The Command of God:
The meaning and Application of Blessings that State
"Who Has Sanctified Us By Your Commandment and Commanded Us To . . ."

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The issue discussed here is the notion of בְּרָכַת פָּנָיָה, the blessing made upon doing a mitzvah (commandment). Particularly, we will discuss its application to actions that are not explicitly commanded in the Torah.

**BLESSINGS ON RABBINIC COMMANDMENTS**

*Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 23a*

אמר רב אשי בר אשי מר: המדליק רעיה ותפוך פריך ב分局. אמר רבינו שמעון אברך שנים קדשים במצווה
所提供 המדליק רעיה ותפוך פריך ב分局. אמר רבינו שמעון אברך שנים קדשים במצווה

Rabbi Chiyah bar Ashi said in the name of Rav: "One who lights the candle of Chanukah must bless." . . . What does he bless? "Who sanctified us by your commandment and commanded us to kindle the candle of Chanukah." Where did [God] command us (to light the Channukah candle)? Rav Aviya said: from the verse "do not stray." (Deut 17:11) Rabbi Nechemiah said: "Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will command you."

**Deuteronomy 17:11**

דִּבְּרֵי פָּרָק וּמִסְפֹּק אֵינָךְ:  
עלפי השוקהרצה נזר ויהלמה שמה ממיתר קקיתא להמשיכו וסומך ועומר עומר ויגידי לויvim וימי וימים:  
According to the Torah which they (the priest or judge) instruct you, you shall do. Do not stray from that which they tell you right or left.

**Deuteronomy 32:7**

דִּבְּרֵי פָּרָק וּמִסְפֹּק וָ:  
וכי יתבוננה עשה ויהלמה ויהלמה זומית אבריך ויבאתי והקיקא והקיקא ויום מים:  
Remember the days of old, understand the years of each generation. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders and they will command you.

NB: A good philological translation of the word יָאָמָר indicates a sense of "command" not just "say."

**BLESSINGS ON MINHAG**

*Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 44a*

_ROOM וְלֹא מֵאֲמַרְךָ וְלֹא עָמַרְךָ וְלֹא שָׁמַרְךָ וּלֹא מָעַרְךָ:  
In brief, every word is kept, but the blessing, the promise, the command, the commemoration.

Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Joshuah ben Levi [disagreed]: One said that aravah (willow) is an enactment (lit. foundation) of the prophets, whereas one said it is custom (minhag) of the prophets.
**Rashi Sukkah 44a (selection)**

The custom of the prophets - The prophets directed, but did not legislate (taking them), and the practical difference is that they don't need a blessing, since you can't say "and commanded us," since this doesn't even fall within the rule of "do not stray."

**Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 44b**

Aibu said: I once was before Rabbi Elazar bar Tzadok, and a person brought willows before him. He took, [them] repeatedly (trans. per Jastrow dictionary), and did not bless. He taught: It is custom of the prophets. Aibu and Chezekiah the son of Rav's daughter brought willows before Rav. He shook [them] repeatedly and did not bless. He thought: It is custom of the prophets.

**Rashi Sukkah 44b (selection)**

It is custom of the prophets - . . . and not an enactment of the prophets, therefore it does not need a blessing.

**Rabbenu Channanel Sukkah 44b (selection)**

And we conclude . . . that it needs shaking, but does not need a blessing, like Rav who thought it is custom of the prophets.

**Geonic Responsa (Rav Sherirah Gaon)**

And that which you asked, what is the difference between an prophetic enactment and custom of the prophets, a prophetic enactment has more strength than prophetic custom, because when they enacted it they made it a foundation to build the mitzvah on . . . but the custom of the prophets is not like that, because it is possible that they instructed (hinig) the nation to do thus because of legislation. And if you say willow is a prophetic enactment, and you have explained them as a mitzvah, why don't we bless on it when it is on its own (i.e. not in a Lulav bundle), we will respond and say that not all mitzvas are we obligated to bless on. There are some we are obligated to bless on, and those that we are not obligated to bless on. And willow is an enactment of the prophets which they enacted for all of Israel to do thus. Rabbi Sherariah of blessed memory.
Rabbi Sigdiyah.

Everyone immerses (in the mikvah) on Yom Kippur eve, and on coming up from immersing blesses, "[blessed are you . . . commanded us] regarding immersion."

But Rabbi Yitzchak ibn Gi'at, of blessed memory [said] this immersion, since it is not from the enactments of the original sages, does not get a blessing, and does not require a blessing before it - as we say that all mitzvot require a blessing before doing them except for immersion, and the heads (of the academies, i.e. ge'onim) related this to the immersion of the convert, since "he is still not a fitting person," but all others who are required to immerse bless before and go (immerse). Therefore, a person immerses per the minhag of the sages, but does not bless, because we do not bless on a minhag, as we said regarding the willow: "[He] shook [them] repeatedly, and did not bless, for the thought it is a minhag of the prophets," which demonstrates that we do not bless on a minhag.

As is said regarding willows, "[He] shook [them] repeatedly, and did not bless, for the thought it is a minhag of the prophets," which demonstrates that we do not bless on a minhag - because we only bless on mitzvas, and how could we bless "who sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us . . ."
HALLEL

When is Hallel an Obligation? What about Rosh Chodesh?

For Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotsadak: There are 18 days that an individual completes (perhaps better: reads) the Hallel on: 8 days of The Holiday (i.e. Sukkot), 8 days of Chanukah, the first Yom Tov of Passover, and (the first) Yom Tov of Atzeret (i.e. Shavuot).

And in the diaspora 21 (days): 9 days of The Holiday (sukkot), 8 days of Chanukah, two Yom Tovs of Passover, and two Yom Tovs of Atzeret.

Shabbat, which has a different sacrifice (i.e. than other holidays) say [Hallel]! It is not called "moed" (a holiday).

Rosh Chodesh (the new month), which is called "moed," say [Hallel]! It is not sanctified with [a prohibition] of work. . .

Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur that are called "moed" and sanctified with [a prohibition] of work, say [hallel]! [We do not say it] because of [the reason given by] Rabbi Abahu. For Rabbi Abahu said: The ministering angels said before the Holy One: Master of the Universe, why doesn't Israel say song before you on Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur. [God] said to them: Is it possible that the King sits on the throne of judgement with the books of life and the books of death opened before him and Israel would say song before me?

