference in language, the Meiri continues the *rishonim*'s multi-generational conversation about whether *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah*.

ii. Study Immediately After What?

ולפי מה שהתבאר בתלמוד המערב דוקא שהתחיל במשנתו סמוך לתפלתו, והוא שאמרו שם והוא ששנה על אתר ר"ל לאלתר, ולא לאלתר ממש ר"ל אחר ק"ש שהרי צריך הוא לסמוך גאלה לתפלה אלא לאחר תפלה, אבל אם הפסיק אחר תפלה אין ברכת אהבת עולם עולה לו למשנתו וכן אם התחיל במשנתו קודם שקרא את שמע ובירך למשנתו ועמד כשהוא חוזר למשנתו חוזר ומברך.

According to what was explicated in the Western Talmud (Yerushalmi), one begins his studies exactly after his prayer, and he said it there, and he learned in the same place, meaning immediately. But it's not really immediately after the recitation of the *Shema*, since one needs to juxtapose the redemption prayer to *T'filah*. Rather, it's after *T'filah*, but if one stops after *T'filah*, the blessing of *Ahavat Olam* does not fulfill the blessing over his studies, and thus if he begins his studies before the recitation of the *Shema* and blesses his studies, then stands when he returns to studying, he must say the blessing again.

After summarizing the *sugya* on B. Berakhot 11b, the Meiri mentions the *sugya* in PT Berakhot 1:5 like the Tosafot and Rashba do. He cites a number of other works throughout his commentary, which places his explication in conversation with those who have discussed the issue of the *birkat haTorah* exemption before him. The Meiri also brings in these older commentaries to help him formulate his position. He then interprets the parallel *sugya* in PT Berakhot 1:5 similarly to Tosafot and Rashi, establishing that one's Torah study must be right after their prayer service for *Ahavat Olam* to exempt them from Birkat HaTorah. However, the Meiri contextualizes the order of *Ahavat Olam* and Torah study by adding another Talmudic prayer obligation into the conversation. Another one of the *Shema*'s

⁴ Lawrence A. Hoffman. *My People's Prayer Book. Vol. 9, Welcoming the Night: Minchah and Ma'ariv (Afternoon and Evening Prayer)*. Woodstock: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2005. Page 63.

blessings should lead directly into the *T'filah* portion of the prayer service⁵ according to B. Berakhot 4b and 9b. The Meiri mentions this because *T'filah* could be understood as an interruption between the *Shema* and Torah study, but he understands the stipulation in the Palestinian Talmud that one must study “immediately” as immediately after the prayer service as a whole, including the *T'filah* section, and not just immediately after the *Shema*. In an effort to maintain immediacy, the Meiri still establishes that there can't be a break between *T'filah* and Torah study, unless they bless the Torah study separately with *birkat haTorah*, because that would sever the connection between *Ahavat Olam* and Torah study. This is a unique contribution to the discussion around the timing and order of the prayer service, Torah study, and the appropriate blessings that the Meiri brings to the surface.

iii. *Birkat HaTorah* Exemptions

ומכל מקום כתבו קצת רבנים שלא נאמר כן אלא באהבת עולם ומפני שאינה ברכה גמורה לתורה, אבל אם בירך אשר בחר בנו הואיל וברכה גמורה של תורה היא אינו צריך לברך כל אותו היום אלא אם כן בקריאת ספר תורה בצבור שמתקנת עזרא.

From any place, the rabbis wrote a bit that *Ahavat Olam* is only said because it's not a completely a blessing for Torah, but if he blesses “who chose us,” since that is completely a blessing of Torah, one doesn't need to bless every time that day, only if there is a public Torah reading as established by Ezra.

If one does study right after *T'filah*, *Ahavat Olam* still only exempts someone from saying *birkat haTorah* for that instance of studying Torah. If they study another time in the day, they'll have to recite a blessing, which is not the case for *birkat haTorah* —saying it once does exempt one for the rest of the day, even if there are multiple different sessions of

⁵ The *T'filah* portion of the prayer service, also known as the *Amidah*, is the unit of prayer in the Jewish prayer service that directly follows the *Shema* and its blessings during the morning and evening services. *T'filah* is typically recited three times per day, in the morning, afternoon, and evening services, however there is a fourth on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, and festivals, and a fifth on Yom Kippur. *T'filah* consists of 19 blessings on weekdays, 7 on Shabbat and festivals, and 9 during the additional *T'filah* on Rosh Hashanah. The rules and origins of *T'filah* can be found in Chapters 4-5 of B. Berakhot.

study with breaks between them. The Meiri qualifies this, though, by writing that one blessing exempting someone for the rest of the day applies only to Torah study, not to the public reading of the Torah, a ritual that requires blessings every time it happens throughout the day. As he writes, אינו צריך לברך כל אותו היום אלא אם כן בקריאת ספר תורה בצבור, שמתקנת עזרא, “One only needs to bless every time that day with the public reading of the Torah as established by Ezra.” The inclusion of the public Torah service in his analysis of *Ahavat Olam* and *birkat haTorah* picks up on the thread that Rashba created, comparing *birkat haTorah* in the different contexts of Torah study and public Torah reading, illustrating the intellectual dialogue amongst different *rishonim* in their respective commentaries.

iv. Sukkah and Tefillin Blessings

והם העידו בקצת גדוליהם שלא היו מברכים לישיב בסוכה אלא מסעודה לסעודה אע"פ שהיו הולכים לעסקיהם וחוזרים ובאים לישן בתוכה, הא כל קריאה שבספר תורה חייב לברך כל זמן שבא לקרות אפילו הרבה בקריאות כל היום שכל קריאה שבספר תורה אך ביתר מכדי תקנת עזרא ראשונה היא וקובעת ברכה לעצמה כדין תפילין שכל זמן שמניחן מברכים עליהן.

They witnessed their great rabbis who would only bless sitting in the Sukkah from meal to meal even though they went to their business engagements and returned to come to sleep inside the Sukkah. Thus, all reading in the Torah is obligated to come with a blessing every time there's a recitation even if there are a lot of readings throughout the day, all the Torah readings (are blessed) as Ezra first established them. The blessing for the reading is fixed itself as the ruling of tefillin, which every time someone puts on tefillin they must bless it.

