

Rabbi Rashi Simon

RABBI YAAKOV BAAL HATURIM—THE TUR

רבי יעקב בעל הטורים—טור

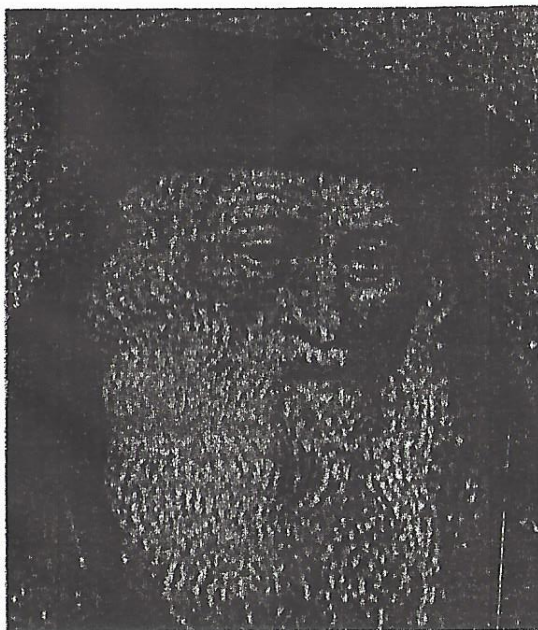


born: Cologne, Germany, c. 1275

died: Toledo, Spain, 1343

Popularly referred to as the *Tur*. Halachist, Torah commentator.

Rabbi Yaakov, the third son of **Rosh**, studied under his father and under his older brother, Rabbi Yechiel. On the heels of the Rindfleisch persecutions he and his father fled Germany, arriving in Spain in 1306. After living for a few years with his brother Yechiel in Barcelona, he moved to Toledo, where his father served as rabbi. In 1329 Rabbi Yaakov wrote regarding Germany: "It is forbidden for a person to even traverse a place of mortal danger, let alone to live in the land of blood. . . . Anyone who succeeds in bringing a person out from there (Germany) is considered as having saved a Jewish soul." He lived in dire poverty, but refused to accept a rabbinical post, preferring studying and writing. After his father's death he was appointed as judge in the *bet din* (religious court) in Toledo. Rabbi Yaakov wrote a commentary on the Torah that is an extract of the commentaries of **Rashi**, **Ramban**, **Ibn Ezra**, **Redak**, and others. He prefaced each weekly portion with comments based on *gematrias*¹ and allusions. These prefaces are printed in most editions of the Chumash under the title *Baal Haturim*. His most important work is the *Arba'ah Turim* (Four Rows).² It is a summary of all halachot and serves as the basic text for the study of Halachah to this day. It is popularly referred to as the *Tur*. **Rabbi Yosef Karo** wrote his great commentary, *Bet Yosef*, on the *Tur* and patterned his *Shulchan Aruch* on the *Tur*'s system of classifying halachot



Rabbi Yaakov Baal Haturim, the *Tur*.

R' Yaakov left Germany in 5063/1303 with his father and settled in Barcelona. After a time, he moved to a community outside-Toledo where his oldest brother, R' Yechiel, served as rabbi. He lived in his brother's house there for a few years, until R' Yechiel's passing. In 5074/1314, R' Yaakov took up residence with his father and brothers — R' Shlomo, R' Yehudah, R' Elyakim, R' Shimon — in Toledo. Throughout those years, R' Yaakov was unable to earn enough to support his family and constantly had to turn to others for financial assistance. R' Yaakov served on the Toledo *bais din* (rabbinical court), yet, despite his poverty, refused to accept a wage for any service that he rendered to the community.

Very little is known about R' Yaakov's marriage and children. He did have at least one son and one daughter. His son, R' Shlomo, was a modest God-fearing scholar, who passed away in Nissan of 5109/1349. R' Yaakov's daughter is known to have been selfless and tireless in her efforts to support her family so that her husband and sons could dedicate themselves to lifelong Torah study.

At some point late in his life, R' Yaakov left Toledo. (According to one report he set out for the Holy Land, but passed away en route, on the Aegean island of Chios.) After his passing, his remains were brought to Toledo where he was laid to rest on 12 Tammuz 5103/1343, in the family plot in Toledo, near his father and four of his brothers.

Because this work is mostly a condensed version of the Ramban's commentary, R' Yaakov writes, "I have not often mentioned the Ramban's name [in quoting from his work], for most [of my words] are his. So I have not mentioned him [by name] except where the context demanded it." Once again, as is his wont in his halachic writings, here too, R' Yaakov allows his original comments to slip unobtrusively into the work.