But Chanukah doesn't have thus (i.e. does not have sacrifices or a prohibition of work) and it is said! Because [it has a] miracle.

Purim, which has a miracle, say [Hallel]! Rabbi Yitschak said: Because we don't say song on a miracle that [happened] outside the land [of Israel].

Rav Nachman bar Yitschak demurred (on this point): But leaving Egypt which is a miracle outside the land, and we say Hallel. As it is taught: Until Israel entered the land - the whole world was fitting to say song [if a miracle happened in it], from when they entered [Israel] - the whole world was not fit to say song.

Rav Nachman bar Yitschak said: Reading it (the Megillah) is its Hallel.
Rava said: It is settling there [on Passover] to say "Sing servants of God" - [meaning those who are] not servants of Pharaoh. Here [on Purim] "Sing servants of God" - [would mean those who are] not servants of Achashverosh. But we are servants of Achashverosh.

Babylonian Talmud Ta'anit 28b

Let the Mishnah also teach the first of Nissan . . . Said Rava: This demonstrates that Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is not from the Torah. For Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotsadak 18 days . . . Rav went to Babylonian (from Israel), he saw that they read Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. He thought to stop them. Since he saw that they skipped, he said "learn from this that they have the minhag of their fathers in their hands." It was taught: an individual should not start, but if he started - he finishes.

Notes: This Talmud recognizes the differing status of Hallel on Rosh Chodesh - it is not mentioned as one of the days that "an individual" says the Hallel (note the last days of Passover are left out as well). We are told that Rav was unfamiliar with the practice of saying Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, but let ot slid as he reasoned that it was a "minhag" of this peoples' ancestors. Finally, the Talmud reports a teaching that an "individual" does not start saying the Hallel, but should continue to do so if the individual started. It is not at all clear what situation this speaks to.

The Order of Rav Amram Ga'on, Passover section

So too our master and teacher, Moshe, the head of the Academiy said: An individual, after finishing his food on Passover evening is obligated to finish the Hallel . . . and to seal (with a blessing at the end, for thus we learned (in the Mishnah) . . . [they mix the] fourth [cup and upon it he] "finishes the Hallel . . . " had we said "he says on in the Hallel," I would have said it is like the Hallel of Rosh Chodesh, but now that we read "finishes," an individual must finish Hallel and seal (i.e. say the ending blessing) after it.

Notes: This piece says that an individual finishes the Hallel with blessings during the Passover Seder. Rav Amram compares this to Rosh chodesh practice. It seemse to indicate that on Rosh Chodesh an individual would not say the Hallel (or at the very least not finish it with a blessing).
The Order of Rav Amram Ga'on, Rosh Chodesh section.

And in public, after the public messenger who goes before the ark (i.e. the chazan) finishes the order of the prayer, he blesses "blessed are you Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to read the Hallel," and we read the Hallel with skips.

Notes: Rav Amram, in giving the order of Rosh Chodesh prayers, says "in public" the Hallel is done. This is further indication that he believed that Hallel was not said on Rosh Chodesh by an individual. Note that he does prescribe a blessing for Hallel on Rosh Chodesh.

The Order of Rav Amram Ga'on Chanukah Section

And we read Hallel, and bless "blessed are you Lord our God, Sovereign of the Universe, who sanctified us by your commandments and commanded us to complete the Hallel."

Note: Rav Amram tells us that Hallel is done on Chanukah. He does not say anything about an individual, probably indicating that the individual says Hallel as well. Also note that Rav Amram has the blessing as "to finish the Hallel" on days where a full hallel is said. This will be the case for all the other examples we see.

And so wrote Master Sar Shalom Gaon: One who prays individually on these 21 days that an individual finishes the Hallel, must bless, and must finish on them the Hallel, and to read its entirety, and to seal after it (i.e. say the closing blessing). And thus is the practice in the two Yeshivoth (i.e. Sura and Pumbedita, the two major academies in Babylonia).
Halachot Gedolot, Laws of Lulav

And the "individual," that we say finishes the Hallel, does not literally mean an individual, rather, as long as the entirety of Israel isn't assembled, it is called an individual... for if you think that it refers literally to an individual, but a congregation has other days where they say Hallel, we see (in Ta'anit 28b), when Rav went to Bavel on Rosh Chodesh and found the congregation saying Hallel, why was he concerned - they were a congregation. Rather, shall we not learn from this that even 100 and even 1000 [people], whenever they all of Israel is not assembled, they are called an individual. Now that we have said such, Rav was concerned since these [people saying Hallel] were [considered as] an individual, and when he heard them skipping, he left them alone, and said "they have the minhag of their fathers in their hands" Learn from this that the individual who prays alone, without 10, on a day that the congregation reads, but does not complete Hallel, like Rosh Chodesh and Chol Hamo'ed, [the individual] reads Hallel. And blesses in the beginning and end just as with 10 [people], because we don't call it a congregation except with all Israel [present]. Halachot Gedolot also assumes that one says a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh.

Notes: Halachot Gedolot says that there is no difference in practice between an individual and a congregation. The "individual" referred to in the Talud means any group of less than the entire Jewish people. Therefore, an individual should say Hallel on Rosh Chodesh and the last days of Passover (he also has a blessing for this Hallel). Does he not have the final line of the Talmudi in Ta'anit that says "an individual should not begin?" Does he disagree or understand that statement differently? Note: As per note on page 5, he likely reads it as a reference to Hallel said on a miracle.

Laws of Ritz Gia'at, Laws of Hallel p166-167.

So too an individual after his prayer blesses "to complete [the Hallel]," and reads it in his normal manner until the end of the order, and blesses after it in places that they practice [to make a blessing after Hallel].

And on Rosh Chodesh and the remaining days of Passover, we bless "to read the Hallel," and read it and skip... and blesses after it in places that they practice [to make a blessing after Hallel]. This is in public, but not an individual. As is said later "Rav went to Bavel... . It was taught: An individual should not begin, and if he began, he finishes." Explanation: It refers to the remaining days of Passover, when everyone reads and skips. But on Rosh Chodesh, it is a minhag to read and skip.
Notes: (1) Ibn Gi’at says that a congregation makes a blessing and says Hallel with skips on Rosh Chodesh and the last days of Passover (NB: This is the same Ibn Gi’at who objected to saying a blessing on going to the mikvah before Rosh Chodesh, since that was only a "minhag").

