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## BRURIA IN THE BAVLI AND IN RASHI AVODAH ZARAH 18B

### INTRODUCTION: PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

**T**he provocative tale in the Rashi to *Avodah Zarah* 18b has blackened the name of Bruria, the epitome of the learned woman, for close to a millennium. Bruria is described there as having ridiculed the statement in BT *Kiddushin* 80b that women are by nature easily influenced (*nashim da'atan kalot hen alaihu*),<sup>1</sup> before her husband R. Meir. He replied that she would come to recognize the truth of this statement. He then ordered one of his students to seduce her. For a long time she rejected his overtures until finally she yielded. When she found out, she choked herself, and R. Meir fled out of shame.

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Both rabbinic and academic scholars and others have found the passage to be more than a passing oddity, and it has been studied extensively in modern times. Various attempts have been made to understand this story, and to explain it. Two important and comprehensive articles have been

This article is dedicated in memory of R. Eitam and Naama Henkin, may God avenge their blood, murdered in the presence of their four young children on Hol ha-Mo'ed Sukkot, 19th of Tishrei, October 1, 2015. Note R. Eitam's contribution to this topic in n. 3 below.

<sup>1</sup> Alternative translation: "fall prey to (sexual) enticement," and in BT Shabbat 33b the phrase means "to withstand torture." The word *da'at* in rabbinic literature sometimes means 'nature,' or 'character.' See, e.g., Maimonides, *Hilchot De'ot*.

written fairly recently, by Brenda Bacon<sup>2</sup> and Eitam Henkin.<sup>3</sup> Both articles are important, and the latter article is required reading for anyone interested in the relevant rabbinic discussions. Between them, they include most of the pertinent material that has been published to date on this passage, and I have made free use of them.

Various theories have been proposed as to how the story entered the text of Rashi, and how to understand it in context. In my view, the most reasonable possibility is that it found its way into the text of Rashi from a marginal comment that was mistakenly copied into it, and that the tantalizing tale spread rapidly and soon acquired legitimacy.<sup>4</sup>

I would like to demonstrate that not only is this passage in Rashi a later addition, but that the very passage in the Gemara upon which Rashi comments does not belong to the original text, rendering the problematic lines in Rashi even less relevant. I hope to be able to do this with the aid of a modern technological tool – the Bar-Ilan database.

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### *Critiquing the Story in Rashi*

Before proceeding to my major thesis, I shall commence with a short critique of the story in Rashi as it stands, raising points that make its authenticity suspect. Clearly, this tale found in our Rashi text, runs in the face of simple logic. To begin with, the narrative does not prove, as it claims to, that “women are easily influenced,” as the statement *nashim da’atan kallot ben alaihu* is usually understood. On the contrary, it explicitly states that Bruria withstood temptation for a very long time in spite of her having been repeatedly propositioned by R. Meir’s student. The fact that the Talmud relates on several occasions that R. Meir himself was very close to succumbing to temptation<sup>5</sup> makes the very idea that R. Meir would have sent a student to seduce his wife doubly strange.

<sup>2</sup> Brenda Bacon, “How shall we tell the story of the end of Bruria?,” [in Hebrew] in *Lihyot Isha Yehudiah*, ed. Margalit Shiloh, (Jerusalem/NY: Urim, 2003), 121-130, and a slightly different English version of this may be found in *Nashim* 5, 2002. This can also be found in *Kolekh* 36, together with comments by readers.

<sup>3</sup> Eitam Henkin, “The Enigmatic Bruria Story: A Proposed Solution” [in Hebrew], *Akdamos* 21, (2008), 141-159. His is the most comprehensive survey from a halakhic purview.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., op. cit., Henkin, 145ff.

<sup>5</sup> See below at n. 8.

Second, the entire story is in stark contrast to everything else we know from the Talmud about Bruria. Talmudic tradition portrays her very differently, as both a *talmidat hakhamim*,<sup>6</sup> and as a highly educated woman of sterling moral qualities.<sup>7</sup> Her excellent character and her status as a learned woman are both clearly reflected in the stories about her, and the excellent interpersonal relationship between her and her husband depicted in them, makes the entire scenario highly unlikely.