The Meiri compares this to the requirement to bless dwelling in the Sukkah at the beginning of each meal, which is a departure from how the Tosafot and Rashba compared *Birkat HaTorah* with Sukkah blessings. Rather than contrasting *birkat haTorah* with the Sukkah dwelling blessing since one recitation of *birkat haTorah* exempts someone for the whole day while they must repeat the Sukkah dwelling blessing at the beginning of each meal as Tosafot and Rashba do, the Meiri compares the blessings for the public reading of

the Torah with the Sukkah dwelling blessing because they are both recited numerous times a day for each of their respective occasions. Further, the Meiri introduces another comparison to further make this point that there is an obligation to bless the public Torah reading every time it happens throughout a day. He writes, כדין תפילין שכל זמן שמניחן מברכים עליהן, “like the ruling for tefillin in which every time someone puts them on, they must bless them.” The Tosafot and Rashba do not make this comparison, but the Meiri compares this obligation to the obligation to say the blessings for putting on *tefillin* every time one puts it on throughout the day—one set of blessings in the morning does not create an exemption for the rest of the day. He then contrasts the tefillin blessings with the Torah study blessing, either through *Ahavat Olam* or *Birkat HaTorah*, in that according to the Rabad and Rashba, the one recitation of either *Ahavat Olam* in the *Shema* with study directly following *T’filah* or of *birkat haTorah* exempts someone for the rest of the day, even if they take a break and return to Torah study later.

v. Meiri’s Conclusion

ויש גורסים בתלמוד המערב והוא שקרא על אתר ומתוך כך הם פוסקים אם קרא את שמע סמוך לברכת אהבת עולם אע"פ שהפסיק בין תפלתו למשנתו ברכת אהבת עולם עולה לו לכמה פעמים כל אותו היום, והוא הדין אם השכים לשנות קודם ק"ש ובירך למשנתו ועמד שאין צריך לברך כל אותו היום, ואין הדבר דומה להנחת תפילין שאין (לעסוק) [לעוסק] בתורה שום הפסק ואכילה ושתייה אינו הפסק אחר שלא התפרק עול תורה מעליו, ועכשיו שנהגו לברך בשל שחרית אותן ברכות שתקנו חכמים על התורה או שנהגו לקרות את שמע סמוך לאהבת עולם אין צריך לברך כל אותו היום ברכת התורה אלא בקריאות המתקנות מתקנת עזרא בספר תורה, שהם מצוה בפני עצמה ואינם בכלל תלמוד תורה, אבל אם הפסיק בין אהבת עולם לק"ש הואיל ולא נאמרה ברכת אהבת עולם כהלכתה מכל וכל אינה עולה אלא לדבר שנאמרה בשבילו ר"ל ק"ש.

There’s learning in the Western Talmud (Yerushalmi) that one recites immediately and within this, they cut off the *Shema* and *Ahavat Olam* together, even if they take a break between *T’filah* and studying, *Ahavat Rabbah* fulfills their obligation for multiple times that same day. And he rules if one gets up to study before reciting the *Shema*, and blesses his studies, then he doesn’t need to bless every time that day, and it’s not a similar thing to putting on tefillin, who isn’t engaging with Torah without a break, eating, and drinking without a break afterward, and not interrupting the yoke of Torah upon him. And now, they

were accustomed to bless in the morning prayer service blessings that the sages fixed upon the Torah, or they were accustomed to recite the *Shema* juxtaposed with Ahavat Olam, they didn't need to bless every time that day the birkat haTorah, only in the readings of the Torah scroll that were fixed by Ezra. That they were commanded itself without general Toral learning, but if one stops between Ahavat Olam and the recitation of the *Shema*, since Ahavat Olam wasn't said, it's ruling in any place is that it doesn't fulfill that which it's said with, meaning, the *Shema*.

The Meiri goes on to write that there's a custom to recite *birkat haTorah* every morning during the morning prayer service as the sages established on B. Berakhot 11b, which exempts someone from needing to say *birkat haTorah* the rest of the day, but does not exempt them from reciting the Torah blessings for a public Torah reading. To conclude his commentary on this specific question about *birkat haTorah*, the Meiri clarifies that in order for *Ahavat Olam* to exempt someone from *birkat haTorah*, it must be recited directly before the *Shema* in its established place within the recitation of the *Shema* and its blessings. The next section is only tangentially related, and deals with why there are obligated blessings both before and after the public reading of the Torah. The Meiri contrasts this obligation with *birkat haTorah*, where there is only a blessing before the study of Torah, which serves as the transition from the discussion about *Ahavat Olam* and *birkat haTorah* to the discussion about blessings before and after different ritual obligations. In his commentary on this *sugya* from B. Berakhot 11b, the Meiri enters into conversation with Tosafot and the *rishonim* before him, and adds new insights regarding the order of the *Shema*, *T'filah*, and Torah study, as well as the Sukkah and *tefillin* blessings in comparison with *birkat haTorah*.

VIII. Similarities and Differences

The different *rishonim* don't have major substantive differences in their behavioral applications of the original question about how *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from

birkat haTorah. All conclude that, with the help of PT Berakhot 1:5, that this is only the case when one studies directly after their prayers, although the Meiri specifies that it's after the *T'filah* section⁶ of the morning prayer service while others leave it ambiguous as to whether the study needs to be performed after the *Shema* or *T'filah*. If there is an interruption between prayer and study or between different periods of study, *Ahavah Rabbah* does not exempt someone from *birkat haTorah* and they must recite *birkat haTorah* when they return to their studies. All also specify that this is not the case with *birkat haTorah*, which exempts someone from further obligation that day to recite it at the beginning of Torah study, even if there is interruption between prayer and study or different periods of study. Rashba and the Meiri also add a further distinction between blessing Torah study and blessing the public reading of the Torah. In response to the original question about *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*, the *rishonim* agree that this is only in the case of study directly after prayer and doesn't exempt someone from the requirement to bless Torah study throughout the day as *birkat haTorah* does.

In addition to the content of their responses, the different *rishonim* also share similar processes as to how they reach their conclusions. After citing the line in question from the Babylonian Talmud about *Ahavah Rabbah* exempting someone from *birkat haTorah*, all refer to the parallel *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud. All also cite sages who came before them: Tosafot cite Rav Yitzchak of Ashkenaz, Rashba cites Rashi, and the Meiri cites Rabad and Rashba. This is representative of the continuous development of post-Talmudic halakhic literature,⁷ of which the genre of Talmudic commentary is an essential part. Further, all these

⁶ See previous footnote for further information on *T'filah*.

⁷ Post-Talmudic Halakhic Literature refers to the body of literature that follows the Talmud and includes Talmudic commentary, Jewish legal interpretation and codes, and rabbinic responsa.

rishonim compare *birkat haTorah* with different blessing obligations associated with the Sukkah. While they all don't do it in the exact same way, they do all draw this comparison. The overlapping conclusions with different methods of getting there between the different *rishonim* illustrate the importance that each commentator to write their own commentary, if for no other reason than they are writing in a position of authority in their respective communities and this Talmudic inquiry held behavioral implications. Lastly, starting with Rashba, all create a distinction between blessing Torah study and blessing the public reading of the Torah. All these similarities show the *rishonim*'s interaction with the post-Talmudic literature that came before them, as well as how they all arrive at similar conclusions.