(2) The balance of this paragraph is not entirely clear. A commentary by Yitzchak Yarnan explains that the final teaching of the Talmud in Ta’anit could not refer to Rosh Chodesh, because that would imply that a congregation is obligated to do Hallel on Rosh chodesh (since the statement says only that an individual should not), which would be impossible, because then Rav would not have complained about this group of people saying Hallel. Therefore Ibn Gi’at concludes that the ruling refers to the last days of Passover, telling us that despite the fact that saying Hallel with the community on the last days of Passover was a universal practice, it still was not proper for an individual to say Hallel. If this is Ibn Gi’at’s intention, the logic seems faulty. First, we do not necessarily know that Rav had the statement "an individual should not start," so he may still object to this group saying Hallel even if this teaching "clearly" that they should. Second, it is not at all clear that saying "an individual shouldn't begin" means that a congregation should say Hallel.

And Master Rav Sar Shalom, or some say Rav Natronai Gaon said: one who prays on his own on these 21 days that an individual finishes the Hallel, must bless “to finish the Hallel,” and read it and seal after it, and thus is the practice in both [Babylonian] academies, and that which you hewn out to us in mutilated halacha, that it doesn't mean an actual individual, but even a congregation is called "invididual," we haven't heard such a thing ever, not in writing nor orally, and do not do thus - for there is no practice other than what we described to you, and do not err in Halacha.

Notes: Ibn Gi’at quotes Rav Sar Shalom (or perhaps Natronai Gaon) as saying that individuals should read the Hallel on the days that the Talmud says that individuals should say the Hallel. As becomes more clear in the next paragraph, it seems that some people took Halachot Gedolot's argument that the “individual” means even any group of people who are less than the entirety of all Jews in the world to mean that you need at least a minyan to say Hallel.
he has no permission at all. And he [Hai] responded: It is not like you wrote from Rabbi Yehudai Gaon, and that which is clear from his words is that each and every individual on the days that we don't complete [Hallel] reads and blesses before and after, [this] is not to teach you that the individual does not complete [Hallel] on the days that we complete the Hallel, [rather] all the more so that an individual that is not in public completes the Hallel and blesses before and after, Rather [Rav Yehuday] intended to reject the words of those who say that an individual may not read [Hallel] at all, as you had said you found in the geonim. And that which we said "there are 18 days that an individual completes the Hallel on them" don't say that it is only the individual who does not complete [the Hallel on other days], rather even the congregation only completes the Hallel on those days, for if you say otherwise, Rav when he went to Bavel . . . why did he worry [that they were reading Hallel], they were a congregation . . . and what they said that an individual may not read at all on the days that we don't finish Hallel, this is not our practice, rather [individuals] read on all days of its reading. . . .

Notes: Ibn Gi'at reports an opinion of Hai Gaon. Hai Gaon is responding to some people who misunderstood Rav Yehudai Gaon's opinion that "individual" means anyone less than the entire congregation of Israel. They had understood this to mean that "individual" means a community of less than the entirety of Israel, and therefore concluded that individuals outside of a minyan should not say Hallel. Instead, Hai Gaon explains that Yeudai Gaon meant to demonstrate that individuals and groups were on equal footing, and that when there is indication that an "individual" does not complete Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, this also means that a congregation does not complete the Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. Both the congregation and the individual can say the Hallel with skips on Rosh Chodesh.

And it was asked of Rav Hai, in the end, what is the rule regarding an individual reading Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, since we find in the Halachot from Rav Yehudai etc., and we find according to Master Rav Natronai Gaon who said "but on Rosh Chodesh," etc. And he responded: Our practice is according to Rav Natronai, since we learend explicitly "It was taught: an individual should not start, but if he started - he finishes," learn from "does not start," ab initio, but if he started - he finishes, as is taught, but he (the individual) should not make the sealing blessing (i.e. the blessing after Hallel), since he is not obligated in it. But if there are those who practice according to Rav Hai, then should not change, since they have the teaching of their ancestors in their hands.
who also expressed the view that he was entitled to bless, and thus do not finish the Hallel," the congregation reads and blesses, but an individual doesn't read at all, and blessed before it, he reads and goes through, so as not to have used God's name in vain, but the final blessing should not bless, since he is not required to read [the Hallel,] and it should not be difficult that which Rava (Berachot 14a) said that "On the days that the individual completes the Hallel, one may interrupt between chapters (to greet an important person), in the middle of a chapter one may not interrupt, but on days that an individual does not complete the Hallel even in the middle of the paragraph one may interrupt, which [might be taken to] indicate that an individual reads [Hallel] both on the days that we complete the [Hallel] and on days that we do not complete [Hallel], because we can understand this [as applyint to] when he reads in public and needs to interrupt, or alternatively when he forgets and begins [Hallel] (despite being an individual), and this is ___ (several letters missing) of Rav bar Shabba who went to Ravina on the days that an individual does not finish the Hallel, and he didn't stop for him," [Ravina] was reading [Hallel] with a congregation.

And they sent from the academy that the "individual" is literally an individual, for Rava states (Berachot 14a) "On the days that the individual completes the Hallel, one may interrupt between chapters (to greet an important person), in the middle of a chapter one may not interrupt. . . . [and the Talmud challenges] "Is this the case? But Rav bar Shabba went to Ravina on the days that an individual finishes the Hallel, and he didn't stop for him," [to which the Talmud responded] "Rav bar Shabba is different, since he wasn't important to Ravina." This demonstrates that it is literally an individual.

