

Reference Guide for Learning Yoreh De'ah

Introduction:

Learning Yoreh De'ah present unique challenges to RIETS semicha students. Long and involved with many shitos, details, and interconnecting concepts, Yoreh De'ah is not something that can be learned in one's spare time. Additionally, while one may have previously studied a siman or two of Beis Yosef and Shulchan Aruch with its basic commentaries, Yoreh De'ah often is a student's first encounter with in-depth halachic study. At RIETS, students typically learn Yoreh De'ah for only one seder and are expected to cover at least twenty simanim of Bassar B'chalav and Taaroves, not to mention halachos of Hechsher Keilim. Much has been written on all nearly every detail in this limud and due to time limitations, one cannot learn everything but rather must focus on that which is more important. The purpose of this ad hoc guide is to help delineate the function of various sefarim in the halachic process and to guide others to focus their time and energies in the right places. Focusing on Yoreh De'ah to the exclusion of other serious limudim will significantly alleviate many of these challenges and greatly enhance one's learning. Nonetheless, students learning Yoreh De'ah full-time will likely benefit from this guide.

Lacking intimate familiarity with Yoreh De'ah and all the sefarim mentioned in this guide, I am not qualified to advise others. However, much of what I write comes from conversations with Rabbaim who are qualified to make these judgments. I often cite these Rabanim by name. However, it is possible that I misremembered or misunderstood what they said. As such, any mistakes should be attributed only to myself. Finally, this guide reflects the particular approach I received from my rabbaim and other rabbaim may have different approaches. As such, readers are encouraged to consult and follow the advice of their own teachers.

I am grateful for the help and advice I received from Rav Dovid Miller. I also want to thank Rabbis Ezra Schwartz, Netanel Wiederblank, and Etan Schnall for looking this over and providing feedback.

Goals:

We need to ask the following question: since we will not leave the year being poskim in Yoreh De'ah, beyond Torah lishmah, what are our goals in this limud? A good goal is to know the basics of hilchos Kashrus. However, this could be better accomplished by reading the Artscroll Hilchos Kashrus (a sefer I personally like a lot). Why do we learn Rishonim on the Gemara and Acharonim on the Shulchan Aruch if it is insufficient to make us poskim? The answer is that we know there is a vast difference between one who learns halacha from primary sources (Rishonim and the Shulchan Aruch) to one who learns halacha from poskim or an Artscroll, without learning the primary sources. As will be discussed later, in Hilchos Kashrus, the Shulchan Aruch, Shach, and Taz are not only the foundation upon which subsequent halachic discussions are built, but they actually contain most the knowledge poskim use to answer questions. Someone who learns Yoreh De'ah well¹, while not being able to poskin new questions not explicitly discussed, should (1) be able to answer most practical questions, (2) possess the requisite knowledge and thinking skills to dissect difficult questions, and (3) even typically predict

¹ Learning halacha well involves many steps and cognitive processes such as reviewing and conceptualizing. Additionally, one cannot properly understand the Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries without knowing the Gemaros and Rishonim upon which they are based.

whether something should be mutar or assur. This level of knowledge should be one's goal in this limud. Let me illustrate with a personal example: my mother once asked me a complicated question about an onion and a knife and since I finished most of Yoreh De'ah, I looked into the question and thought it should be mutar. However, I didn't feel comfortable ruling on my own so I called a Kashrus agency. The Rabbi who answered the call wanted to be machmir but he wasn't holding and couldn't address the reasons why I thought one could be meikil. Subsequently, the Rabbi passed me on to his superior who ruled leniently. Since I knew the sources inside and well, I was able to argue with the Rabbi who unfortunately wasn't as holding as he should have been. While there certainly are different levels of this, I believe this is the level of knowledge we should strive for.

The Halachic Process and how it impacts what we should focus on:

When I asked Rabbi Yossi Berger, an important posek at Ner Yisrael, for advice on learning Yoreh De'ah, he cautioned me to focus my energies on the Gemaras, Rishonim, and Shach and Taz, and not to get distracted with lots of other sefarim.² What makes the Shach and Taz so important, especially when compared to the Bach, a sefer with a similar function? Klal Yisrael has a way of determining a sefer's importance, and while this determination may not always be like a science, it nonetheless may be comparable to an art.

