

Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

Brief History Of Ashkenazic Jewry

From Mesopotamia to Modernity: Ten Introductions to Jewish History and Literature
By: Burton L. Visotzky; David E. Fishman, Westview Press, 1999; page 119-120

Jewish settlement in northern Europe was fueled by Jewish perceptions of economic vibrancy in that heretofore backward area and by a sense on the part of many barons that Jewish immigrants might broadly contribute to the general well-being of their domains and might, at the same time, directly enrich baronial coffers. Unfortunately, no memoirs in which Jews identified their motivations for moving northward are extant. In an interesting document in which he invited Jews to settle in Speyer in 1084, Bishop Rudiger, as temporal lord of the town, suggests that the immigration of Jews would enhance the glory of his town a thousandfold. What the bishop seems to be alluding to is the economic advantage that would accrue from Jewish settlement. The early Jewish settlers seem to have been involved primarily in the burgeoning trade of northern Europe. Documents both Jewish and non-Jewish show these Jews buying and selling a wide range of goods, interacting with a variety of Christian neighbors, setting up shop in town in some cases, traveling considerable distances to carry on their business in other instances. Involvement in trade spilled over inevitably in a number of related directions. Exchange of coinage was a major economic need in this rapidly developing area, and Jews seem to have been active in this arena. Extension of credit constituted yet another business-related enterprise, and Jews seem to have done that as well, although only in the most rudimentary ways. There is little evidence of genuine Jewish economic diversification. The Jewish immigrants came as businesspeople and seem to have remained businesspeople. The process of settling in did not include movement into crafts or agriculture. The essentially business orientation of the early Ashkenazic Jews was appreciated by many in majority society; nevertheless, it was clearly resented by others, particularly those for whom the burgeoning business of this rapidly developing area was both new and threatening.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

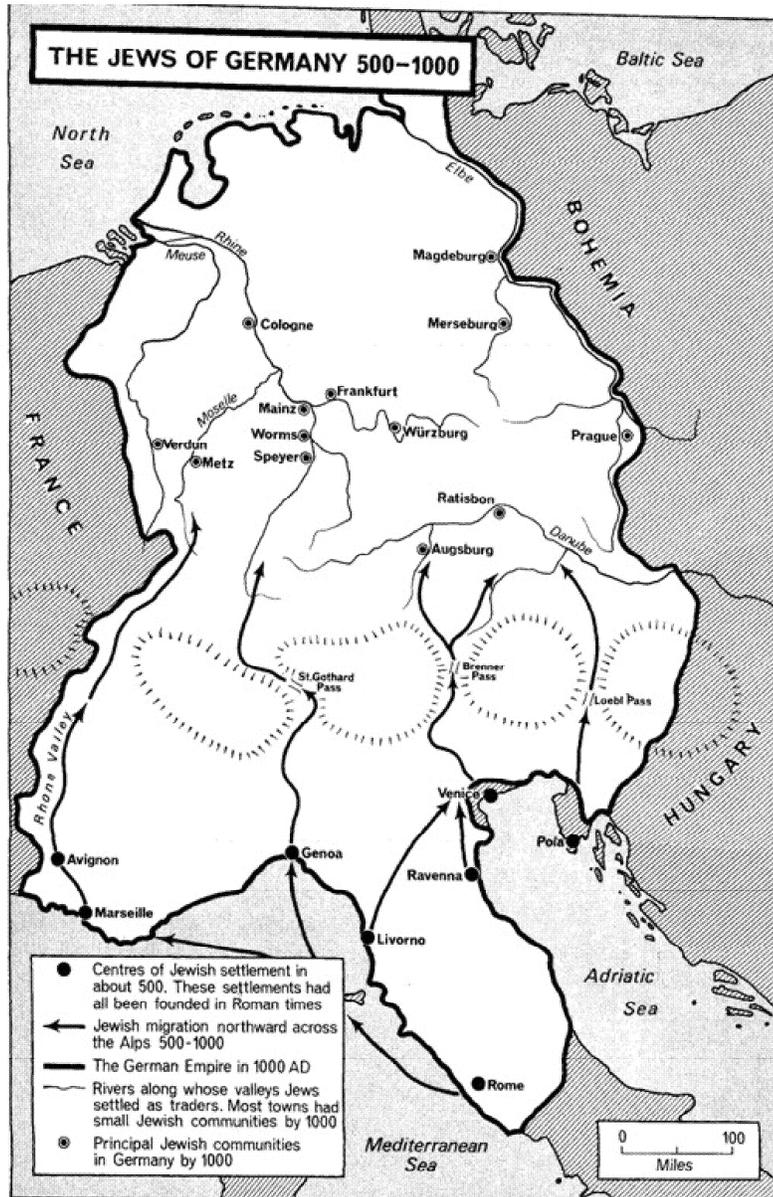
Bishop of Speyer: Grant of Lands & Privileges to the Jews, 1084

