

Daniel Scheide was unable to attend the conference this year but he sent me his remarks to read. As much as he would have like it, I will not read this in a Mickey Mouse voice.

The subject matter of our choice for the winner of the Bibliography Award gives me the opportunity to share one of my favorite jokes with you. I promise that isn't why we chose it. Forgive me if you've heard this one before.

A man wants to build a house. Being a very religious man, he first consults his rabbi. The rabbi pulls out a volume of the Talmud and copies out the details that the man will need to construct his home. The man goes and follows the instructions to the letter. When he is finished with the house, he nails in the mezuzah and the house falls down. He goes back to the rabbi who tells him that he must have made a mistake somewhere and the man once again builds his house to the Talmud's specifications. Again, as the finishing touch, he nails in the mezuzah and the house falls down. He goes back to the rabbi and asks "I've done everything exactly the way the Talmud tells me. Why does my house keep falling down?" The rabbi looks at the page of Talmud for several minutes and finally says "You know, Rashi asks the same question."

Anyone who has studied the Talmud in any serious way will know that the text that we have in the Vilna Shas is not without errors and did not spring fully formed from the pens of the Tannaim and Amoraim. In recent years, the discipline of the academic study of the Talmud has flourished and the bar for such scholarship has been raised significantly. Or lowered, if you prefer the limbo metaphor.

This year's Bibliography Award winner is Otsar kitve-ha-yad ha-Talmudiyim by Yaakov Zusman with Yoav Rozental and Shvikah Aharon. This book is a catalog of all fragments and complete manuscripts of the Mishna, Tosefta, Babylonian Talmud, Palestinian Talmud and Rabbi Isaac Alfasi (RIF). The book includes almost 9,000 fragments/manuscripts from all over the world, 320 libraries. These manuscripts are essential for scholars of rabbinic literature since they can help trace the history of the texts, which can shed light on the development of halakha. Based on many years of original research, it provides information that, for the most part, is not accessible anywhere else, in print or online. Dr. Zusman could not be here tonight, but he gave us a statement. "I do indeed hope that this publication will serve the scholarly public faithfully, as was our intention"

The committee is awarding the Honorable Mention in the Reference category to Dr. Ardashir Babaknia for his four volume work, Hulukast. His publication is the first and only comprehensive reference work (over 2300 pages) about the Holocaust in Persian. All volumes are profusely illustrated with facsimile documents and photographs relating to the Holocaust. Of special note were the areas that focused on the rescue of the Tehran Children and Abdol Hossein Sardari, an Iranian diplomat who saved the lives of many Jews during the Holocaust. We hope this book will be distributed in Iran in order to make the facts about the Holocaust known within Iran.