

# Contents

Preface — V

Introduction — 1

Defining the Problem — 2

Status quaestionis — 4

Relevance and Contribution to Scholarship — 5

Methodology and Modus Operandi — 7

## Chapter 1

**Responsa Literature, Selection of the Corpus, and Substantive Aspects of the Texts — 14**

1.1 The Genre of the Responsa — 14

1.2 Responsa Literature — 16

1.2.1 Definition — 17

1.2.2 Internet and Other Media — 19

1.3 Form and Presentation of a Responsa Publication — 22

1.3.1 Intertextuality and References in Responsa Literature — 23

1.4 Assembling the Research Corpus — 26

1.4.1 First Phase: “Ruach Ra‘ah” as a Search Term — 28

1.4.2 Second Phase: Refining the Search Terms — 31

1.4.3 The Final Corpus of Authors from the Bar-Ilan Project — 32

1.4.4 Third Phase: Searching for Related Terms — 34

1.4.5 Fourth Phase: The Results Described in Detail — 35

1.4.6 Fifth Phase: Supplementing the Responsa Project — 45

1.4.7 Sixth Phase: The Definitive Corpus — 47

1.4.8 Cultural and Ethnic Background — 50

1.4.9 Primary and Secondary Sources — 52

1.5 Formal and Substantive Aspects of the Corpus Texts — 53

1.5.1 Form and Length — 53

1.5.2 Style and Use of Language — 53

1.5.3 Anonymous vs. Including Addressee — 54

1.5.4 Substantive Aspects: Themes — 55

1.5.5 Historical Setting — 56

1.6 Conclusion — 57

Appendix A — 58

Appendix B: Combined Searches Using Several Terms — 60

**Chapter 2**

<b>The Ruach Ra'ah in Premodern Sources — 64</b>
2.1      Ruach in Tanach — 64
2.1.1    Ruach Ra'ah in Tanach — 66
2.2      Ruach Ra'ah in Second Temple Period Literature — 68
2.2.1    Dead Sea Scrolls — 69
2.2.2    Apocryphal and other Non-canonical Books of the Bible — 71
2.2.2.1 <i>Tobit</i> — 71
2.2.2.2 <i>Testament of Solomon</i> — 72
2.3      The New Testament — 73
2.4      Talmud: Demons, Spirits, Shadows, and Other Dangers — 74
2.4.1    Ruach in the Talmud — 78
2.4.2    Possession — 81
2.4.3    Specific Spirits: Personification — 82
2.4.4    Ruach Ra'ah in the Talmud — 86
2.5      The Middle Ages: Talmud Commentators, Codices, and Kabbalah — 87
2.5.1    Medieval Talmud Commentators — 88
2.5.2    Medieval Codices — 89
2.5.2.1    Maimonides — 89
2.5.2.2 <i>Tur</i> and <i>Shulchan Aruch</i> — 90
2.5.3    Kabbalah and the Ruach Ra'ah — 91
2.6      Conclusion — 93

**Chapter 3**

<b>Central Texts on the Ruach Ra'ah in the Responsa of the Corpus — 94</b>
3.1      Babylonian Talmud — 94
3.1.1    Berachot 60b — 94
3.1.2    Berachot 14b–15a — 96
3.1.3    Berachot 51a — 97
3.1.4    Shabbat 108b–109a — 98
3.1.5    Yoma 77b / Hullin 107b — 99
3.1.6    Pesahim 112a — 100
3.1.7    Niddah 17a — 101
3.1.8    Hullin 105b — 104
3.1.9    Shabbat 29b — 105
3.2      Talmud Commentators — 105
3.2.1    Commentaries on Berachot 60b — 106
3.2.2    Commentaries on Shabbat 108b–109a — 106
3.2.3    Commentaries on bYoma 77b / bHullin 107b — 106
3.2.4    Commentaries on Pesahim 112a — 107

3.2.5	Commentaries on Shabbat 29b — 107
3.3	Mystical Sources: <i>Zohar</i> — 108
3.3.1	<i>Zohar</i> Introduction 10b — 108
3.3.2	<i>Zohar</i> Bereshit 53b — 109
3.3.3	<i>Zohar</i> Vayishlach 169b — 110
3.3.4	<i>Zohar</i> Vayeshev 184b — 111
3.3.5	<i>Zohar</i> Miketz 198b — 112
3.4	Halachic Codices: <i>Shulchan Aruch</i> — 112
3.5	Post- <i>Zohar</i> Kabbalistic Sources — 115
3.5.1	Vital, <i>Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Haberachot</i> , Ch. 5 — 116
3.5.2	Y. Sofer's <i>Kaf Hachaim</i> on OH. 4, Subsections 1 and 32 — 117
3.5.3	<i>Mishnah Berurah</i> (Yisrael Meir Hakohen, 1838–1933) — 117
3.6	Conclusion — 118
	Appendix C — 119