Notes: (1) Here it is opined that it must be that the literal individual does say Hallel, as an issue of the permissibility of interruption during the Hallel is probed by asking about the behavior of Ravina, an individual. I am not certain why we can't presume that Ravina was praying with a Minyan. (Note Ibn Giat, quoted below, speculates that this refers to a situation where Ravina was saying Hallel with a group) (2) The text of Berachot 14a as printed in the Vilna edition says that the incident with Ravina occurred on a day that we do not complete the Hallel. The Munich manuscript of the Talmud says it was a day that an individual finishes the Hallel (see Dikdukei Soferim). Ibn Giat on Hallel has it that it was not a day that the individual completes Hallel.
And Rav Natronai Gaon said: an individual on Rosh Chodesh is not permitted to say Hallel, neither to complete it nor to read it. For thus the first Rabbis explained: The individual referenced by Rabbi Yochanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon is a congregation, that since the sacrifices were stopped, the individual and the congregation are equal in Hallel. And just as a congregation completes the Hallel, an individual completes the Hallel. But on Rosh Chodesh and the six days of Passover, a congregation reads the Hallel and blesses "to read," and skips, and the individual is exempt from reading and blessing. And that which the sages said, "an individual should not start," this means that the individual should not be reading the Hallel on these days. When it says "but if he started - he finishes," this means that if he has already said the blessing, he should finish reading the Hallel (with skips). However, he should not say the final blessing (thus ending his Hallel with "ki le'olam chasdo.")

Notes: Rav Natronai Gaon explains that when the Talmud refers to "individuals" finishing the Hallel, the use of this term was to let us know that even an individual finishes the Hallel on these days. Rav Natronai indicates that a congregation on Rosh Chodesh and the last days of Passover reads Hallel with a blessing of "To read the Hallel," and reads Hallel with skips. When the Talmud says that "an individual should not start," this means that the individual should not be reading the Hallel on these days. When it says "but if he started - he finishes," this means that if he has already said the blessing, he should finish reading the Hallel (with skips). However, he should not say the final blessing (thus ending his Hallel with "ki le'olam chasdo.")

Note: At this point we will leave the excurses on the issue of individuals saying Hallel. For the record, Shulchan Aruch (422:2) rules that an individual should not say a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh (we shall see below that Karo does not necessarily approve of a congregation saying a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh). Rabbi Isserless indicates that practice in his area was for an individual to say a blessing, but that it is best to be with a minyan so to get out of this problem.
Notes: Above, on Sukkah 44b, Rabbenu Channanel had agreed that because shaking the willow is a custom, we do not make a blessing. Below, we will see that Rabbenu Channanel (on Pesachim 7b) explains that a convert does not say the blessing on dipping in the mikvah (ritual bath), because the non Jew can't say "who has sanctified . . . and commanded," since the non Jew is not subject to these commandments. Here, again, it seems that Rabbenu Channanel is saying that an individual should not say a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, because there is no obligation. Though Rabbenu Channanel does not say so explicitly, he seems to be indicating that a congregation would say a blessing on Hallel. This is particularly evident from the fact that he says "if he erred and said "who has sanctified us by his commandments and commanded us to read," which thus far we have seen is language generally used for a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. The fact that Rif (below), who often follows Rabbenu Channanel's rulings, seems to hold that a congregation says a blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is further indication that Rabbenu Channanel had a blessing. It would seem that Rabbenu Channanel does think there is some form of obligation for saying Hallel in a congregation on Rosh Chodesh. HOWEVER, one could argue that Rabbenu Channanel means there is no obligation for Hallel at all on Rosh Chodesh, and that neither an individual nor a community should say a blessing. This would require Rabbenu Channanel to follow one of the less literal understandings of the word "invididual," and also would not explain his choice of words "commanded us to read."

Rabbi Yitschak Alfasi (Rif) on Tractate Shabbat, p. 11b in Rif. רבי יצחק אלפabıי על תракט 대שבת פרק n. 11b לרבי. However, Hallel of Rosh Chodesh is not derived from the Torah, but rather is a minhag, and therefore we do not finish the Hallel on it, rather we skip, as said Rav went to Babylonian (from Israel), he saw that they read Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. He thought to stop them. Since he he heard that they skipped, he said "learn from this that they have the minhag of their fathers in their hands." It was taught: an individual should not start, but if he started - he finishes. Therefore, if an individual cares to read Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, he reads it without a blessing and skips.

Notes: Rif indicates that an individual who chooses to say Hallel on Rosh Chodesh should not say a blessing. This likely indicates that he feels that a congregation who says Hallel on Rosh Chodesh should say a blessing.

Should One Say a Blessing on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh?

Thus far, we have seen at least 4 opinions (R. Amram, R. Natronai, Halachot Gedolot, Ibn Gi'at) who presume that a blessing of "to read the Hallel" is said on Rosh Chodesh, and presumably on the last days of Passover as well. They take this for granted, and don't seem to have reason to care to argue this point out. The earliest references to a problem with this practice (at least the earliest references to which I am aware) come from Rashi (though he does not mention it in his commentary on Talmud) and Maimonides.
The people have practices to bless on Rosh Chodesh "to read the Hallel." But our teacher, may his soul rest in the bonds of life, did not bless on it. And this is his responsum: You asked regarding the individual who reads the Hallel on the days that are not amongst the 18 days of Torah’s requirement of saying Hallel, if it is an obligation on the congregation to bless, should the individual bless as well? But I do not bless on it neither with a congregation nor individually. Because it is but a minhag, and a minhag does not need a blessing. As we said in Sukkah chapter "Lulav" (the fourth chapter, sukkah 44b) . . . . Therefore I do not bless on it "who has sanctified us by his commandments and commanded us." But I do bless on it "Blessed are You Ad-onay our God, sovereign of the universe, who is praised by the words of his nation, exalted and hallowed with the songs of David your servant. Blessed are you Ad-onay, hallowed with exaltation. And afterwards: "yehallelucha" in its normal manner (i.e. the regular closing blessing). I did not hear more, for I did not go into it with detail with my teacher. Shelomo ben Rav Yitzcah. And I saw my teacher who would not read Hallel on Rosh Chodesh with the congregation, and he read it on his own seated at the time of the reading of the Torah.

Notes: (1) Vitry continues with Rabbenu Tam’s response to Rashi. We will see that response from some Tosafot below. (2) Rashi takes Hallel as a Torah obligation. Maimonides (below) disagrees. That question is beyond the scope of this compilation.
Achi the Tanan (i.e. one who memorized teachings) of the school of Rabbi Chiyya asked Rabbi Chiyya: In Hallel and Megilla, what is the ruling [regarding whether or not one is permitted] to interrupt? Do we say a fortiori: Reading the Shema is from the Torah and one may interrupt (to greet someone of significant stature), is Hallel which is a rabbinic mitzvah a question? Or do we perhaps say that publicizing the miracle is more important? He said to him: He may interrupt, and there is no matter. Rabbah said: On days where an individual completes the Hallel, between the chapters he may interrupts (as is the case for Shema), in the middle of the chapters he does not interrupt. But Rav bar Shabba went to Ravina on the days that an individual does not finish the Hallel, and he didn’t stop for him! Rav bar Shabba is different, since he wasn’t important to Ravina.