So, too, is it reasonable to suppose that R. Meir would have instructed a student of his to seduce his wife? Outside of the sins that would be involved both respecting himself and the student, were Bruria to succumb, R. Meir would be required to divorce her, or at the very least to no longer continue to live with her.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See, among other instances, BT *Pesachim* 62b, where the statement is obviously a hyperbole, but at the same time her extensive knowledge is used there as a yardstick, and she is called ‘an ardent Torah scholar’ (*tsurva merabanan*), and see also *Tosefta Kelim Bava Metsia* 1:6. Note in this context that Bacon, op. cit., 122, quotes Prof. Shamma Friedman as pointing out that the Tosafist Rav Shimshon Minkinon (14<sup>th</sup> century) speaks of Bruria as a Tanna.

<sup>7</sup> Probably the most famous tradition is found in *Ber.* 10a. According to the story related there, she once found Rabbi Meir praying that an annoying neighbor would die. She quoted to him the verse “Let sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked shall be no more” (Psalms 104:35), and read it as if vocalized differently (with a *patah* rather than a *hataf patah*) to mean: “Let sin be consumed from the earth,” in the sense that that the wicked shall be no more because they have repented. Another famous tradition about Beruriah has to do with the tragic death of her two sons. When both of her sons died suddenly on Shabbat she covered their bodies and waited for R. Meir to come home. After he recited the *havdalah* Beruriah asked him: “Some time ago, I was given a treasure to watch over, and now the owner wants it back. Must I return it?” When Rabbi Meir responded that “yes, of course she must return it,” she removed the sheet from the bodies of their sons, saying: “These are the treasures and God has taken them back” (Yalkut Proverbs 964 and Midrash Proverbs 37:76 to Proverbs 31:10).

<sup>8</sup> I am not aware that the fact that this would have terminated their marriage has previously been pointed out. I wish, however, to note that her committing suicide is psychologically convincing. For while the story does not explicitly state what she discovered, since she of course did not need to discover what she herself had done, her discovery must refer to the part played by her husband – that he had set up the student to seduce her. This would explain both R. Meir’s need to leave town out of shame, for his action was clearly against halakha, as well as Bruria’s committing suicide, that while forbidden by halakha, is readily understandable under these circumstances. For what can be more emotionally traumatic for a woman, than to find that her husband, in whom she had had implicit trust, had deceived her, without even having the alibi that he had been the prey to his own uncontrollable impulses. In contrast to this, there is the account found in *Kiddushin* 81a, respecting R. Meir himself; that he was enticed by Satan in the form of a beautiful woman and would have succumbed to temptation, had he not been saved by his Torah study.

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Further, to date no midrashic source for this tale has been identified.

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### *The Gemara Passage upon which the Rashi Story Depends*

While trying to solve this conundrum, I decided to take a more careful look at the final eight words of the Talmudic passage – since the story now found in Rashi depends on these words. What I discovered with the aid of modern technology was that these words are almost certainly a later addition to the text of the Talmud. If so, since the problematic story that is found in Rashi depends on them, if these words are a later addition to the Talmudic text, then the story in Rashi whose only reason to be there are these words must also be a later addition. If there is no Talmudic text in need of explanation, what justification is there for Rashi bringing it? His is an exegetical commentary, not a meandering collection of associative thoughts. Hence, if there is nothing in the Talmudic text for it to relate to, the logical conclusion is to suspect that it doesn't belong there.

I am well-aware that at first glance this sounds like an unheard of suggestion, and I ask the reader to bear with me, while I make a short detour and discuss the remarks of Tosafot to Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* 1:8 found on the very next page after the Bruria insert. The object of this exercise is to show that textual criticism of this sort is not new, and that one can even find textual criticism by such revered scholars as the Tosafists located in close proximity to our case.

Mishnah *Avoda Zarah* 1:8 reads:

None may make ornaments for an idol: necklaces or ear-rings or finger-rings. R. Eliezer says: If for payment, it is permitted.