While the *rishonim* share a lot in common in their response to the original question about *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah*, there are also differences between their commentaries that represent the different temporal and cultural contexts in which they were writing. The Tosafot cite Rabbi Yitzcha and reference a French custom to read excerpts of Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud after reciting *birkat haTorah* during the morning prayer service. Rashba brings in a unique textual analysis between the words “to repeat,” שנה, and “to recite,” קרא, and he was the first to expand the exposition of *birkat haTorah* into the public reading of the Torah. His comment on the particular word used was a response to Rabad, which might suggest that Rashba was in closer intellectual connection to him than other *rishonim*. The expansion of the commentary into the blessing for the public reading of Torah shows that those blessings and practices were likely part of the cultural context in which Rashba lived in 13th century Spain. Further, the Meiri used the words *Ahavat Olam* in place of *Ahavah Rabbah*, although he was referring to the same blessing, brings in a comparison to tefillin blessings, and refers to a practice of reciting *birkat haTorah* every

morning prayer service as instituted by the sages. While minor differences, these differences unique to each commentary offer more perspectives into the original inquiry about *Ahavah Rabbah* and *birkat haTorah* that reflect the different cultural contexts in which the original inquiry was relevant.

IX. Conclusion

Tosafot and other *rishonim* ultimately arrive at similar conclusions regarding our initial inquiry from B. Berakhot 11b as to whether and how *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah*. *Ahavah Rabbah* only leads to exemption when someone studies immediately after the morning prayer service. If there is an interruption, either between the morning prayer service and when one studies or between periods of study, one must bless *birkat haTorah*. However, once they bless *birkat haTorah*, they are exempt for the day from saying it at the beginning of another period of study, whereas *Ahavah Rabbah* is only valid immediately after the morning prayer service. The blessings for the public reading of the Torah are a separate category and must be recited at the beginning of each public reading. The different commentaries offer different angles, insights, and interpretations into their similar conclusions, but a question emerges around why there are all these different commentaries that say such a similar thing. From this journey through these different commentaries, I believe that the Talmudic discourse across generations and geographies illustrates each commentator's particular goals and contexts, and builds a valuable intellectual culture around Talmudic discourse.

First, each commentator, whether Tosafot or any of the various *rishonim*, follows whoever previously commented on the particular issue at hand. Tosafot followed Rav Yitzchak of Ashkenaz, Rashba follows Rashi, the Meiri follows Rashba and Rabad and so

on. This accomplishes two different results. When a previous commentator sets a precedent regarding a particular issue, citing them gives one's commentary stronger authority when they use it to support their argument. In addition to strengthening their own commentary, following previous commentaries has the effect of building a chain of behavioral and intellectual tradition. These *rishonim* weren't ruling about when *Ahavah Rabbah* exempts someone from *birkat haTorah* out of nowhere—they were making decisions informed by previous commentaries. Then intellectually, the progression of Talmudic commentaries creates an intellectual tradition in which one Talmudic inquiry is continually interpreted based on cultural circumstances.

Second, the *rishonim* were often the Jewish legal authorities of their respective communities. When it came to questions of Jewish practice and behavior, such as when someone is exempt from saying *birkat haTorah*, Jewish communities in the medieval era followed their rabbi. There wasn't yet a comprehensive volume of Jewish practice and law that guided the global Jewish community. Instead, the *rishonim* handled Jewish behavioral, practical, and legal questions for their individual communities, and could do so through Talmudic commentary when an issue came from the Talmudic text. In hindsight, we can point out the overlapping content and conclusions between the different commentaries, but there was a need for each individual commentator to write their individual commentary, especially when it came to behavioral questions like the exemption from *birkat haTorah*.

Lastly, these separate commentaries put commentators of different generations and geographies in conversation with one another. This may have not been a primary goal, but the result is a robust intellectual culture that spans across time and place. For example, the Meiri used the phrase *Ahavat Olam* to refer to *Ahavah Rabbah* due to his cultural context in

which it was commonplace to add those words to the beginning of *Ahavah Rabbah*. He addresses the same question as other *rishonim*, and comes to a similar conclusion, but his different language and path of getting there shows one intellectual and cultural strand in Talmudic discourse. For both intellectual culture and Jewish legal rulings and practice, the conversation between commentaries helps construct a fuller scope of Jewish tradition and practice across different times and places.

While these commentaries arrive at similar answers, their similarities and differences as well as the fact that all of these different commentaries exist around the same question show some of the individual commentator's goals and the nature of the discourse found in medieval Talmudic commentaries. By following previous commentaries, establishing authority in their own communities, and entering into cross-generational and cross-cultural conversation, the *rishonim* have valid reasons for writing their own commentaries, even if they share conclusions with other commentaries. Beyond their immediate reasons, the development of Talmudic commentaries built a tradition of textual interpretation which complements and deepens study of the text itself.

Stammaitic Editing and Motivations in B. Berakhot 4b

I. Introduction

There is a unit of Talmudic text, (“*sugya*”), on B. Berakhot 4b that presents significant indicators of *Stammaitic* editing in the 7th-8th centuries CE. While a traditional Jewish perspective accepts the Talmud as a cohesive unit, modern scholarship that has developed over the course of the 20th and 21st centuries, beginning with Hanokh Albeck, acknowledges transmission and editing processes that can influence the understanding of a text and its origins. This school of thought suggests that there was a group of Talmudic rabbis in the 8th century, called the *Stammaim*, who were responsible for glossing, editing, and ultimately compiling the volume that we know as the Babylonian Talmud.⁸ In this critical examination, I will analyze the structure of the *sugya* in focus according to Shamma Friedman’s 14 methodological principles to investigate the origins of Talmudic statements,⁹ trace statements back to their sources between *Tannaitic*, *Amoraic*, and *Stammaitic* origin, compare the *sugya* in focus to a parallel *sugya* on B. Berakhot 9b, and suggest potential motivations for the *Stam*’s editing choices. Through this critical analysis, I hope to uncover the indications of *Stammaitic* editing and their motivations for editing this *sugya*.

⁸ David Weiss Halivni and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein. *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Page xxix.

⁹ Shamma Friedman. *Pereq Ha-Isha Rabba in the Babylonian Talmud: A Critical Study of Yevamot X with a Methodological Introduction* in Hayyim Zalman Dimitrovsky, Ed. *Texts and Studies, Analecta Judaica, Vol. 1*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1977. Pages 300-309. (Hebrew)

II. Structural Analysis

אמר מר, קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל.¹⁰ מסייע ליה לרבי יוחנן. דאמר רבי יוחנן: אינהו בן העולם הבא — זה הסומך גאולה לתפלה של ערבית.¹¹ רבי יהושע בן לוי אומר: תפלות באמצע תקנום.¹²

במאי קא מפלגי?

אי בעית אימא קרא, אי בעית אימא סברא.

אי בעית אימא סברא.

דברבי יוחנן סבר גאולה מאורתא נמי הוי, אלא גאולה מעלייתא לא הויא אלא עד צפרא. ורבי יהושע בן לוי סבר פיון דלא הויא אלא מצפרא — לא הויא גאולה מעלייתא.

ואיבעית אימא קרא, ושניהם מקרא אחד דרשו, דכתיב "בשכבה ובקומה".