To a certain extent, a sefer becomes important because it is quoted by subsequent seforim. Thus, while the Pri To'ar was written as a response to the Pri Chadash and might be considered equally important as the Pri Chadash, the Pri Chadash becomes more important than the Pri To'ar because subsequent acharonim cite the Pri Chadash far more frequently than the Pri To'ar. This of course begs the question, why did acharonim cite the Pri Chadash more than the Pri To'ar? To a certain extent, Hashgacha may have been involved. Another potential factor may be the sefer's publicity or accessibility; did subsequent acharonim have access to it and was it easy to use? However, beyond this, presumably the frequency a sefer is cited is related to the quality of the sefer and its arguments. Thus, presumably acharonim frequently cited the Pri Chadash because they frequently found his points compelling. Similarly, even though the Bach preceded the Shach and Taz, we are told to learn Shach and Taz because presumably poskim found their arguments to be stronger or their points to be more practically relevant. In fact, the Shach and Taz's comments are so central that in many ways, nearly all subsequent discussions could be characterized as footnotes on the Shach and Taz.^{3 4} Of course, a חכם המגיע להוראה has the ability (and perhaps obligation) to investigate each issue to the best of his abilities and when possible, decide between the previous authorities based on his own understanding. Such a חכם would obviously have learned Yoreh De'ah several times and see many more poskim. (Although even then, the issues typically will be already discussed by the Shach and Taz and the conclusion of the Shach and Taz will greatly influence the final psak.) For those who have not reached this level and are only learning Yoreh De'ah for the first time, it makes sense to devote more attention to seforim which Acharonim determined to be important.

² If I remember correctly, Rabbi Berger mentioned the following as "distractions": The Pri Megadim, the Chavas Daas, and the Badei HaShulchan. Rabbi Berger clarified that he thought these are excellent sefarim and did not object to me using them occasionally when I did not understand something. Nonetheless, he still strongly advised me to focus my energies the first time learning Yoreh De'ah on the sugyos together with the Taz and Shach. This is Rabbi Yossi Berger's opinion and others may disagree. Nonetheless, I believe Rabbi Berger's advice highlights the centrality of the Taz and Shach in this limud.

³ In other areas of halacha, this is not necessarily true. For example, one learning Nidah must absolutely know much more than just the Taz and Shach to function properly. On the other hand, one can comfortably answer many kashrus questions with only knowing the Shach and Taz. I do not know the reason for this difference.

⁴ In fact, a Rabbi working for the Star-K told me that one can answer correctly perhaps 80% of practical kashrus questions directly from the Shach and Taz.

On a related point, people speak about a general rule that we follow the Shach over the Taz. (However, I am told Chassidim typically followed the Taz over the Shach.) This may be because poskim found the Shach in general to make stronger arguments. However, I must state a critical qualification. There are plenty of disputes between the Shach and Taz where poskim follow the Taz over the Shach. This is because these poskim were qualified to decide between the Shach and Taz and found the Taz in these instances to be more compelling. Because it is not uncommon to follow the Taz over the Shach, I believe one cannot simply ignore the Taz, learn only the Shach, and hope to know the halacha.⁵ Additionally, even when we follow the Shach, the Taz continues to serve as a weighty opinion and is frequently combined with other snifim to create a different psak. Other poskim are not necessarily as strong a snif as the Taz. Thus, even if we poskin a Shach over a Taz, the Taz's view continues to impact halaha.

The best thing to do is to learn both Shach and Taz well and to use a sefer like the Aruch HaShulchan or the Artscroll Hilchos Kashrus (or ask one's posek) to learn the bottom line halacha. If one learns the Gemaras, Beis Yosef, and Shach and Taz well, one may be able to predict with reasonable accuracy when we follow the Taz over the Shach. However, since the learner is not מגיע להוראה, learning the Taz and Shachs well, while very valuable, will not substitute for learning a sefer to get the bottom line. (Another reason to learn a bottom-line sefer is because sometimes we poskin against both the Shach and the Taz!) If one truly is pressed for time, one could perhaps learn only Shach a bottom-line sefer. Additionally, one's rebbi can hopefully point out the important Tazes to see. However, obviously, if one takes this route, it will be much harder, if not impossible, to reach the level of knowledge I discussed in the Goals section.

Halachic Methodology:

Poskining in real-life situations is an art and requires practice. There are many factors and issues in halachic methodology. The following are a few helpful sources and resources which discuss various aspects of psak halacha:

1. The Bach and the Shach each wrote pieces on halachic methodology. The Bach's is printed in the front of the first volume of the Machon Yerushalayim Tur/Beis Yosef Yoreh De'ah. The Shach's comments are a response to the Bach and are printed at the end of Yoreh De'ah siman 242.

⁵ Until his later years, when the Rav taught Yoreh De'ah, he rarely taught Tazes. I do not believe this can be fully explained by the fact that we often poskin like the Shach over the Taz. My impression was that while later Acharonim certainly typically sided with the Shach over the Taz, there were still a fair number of exceptions when Acharonim, including the Gra, sided with the Taz over the Shach. Thus, as I wrote, if one's goal is to come out with the halacha, I do not believe learning only the Shach will suffice. Returning to the reason that the Rav rarely taught Taz, I offer four complimentary possibilities. First, the Rav may not have been so interested in giving over halacha in shiur. (Rav Dovid Miller told me that when he learned Yoreh De'ah under the Rav, the Rav didn't teach out of Shulchan Aruch but rather taught Toras HaBayis. While extremely important, Toras HaBayis obviously is not a source of halacha in the same way as the Shulchan Aruch.) Second, it is important to remember that in addition to Taaroves and Basar B'Chalav, the Rav also taught Shechita, Melicha, and sometimes also taught Tereifos. We struggle to finish Basar B'Chalav and Taaroves in one year with both the Shach and Taz. It would have been impossible to finish what we learn together with Shechita and Melicha while learning both Shach and Taz. Third, when the Rav thought the Taz was more correct than the Shach, or at least another equal possibility in the sugya, he may also have taught the Taz. Fourth, the Rav may have encouraged students to learn Taz on their own. As I wrote, because poskim often enough side with the Taz, I believe it is far from ideal to learn only the Shach. Typically, we supplement the Shach with the Taz. However, Rav Schachter says that when the Brisker Rav learned Yoreh De'ah for the first time, he learned the Shach and the Gra. The Brisker Rav and Rav Schachter do not need my approval but I will say that learning the Gra certainly is a fair alternative to the Taz. However, the Gra is not easy to learn. Thus, this alternative may not work for most students at RIETS.