After writing this commentary, R' Yaakov, "saw fit to include, at the beginning of each weekly *sidra*, condiments — such as *gematrias* and interpretations of masoretic notes — to whet the mind's appetite." Yet it was this series of prefaces to the *sidros* that were first printed, originally as a separate volume (Constantinople, 1514; and Venice, 1544; see pp. xxii-xxv below) and later as part of most editions of the *Chumash*. This afterthought to R' Yaakov's commentary became known as the *Baal HaTurim*, and, if the number of editions is any indication, is one of the most popular Torah commentaries ever written.

תעלה ותרם סלקה אנה : יא מא סגרון לשן
אין רבא קשקשא תורון תרבויו : מ לא תקוין
אלוין בתי לישן הליסח דדוא קשי מ סגרא
ותשלט מן היין חורמא פבורה תרצין סכסכא

פגרה דנא לא סקבון אפין : ססקנא ולא תפרין
מ צמי מת-תולל לא נקטון פגרי ללא חילוטא לסכריה
ולא חילוטא ליזא דברא דאון רשת גי' עילוטא דנא זמן
פגרי

ס' יצחק

רשעים
בראש כי סעלה דאנו גונו, שבו שרובן [מן] דאן וקלרן, ונחשו עינינו
חפון דאנו וישרת וקרבט פאר אל, וישרת דאן וקלרן, ונחשו עינינו
חפון דאנו, וקלרן, ונחשו עינינו, וקלרן, ונחשו עינינו, וקלרן, ונחשו עינינו,
שבו, דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו
דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו דאנו חפון עינינו

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אין תעבורו... גזר הוה פון הרבניצולות פון שו"ת תעבור
על דין דער שוה חזקת הרצולות גרונות
הדעוועט לעבן... דערדינעוועט שווער און תעבור און הרבניצולות
העולם הוה... שוה גרונות הרבניצולות הוה
הוה הרבניצולות הוה... שוה גרונות הרבניצולות הוה
הוה הרבניצולות הוה... שוה גרונות הרבניצולות הוה

תשובה

Baal Haturim, a popular commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Yaakov Baal Haturim, which concentrates on finding significant meaning in the numerical value of words. From *Mikra'ot Gedolot*.

סֶלֶם — A LADDER.¹¹ The *gematria* of this word (130) is equal to that of the phrase וְהָרָא כְּסֵא הַקְּבוֹד, *this refers to the throne of glory*.^{11a}

□ סֶלֶם — A LADDER.¹¹ The *gematria* of סֶלֶם (136) is equal to that of קוֹל, *sound, voice*.^{11b} For the sound of the prayers of the righteous serves as a ladder upon which the angels may ascend.¹² This is similar to the incident of the angel who ascended in the flame of [Manoah's] offering,¹³ for prayer is tantamount to the Altar service.¹⁴ Therefore, whoever focuses his Intent upon his prayers causes the ladder to be complete with all its rungs, and they, i.e., the angels, are able to ascend.^{14a}

□ סֶלֶם — A LADDER. The *gematria* of סֶלֶם (136) is equal to that of קֶמֶן, *money*, and עֶנִי, *poverty*.¹⁵ For, [as it is stated regarding wealth,] *He lowers this one and He raises that one (Psalms 75:8)*.¹⁶

□ **סֶלָם** — A LADDER. This word has the same letters as the word **סֶמֶל**, *idol*, for God showed Jacob a prophecy of his offspring worshiping idols.¹⁷

וַיֵּרָא לְיַעֲקֹב אֶלְמַלְאָכִי וְהָיָה אֵלָיו אֶלְמַלְאָכִי וְהָיָה אֵלָיו אֶלְמַלְאָכִי — AND BEHOLD! A LADDER. The *gematria* of this phrase (196) is equal to that of וְהָיָה אֵלָיו אֶלְמַלְאָכִי, and the end,¹⁸ for God showed Jacob the appointed time for the end of the exiles.¹⁹

סֵלֶם — A LADDER. The *gematria* of this word (130) is equal to that of סִינַי, *Sinai*,²⁰ for God showed Jacob the [Israelites] standing at Mount Sinai.²¹

□ סלם מצב — A LADDER STANDING. The *gematria* of סלם מצב (268) is equal to that of מרכבו²², His Chariot.^{22a}

□ מַצֵּב — STANDING. The masoretic note, ג, means that this word appears three times in the Tanach: (i) here, (ii) אֵלֶּיךָ מִצֵּב אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁכֶם, *the Plain of the Standing Stone which was in Shechem* (Judges 9:6); and (iii) וְיָצְאָתִי מִצֵּב, *and will attack you with a standing siege-tower* (Isaiah 29:3). This implies that God showed Jacob the entry [of his descendants] into the Land of Israel, as alluded to by *the Standing Stone which was in Shechem*, for this was the first place that they conquered.²³ And the exile also began there,^{23a} as alluded to in the verse, *and will attack you with a standing siege-tower*.

□ לָמָד — A LADDER. The letters of this word can be rearranged to spell מָלָא, as a tributary, for God hinted to Jacob about the exile.²⁴