רבי יוחנן סבר: מקיש שכבה לקימה, מה קימה — קריאת שמע ואחר כך תפלה, אף שכבה נמי — קריאת שמע ואחר כך תפלה. רבי יהושע בן לוי סבר: מקיש שכבה לקימה: מה קימה — קריאת שמע סמוך למטתו, אף שכבה נמי — קריאת שמע סמוך למטתו.¹³

מתיב מר בריה דרבנא, בערב מברך שמים לפניו ושמים לאחריו.¹⁴ ואי אמרת בעי לסמוך, הא לא קא סמוך גאולה לתפלה, דהא בעי למימר "השכיבנו!"

אמרי: פיון דתקיננו רבנן "השכיבנו" — כגאולה אריכתא דמא. דאי לא תימא הכי, שחרית היכי מצי סמיה?¹⁵ והא אמר רבי יוחנן: בתחלה אומר: "ה' שפתי תפתח",

ולבסוף הוא אומר: "יהיו לרצון אמרי פי".¹⁶

¹⁰ Tannaitic Statement. The phrase "אמר מר" indicates a resumptive statement that is often derived from a Baraita that has been discussed previously. Statements derived from Baraitot are Tannaitic because Baraitot are from the Tannaitic Era, the same era as the Mishnah, but were left out of the official Mishnah.

¹¹ Amoraic Statement. While the use of the Aramaic "ד" is a sign of *Stammaitic* Editing, the statement itself is in Hebrew, the rabbi cited is from the Amoraic Era, and its parallel on B. Berakhot 9b all suggest that this is an Amoraic statement. Friedman, *ibid.* Pages 301 and 306-307.

¹² Amoraic Statement. This statement is attributed to a rabbi of the Amoraic Era and contains Hebrew. Friedman, *ibid.* Page 301.

¹³ Unit of *Stammaitic* Editing. This unit of text is in Aramaic, uses the Aramaic "ד", provides an Aramaic explanation to *memrot* in Hebrew, and uses longer language, all of which are signs of *Stammaitic* editing. The term "סבר" also usually indicates that the statement is a reconstruction or conjecture about the reasoning. Friedman, *Ibid.* Pages 301-303.

¹⁴ Tannaitic Statement. This statement comes from Mishnah *Berakhot* 1:4, rendering it a Tannaitic statement.

¹⁵ Unit of *Stammaitic* Editing. This question contains both Hebrew and Aramaic and also has a corresponding parallel on BT *Berakhot* 9b. While this question's origins are not clear, it likely appears in this *sugya* due to *Stammaitic* editing. Friedman, *ibid.* Pages 306-307.

¹⁶ *Stammaitic* Editing. While this statement is attributed to a rabbi from the Amoraic period and is introduced with אמר, it also appears on *Berakhot* 9b which signifies *Stammaitic* editing, and can therefore be characterized as *Stammaitic*. Friedman, *Ibid.* Page 301.

אֵלָא הָתָם כִּיּוֹן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבִּנּוּן לְמִימַר "ה' שְׁפָתַי תִּפְתָּח" — כְּתִפְלָה אֲרִיכָתָא דְּמִיָּא. הָכָא
נָמִי, כִּיּוֹן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבִּנּוּן לְמִימַר "הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ" — כְּגַא וְלָהּ אֲרִיכָתָא דְּמִיָּא.¹⁷

III. Source Critical Analysis

a. *Tannaitic* Statements

There are only two *Tannaitic* statement in this *sugya*. First, to open the *sugya*, we read קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל מר, אָמַר מַר, which translates to “the master has stated that one who recites the *Shema* and then prays *T’filah*...” The phrase “אָמַר מַר” indicates a resumptive statement that is often derived from a *Baraita* that has been discussed previously. Statements derived from *Baraitot* are *Tannaitic* because *Baraitot* are from the *Tannaitic* Era, the same era as the Mishnah, but were left out of the official Mishnah. In this case, the statement resumes a statement made earlier on BT *Berakhot* 4b. The second *Tannaitic* statement in this *sugya* is, בְּעֶרְבַּ מְבָרְךְ שְׁמַיִם לְפָנֶיךָ וְשְׁמַיִם לְאַחֲרֶיךָ, which appears here and B. Berakhot 2a and is originally from Mishnah Berakhot 1:4. In this context on BT *Berakhot* 4b, it appears as a transition phrase between the two main topics of the *sugya*, the first being the order of the *Shema* and *T’filah* and the latter being extended blessings within the context of juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* with *T’filah*. On B. Berakhot 2a, it is used as a proof text for showing that the evening *Shema* should be taught first. These two widely different applications of this *Tannaitic* statement suggest that these statements may have been edited into their respective *sugyot* during the *Stammaitic* era due to their textual variance, according to the school of academic Talmud study that endorses the hypothesis about *Stammaitic* glossing, editing, and compiling.

b. *Memrot*

¹⁷ Unit of *Stammaitic* Editing. Ibid.

This *sugya* is comprised largely of *Stammaitic* editing and statements. First, however, the *sugya* is built upon two *Amoraic* statements, one of which seems to be more connected to the opening *Tannaitic* statement, *אמר מר קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל*, than the other. The first *Amoraic* statement comes right after this opening statement, and reads *דאמר רבי יוחנן: אינהו בן העולם הבא — זה הסומך גאולה לתפלה של ערבית*. We know that this is an *Amoraic* statement because of the use of “אמר,” the use of Hebrew as opposed to Aramaic, and the rabbinic citation of Rabbi Yohanan, who was a 2nd generation *Amora*.¹⁸ This *Amoraic* statement, however, is likely included in this *sugya* due to *Stammaitic* editing. The use of “ד” before “אמר” is a sign that this statement appears elsewhere in Talmud.¹⁹ In this case, the statement *אינהו בן העולם הבא — זה הסומך גאולה לתפלה של ערבית* also appears on B. Berakhot 9b, in an only very slightly altered way. The fact that this statement appears in multiple places suggests that *Stammaitic* editing took place. There could have been various traditions around where this statement originated, as well as multiple traditions as to where to apply this statement. In this *sugya*, it seems especially out of place because the discussion around juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* and *T’filah* that it introduces is secondary chronologically to the discussion around the order of the *Shema* and *T’filah*, which the first and third *Amoraic* statements introduce. This reference to material that appears later in the *sugya* and its distance from that topically relevant material within the text, however, are further signs of *Stammaitic* editing.²⁰ Lastly, the *Amoraic* statement that comes after Rabbi Yohanan’s statement is more smoothly connected to Mar’s first statement, meaning that removing Rabbi Yohanan’s statement would render a more continuous text—yet another sign of *Stammaitic* editing.²¹ Because of both

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. Pages 301 and 306-307.

²⁰ Ibid. Pages 304-305.

²¹ Ibid. Page 303.

syntactic variance within the statement and positional clues within the *sugya*, this *Amoraic* statement was likely a result of *Stammaitic* editing.