In the name of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, I, Rudiger, surnamed Huozmann, Bishop of Speyer,

When I made the villa of Speyer into a town, thought I would increase the honor I was bestowing on the place if I brought in the Jews. Therefore I placed them outside the town and some way off from the houses of the rest of the citizens, and, lest they should be too easily disturbed by the insolence of the citizens, I surrounded them with a wall. Now the place of their habitation which I acquired justly (for in the first place I obtained the hill partly with money and partly by exchange, while I received the valley by way of gift from some heirs) that place, I say, I transferred to them on condition that they pay annually three and a half pounds of the money of Speyer for the use of the brethren. I have granted also to them within the district where they dwell, and from that district outside the town as far as the harbor, and within the harbor itself, full power to change gold and silver, and to buy and sell what they please. And I have also given them license to do this throughout the state. Besides this I have given them land of the church for a cemetery with rights of inheritance. This also I have added that if any Jew should at any time stay with them he shall pay no thelony. Then also just as the judge of the city hears cases between citizens, so the chief rabbi shall hear cases which arise between the Jews or against them. But if by chance he is unable to decide any of them they shall go to the bishop or his chamberlain. They shall maintain watches, guards, and fortifications about their district, the guards in common with our vassals. They may lawfully employ nurses and servants from among our people. Slaughtered meat which they may not eat according to their law they may lawfully sell to Christians, and Christians may lawfully buy it. Finally, to round out these concessions, I have granted that they may enjoy the same privileges as the Jews in any other city of Germany.

Lest any of my successors diminish this gift and concession, or constrain them to pay greater taxes, alleging that they have usurped these privileges, and have no episcopal warrant for them, I have left this charter as a suitable testimony of the said grant. And that this may never be forgotten, I have signed it, and confirmed it with my seal as may be seen below. Given on September 15th, 1084, etc.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators



30

Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

The First Crusades And Its Impact On Jewish Prayer

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By: Burton L. Visotzky; David E. Fishman, Westview Press, 1999; page 122

The first major crisis encountered by early Ashkenazic Jewry came in 1096, as a result of the call to the First Crusade. Pope Urban II, who exhorted the warriors of western Christendom to fight against the Muslim forces holding the Holy Land, surely made no reference to Jews, and the organized crusading armies that responded to his exhortation and eventually conquered Jerusalem in 1099 inflicted no harm on European Jewry as they made their way eastward. The papal call, however, aroused a wide variety of knights, preachers, and common folk. In many instances, the popular militias that were formed saw the crusading venture in highly idiosyncratic ways. Particularly extreme in both their thinking and behavior were the popular German crusading bands. For some of these bands, the call to take up arms against the Muslims in the Holy Land was generalized into a slogan of hatred toward and revenge upon all enemies of the Christian faith. This radical generalization led the German crusaders to ask themselves why they were journeying long distances to engage the Muslim enemy in the Near East, while a profounder enemy-- the Jews of Germany-- was living nearby. The animosity toward Jews that developed in some crusader circles out of the traditional Christian motif of Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus resonated among some of the burghers of the Rhineland cities as well. A potent coalition of crusaders and burghers assaulted the major Rhineland Jewish communities of Worms, Mainz, and Cologne, wiping out these three great centers of early Ashkenazic Jewish life. Although the attacks of 1096 were localized and the bulk of early Ashkenazic Jewry survived unscathed, the ferocity of the assaults, the devastation that they wrought in those three Rhineland cities, and the remarkable Jewish responses combined to make the events of 1096 both disquieting and memorable.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