Notes: This piece of Talmud is where the Talmud discusses when one is allowed to interrupt their recitation of the Shema and its surrounding blessings in order to greet someone. Achi asks is there is a similar rule regarding interrupting the Hallel. The story of Rav bar Shabba shoes that Ravina did not interrupt his Hallel in order to greet Rav bar Shabba. The Talmud as printed in Vilna says that this occurred on one of the days that the "half Hallel" is said. If this is the case, one would be hard pressed to explain why such an interruption would not be permitted if there were no blessing said on Hallel. However, some (few) versions of this piece of Talmud say that this story happen on a full Hallel day (e.g. Munich manuscript). Dikdukei Soferim indicates that it appears that most or all of the Medieval rabbis had the story as it is printed in our Talmud.

The days that an individual finishes he Hallel - Not specifically an individual, rather even in a congregation an individual reads . . . for indeed it is established for us that the days that an individual does not finish the Hallel, there is no obligation to say it at all, even with skips, for thus it implies in Arachin (10b) in that . . . it asks "Rosh Hashannah and Yom Kippur say [Halleh!]." which implies that on the remaining holidays like Rosh Chodeshes it is apparent that we don't say [Hallel]. And this is also implied by the last chapter of Ta'anit (28b) Rav went to Babylonian (from Israel), he saw that they read Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. He thought to stop them, ." meaning that he thought they were completeing it (the Hallel). "Since he saw that they skipped, he said "learn from this that they have the minhag of their fathers in their hands," demonstrating that on the days where we don't complete Hallel, there is no obligation to say it, and we may say is because of a minhag.
And it is written in Machzor Vitri that since it is only a minhag, we do not bless on it, as we said in Chapter "Lulav and Aravah" (Sukkah 44b). . . .

However, Rabbenu Tam says that this is no proof, for regarding shaking, of course we do not bless, but on a mitzvah, it is clear that we bless, for we have seen on every second day of Yom Tov, it is but a minhag and we bless.

The Status of the Second Day of Yom Tov

Babylonian Talmud Betsah 4b

As is taught (Mishnah Rosh Hashannah 2:2, BT 22b): "Originally, they used to light flames. When the Samaritans disrupted, they established that messengers should go out." And if the samaritans would be eliminated, we would do one day. And now that we know by way of a set month, why do we do two days? Since they sent from there (the Court in Jerusalem): "Be careful with the minhag of your ancestors which is in your hands. There [may be] times of repressive decrees, and it will be disarranged."

Tosafot understands this piece as indicating that the second day of Yom Tov is kept as a minhag. Maimonides report of this issue may indicate a different understanding:

Maimonides Laws of Yom Tov 1:21

That which we do outside the land [of Israel], each Yom Tov two days, is a minhag. And the second day of Yom Tov is rabbinic law, and it is one of the things that was innovated in the diaspora . . .
Moreover, it is also implied that we bless, for if we don't bless, how is (the prohibition against) interruption applicable to it.

Notes: Tosafot argues there that if a blessing were not being said on Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, how could the Talmud have any concern that one should not interrupt this Hallel. Is it possible that there was simply a concern that if we allow interruption in this Hallel, one might errantly interrupt during the full Hallel? Is it possible that someone might find it improper for one to interrupt series of praises of God in order to greet someone (a similar suggestion is made in a different context by Ra"n's comment on the Ri"f Berachot 7b in Ri"f’s pagination, s.v. "Behallel.")? Plus, if we take Rabbah at his word that there is less a concern for interrupting the Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, might this indicate that a blessing was not being said?

There is further proof that we bless on a minhag, from that regarding "Rav went to the synagogue, etc." - for if they had not blessed in the beginning [of their reciting Hallel], why didn't Rav realize [that what they were doing was a] minhag until they skipped? Rather, indeed they blessed, since we fittingly bless on minhags, and therefore he did not realize [that what they were doing was a minhag] until the skip.

Notes: Tosafot takes for granted that the congregation that Rav saw must have said a blessing on Hallel, or he would have realized that they were doing Hallel only out of a sense of custom. The history of blessings is an interesting study in its own right. However, it is quite possible that at Rav's time it was not assumed that one would say a blessing before performing each mitzvah. So, it is possible that even people who felt commanded to say Hallel might not have said a blessing.

And should you say, why didn't it occur to him whether they had blessed "to read the Hallel" or "to finish the Hallel," one can say that there is no reason to worry about that, because [one] can fittingly bless "to finish" even when he skips, or vice versa, and that which we bless thusly on the skip "to read," and when we finish [we bles] "to finish" is so that we don't err, and therefore he couldn't understand from the blessing [that the did not feel obligated] until the skip. . . .

The final argument of Tosafot, which concerns women saying blessings on commandments that they are not required to fulfill is covered below in the section titled "Blessings by the uncommanded.". Since their position on this matter is not universally accepted, the use of that matter to prove their opinion about saying a blessing on a minhag is not convincing.
And we read the Hallel with skips, whether an individual or a congregration. But some say that the congregation blesses on it in the beginning "To read the Hallel," But if he blessed "to finish the Hallel," he need not go back (i.e. make a new blessing), and at the end we say Yehallelucha (i.e. the closing blessing of Hallel). And the individual (praying on one's own) does not bless at all. But some say that even the congregation does not bless on it, whether in the beginning or in the end, and this is the opinion of Maimonides, and this is the practice in all of the land of Israel and its surroundings. Note: Some say that an individual may also bless on it. And that is how we practice in these lands. Nonetheless, a person should be careful to read [Hallel] in a congregation so as to bless with the congregation. But some say that when an individual reads, he should ask two people to say the beginnings of the paragraphs, and then they will be like a congregation. And they (the people in the area) have practiced thusly for hodu, but not for anna.