The second *Amoraic* statement reads רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לֵוִי אוֹמֵר: תְּפִלוֹת בְּאַמְצָע תִּקְנוּם. While this statement doesn't begin with "אמר" like the others, it begins with a form of the same word, "אומר." It's also in Hebrew as opposed to the Aramaic language in which the *Stam* usually appears.²² Additionally, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi is a 1st generation *Amora*. Considering these three factors, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's opinion can also be classified as an *Amoraic* statement. Unlike Rabbi Yohanan's statement, it appears to be in its rightful place as well, as it offers an alternative understanding of the order of the *Shema* and *T'filah* in direct response to the opening *Tannaitic* statement that begins the *sugya*. The main discussion of the *sugya* that follows unpacks the different, incompatible understandings that Mar and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi hold about the order of the *Shema* and *T'filah*. The construction of their disagreement in the *sugya* opens opportunity for further critical analysis of origin sources and editing.

There is another *memre* later in the *sugya* as well that is also attributed to Rabbi Yohanan. We know that יְהוֹנָן רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: בְּתַחֲלָה אוֹמֵר: "ה' שָׁפְתַי תִּפְתָּח", וְלְבָסוּף הוּא אוֹמֵר: "יְהוָה" is an *amoraic* statement because of the use of "אמר," its attribution to a rabbi, and because it's in Hebrew. This *memre* also appears, however, on B. Berakhot 9b which suggests that, while this is still an *Amoraic* statement, there may have been *Stammaitic* editing or manipulation in this statement's application to the *sugya* on B. Berakhot 4b. This statement of Rabbi Yohanan's on 9b is also in conversation with his previous *memre*, that appears on both 9b and 4b, "אֵיזְהוּ בֶּן הָעוֹלָם הַבֵּא," within the context of the "extended

²² Ibid. Page 301.

blessing.” The issue of the “extended blessing” becomes the topic for the second unit of the *sugya* on 4b, whereas it is the main issue of focus on 9b. On 4b, Rabbi Yohanan’s first *memre* is totally separate from his latter *memre* and ensuing discussion on extended prayers. On B. Berakhot 9b, both *memrot* and the ensuing discussion are all together in one textual unit. This textual variance is an indicator of *Stammaitic* editing according to Shamma Friedman, because the variance shows there were multiple versions of the statement quoted by the *Stammaim*.²³

c. *Stammaitic* Contributions

The majority of this *sugya*, which appears between the opening *memrot* and the closing statements can be described as “*shakla v’tarya*,” which David Halivni defines as “dialectical argumentation.”²⁴ The transmission of *shakla v’tarya* through the generations of *Amoraim* was not a foolproof process, and the *Stammaim* were often left to rediscover, reconstruct, and/or fill in dialectical argumentation the best that they could. This unit of text within the *sugya* begins with the question “במאי קא מפלגי?” meaning, “(regarding) what do (they) disagree?” This question is borne out of the opposing *memrot* between Mar and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi—Mar suggested that *Shema* always comes before *T’filah* while Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi suggested that *Shema* comes before *T’filah* in the morning, but after *T’filah* at night, rendering the *T’filah* prayers in the middle of the morning and evening *Shema* obligations. “במאי קא מפלגי?” brings forth the disagreement between these two positions for further argumentation and exploration. Interestingly, the second opening *memre*, from Rabbi Yohanan, isn’t yet applied to the *sugya*, providing evidence that it may

²³ Ibid. Pages 306-307.

²⁴ David Weiss Halivni. *Aspects of the Formation of the Talmud* in Rubenstein, Jeffrey L., *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Stammaim to the Aggada*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. Page 339.

have been edited into the *sugya* between the other two more relevant and connected *memrot*.²⁵ Further, the language of the opening question to this unit with of text within the *sugya* also indicates *Stammaitic* editing or sourcing, considering the Aramaic vocabulary and grammatical forms.²⁶

The next line is also indicative of *Stammaitic* material because it contains a key Aramaic phrase that introduces the kind of Talmudic discussion that suggests potential *Stammaitic* activity in the text. “אי בעית אימא” means “if you wish, I will say” and establishes the framework for the *shakla v’tarya* that follows. The *gemara* goes on to offer deeper interpretations and explanations of Mar and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s disagreement according to both scripture and logic. These are not unusual lenses for *shakla v’tarya*, but it is noteworthy that both options are discussed to their points of conclusion. This is especially important because this disagreement around whether the order of *Shema* and *T’filah* is flipped in the evening is never really considered as *halakhah*, which is shown through the lack of interest from *Tosafot* and later commentators in Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s opinion. The order of the *Shema* before *T’filah* prevails as the normative order of the Jewish prayer service, but the alternative that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi provides is fully investigated according to both scripture and logic. This textual unit within the *sugya*, detailing the differences of opinion between Mar and Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, is based first on logical interpretation of how the timing of the Exodus from Egypt informs their prayer practice, and then on the scriptural interpretation of Deuteronomy 6:7, concluding with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s scriptural support for why the *Shema* should come after *T’filah* in the evening.

²⁵ Friedman. Ibid. Page 303.

²⁶ Ibid. Page 301.

The *sugya* then abruptly changes gears, referring to Rabbi Yohanan's *memre* that hadn't been directly expounded upon to this point. The disconnection between Rabbi Yohanan's statement and its corresponding material later in the *sugya*, as well as this abrupt shift of content from the order of the *Shema* and *T'filah* to the juxtaposition of *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* are both signs of *Stammaitic* editing.²⁷ The transition between these two topics is attributed to 4th generation *Amora* Mar b'reih Ravina's objection, but the statement attributed to him-- "בערב מברך שתיים לפניו ושתיים לאחריו"—originates in the Mishnah (Berakhot 1:4) and is therefore *Tannaitic* in origin as he quotes from a Mishnah to support his position. Its application here serves as a bridge between discussions about the *Shema* and *T'filah* order and the *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* juxtaposition and could be yet another sign of *Stammaitic* editing because it appears in a different context when it appears on B. Berakhot 2a. It is merely a vehicle to progress the discussion of the *sugya* from one topic to another, neither of which are directly related to the content of this *Tannaitic* statement.

The rest of the *sugya*, outside of Rabbi Yohanan's second *Amoraic* statement and the statements that overlap with B. Berakhot 9b, is *Stammaitic* in character because of its vocabulary and language. There are key Aramaic phrases such as-- "דמיא", "דהא", "בעי", Aramaic grammar, and textual variance between this *sugya* and its parallel on B. Berakhot 9b. Another indication of *Stammaitic* editing in this unit of text is the repeated use of "ד" to refer to statements, and in this case rulings, made elsewhere.²⁸ All of these textual clues indicate that the *Stammaim* significantly edited this *sugya* outside of its four most clear *Amoraic* statements. Even among those *Amoraic* statements, there are signs that two of them were subject to *Stammaitic* editing despite their *Amoraic* origins.

²⁷ Ibid. Page 303 and 306-307.

²⁸ Ibid. Page 301.