Excerpt From The Crusade Chronicles

There was a man there by the name of Meshullam, son of Isaac, and he called out in a great voice to his beloved wife Mistress Zipporah and to all those present: "Hear me, adults and children! God gave me this son; my wife Zipporah bore him in her advanced age. His name is Isaac. I shall now offer him up as a sacrifice as our Father Abraham did his son Isaac." His wife Zipporah said to him: "My lord, my lord, wait, do not yet move your hand toward the boy whom I have raised and brought up, whom I bore in my old age. Slaughter me first and let me not see the death of the child."²⁴ He replied: "I shall not tarry even for a second. He Who gave him to us shall take him as His share and place him in the bosom of our Father Abraham." He bound Isaac, his son, and took the knife in his hand to slaughter him, reciting the blessing for Ritual Slaughter. The boy responded: "Amen." And he slaughtered the boy. He took his shrieking wife and together they left the room. The errant ones then slew them.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

**Elegy Concerning The First Crusade Recited On Tisha
B'Av-Commemorating The Destruction Of The Two Temples**

Reader or Narrator: Truly, my eyelids gush with water and my eyes stream with tears, as I bewail in bitterness of soul the martyrs of Speyer; it happened on the eighth day in the second month, on the Day of Rest; my tranquility was changed to tumult and destruction as handsome youths and venerable men were slain; when they were gathered together, they gave up their souls heroically and in perfect unison for declaring the Unity of God in awe; they were valiant heroes, quick to fulfil his words; my priests too and my young men, they were ten in all who perished. *Cong.:* Alas, for the house of Israel and for the people of the Lord, for they are fallen by the sword!

Reader or Narrator: In the bitterness of my anguish and my sorrow, I compose dirges, as I call to mind this day and the martyrdom of the holy congregations; the congregation of Worms, well tested and chosen, the renowned ones of the land and perfect in purity; twice did they sanctify the Unity of God in awe, once, on the twenty-third of the month Iyar in all purity; and the second time in the third month Sivan during the reading and chanting of the Hallel, they gave up their soul bound to G-d in love; like a thick cloud full of water, so will I moan with a wailing cry for those who were adorned with the diadem of martyrdom. *Cong.:* Alas, for the house of Israel and for the people of the Lord, for they are fallen by the sword!

Reader or Narrator: For the noble ones of the esteemed congregation of Mayence, who were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions to do G-d's will; they gave up their souls for declaring the Unity of the Revered G-d; indeed, for them will I lament with a soul-shattering cry, for the foundations of both my Temples that were today laid bare, and for the destruction of my miniature temples and houses for study of the Law. *Cong.:* Alas, for the house of Israel and for the people of the Lord, for they are fallen by the sword!

Reader or Narrator: On the third day of the third month Sivan, more sorrow and destruction were added, the month which was turned into grief and distress; on the day of the giving of the Law I had hoped to find cause for regained happiness, but as on the day of its giving, so did the Torah return now; it ascended on high to the place of its dwelling, together with its casing and covering, its interpreters and those who explored it, those who studied and taught it in the darkness of night as well as during the day *Cong.:* Alas, for the house of Israel and for the people of the Lord, for they are fallen by the sword!

Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

Incident In Blois, France 1171

Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France, By Susan L. Einbinder, Princeton University Press, 2002; page 26

The Blois incident marked the first time in medieval Jewish memory that a secular ruler responsible for their welfare had prosecuted and condemned his Jews, and it is no wonder that the Jewish sources reflect a sense of new crisis and dismay. The catalyst was the claim of a Christian servant that he had seen a Jew cast the corpse of a Christian child into the Loire River. Long-simmering resentments between a local Blois lord and a prominent Jewish woman named Pucellina (to whom we return in chapter 2) escalated tensions and resulted in the mass arrest of the Blois Jewish community, totaling some forty adult men and women. Ransom negotiations broke down and on May 26, 1171, thirty-two Jews were burned at the stake.