**BLESSINGS BY THE UNCOMMANDED**

Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 7b

Everyone, nonetheless, [agrees] that one must bless initially (i.e. before doing the mitzvah). . . . In the academy of Rav they say: Except for immersion (in a mikvah) and shofar. It is well [to say thus about] immersion - for the person is still not fit, but what is the reason for shofar? And should you say "lest the blasts be incorrect," if so - even slaughtering and circumcision also [should have their blessings made after the act]. Rather, said Rav Chisda: Except for immersion only (i.e. all other blessings are done before the mitzvah). It is also taught thusly: When he immerses and comes up, upon his coming up (i.e. coming above water,) he says "[Blessed are you . . .] who sanctified us with his commandments and commanded us regarding immersion."

Note: Here, the Talmud informs us that all blessings are done before the mitzvah is performed, except for immersion in a mikvah. The Talmud explains that before going to the mikvah, a person is not "fit" to say the blessing. The reason and application of this rule are not clear, as demonstrated by the following commentaries:
Rashi on Pesachin 7b

For the person is still not fit - For instance a ba'al keri (one who has come into contact with semen), as is established for us in [Babylonian Talmud] Berachot (20b), that [the ba'al keri] is forbidden from [reciting] words of Torah and blessing, since Ezra legislated immersion for the ba'al keri in order [to be able to use] words of Torah, and because of this immersion, it is legislated for all immersions [that] their blessing is afterwards.

Notes: Rashi argues that there was a specific case where one could not say the blessing before going to the mikvah, and that because of this specific case the rabbis established as a general rule that the blessing for immersion in the mikvah is done after the immersion. The technical term for this logic is לאפפלוג (lo pelug), meaning "no distinction," i.e. that sometimes the Rabbis will not make a distinction between certain cases, in order to avoid potential confusion.

Tosafot Pesachim 7b

Tosafot argues that this rule refers specifically to the immersion of a convert, who is not fit before the immersion, for s/he does not find reason to say "and commanded us," since s/he still is a non-Jew (and thus not commanded to follow Jewish law). But others required to immerse, like the ba'al keri who is permitted to pray, bless, and learn [Torah] as we said in chapter "he whose dead" (BT Berachot 22b), "the world has practiced like the three elders: Like Rabbi Judah regarding ba'al keri that can pray, bless, and learn [Torah] prior to immersion . . . " Even so, Rabbi Yitschak says that we do not rebuke women who bless after immersion because there is the immersion of the convert who cannot bless, they (the Rabbis) did not distinguish. And so too in washing hands, the did not distinguish between. And so too with hand washing, they did not distinguish between washing after using the bathroom, where it is not appropriate to bless before (washing the hands). However, with washing the hands there is another reason to bless after washing the hands wiping (i.e. drying). As it says (BT Sotah 4:4), "One who eats bread without wiping the hands it is as if s/he eats impure bread.

Regarding immersion - Rabbenu Channanel said in the name of the Ga'on (likely Hai Gaon) that [this rule refers] specifically to the immersion of a convert, who is not fit before the immersion, for s/he does not find reason to say "and commanded us," since s/he still is a non-Jew (and thus not commanded to follow Jewish law). But others required to immerse, like the ba'al keri who is permitted to pray, bless, and learn [Torah] as we said in chapter "he whose dead" (BT Berachot 22b), "the world has practiced like the three elders: Like Rabbi Judah regarding ba'al keri that can pray, bless, and learn [Torah] prior to immersion . . . " Even so, Rabbi Yitschak says that we do not rebuke women who bless after immersion because there is the immersion of the convert who cannot bless, they (the Rabbis) did not distinguish. And so too in washing hands, the did not distinguish between. And so too with hand washing, they did not distinguish between washing after using the bathroom, where it is not appropriate to bless before (washing the hands). However, with washing the hands there is another reason to bless after washing the hands wiping (i.e. drying). As it says (BT Sotah 4:4), "One who eats bread without wiping the hands it is as if s/he eats impure bread.

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Notes: (1) Rabbenu Chananel's opinion on this matter is not entirely clear in his commentary on Talmud Pesachim. It is made clear in his commentary on BT Berachot 51a s.v. "הוא المتعلה..." (2) I am aware of no rabbinic source that says that one needs to wash ones hands when coming out of the bathroom before making a blessing. Several Geonim indicate this rule, while others disagree. Are we better off cleaning our hands free, or immediately saying a blessing when a blessing is appropriate (e.g. the blessing after going to the bathroom)? (3) Of significance for us is Rabbenu Chananel's presumption that one who is not obligated to perform a mitzvah cannot make a blessing on performing that mitzvah.

And some want to say that an individual who says Hallel on the days that we do not complete [the Hallel], that one should not bless. However, the Sar miCoucy would say that since one wants to obligate himself, he blesses, and it is not a vain blessing, just as with lulav and tefillin that women bless (on performing the ritual), even though they are not obligated.

Note: Tosafot sites the argument of Sar Mikutzi, that since women can say a blessing on a time-bound ritual which they are not obligated to perform, a person can say a blessing on a Hallel for which there is no individual obligation (at least when praying on one's own, though we saw above that the obligation of the congregation to say Hallel on "half hallel" days is less than clear). Elsewhere, Tosafot gives us some of their basis for saying that women may make such blessings. As background for that discussion, we must be familiar with a statement of Rabbi Joseph, found most completely in Bava Kamma 87a:

Rabbi Joseph (who was blind) said: At first, were one to say to me "the halacha follows Rabbi Judah," who said that a blind person is exempt from commandments, I would make a holiday (i.e. party) for the Rabbis. Why? Because I was not commanded, but I did the mitzvot. But now that I've heard that [statement] of Rabbi Chaninah, for Rabbi Chaninah said "the one who is commanded and does [the mitzvot] is better than the one who is not commanded and does [the mitzvot]." if one told me that the halacha does not follow Rabbi Judah, I would make a holiday for the Rabbis.
Perhaps he thought like Rabbi Jose - From here (a piece in the Talmud that says that Michal, the Daughter of King Saul wore tefillin and the Rabbis didn't stop her ), Rabbenu Tam says that women make a blessing on all time bound mitzvot, even through they are exempt, just as Michal the Daughter of Saul who presumably also blessed [upon putting on Tefillin]. . . . And he further brought proof from that of Rabbi Yosef in Chapter Hachovel (Bava Kama 87a), "originally, had one told me that the Halacha follows Rabbi Judah (who said that those who were blind were exempt from time bound commandments)

Notes: Tosafot presumes that Michal said a blessing on wearing tefillin, or at least that the person who reported that she wore tefillin would have mentioned that she did soo without a blessing. I find it just as likely to say that the report did not need to mention that she didn't say a blessing.