IV. Parallel Texts: BT Berakhot 4b & BT Berakhot 9b

B. Berakhot 9b	B. Berakhot 4b
היכי מצי סמיד? והא אמר רבי יוחנן: בתפלה הוא אומר: "ה' שפתי תפתח", ולבסוף הוא אומר: "יהיו לרצון אמרי פי וגו'!"	אמר מר, קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל. מסייע ליה לרבי יוחנן. דאמר רבי יוחנן: איזהו בן העולם הבא — זה הסומד גאולה לתפלה של ערבית. רבי יהושע בן לוי אומר: תפלות באמצע תקנום.
אמר רבי אלעזר: תהא בתפלה של ערבית.	במאי קא מפלגי?
והא אמר רבי יוחנן: איזהו בן העולם הבא — זה הסומד גאולה של ערבית לתפלה של ערבית!	אי בעית אימא סברא.
אלא אמר רבי אלעזר: תהא בתפלת המנחה.	דרבי יוחנן סבר גאולה מאורתא נמי הוי, אלא גאולה מעלייתא לא הויא אלא עד צפרא. ורבי יהושע בן לוי סבר כיון דלא הויא אלא מצפרא — לא הויא גאולה מעלייתא.
רב אשי אמר: אפילו תימא אכולהו, וכיון דקבעיה רבנו בתפלה — בתפלה אריכתא דמיא.	ואיבעית אימא קרא, ושניהם מקרא אחד דרשו, דכתיב "בשכבך ובקומך".
דאי לא תימא הכי, ערבית היכי מצי סמיד, והא בעי למימר "השפיכנו!" אלא כיון דתקינו רבנו השפיכנו — כגאולה אריכתא דמיא. הכי נמי כיון דקבעיה רבנו בתפלה — בתפלה אריכתא דמיא.	רבי יוחנן סבר: מקיש שכיבה לקימה, מה קימה — קריאת שמע ואחר כך תפלה, אף שכיבה נמי — קריאת שמע ואחר כך תפלה. רבי יהושע בן לוי סבר: מקיש שכיבה לקימה: מה קימה — קריאת שמע סמוך למטתו, אף שכיבה נמי — קריאת שמע סמוך למטתו.
	מתיב מר בריה דרבינא, בערב מברך שמים לפניו ושמים לאחריו. ואי אמרת בעי לסמוך, הא לא קא סמד גאולה לתפלה, דהא בעי למימר "השפיכנו!"
	אמרי: כיון דתקינו רבנו "השפיכנו" — כגאולה אריכתא דמיא. דאי לא תימא הכי, שחרית היכי מצי סמיד? והא אמר רבי יוחנן: בתפלה אומר: "ה' שפתי תפתח", ולבסוף הוא אומר: "יהיו לרצון אמרי פי".
	אלא התם כיון דתקינו רבנו למימר "ה' שפתי תפתח" — בתפלה אריכתא דמיא. הכא נמי, כיון דתקינו רבנו למימר "השפיכנו" — כגאולה אריכתא דמיא.

This *sugya* on B. Berakhot 9b is the closest parallel to our *sugya* in focus on BT Berakhot 4b. There are several overlapping statements, some completely transposed while others contain slight variations, and they both discuss the same issue of “extended prayer.” To fully compare these parallel *sugyot*, I will compare each overlapping statement according to its syntax and its placement within the overall *sugya* in attempt to trace shared origins and

points of departure through *Stammaitic* era editing. It's also important to note that each *sugya* is borne out of a different context, with the *sugya* on 9b following a dialectic about juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* with *T'filah* at a specific time in the morning while the *sugya* on 4b is woven into a dialectic about the order of prayer and follows a discussion about the obligatory nature of the evening prayer.

In order of the *sugya* on B. Berakhot 4b, the first overlapping statement is the *memre* from Rabbi Yohanan that serves as the foundation for the dialectic around the concept of “extended prayer” in each *sugya*: “אמר רבי יוחנן: איזהו בן העולם הבא — זהו הסומך גאולה של ערבית לתפלה של ערבית!” Syntactically, the *memrot* are introduced slightly differently. In *Berakhot* 9b, it is introduced “והאמר” while it’s introduced “דאמר” in *Berakhot* 4b. The introductory words on 9b likely indicate that *sugya* as the original Talmudic source for *memre*, especially considering the Aramaic origin of the prefix “ד” that the *Stammaitic* editors typically use, and do use on 4b. The phrase “האמר” could also indicate that they are quoting it from yet another source. The *memre* itself, though, is attributed to the same rabbi and holds the same content across *sugiyot*, namely Rabbi Yohanan’s opinion that one who juxtaposes *Birkat Geulah* with *T'filah* in the evening merits a place in the world to come. Further regarding its syntax, the *memre* on *Berakhot* 9b contains two words that are omitted in *Berakhot* 4b. On 9b, *Birkat Geulah* is specified for the evening, as it is fully written out “גאולה של ערבית” as opposed to on 4b, where the evening factor is assumed due to the following phrase “לתפלה של ערבית” and *Birkat Geulah* is simply referred to as “גאולה.” This word variance illustrates possible transposition or editing of this unit, considering its inconsistent wording, although word variation could also just be products of transmission errors as is often the case with

textual variants in Talmudic manuscripts. Outside of the respective introductory phrases and word variance within the *memre*, the statements are identical.

Rabbi Yohanan's statement also holds a significantly different position in each *sugya*. On 4b, the statement appears between two more connected, opposing *Amoraic* statements about the order in which the *Shema* and *T'filah* are recited. The *sugya* then continues, playing out the disagreement between those two *Amoraic* statements surrounding Rabbi Yohanan's statement according to both opposing scriptural interpretations and logical understandings. The *sugya* picks up on Rabbi Yohanan's statement several lines later, continuing the ideological thread despite the literary disconnection. As illustrated by the chart above, Rabbi Yohanan's statement is separated out from its ensuing discussion in the *sugya* on 4b. This is in great contrast to *Berakhot* 9b, where Rabbi Yohanan's statement about juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* with *T'filah* leads directly into its corresponding discussion, outside of one brief *memre* about *minchah* that doesn't appear on 4b. The *sugya* on 9b, therefore, is a much more cohesive unit, as illustrated by the literary flow from Rabbi Yohanan's statement to the ensuing discussion, whereas the *sugya* on 4b shows the disconnect between Rabbi Yohanan's statement and its ensuing discussion. The more cohesive unit on 9b suggests that the *sugya* there is a more original source while the disconnected unit on 4b suggests that the *sugya* there was edited into another section of text during the *Stammaitic* period.

Following the chronology of 4b, the next overlapping statement is about the problem that *Hashkiveinu* poses by its position between *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah*. In 4b it is written, *וְאֵי אֲמַרְתָּ בְּעֵי לְסֻמוֹ, הָא לָא קָא סָמַךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה, דְּהָא בְּעֵי לְמִימַר "הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ"!* In 9b, it is written *דְּאֵי לָא* *וְאֵי אֲמַרְתָּ בְּעֵי לְסֻמוֹ, הָא לָא קָא סָמַךְ גְּאוּלָּה לְתַפְלָה, דְּהָא בְּעֵי לְמִימַר "הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ"!* Again, their syntactic and positional

differences help paint a picture about the relationship between these *sugiyot*, even as their content is so similar.