Although a majority (seventeen or eighteen) of the Blois victims were women, the men included scholars of renown associated with the northern French Tosafist schools. So, too, were the poets who commemorated them. These poets introduced new martyrological conventions, recasting the ideal martyr as a member of the scholar elite and fusing the descriptions of scholar-martyrs with images of biblical revelation. Hillel of Bonn first links the Blois martyrs to the story of Sinai, when G-d spoke from the fire to the assembled Israelites and gave them his Law. In Hillel's lament, the Sinai motif signals collective witness and obedience and is distinct from the motif of the martyrs' incombustibility, which appears a few stanzas later.

Wording Of A Liturgical Poem Dedicated To The Memory Of The Victims Of The Blois Massacre By Rabbi Ephraim Of Bonn

Woe unto me for my tragedy! My wound is fatal! When the wicked one—may his name be blotted out from the earth— ordered the burning of the pious of the Lord, so full of wisdom, He brought them to the place of burning, to be burned there. They [the Christians] said: “Exchange the Divine Glory for one who effects nothing!” The righteous spoke out in defiance, to put dust in their [the Christians'] mouths: “Burning and boiling are not convincing argument against proclaiming the unity of the Awesome and Pure.” They sang out the prayer '*Alenu le-shabeab*' in order to declare the unity of the one Lord.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

The Wording For Aleinu L'Shabeach

עלינו It is incumbent upon us to praise the Master of all things, to exalt the Creator of all existence, that He has not made us like the nations of the world, nor caused us to be like the families of the earth; that He has not assigned us a portion like theirs, nor a lot like that of all their multitudes, for they bow to vanity and nothingness. But we bend the knee, bow down, and offer praise before the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who stretches forth the heavens and establishes the earth, the seat of whose glory is in the heavens above, and the abode of whose majesty is in the loftiest heights. He is our God; there is none else. Truly, He is our King; there is nothing besides Him, as it is written in His Torah:¹ Know this day and take unto your heart, that the Lord is God, in the heavens above and upon the earth below there is nothing else.²

ועל And therefore we hope to You, Lord our God, that we may speedily behold the splendor of Your might, to banish idolatry from the earth—and false gods will be utterly destroyed; to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty. All mankind shall invoke Your Name, to turn to You all the wicked of the earth. Then all the inhabitants of the world will recognize and know that every knee should bend to You, every tongue should swear [by Your Name]. Before You, Lord our God, they will bow and prostrate themselves, and give honor to the glory of Your Name; and they will all take upon themselves the yoke of Your kingdom. May You soon reign over them forever and ever, for Kingship is Yours, and to all eternity You will reign in glory, as it is written in Your Torah: The Lord will reign forever and ever.³

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

The Wording Of Av Harachamim

Recited on most Sabbaths during the Additional Service on Shabbat In Synagogues that Follow The Polish Ashkenaz Practices In Memory Of The Victims Of The Chmelnitzki Massacres of 1684.

Recited on the Sabbath Before Shavuot and Tisha B'Av In Synagogues that Follow The German-Ashkenaz Practices In Memory Of The Victims Of The Crusades

May the Father of mercies, who dwelleth on high in his mighty compassion, remember those loving, upright and blameless ones, the holy congregations, who laid down their lives for the sanctification of the divine name, who were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death were not divided; swifter than eagles, stronger than lions to do the will of their Master and the desire of their Rock. May our God remember them for good with the other righteous of the world, and avenge the blood of his servants which hath been shed; as it is written in the Law of Moses, the man of God, Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will make atonement for his land and for his people. And by the hands of thy servants, the prophets, it is written, saying, I will cleanse their blood that I have not yet cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion. And in the Holy Writings it is said, Wherefore should the nations say, Where is their God? Let there be made known among the nations in our sight the revenging of the blood of thy servants which hath been shed. And it is said, For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth them; he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. And it is further said, He judgeth among the nations; the land is full of corpses: he smiteth the head over a wide land. He drinketh of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

Origin Of The Mourners Kaddish

Siddur Of Rashi-The leader recites: V'Hoo Rachum Barchu, the Evening Service in the order as he does all year, and recites Shmona Esrei as always, except that he recites Havdalah; in the blessing Chonain Ha'Daat, Atah Chonuntanu, whole Kaddish, he recites Havdalah on a cup of wine, and makes the blessing on the fire using the candles that were burning throughout Shabbat, and if it is the end of Shabbat, they recite V'Yitain L'Cha, and a minor recites Kaddish and they go home in peace.