Maimonides Laws of Tsitstit 3:9

Women, slaves, and children are exempt from tsitsit according to the Torah. But [the rule] from the rabbis is that any child who knows how to wrap (in tsitsit) is obligated in tsitsit so as to teach him the mitzvot. And women and slaves who want to wrap in tsitsit do so without a blessing. And so too all positive mitzvot from which women are exempt, if they want to do them without a blessing we do not stop them.

Note: Hagahot Maimoniot, a commentary on Maimonides, comments that Rashi agrees with Maimonides’ ruling.

Tur Orach Chayim 17

A blind person is obligated to wear tsitsit, but women and slaves are exempt. One of questionable gender or a hermaphrodite are obligated by way of doubt (i.e. since tsitsit is a Torah commandment, we will have these people wear tsitsit although they may not really be obligated). Maimonides, of blessed memory, wrote they may wrap (i.e. wear tsitsit) without a blessing. And he goes in accordance to his own opinion, for he explained that women cannot make a blessing on that which they are not obligated [to do]. But Rabbenu Tam wrote that they may bless, even though they are exempt. But it is better that they don't bless. A minor who knows how to wrap, his father needs to buy tsitsit (for the son) to teach him.

Note: It is probably worth adding here is Laws of Blessings 1:15 in which Maimonides writes, "Anyone who blesses a blessing that is not necessary has raised the name of the of heaven in vain and is as one who has made a vain oath." (cf BT Berakhot 33a) Of course this begs the question what constitutes an "unnecessary" blessing. - NCG 3/31/14
Bet Yosef Orach Chayim 17

Maimonides, of blessed memory, wrote they may wrap without a blessing - ... it is written there in "Hagahot [Maimoniot]" that this is also the view of Rashi.

But Rabbenu Tam wrote that they may bless, even though they are exempt - And Ra"n agreed with the view of Rabbenu Tam that they bless, because they get reward [for doing a mitzvah that they are otherwise not obligated to do], since Rabbi Jose bar Chaninah said (Kiddushin 31a) "the one who is commanded and does [the mitzvot] is better than the one who is not commanded and does [the mitzvot]," and since it says "greater," it implies that the one who is not commanded and does [the mitzvot] also has a reward. . . . and for halachic purposes we will follow Maimonides, of blessed memory, for [we resolve] doubts regarding blessings leniently (i.e. towards not saying a blessing if it might be in vein).

Note: There were, and still remain, some rabbis who objected to women doing certain mitzvot. As we have seen above, there is good reason to reject these opinions. I am at a loss for a good explanation as to why doing a mitzvah that one is permitted to do "appears haughty."

Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 17:2

Note: The italics represents the comments of Rabbi Moshe Iserless, the Ashkenazi voice of the Shulchan Aruch.

Women and slaves are exempt (from wearint tsitsit), since it is a positive time bound mitzvah. Note: nevertheless if they want to wrap in it and bless on it, the permission is in his hands, like all other positive time bound mitzvot, however, it appears haughty and therefore they (females) don't have permission to wear tsitsit . . . One of questionable gender or a hermaphrodite are obligated by way of doubt, and should wrap without a blessing. . . . Note: Due to what we wrote, that women bless on positive time bound mitzvot, they (the hermaphrodite or one of questionable gender) should also bless.

Notes: As mentions above (on his commentary, the Bet Yosef), Rabbi Karo errs on the side of caution, ruling that women should not say blessings on positive time bound mitzvot such as talit. Rabbi Isserless sides with the opinion that they may say such blessings. Given that logic, he rules that hte person of questionable gender status can say a blessing on time bound mitzvot as well.
I posted the following relevant comment to the Facebook Group “UTJ - Union for Traditional Judaism” (https://www.facebook.com/groups/43642532993/permalink/10155198242947994/) on 2/23/17. Please note that the below is slightly edited from the original post.

During our discussion of the OU pronouncement concerning ordination of women, Rabbi (Ya’akov) Jeffrey Siegel understood me, I think correctly in context, that where it comes to something that is technically halakhically permissible but has not been put into practice, k’vod hab’riyot can be a countervailing argument against the concern for maintaining minhag, which seemed to be the primary concern of the authors of the OU teshuvah.

I did want to mention that while this is one way k’vod hab’riyot might be factored into halakhic decision making, I am sure there are others. At the time, I didn’t have any other examples I wanted to throw out there. However, one example of how I might weigh k’vod hab’riyot (or at least a closely related concept) in making a halakhic decision recently came to me as I was studying another subject.

There is a longstanding Ashkenaz/Sephard divide on whether a person (usually a woman) may make a blessing on doing a mitzvah which she is not obligated to do (I put together some sources on this a long time ago – see http://www.e-ark.net/rabbi/birkatm.pdf starting at page 17). I have always been ambivalent about this halakhic point. I am generally a Sephardi trapped in an Ashkenazi’s body, and I tend to follow a Sephardic view in halakhah. This includes my being very careful about avoiding potential berakahah levatalah, including avoiding reciting berakhot that were not instituted by חז”ל and where the propriety of the berakahah is in question (safek berakhah lehakel). On the other hand, there is, to my knowledge no Talmudic source that states that a berakhah cannot be made by one who does a mitzvah voluntarily. The argument that it is inaccurate for an exempt person to say “… asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav” (who has sanctified us by Your commandments) is less than iron-clad, because the word kid’shanu (commanded US) is plural, and while the individual may not be obligated, the entire people were sanctified by the giving of the commandment (especially in light of the fact that exempt persons receive reward for mitzvoth they do, see e.g. Beth Yoseph on page 21 of my compendium). The Talmudic source that forbids saying a berakhah on a minhag (discussed further in my compendium referenced above), is also not dispositive as to an exempt person saying a blessing, because where something is a minhag God did not command anyone to do the act.
On these logical arguments I am left fairly ambivalent as to which side I am on. In this situation, and recognizing that ruling that women may not make a berakha on performing certain mitzvot would be genuinely hurtful to many women, I think there is room to err on the side of permission. In this regard, I would mention BT Chagiga 16b where providing “נחת רוח לנשים” (emotional comfort/pleasure to women) is given as a reason why women were permitted to do smikhah (laying hands on a sacrificial animal). Although the permission to recite a berakha might be more difficult than the permission to do smikhah, at the very least this demonstrates that nachat ruah l’nashim is a valid halakhic consideration.