## Chapter 4

### Nine Paradigmatic Texts from the Corpus — 127

4.1	Thematic Categories — 127
4.1.1	Food and Drink — 127
4.1.2	Inside and Around the Human Body — 129
4.1.3	Physical Space and its Status — 130
4.2	Three Approaches in the Corpus: Object-oriented, Subject-oriented, and Text-oriented — 131
4.2.1	The Brisk Analytical Approach — 131
4.2.2	Approach 1: The Ruach Ra'ah as "Object" — 136
4.2.3	Approach 2: The Ruach Ra'ah Viewed from the Perspective of the "Subject" — 138
4.2.4	Approach 3: The Ruach Ra'ah Viewed from the Texts — 139
4.3	Paradigmatic Texts from the Three Categories — 139
4.3.1	Category of Food and Drink: Object-oriented Approach (20 Texts) — 139
4.3.2	Category of Food and Drink: Subject-oriented Approach (19 Texts) — 142
4.3.3	Category Food and Drink: Text-oriented Approach (32 Texts) — 144
4.3.4	Category (33 Texts) of Space: Object-oriented Approach (10 Texts) — 149
4.3.5	Category of Space: Subject-oriented Approach (72 Texts) — 160
4.3.6	Category of Space: Text-oriented Approach (77 Texts) — 165

4.3.7	Category of the Human Body: Object-oriented Approach (22 Texts) — 175
4.3.8	Category of the Human Body: Subject-oriented Approach (Eight Texts) — 178
4.3.9	Category of the Human body: Text-oriented Approach (23 Texts) — 184
4.4	Atypical Texts: the Residual Group — 187
4.4.1	Ruach Ra'ah as a Psychological Factor — 189
4.4.2	Ruach Ra'ah and the Shabbat Laws — 191
4.5	Conclusion — 193

## Chapter 5

### Ruach Ra'ah: Explanatory Models between the Material and the Spiritual World — 196

5.1	Knowledge Paradigms with Regard to the Ruach Ra'ah: Revealed Knowledge versus Health Regulations — 196
5.1.1	The Talmudic Knowledge Paradigm: Forms of Treatment, Diet, and Human and Animal Anatomy — 198
5.1.2	Talmudic Law as Revealed Knowledge — 200
5.2	Origins of the Ruach Ra'ah — 201
5.2.1	Manifestation I: Impure Spirit — 203
5.2.2	Manifestation II: Night — 205
5.2.3	Manifestation III: Nails (Finger and Toenails) — 207
5.2.4	Manifestation IV: Filth and Dirt — 212
5.2.5	Spiritualisation: From Physical Dirt to Impurities — 213
5.3	Effects of the Ruach Ra'ah — 215
5.3.1	Contact Theory — 216
5.3.2	Type I: Implicit References to Effects — 220
5.3.3	Type II: <i>Mishneh Halachot</i> and <i>Divrei Yatsiv</i> : Diseases and Accidents — 222
5.3.4	Type III: Spiritual Effects – <i>Yitzchak Yeranen</i> and <i>Teshuvot ve-Hanhagot</i> — 227
5.3.5	Type IV: Spiritual and Physical Effects – <i>Teshuvot ve-Hanhagot</i> and <i>Rivavot Ephraim</i> — 230
5.4	Atypical Texts from the Corpus: Theory and Remedies — 232
5.4.1	“Synthesis” between Ruach Ra'ah and Modern Science — 232
5.4.2	Mastering the Ruach Ra'ah: Martyrdom, Prayer, and Torah Study — 233
5.5	Conclusion — 236