Machzor Vitry-Hashem Chafetz L'Maan Tzidko Yagdil Torah V'Yaadir: Kaddish, and then the leader sits down. The congregation then recites: Shir Mizmor L'Assaf...Ki Kal Hamim Yalchu Ish B'Shem Elokav V'Anachnu Nalaich B'Shem Hashem Alokainu L'Olam Va'ed. And the minor stands and recites Kaddish and skips TiTkabel and says: Y'Hai Shloma Rabbah. When the congregation recites verses or a section of Mishna, the congregation must recite Kaddish afterwards; Ki Hamalchut Shelcha Hee OOL'Olmav Ad Timloch B'Kavod. Ki Ain Lanu Melech Elah Atah; Baruch Atah Hashem Hamelech Bichvodo Tamid Yimloch Aleinu L'Olam Vaed V'Al Kol Maasav. And he recites Kaddish until D'Amiran. They stand to recite Shmona Esrei and then say Kaddish. The leader then sits down and everyone recites Pitum Hakitoret...the minor stands and recites Kaddish without Titkabel. And this Kaddish is recited solely for the purpose of educating young children. It is not considered one of the seven mandatory Kaddishes that are represented by the verse: Seven each day I will praise you.

Ohr Zarua-Our custom in Bohemia and also the custom in the Rhineleand is that on Shabbos after the congregation recites Ain Kailokainu, the orphan stands and recites Kaddish but in France I saw that they are not concerned as to who recites the Kaddish whether it be a child who lost a parent or a child who has both parents. But our custom is more appropriate because of the story of Rabbi Akiva.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commentators

Why Ashkenazim Do Not Perform The Priestly Blessings Every Day

Sefer Ha'Igor-The Gadol HaDor Rav Molin (Maharal) was asked: why do the Kohanim not recite Birchat Kohanim each day given the fact that it is a positive commandment to do so each day. He answered that it was the custom of the Kohanim to go to the Mikveh before performing Birchat Kohanim as it is written in Ha'Gahot (Notes to) the Rambam. To do so each day would be difficult because of the winter months. As a result the practice became to do so only on Yom Tovim. In addition, to do so each day would take away from work time. The reason that it is not a problem is that if the Kohanim are not summoned to perform Birchat Kohanim, they have no obligation to do so.

Why only on Holidays?

It is the practice in these lands that Kohanim do not Bless the people except on Yom Tovim because on those days the people are immersed in the happiness of the holiday. It is when the people are feeling good that the Kohanim bless the people. This is not the way they feel on other days even on Shabbat. Even on Shabbat they are distracted by thoughts concerning their well being and the loss of work. Even on Yom Tov they bless the people only in Tephilat Mussaf. It is after Tephilat Mussaf that they leave synagogue feeling joyous about celebrating Yom Tov.

Presence Of Non-Jews In Synagogue

There are those who wrote that Birchat Kohanim is not recited each day in the Diaspora because of the presence of non-Jews. There are places where it is felt that it is inappropriate to recite Birchat Kohanim in the presence of non-Jews.

Mishna-The incident of Reuven is read in synagogue but is not translated. The story of Tamar is read and translated. The first account of the incident of the golden calf (Shemos 32, 1-20) is both read and translated, the second account (Shemos 32, 21-25) is read but not translated. The blessing of the priests is not read and is not translated. The stories of David (Shmuel 2, 11, 2-17) and Amnon (Shmuel 2, 13, 1-4) are read but are not translated. The blessing of the priests is not read and not translated. Rabbi Bah son of Kohain came before Rabbi Yossi and asked: what is the reason? Rabbi Yossi said: the verse states: Ko Sivarchu (so should you bless); the words were meant to be recited only for purposes of a blessing and not to be simply read.

Rashi-Because of the word "yisah". That non-Jews should not say that G-d favors the Jews. What non-Jews fail to understand is that there is every reason for G-d to favor the Jews, as it is written in Masechet Brachos (20,2): is it not appropriate that I, G-d, favor the Jews. I commanded them: eat, become satisfied and then bless me (Devarim 8). The Jews on their own instituted a stricter standard; even for an olive sized or egg sized amount of food.

Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commenatators

Selichos Composed After The Crusades

איך How can we open [our] mouth before You, who dwells in the stretched-out [heavens]? In what way can we pour out prayers? We loathed Your upright and honest paths; we clung to abominations and despicable deeds. We went after vain and misleading oracles; we were stubborn and acted with insolence. Because of us You raged against the secure Dwelling Place [the Holy Temple]: it was destroyed, and the pleasing scent [of the offerings] ceased; driven away and made to wander about were the anointed priests — they who know how to arrange burnt-offerings and sacrifices. You chastised us oftentimes through the envoys that were sent, but we were not attentive to listen to those who rebuked. From then until now we have been dispersed, slain, slaughtered and butchered. We are left a mere few, among cut-down thorns, our eyes pining without finding relief. The oppressors of Your people who bow to Bel¹, why do they succeed in the morning and the evening? They rise up against You, uttering blasphemies: “Crushed ones, in whom do you trust?” [You] Who dwells eternally and are holy, observe the humiliation of those who groan; they rely on You and bond with You. May we be delivered forever by Your right hand’s awesome deeds, for we trust in Your abundant mercy.

1. Bel is a Babylonian idol cited in Isaiah 46:1. Early editions read “who bow to one who is dead,” and this was probably altered by gentile censors.

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Prayer During The Period Of The Early Commentators

Major Prayer Books From This Era

Ashkenaz

SIDDUR RASHI AND THE MACHZOR VITRY

Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, Isaacides) was born in Troyes, in northern France in 1040; and died in Worms in 1105. He studied in the academies (yeshivot) of Troyes, Mainz, and Worms. His teachers, Rabbi Jacob ben Yakar and Rabbi Isaac ben Judah, were students of Rabbenu Gershom, Me'or Ha-Golah. In 1070, Rashi returned to Troyes and founded a yeshiva there, which was attended by students from far and near. At the same time, Rashi began writing his life work: a commentary on the Bible as well as on the entire Talmud, for which he was nicknamed Parshandata. His knowledge of Hebrew language and grammar on the one hand, and of the sciences and handcrafts on the other, find clear expression in his commentary, which is both deceptively simple and unfathomably deep. Rashi had three daughters, two of whom married prominent Torah scholars. His grandsons included such illustrious scholars as Rabbenu Jacob Tam and the Rabbi Samuel ben Rabbi Meir (Rashbam), both of whom were among the founders of the Franco-German Tosafist school of Talmud study. Rashi passed away in 1105.

PEIRUSH SIDDUR HATEFILLAH LAROKEACH

R. Elazar of Worms (the Rokeach) was born in Magentzia circa 4920 (1160 CE). He received his early Torah education from his father, R. Yehuda bar Klonimus (Ribak of Magentzia); subsequently he moved to Metz, where he studied under R. Eliezer, the author of the Yereim. Later, he moved to Shpera, where he studied under his primary teacher R. Yehuda bar Klonimus bar Meir, the author of Yichusei Tanaim VaAmoraim (Ribak of Shpera, apparently not related). In Shpera he was educated in the hidden Torah by his relative R. Yehuda HaChassid, whom he stayed by in Regensberg for a period of time. At a certain time he settled in Worms, and established a yeshiva. Many of the Torah giants of the generation number among his students, including R. Yitzchak of Vienna, author of the Or Zarua. He lost his wife and children during the Crusades, and he himself and many of his students were badly wounded. R. Elazar died in Worms at the end of the fifth millenium (circa 4990 - 1230 CE), and was buried there. His study hall still stands today; it is known as Rashi's beit medrash.

Sephardic

ABUDRAHAM

R. David ben R. Yosef Abudraham lived in Spain during the thirteenth century. He might have been a student of R. Yaakov Ba'al Ha-Turim, although this is not certain. His work, called Abudraham, is a collection of halachot, minhagim and commentaries on the prayers, and is one of the most important works of this type. The Abudraham includes commentaries and halachic decisions from earlier authorities.