After a series of logical arguments against considering the words “R. Eliezer says: If for payment, it is permitted” to be original, the Tosafists conclude with the statement that these words were apparently not found in Rashi's manuscript because he did not explain the word ‘*katla'ot*.’<sup>9</sup> This is an example of the use on the part of the *Tosafists* of what we would today call a ‘scientific’ argument to claim that these words in the Mishnah

<sup>9</sup> They also note that these words do not appear in the parallel in the JT, but that was not their major argument. Besides, I do not think that the Jerusalem Talmud has all of the biographical material that is found here in BT *Avodah Zarah*, and in BT *Gittin*. But this is not the subject under present discussion.

were not original. There are many instances of their critical approach to the text as they had received it, both the text of the Talmud and that of Rashi.<sup>10</sup>

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Hence I may not be too audacious when I use similar methodology to make my case concerning what appears to be an addition to the Talmudic manuscript. Because of the novelty of this approach in traditional circles, I have brought the above to illustrate that already in the Middle Ages the Tosafists did not hesitate to use such methodology when determining that a given text was spurious. In the present instance, while I have made use of new technology, the methodology is the same.

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### *Primary Claim*

What I intend to demonstrate is that the final eight words of the passage in *Avodah Zarah* 18b are foreign to the linguistic usage of the Talmud, while at the same time are appropriate to the language of later periods. The words under consideration come ‘out of the blue,’ so to speak, nor do they proceed anywhere except to the story in Rashi that bears no relation to the content of the Talmudic passage as a whole, except for the mention in both, that R. Meir ran away.

Nor is there any association between the incident recounted in Rashi and the Hadrianic persecutions in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, which is the overall context in the Gemara. The talmudic text under scrutiny reads:

Some say it was because of this incident [that he fled and came to Babylonia,] and others say because of the incident about Beruria (*ikka de-amrei me-hai ma’aseh ve-ikka de-amrei mi-ma’aseh de-Beruriah*).

<sup>10</sup> See Henkin, op. cit. 146, and particularly nn. 25 26, 27. Quoted there are *inter alia*, *Teshuvot Hage’onim*, Mossad Harav Kook, Jerusalem 5727 (=1967), *Baba Mezia*, *Perushim*, 3.

The reasons may be different, but the awareness of the *Rishonim* that there are additions in the text as we know it, in both the Talmud and Rashi, is amply illustrated in these notes. Henkin also sends the reader to Rafael Halperin, *Atlas Ets Hayyim*, 1980, the chapter on the topic “*darko shel Rashi be-Girsa’ot*,” 258 – 268.

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As I have already noted, these eight words (in the Talmud) are the hook upon which the tale in Rashi hangs. The sentence includes the formula “*Ikka de-amrei... ve-ikka de-amrei*,” “Some say... and others say,” and the two alternatives: “*me-hai ma’aseh*,” “from this event,” and “*mi-ma’aseh de-Beruriah*,” where the word following *mi-ma’aseh* is introduced by the prefix “*de*.”

There is nothing surprising about the first word combination, “Some say... and others say” (*ikka de-amrei... ve-ikka de-amrei*). As one of the students in my Talmud class, Tsipi Hess, has pointed out, these words – *ikka de-amrei...ve-ikka de-amrei* – are not to be understood as different ways of referring to the same thing, which is what I originally suspected, but refer to different things. And, indeed, in the immediately preceding Gemara section, this word combination introduces the several different alternatives given for what enabled R. Meir to escape arrest. Hence, one is not justified in understanding ‘from this event’ and ‘the event of Bruria’ to be alternative terms for the same incident.<sup>11</sup>

However, the remaining two word pairs: “*me-hai ma’aseh*,” “from this event,” and “*mi-ma’aseh d’Bruria*,” “from the event of Bruria,” “because of the Bruria event,” I found to be significant.<sup>12</sup> I repeat my thesis to avoid misunderstanding: it is the addition of the prefix “*mi*” in both these phrases that is idiosyncratic and revealing. It appears twice in these eight words, but not in this combination elsewhere in the BT, although the linguistic nuance is found to be common elsewhere.

And further, it is not this finding that initially made the line suspect. On the contrary, it was the fact that these were the words upon which the story in Rashi depended, that made me take a closer look at them and discover the idiosyncratic nuance. I repeat: it is *me-hai ma’aseh* (with an introductory *mem* prefix), and not *hai ma’aseh*, and likewise, in the

<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, as E. Henkin, op. cit., 154ff., has pointed out, R. Judah b. Kalonymus b. Meir of Speyer, author of *Yibusei Tanna'im va-Amora'im* (12<sup>th</sup> cent., Germany) may well have divided the passage in the *Avodah Zarah* 18a-b into two separate incidents, understanding *hai ma’aseh* to be the incident that triggered his flight to Babylonia, and *ma’aseh de-Beruriah* to be the beginning, the part initiated by Bruria, considered as a separate unit. And see Henkin, op. cit. 155-156, particularly nn. 62-64, where he also writes that both Y. L. Maimon’s edition of *Yibusei Tanna'im va-Amora'im*, 1963, as well as that of Raphael Neta Rabinowitz, 1879, identify *Ma’ase de-Bruria* to AZ 18a, where the *ma’aseh de-Beruriah* in the Gemara is found, and not 18b (which latter is the page that contains the Bruria tradition in Rashi).