**Chapter 6**

<b>Theologies of the Corpus — 240</b>	
6.1	Theoretical Framework — 241
6.1.1	Emphasis on the Stricter Opinion (Chumrah) — 242
6.1.2	Holistic Approach to Texts: The <i>Mishnah Berurah</i> — 243
6.1.3	Halachah and Meta-Halachah — 244
6.1.3.1	Magic as meta-Halachah — 248
6.1.4	Scientific Knowledge versus Religious Thinking — 249
6.2	The Authors of the Corpus and Rabbinic Literature: Different Paradigms for the Ruach Ra'ah — 252
6.2.1	Magical-demonic — 252
6.2.2	Rationalistic: Maimonides — 254
6.2.3	Pragmatic — 256
6.2.3.1	The Tosafists and the Shibta — 257
6.2.3.2	The <i>Mordechai</i> and the peeled egg — 257
6.2.4	Washing Hands after Rising: Qualifying Observations from Pre-modern Times — 259
6.2.4.1	The <i>Yam shel Shlomoh</i> (Shlomoh Luria, Sixteenth Century) — 259
6.2.4.2	The Maharam ben Chaviv — 260
6.2.5	The <i>Yabbia Omer</i> : An Example — 261
6.2.5.1	Reconstruction of halachic praxis from texts — 262
6.2.5.2	Magical-mystical elements — 264
6.2.5.3	The limits of the discourse: <i>the Mishnah Berurah and the Chazon Ish</i> — 266
6.3	Technology, the Modern World, and the Corpus — 267
6.3.1	Modern Means of Transport — 268
6.3.2	The Modern Toilet and Bathroom — 268
6.3.3	The Modern Food Industry — 270
6.3.3.1	Refrigerators — 271
6.3.4	The External Side of Modern Science: Technology — 271
6.3.4.1	“Changed Nature” and the Corpus — 272
6.3.4.2	The magical Talmudic paradigm reaffirmed? — 275
6.4	Conclusion — 277

**Chapter 7**

<b>The Ruach Ra'ah: Sociological and Anthropological Aspects — 280</b>	
7.1	Theoretical Outlines of the Ruach Ra'ah — 280
7.1.1	The Ruach Ra'ah and Ritual — 282
7.1.2	The Ruach Ra'ah as a Rite of Passage — 286

7.1.3	The Ruach Ra'ah as a Ritual of Affliction — 289
7.1.4	The Ruach Ra'ah and Biblical Purity Laws — 293
7.1.5	Mary Douglas and Purity and Impurity — 295
7.1.5.1	Purity laws, social order, and cosmology — 296
7.1.6	Douglas's Typologies of Societies — 298
7.2	Applying the Theoretical Framework to the Corpus — 301
7.2.1	Internal Boundaries: Children — 303
7.2.1.1	Children and the Ruach Ra'ah – different points of view — 305
7.2.1.2	Holiness, Purity, and the Boundaries of the Community — 306
7.2.2	Gender, Women, and the Ruach Ra'ah — 309
7.2.2.1	The Male Body as the Point of Departure — 310
7.2.2.2	Women and the Ruach Ra'ah: Between Traditional Roles and New Perspectives — 311
7.2.2.3	Gender Shift: the Male Perspective — 313
7.2.2.4	“Child” or “Little Boy”? — 315
7.2.3	The External Boundaries of the Community: Non-Jews — 318
7.2.3.1	Non-Jews, Purity, and Holiness — 319
7.2.3.2	Holiness as a Physical Jewish Component — 321
7.2.4	Jewish, but outside the Community: Seculars, Shabbat Breakers, and Sinners — 322
7.2.4.1	Buying Bread in a Secular Jew's Bakery ( <i>Yabbia Omer</i> ) — 323
7.2.4.2	Shabbat Breakers: the Non-religious Jewish Household Assistant — 324
7.2.4.3	Suicide: Transgressing the Boundaries of the Community — 326
7.3	Maintaining Boundaries: Control, Coercion, and Ruach Ra'ah — 331
7.3.1	Control Mechanisms — 331
7.3.1.1	Coercive Language — 331
7.3.1.2	Intimidation and Physical Force — 333
7.3.1.3	Visible Place of Washing — 334
7.3.1.4	Minimizing and Maximizing Intensity of Control — 337
7.4	Ruach Ra'ah: the Discourse of Douglas's “Enclave Culture” — 339
7.4.1	Habitus and Control — 343
7.4.2	Power, Discipline, and Foucault — 343
7.4.3	The Place of the Rabbi — 346
7.5	Conclusion — 349

**Chapter 8**

**Concluding Remarks — 353**

- 8.1      Scientific Knowledge versus Revealed Knowledge — 355
- 8.2      Solution Strategies: Mitigating Incompatibility between Rabbinic Discourse on the Ruach Ra‘ah and the Modern Knowledge Paradigm — 357
- 8.3      From Text to Reality? — 359
- 8.4      Social Reality — 360
- 8.5      Power, Control, and Religious Authority — 361
- 8.6      Tradition versus Modernity: Concluding Remarks — 362

**Literature — 365**

**Index — 379**