

History of Jewish Publishing, Week 3: Who invented Rashi Script? And why does it matter?

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The original switch: Hebrew to Assyrian - The Messenger is the Message

Origin of "Rashi script"

Five Hebrew scripts of the Middle Ages - Mizrahi, Byzantine, Italian, Ashkenaz, Sephard

How new scripts emerge – Scribes; Students and Presses; Religious reasons

The oldest semi-cursive styles

Hamedavdev (Maimonides, Tashbetz, Rabbeinu Yerucham - Egypt and Spain, 12th-14th centuries)

Masheita (R' Meir of Rotenberg - Germany, 13th century)

Mashek (Rashba - Spain, 13th century)

"Rashi script"

Sephardic script of 13th century or later

Would Rashi, Franco-German of the 11th century, have known it?

The possible Klonymus link

Then why the name? Publication of his manuscripts

Why was this script used for Rashi's commentary? - Convenience, space and religious reasons

Status of these semi-cursive languages in Jewish law – Gd's Name; Sirtut; Megilah and Mezuzah; Bills of divorce

Bibliography

A Bridge of Longing, Roskies

Language in a time of revolution, Harshav

Yiddish: Turning to Life, Fishman

Introduction to Old Yiddish Literature, Baumgarten & Frakes

The Rise and Fall of the Ethnic Revival, Fishman

Early Yiddish Typography, Jewish Book Annual 44, Zafren

Sources

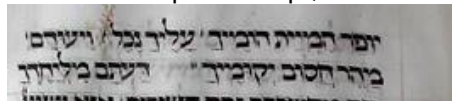
1. Talmud, Sanhedrin 21b

Mar Zutra, and some said Mar Ukva, said: In the beginning the Torah was given to Israel in Hebrew script and *Lashon haKodesh*. Then it was given to them in the days of Ezra in Assyrian script and Aramaic. Israel chose Assyrian script and *Lashon haKodesh*, and they left Hebrew script and Aramaic for *hedyotot*.

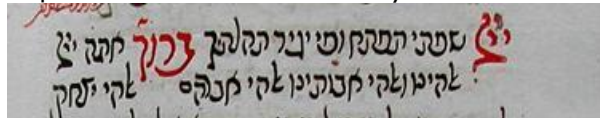
Who are *hedyotot*? Rav Chisda explained: Kutim.

2. Sample scripts (<http://bc.u.leidenuniv.nl/bc/tentoonstelling/Judaica/object3.htm>)

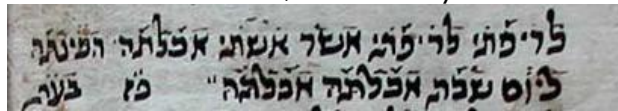
Ashkenazi square script, 14th century



Sephardic cursive, 17th century



Yemenite semi-cursive, 17th century



3. Cursive Chart, *Jewish Encyclopedia, 1901-1906*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursive_Hebrew

CURSIVE WRITING.

	EASTERN FORMS.							WESTERN FORMS.						
	Babylonian, 7th cent. ?	Egypt, 12th cent.	Constantinople, 15th cent.	10th century.	Spanish, 14th.	Spanish, 10th cent.	Provençal, 10th cent.	Italian, 10th cent.	Greek, 13th.	Italian, 14th.	Italian, 10th cent.	German, 10th cent.	(German), 15th.	German, 18th.
א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א	א
ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב	ב
ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג	ג
ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד	ד
ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה	ה
ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו	ו
ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז	ז
ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח	ח
ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט	ט
י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י	י
כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ	כ
ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל	ל
מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ	מ
נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ	נ
ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס	ס
ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע	ע
פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ	פ
צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ	צ
ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק	ק
ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר	ר
ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש	ש
ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת	ת
col.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

4. Rabbi Meir of Rotenberg, Hagahot Maymoniyot, Laws of Torah Scrolls 7

Our thin script is *masheita*, which is not real script.

5. Samples of Rashi script

אבגדהוזחטיכךלמם
נוסעפףגףאזקרתש

6. Rama, Yoreh Deah 284:2

Some say that one should not write mundane things in the Assyrian script with which we write the Torah.

7. Talmud, Shabbat 41a

From the fact that Rav Yehudah told his servant, while in the bathhouse, "Bring me natron, bring me a comb," we learn that one may say mundane things in Lashon Kodesh.

8. Talmud, Gittin 19b

Rav Ashi said: Rav Huna bar Natan cited Ameimar to me: Persian documents with Jewish witnesses may be used to collect from encumbered property. But we don't know how to read it! This is where we do know.