<sup>12</sup> The var. lect. “*mi-shum ma’aseh de-Beruria*,” that is, the reading of the Munich ms. here is not immediately relevant, though it is worth noting that it is also the introductory *lemma* (tag) to the Bruria insert in Rashi in our texts. But that is a matter for a different study.

second case as well, it is the addition of the *mem* to *ma'aseh* + *de-*, yielding *mi-ma'aseh de-*, that is idiosyncratic. Upon studying these two word pairs with the aid of the Bar-Ilan University Responsa Project database,<sup>13</sup> I discovered that, while they are used quite often in later sources, there is no exact parallel in the Babylonian Talmud to either of these grammatical constructions.

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The phrase *me-hai ma'aseh*, “from this event,” is found some 75 times in the Bar-Ilan Responsa database.<sup>14</sup> However, this is the *only* instance of it found in the entire Talmudic text. So too for the other grammatical construction : *mi-ma'aseh de-Beruria* “from the event of Bruria” — i.e. *mi-ma'aseh*, “from the event” plus an additional word introduced by the prefix *de-*, “of,” is also found in the Talmud *only here*; and this is so in spite of the fact that the Bar-Ilan database contains 838 instances of this linguistic combination!<sup>15</sup>

In sum, the linguistic usage found in these two lines differs from the language of the Talmud, while at the same time, in later rabbinic literature, it is common enough. It apparently does not belong to the original Talmudic discourse. And if this is a later addition, then the same must be true for the Beruriah tale in Rashi, for it is dependent upon these words.

### *A parallel important consideration*

Finally, I am not aware that anyone has yet considered the fact that what is described at length here in the Talmud as to why R. Meir ran away to Babylonia, and the insert under present consideration in Rashi, could not both have occurred. If the one happened, than the other could not have happened. A careful consideration of them shows that they are mutually exclusive.

Let us first review the fascinating story in *Avodah Zarah* 18a-b. It describes how, at his wife's request, R. Meir removed her sister from the Roman brothel into which she had been thrown when the Romans

<sup>13</sup> My copy is version no. 18.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix A *me-hai ma'aseh*, accessible at the *Tradition* website, [traditiononline.org](http://traditiononline.org).

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix B, *mi-ma'aseh de-*\_\_\_\_, accessible at the *Tradition* website, [traditiononline.org](http://traditiononline.org).

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executed both her father R. Hanina b. Teradion as well as her mother. It describes the ensuing mortal danger in which R. Meir found himself after he bribed her sister's captor, which triggered R. Meir's flight to Babylonia (viz. the Parthian empire that was beyond the confines of the Roman Empire, and thus safe from the hands of the Roman government). The Talmudic tradition not only has internal logic, and satisfactorily explains his need to flee, but also fits naturally into the Talmudic context that describes events in the aftermath of the Bar Kokhba rebellion.

It follows immediately after the description of what happened to Beruria's parents and sister. The circumstances of the arrest of her father, R. Hanina b. Teradion, are recounted at length, including his terrible fate,<sup>16</sup> as well as the fate of her mother. This leads naturally into the fate of Beruria's younger, yet unmarried sister,<sup>17</sup> whom the Romans arrested and placed in a brothel. It proceeds to describe how R. Meir rescued her at his wife's behest, and then that the Romans posted a "wanted notice" on the walls of the city, in order to apprehend R. Meir for what he had done. The finale describes how R. Meir managed to escape at the last minute, after which he fled to Babylonia, presumably since it was beyond the confines of the Roman Empire and so would provide a safe haven. The entire story has internal coherence, and fits naturally into the context of the Gemara. We read there:

Beruria, the wife of R. Meir, was a daughter of R. Hanina b. Teradion. Said she [to her husband], 'I am ashamed to have my sister placed in a brothel.' So he took a tarkab-full of denarii and set out. If, thought he, she has not been subjected to anything wrong, a miracle will be wrought for her, but if she has committed anything wrong, no miracle will happen to her. Disguised as a knight, he came to her and said, 'Prepare thyself for me.' She replied, 'The manner of women is upon me.' 'I am prepared to wait,' he said. 'But,' said she, 'there are here many, many prettier than I am.' He said to himself, that proves that she has not committed any wrong; she no doubt says thus to every comer. He then went to her warder and said, 'Hand her over to me. He replied, 'I am afraid of the government.' 'Take the tarkab of dinars,' said he: 'One half distribute [as bribe], the other half shall be for thyself.' 'And what shall I do when these are exhausted?' he asked. 'Then,' he replied, 'say, "O God of Meir, answer me!" and thou wilt be saved.' 'But,' said he, 'who can assure me that

<sup>16</sup> This is the source for R. Hanina b. Teradion's fate in the Yom Kippur *piyyut* – The Ten Martyrs (*asarah harugei malkhut*).

<sup>17</sup> See *Avodah Zarah* 18a where she is called a *Riva* = a young lady.

that will be the case?’ He replied, ‘You will see now.’ There were there some dogs who bit anyone [who incited them]. He took a stone and threw it at them, and when they were about to bite him he exclaimed, ‘O God of Meir answer me!’ and they let him alone. The warder then handed her over to him. At the end the matter became known to the government, and [the warder] on being brought [for judgment] was taken up to the gallows, when he exclaimed, ‘O God of Meir answer me.’ They took him down and asked him what that meant, and he told them the incident that had happened. They then engraved R. Meir’s likeness on the gates of Rome and proclaimed that anyone seeing a person resembling it should bring him there. One day [some Romans] saw him and ran after him, so he ran away from them and entered a harlot’s house. *Others say* he happened just then to see food cooked by heathens and he dipped in one finger and then sucked the other. *Others again say* that Elijah the Prophet appeared to them as a harlot who embraced him. God forbid, said they, were this R. Meir, he would not have acted thus! [and they left him]. He then arose and ran away and came to Babylonia.<sup>18</sup>

Can anything be more straightforward than this? Because of the discovery of R. Meir’s having bribed the Roman soldier, the government posted a “wanted” notice for R. Meir, and after he succeeded in escaping from their hands by means of a subterfuge, and/or with the help of a miracle, he fled to Babylonia. This more than satisfactorily explains why and where he fled.

The story found in Rashi could hardly have preceded the Talmudic tradition since the Talmudic tradition relates that it was Beruria who sent her husband to Rome to ransom her sister from a brothel, and so she must have been alive at this point. But in the tradition found in Rashi, Beruria committed suicide, following which her husband ran away. To put it another way: the tradition in the Gemara could not have occurred after the events described in the Rashi story, because Beruria would already have committed suicide.

Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the incident described in Rashi happened shortly *after* the events recounted in the Talmudic version. For it is hardly likely that Rabbi Meir, occupied as he was with escaping from the Romans, went about setting Bruria up with his student and for her to have *withstood* the student “*for a long time*,” as is recounted in the Rashi tale.

<sup>18</sup> Translation by A. Mishcon, under the general editorship of Isidore Epstein, (London: Soncino Press), 1935.

Hence it is not at all surprising to find that Rabbenu Nissim Gaon, who lived a generation *before* Rashi, in his book, *Hibbur Yafeh me-haYeshuah*,<sup>19</sup> writes that R. Meir took *his wife and sister-in-law with him* when he fled to Babylonia! His wife must have been alive at the time that he fled. Indeed, there isn't the faintest hint in Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon's account of the tale now found in Rashi.

Is it conceivable that R. Meir had nothing else with which to occupy himself during this period of traumatic upheaval in his life, other than that his wife Beruria had objected to the statement mentioned in BT *Kiddushin* 80b *nashim da'atan kalot aleihen*? And besides, as he must have been away from his students, who could Rabbi Meir have enticed to do such an unheard of thing in Babylonia in direct opposition to the precepts of halakha?