I should note that I am not necessarily saying that considerations like k’vod hab’riyot are only admissible as “tie-breakers.” Rather, I think they are one factor to be weighed among many (a vote, not a veto).

Rabbi Jeffrey Siegel, I believe you disagree with me regarding permitting women to say such berakhot (and as you can tell I am still on the fence), but would you agree that methodologically this is a reasonable application of k’vod hab’riyot (or a related concept) as a factor in halakhic decision making?
Biography Of Sources

Much of the information in this biography comes from the Bar Ilan Responsa CD-ROM and from Encyclopedia Judaica.

Agur: Jacob ben Judah Landau, 15th century scholar, born in Germany, later lived in Italy.

Amram (ben Sheshna) Gaon: Gaon of Sura, died 875. The dates of his service as Gaon are not clear, but it seems he held that post by 858. His Seder (Order), AKA Siddur is the oldest extant order of Jewish prayers.

Bet Yosef: See Karo, Joseph.

Channanel (ben Chushiel), Rabbenu. D. Qairuwan (North Africa) 1057. Author of an early halachic code following the order of the Babylonian Talmud.

Halachot Gedolot: One of the earliest compendia of halachic decisions written in the 9th century by R. Shimon Kayyara in Babylonia based on the Halachot Pesukot of R. Yehudai Ga'on and on Sheiltot De-Rav Achai.

Hagahot Maimoniot: Late 13th/early 14th century commentary on Maimonides' Mishneh Torah giving rulings of German and French scholars. Written by Meir Ha-Kohen, a student of Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg.

Hai Gaon: There are three Geonim known as Hai. Most often, references to Hain Gaon refer to Hai ben Sherira (939–1038), gaon of Pumbedita, 998-1038, son of Sherira Gaon, though they could also refer to Hai ben Nahshon, gaon of Sura from 885–896, or Hai Bar Rav David Gaon, gaon of the Pumbedita academy from 890 to 898.

Isserless, Joseph: 16th Century Polish scholar. Authored a commentary on Tur and glosses on the Shulchan Aruch with many Ashkenazi opinions on the matters discussed therein.

Karo, Joseph: B. 1488, Spain or possibly Portugal. Grew up largely in Turkey, and left to Safed, Israel in 1536 where he died in 1575. Karo's halachic magnum opus was the Bet Yosef, a commentary on Tur (see XXX) which provides Talmudic sources and references to later rabbinic discussions on each halachic issue addressed by Tur, as well as certain other issues. Karo also wrote a brief compendium of his halachic opinions (based on his Bet Yoseph), which is known as the Shulchan Aruch. Karo also wrote a commentary on Maimonides Mishneh Torah (known as the Kesef Mishnah), as well as responsa.

Mahzor Vitry: Liturgical and halachic composition of Simcha ben Samuel of Vitry, a student/colleague of Rash”i.

Mahar"i Moellin: Jacob ben Moses Moellin (ca. 1360-1472). AKA "MaHarRi"L” (Morenu ha-Rav Jacob ha-Levi) Leading talmudist of his generation, and head of the Jewish communities
of Germany, Austria, and Bohemia.

**Maimonides:** Rabbi Moses (AKA Moses ben Maimon, or by his acronym RaMBa"m) (1135-1204). Rabbi and philosopher. Authored a commentary on the Mishnah (a compilation of rabbinic teachings from the late 2nd century), a code of Jewish law known as the Mishneh Torah, and famed philosophical work, "The Guide to the Perplexed."

**Meiri:** Menachem Meiri, France 1249-1316. Author of halachic works as well as a major commentary on the Babylonian Talmud.

**Mishneh Torah:** See Maimonides.

**Natronai Gaon:** There are two Geonim whose name was Natronai. Natronai bar Nehemiah (AKA Rav Yenuka), Gaon of Pumbedita, 719–730 and Natronai bar Hilai, Gaon of Sura from 853 to 858. The references found in this compilation are from Natronai bar Hilai as far as I know.

**Rabbenu Tam:** Jacob ben Meir Tam. France 1100-1171. Prolific member of the school of Tosafot.

**Ra"n:** Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi. (1310-ca. 1375) Spanish scholar.

**Rash"i:** Rashi, Rabbi Solomon Yitzchaki (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac) b. Troyes, France 1040, d. Worms in 1105. Author of commentary on Bible and Talmud.

**RIF:** Rabbi Isaac Alfasi, b. 1013 Algeria, died Spain 1103. Studied in Kairouan, Egypt. According to my teacher Rabbi Levy, he likely was heavily influenced by Rabbenu Channanel, but may never have studied under him. Wrote an halachic code following the order of the Babylonian Talmud, in much the same style as Rabbenu Channanel. Maimonides was a student of Rif's student, and thus Maimonides often follows the opinion of Rif.

**Sar miCoucy:** Samson ben Samoson of Coucy. 13th century French scholar of the tosafistic school.

**Sar Shalom Gaon:** Gaon of Sura, 838-848.

**Shulchan Aruch:** See Karo, Joseph and Isserless, Joseph.

**Sherirah Gaon, Rav:** 906-1006. Gaon (head) of the Pumbedita academy 968-98. Father of Rabbi Hai Gaon.

**Sigdayah, R. ??**

**Tosafot:** Composite commentary on the Talmud by scholars in 12th-14th century Germany and France. Started by the students of Rashi, though they often disagree with his understandings.
Tur: Halachic work of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher (ca. 1270-1340). Tur is a code of law, broken into four sections, Orach Chayim (daily ritual law), Yoreh De'ah (ritual laws such as kashruth, family purity and mourning), Even Ha'ezer (marriage and divorce), and Choshen Mishpat (civil and criminal law). This codification system eventually is adopted by Rabbi Joseph Karo in the Shulchan Aruch.

Yehudaim Gaon: Yehudai ben Nahman, Gaon of the academy of Sura c. 757–61, though he was educated in Pumbedita.

Yitzchak ben R. Yehuda ibn Ghayyat, Rabbi b. 1038 in Lucena, Spain. d. Cordoba, Spain, in 1089.