Syntactically, there are three key differences between these two statements. First, they are introduced differently. The statement in 4b is introduced “וְאִי אָמַרְתָּ בְּעֵי לְסִמּוּךְ” while the statement in 9b is introduced “דָּאִי לֹא תִימָא הֵכִי.” They both introduce the problem that *Hashkiveinu* causes, but the statement on 9b includes the Aramaic “ד” prefix and the second person verbal prefix, whereas the statement on 4b doesn’t include the Aramaic “ד” prefix, uses the second person verbal suffix, and uses “בְּעֵי” to introduce the issue at hand. Second, each statement uses a different phrase to establish that there is an incoming problem regarding *Hashkiveinu*. On 4b, it appears “הָא לֹא קָא סִמֵּךְ גְּאִילָה לְתַפִּילָה” while it appears “עֲרִבִית” on 9b. Both phrases establish that there is a complication to their ideal juxtaposition between *Birkat Geulah* and *T’filah*, but again, they use different words and phrasing to communicate that. Lastly, the real point of each statement comes at the end of each sentence and is one letter away from being completely identical. The statement on 4b uses a “ד” prefix to establish the problem of saying *Hashkiveinu*, “דָּהָא בְּעֵי לְמִימַר ‘הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ’,” while the statement on 9b uses a “וְ” to introduce an otherwise identical statement. The difference in syntax doesn’t create a clear picture of which statement was first, considering that each have Aramaic influence illustrated through the use of different words, but their variation does bring up the possibility that there were two parallel *sugiyot* transmitted over the rabbinic generations or transposed with errors.

Their positions within their respective *sugyot* also vary. On 4b, this statement is the continuation from Rabbi Yohanan’s *memre* from the beginning of the *sugya*. On 9b, this statement comes after a *memre* from Rav Ashi about the “extended blessing” as it applies to

the opening and closing prayers surrounding *T'filah*. The order is in reverse on 4b, where the investigation of *Hashkiveinu* comes first and then leads to the statement about the “extended blessing” as it applies to the opening and closing prayers surrounding *T'filah*. The switched order is further evidence of *Stammaitic* editing, but it isn't clear which order is more representative of the original dialectic. With further analysis, I would hope to figure out which *sugya* borrowed from which, or if there was a third *sugya* from which both BT Berakhot 4b and 9b borrowed.

The next overlapping statement is about how the Rabbis' establishment of *Hashkiveinu* supports the principle of the “extending blessing.” On 4b, there are two iterations of this statement. The first iteration, which more closely resembles its counterpart on 9b, appears אָמְרִי: כִּינֵן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבָּנֵן “הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ” — כְּגִאּוּלָּה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמֵיָא. Then at the end of the *sugya*, it appears again as הֵכָא נָמִי, כִּינֵן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבָּנֵן לְמִימַר “הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ” — כְּגִאּוּלָּה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמֵיָא. On 9b, it appears אֵלָא כִּינֵן דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבָּנֵן הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ — כְּגִאּוּלָּה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמֵיָא. Each statement is about how the Rabbinic establishment of the *Hashkiveinu* prayer renders it an extension of *Birkat Geulah* so *Birkat Geulah* can still juxtapose *T'filah*.

Syntactically, all three iterations of this statement across the two *sugyot* end with the same four words, הַשְׁכִּיבֵנוּ — כְּגִאּוּלָּה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמֵיָא. The introduction to the statement is very similar between the version on 9b and the first time it appears on 4b, with the only variance occurring in the first word, “אמר” in 4b and “אלא” in 9b. This is partly due to the specific statements that precede each version in their respective *sugiyot*, but it is significant that the statement on 4b begins with “there are those who say” while 9b omits that introduction, suggesting that the *sugya* in 9b could have been people who the statement on 4b was citing. The second iteration of this statement on 4b opens with “הכא נמי” and ends the *sugya*, more or

less serving as a summarizing statement for the idea of the Rabbis' establishment of *Hashkiveinu* leads to the concept of the “extended blessing” between *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah*.

This is the one overlapping statement in which there is parallel positioning within the *sugya* in addition to parallel content and syntax. The first time the statement appears on 4b is in response to the previous statement that presents *Hashkiveinu* as an issue to *Birkat Geulah* leading directly into *T'filah*. This is the case on 9b as well. Each of these mini units within the *sugya* present the *Hashkiveinu* problem and resolve it in the next statement with Rabbinic establishment of the prayer creating precedent for *Hashkiveinu* to be part of the “extended prayer” between *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah*. The second version of this statement on 4b is the last statement of the *sugya*, summarizing and solidifying the idea of the “extended prayer.”

The next parallel statement is extremely similar in syntax and extremely different in its position within the *sugya*. The statement, as it appears on 9b, is: הִיכִי מִצֵּי סְמִידָה? וְהָאֱמֵר רַבִּי יוֹחֲנָן: בְּתַחֲלָה הוּא אוֹמֵר: "ה' שָׁפְתַי תִּפְתָּח", וּלְבָסוֹף הוּא אוֹמֵר: "יִהְיֶה לְרָצוֹן אֲמָרִי פִּי וְגו'" The only difference in its wording on 4b is that the word “הוא” is omitted after the word “בתחילה.” Such a minor difference is more likely a transmission error than any sort of significant editing. The respective positions of these parallel statements within their *sugiyot*, however, are vastly different. On 9b, this statement begins the *sugya*. The question about how *Birkat Geulah* can be juxtaposed to *T'filah* when there are already prayers before and after *T'filah* presents a challenge to direct juxtaposition and serves as the starting point for the dialectic about “extended blessings.” On 4b, this statement is essentially an alternative example for the morning prayer service, an occasion in which the example of *Hashkiveinu* breaking up *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* doesn't apply. On 9b, this question leads to the rest of the *sugya*; on 4b, it

is merely an alternative example. The significant difference in position, and in this case role, within their respective *sugiyot* shows major impacts of *Stammaitic* editing, with each taking on different meanings within their units of text based on their position, despite containing nearly the same exact words.