And finally, the suggestion made by the renowned rabbinic scholar Aaron Hyman is hardly tenable.<sup>20</sup> His suggestion is that Rabbi Meir fled twice, once in connection with what is related in BT *Avodah Zarah* 18a-b, and again after he returned to the Land of Israel after the political situation had quieted down. Had this been so, the story found in the Rashi to *Avodah-Zarah* 18a-b would have been brought in the latter context, but there is no mention of it in that connection, neither in the Talmudic text there, nor in Rashi *ad loc.* There is not a vestige of a hint in the Talmud that such an occurrence happened then, even while Rabbi Meir's falling out with Rabban Shimon b. Gamliel, the head of the Sanhedrin, is described at some length. That falling out is clearly what caused him to leave his colleagues and found a Yeshiva in Tiberias, and eventually to leave the land of Israel, and to relocate in Assia.

<sup>19</sup> See H. Z. Hirschberg, *Hibbur Yafeh me-haYeshuah*, trans. from the Arabic with introduction and notes, (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1970), 39-40. The relevant content is brought and discussed at some length both by Henkin, op. cit., 150, and see particularly n. 44, and by Brenda Bacon, op. cit., 129-130. She quotes from Abraham Grossman, *Pious and Rebellious – Jewish Women in Medieval Europe* [in Hebrew], (Jerusalem, 2004), 266-272. The book *Hibbur Yafeh me-haYeshuah* was printed several times in Eastern Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There exist, at least, two printed compilations in Hebrew of this short work: *Hibbur Yafeh me-haYeshuah* a) Ferrara, 1557; and b) Amsterdam, 1746 et seq., ed. Israel David Miller, Warsaw, 1886. The work has had a long and chequered literary history.

<sup>20</sup> I here argue against the hypothesis brought by Aaron Hyman, *Toldoth Tannaim Ve'amoraim*, Volume III, 1964, p. 878 at the conclusion of his entry on Rabbi Meir. A. Hyman perhaps sensed the impossibility of its having occurred at the time of the events described here in *Avodah Zarah*, and attempts to explain the tale in Rashi there by suggesting that this supposed event occurred at this latter point in R. Meir's life, and is what caused Rabbi Meir to flee to Assia, rather than, or perhaps in addition to, his falling out with the head of the Sanhedrin.

## CONCLUSION

In the light of all this, I think that one is forced to conclude that the passage found in our text of Rashi, as well as the words in the Talmud upon which it depends, are later additions. We probably will never know for certain exactly how this occurred. But the details of how this came to be do not really matter.

In any event, as we have already pointed out, there is still no mention of this story either in the account of R. Nissim Gaon or on the part of the Tosafists – i. e. from the generation before Rashi until the middle of the thirteenth century, even while, as we have shown above, the Tosafists were in the habit of discussing anything they found to be unusual in Rashi's commentary.<sup>21</sup> And this tale would surely have raised very many questions. Be that as it may, the first mention of the Rashi-Beruria tale is in the *Menorat ha-Maor* of R. Yitzchak Abuhav and the Maharil (both 14<sup>th</sup> cent.),<sup>22</sup> and so we find ourselves not far chronologically from Boccaccio's Decameron (c. 1350), and Chaucer's, Canterbury Tales (also 14<sup>th</sup> cent.), both of which are replete with bawdy stories. The story in Rashi fits the *zeitgeist* of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

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One more point that I think worth bearing in mind before closing. In spite of the recognition of the many difficulties it proposed, the authenticity of the story found in Rashi has been tacitly accepted, probably because of the great respect in which Rashi is held, and much ink has been expended in attempts to explain it.

However, in the past few generations, while not rejected, it has come to be tacitly disregarded. A few random examples in illustration: Beruria is the name of a religious high school for girls in New Jersey in the United States. A Beis Ya'acov Seminary in Jerusalem was founded and headed by Rebbetzin Dr. Beruria David, daughter of R. Yitzchak Hutner, former Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivat Chaim Berlin, who must have at the very least acquiesced in the naming of his daughter, indeed gave her this name and raised her in the spirit of her namesake.

<sup>21</sup> See examples brought by Henkin, op. cit., 147, particularly n. 31, where it is noted that in several instances they reject the possibility that Rashi's source was a *mi-drash* with which they weren't familiar.

<sup>22</sup> See Henkin, op. cit., 147-8.

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Apparently, without explicitly repudiating it, the story found in Rashi *Avoda Zara* 18b has by and large come to be disregarded, and Beruria is today looked upon first and foremost as a scholarly woman of outstanding moral worth, and even in rabbinic circles has come to be looked upon as a role model. Perhaps the present study will, at the very least, contribute to the resolution of this cognitive dissonance.