The last overlapping statement between these *sugiyot* appears in two different iterations on 9b and one on 4b. On 4b, it appears "ה' שפתי תפתח" — אלא הָתָם בֵּינוֹ דְּתַקִּינוּ רַבָּנָן לְמִימַר "ה' שפתי תפתח" — רַב אֲשִׁי אָמַר: אֶפִּילוּ תִימָא אַכּוּלְהוּ, וְכִינוּ דְּקַבְּעוּהָ רַבָּנָן — בְּתַפְלָה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמָיָא. On 9b, it first appears as רַב אֲשִׁי אָמַר: אֶפִּילוּ תִימָא אַכּוּלְהוּ, וְכִינוּ דְּקַבְּעוּהָ רַבָּנָן — בְּתַפְלָה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמָיָא. and then appears as — בְּתַפְלָה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמָיָא — בְּתַפְלָה אֲרִיכְתָּא דְּמָיָא. in the last line of the *sugya*. This line is similar to the resolution of the *Hashkiveinu* problem insofar that both seek to resolve a challenge to *Birkat Geulah* juxtaposing *T'filah* by using Rabbinic authority as precedent for the concept of the “extended prayer.” The most significant syntactic difference between these statements on 4b and 9b is that 9b attributes this statement to Rav Ashi, whereas the statement goes unattributed on 4b. This could mean that the statement, and therefore *sugya*, on 9b is closer to the original version. The most significant positional difference is that the second iteration of this statement on 9b ends the *sugya*, whereas the statement on 4b is providing an alternative example to the *Hashkiveinu* problem. In both cases, however, these statements help establish the prevailing takeaway from each of these *sugiyot*, that the concept of the “extended blessing” allows for *Birkat Geulah* to juxtapose *T'filah*, as Rabbi Yohanan’s opening *memre* idealizes, despite liturgical interruptions such as *Hashkiveinu*, *Adonai S'fatai*, or *Yih'yu L'ratzon*.

These two *sugiyot* are remarkably similar in their content, and the syntactic and positional differences of their overlapping statements help trace the origins and edits of these statements in their different iterations. While there is such a strong parallel, I would not

characterize these *sugiyot* as a “*havarah*,” which Hanokh Albeck describes as a duplication, because of the notable syntactic and positional differences between parallel statements.²⁹ The *sugya* on Berakhot 9b is by far the most significant parallel text to the *sugya* on Berakhot 4b. However, there are statements in the *sugya* on 4b that appear elsewhere as well. On Berakhot 30a, there is an overlapping line about reciting the *Shema* and then *T’filah*, within the context of juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* and *T’filah*: רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: בין כך ובין כך קורא קריאת .שמע ומתפלל, כדי שיסמוך גאולה לתפלה. While there is overlap here in syntax and content to the *sugya* on 4b, it doesn’t lead to a significant parallel because the ensuing dialectic is about sitting or standing for prayer, a topic that does not appear on *Berakhot* 4b, nor is it closely related to the topics on 4b. Similarly, there are overlapping statements on B. Berakhot 2a and Y. Berakhot 1:5. Berakhot 4b and 2a, as well as Y. Berakhot 1:5 use the same excerpt from Mishnah, albeit for different purposes: בָּעֶרֶב מְבָרֵךְ שְׁתֵּים לְפָנֶיהָ וּשְׁתֵּים לְאַחֶרֶיהָ. These overlaps indicate shared source material, as opposed to the strong signs of editing that the syntactic and positional differences between Berakhot 4b and 9b demonstrate. Nevertheless, these comparisons help orient Berakhot 4b in its literary and historical context.

V. Stammaitic Motivations

All this mounting evidence of *Stammaitic* editing raises two important questions. First, why is Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s opinion that the evening *Shema* comes after *T’filah* so thoroughly discussed and investigated in the text when neither the immediate text nor the Tosafot or any later commentary consider it a viable prayer practice? Second, what are these two seemingly separate units of text, one about the order of *Shema* and *T’filah* and the other about the “extended blessing” between *Birkat Geulah* and *T’filah*, doing in the same *sugya*?

²⁹ Hanokh Albeck. *Mavo L’talmidim*. Tel Aviv: D’vir Publishing, 1969. Pages 460-485. (Hebrew)

Regarding each of these questions and the clear signs of editing that lead to each of them, what are our best guesses as to what the *Stammaitic* motivations were in editing this *sugya* the way it appears now?

a. Establishing Prayer Practice

Even though reciting the evening *Shema* after *T'filah* doesn't seem like a viable possibility in the text in accordance with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's opinion, this *sugya* could very well have served as a polemic against this alternative prayer practice. The fact that it's included in this *sugya* suggests that there was a tradition to pray in accordance with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi during the *Stammaitic* period and the *Stammaim* used this *sugya* as an arena to establish the correct order of prayer according to their tradition, which is in line with the opinion of Mar. In this light, I suggest that this *sugya* on B. Berakhot 4b might be an exercise in Rabbinic authority as it pertains to prayer practice in the *Stammaitic* period.

While the second half of the *sugya*, the unit about juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* with *T'filah*, has a parallel *sugya* and its own dialectic, the first half of the *sugya* is constructed from entirely *Stammaitic* statements after the initial statements. The scriptural interpretations and logical understandings create a discussion around a disagreement in the text that was not nearly as worthy of argumentation from the perspective of the Tosafot and later commentators. This *Stam*-constructed dialectic is a further sign that this unit was edited into the *sugya* in response to an alternative prayer tradition during the *Stammaitic* era that they wanted to prevent. Therefore, they use Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's dissenting opinion as a "straw man argument" to reestablish the order of the *Shema* and *T'filah* according to their custom.

b. Synthesizing Sugiyot

The abrupt change of topic between the order of the evening *Shema* and *T'filah* to the juxtaposition of *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* suggests that these two units were brought together during an editing period. While their textual units differ in content and syntax, there is existing precedent for these two topics to appear together on B. Berakhot 30a. With the parallel *sugya* on B. Berakhot 9b cohesive and complete, it is possible that the *sugya* on 4b was intended to serve as grounds to synthesize these two different topics in accordance with the precedent set by the *sugya* on Berakhot 30a.

Further, since the largest unit of *Stammaitic* text within the *sugya* pertains to the disagreement over the evening *Shema* and *T'filah* order, it is possible that the *Stam* sought a *sugya* to place their textual material. To synthesize topics into one cohesive unit, the *Stam* constructed this *sugya* with clear demarcations and transitions to try and encompass both areas of content simultaneously. In addition to reestablishing what they viewed as the normative prayer order, the *Stam* also synthesized different textual units within this one *sugya*.

It is also possible that the synthesis of these two separate content areas illustrates further liturgical and theological arguments that the *Stam* tried to construct. Liturgically, the backdrop of Rabbi Yohanan's *memre* about meriting the world to come by juxtaposing *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* creates significant stakes for the disagreement about the order of the evening *Shema* and *T'filah*. If the text followed the opinion of Yehoshua ben Levi, and the evening *Shema* came after *T'filah*, it would be impossible to juxtapose *Birkat Geulah* and *T'filah* together. Further, Rabbi Yohanan's statement constructs a theological argument by suggesting that those that follow Mar's opinion that the evening *Shema* comes before *T'filah* retain the opportunity to merit the world to come, whereas those who follow Yehoshua ben

Levi's opinion don't. By synthesizing these two areas of content, the *Stammim* illustrate the liturgical and theological implications of one's prayer practice. In addition to reestablishing the correct prayer practice from their perspective, the *Stam* also communicated their liturgical and theological priorities through their editing and synthesizing choices.