2. Rav Willig and Rav Bleich wrote insightful articles on psak methodology. They are available here:
http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/726225/Rabbi_Mordechai_I_Willig/The_Brisker_Derekh_and_Pesak_Halakhah and here:
http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/726224/Rabbi_Dr_J_David_Bleich/Lomdut_and_Pesak:Theoretical_Analysis_and_Halakhic_Decision-Making
3. Rabbi Moshe Walter wrote a fine sefer entitled *The Making of a Halachic Decision*. Reading it, even thoroughly, will not make one a posek and will not replace the need to learn a psak methodology from one's rebbi. However, it familiarizes the reader with many of the issues and provides useful advice. Well referenced, it is possible that most or all relevant issues are at least mentioned briefly in its footnotes. (One who wants to look up his sources and investigate issues inside will find this a rich and rewarding project. The last sefer, שערי הוראה, would also aid in this endeavor.) I would note that the author appears to be Ashkenazi and might not be as thorough when discussing Sefardic approaches to halacha.
4. Dr. Menachem Elon, one of Israel's Supreme Court Justices, wrote a book called HaMishpat HaIvri. It was translated into English and is entitled *Jewish Law: History, Sources, Principles*. The third volume provides a detailed overview of how halacha developed from the times of the early Rishonim through the Shulchan Aruch and its major commentaries. While some sections are more detailed than others, this work appears to me to be well done supplements the other material here by providing a slightly more academic approach.
5. שערי הוראה is a short sefer, for the more-advanced learner, which analyzes a several issues relevant to psak halacha and psak methodology. This sefer is meant to be learned in conjunction with the relevant Gemaras.

Advice:

Terms – The Artscroll Laws of Kashrus contains a useful glossary of terms.

Seforim to own – the basic seforim which I believe are absolutely critical for this limud:

1. a Gemara Chullin with Rif and Rosh
2. a Tur and Beis Yosef
3. a Shulchan Aruch.

I also strongly encourage any ben Torah hoping to learn Yoreh De'ah well to own the following:

1. a Toras HaBayis (it is quoted left and right and is the basis for most the Shulchan Aruch in this limud)
2. Gemaros Pesachim and Avoda Zara with the Rif and Rosh

One should have easy access to the Issur v'Heter, the Hagaos Shaarei Dura, and the Toras Chatas. See the next section for more information on these sefarim.

Many of the seforim below in the list of sefarim are extremely useful, such as Chiddushei HaRamban and HaRashba and the Chochmas Adam. However, one can get by without owning all these seforim.

Review, review, and more review – Yoreh Deah, perhaps more than any other limud, is extremely interconnected. All the meforim assume the learner possesses knowledge of the sugyos and the Shulchan Aruch and will discuss ideas or make references that require this bekiyos. Many comments will only become clear by reviewing them once one has learned more. Additionally, there are a lot of concepts

and factors and the understanding of a particular concept will have ramifications for how to understand many other concepts. Thus, I highly recommend one spend significant time to constantly review and keep everything clear in one's mind.

Conceptualization and Physical Reality – In his eulogy for the Brisker Rav, the Rav praised Rav Chaim for taking the pots and pans out of Yoreh De'ah. This means that Rav Chaim understood Yoreh De'ah was not about determining physical questions such as how far taste traveled but rather was about conceptual principles. Others thought, at least certain halachos, depended on the halachic perception of physical reality. One who thinks critically will attempt to determine what he thinks is the best pshat in any given issue.

Getting the bottom line – As mentioned before, although often Shach and Taz provide the foundation for the halacha, to get the bottom line, one needs to learn a more modern sefer and/or get piskei halacha from one's Rebbi. I have listed six bottom line sefarim below, at the end of the list.

Issue Spotting – Our goal is not simply to know information but to acquire the necessary tools to properly apply the information. Typically, kashrus questions are worded in terms of physical reality such as I did X and then cooked Y and Z. However, these questions often simultaneously involve many different issues such as whether pots had been used in twenty-four hours, whether heat was involved, and whether something is *derech bishul*. Before one can properly apply the rulings of the Shulchan Aruch and its commentaries, one must identify the relevant questions that must be addressed. Lawyers refer to this as issue spotting⁶ and Rav Bleich discusses this more extensively in his article mentioned earlier. See also my discussion of the Pri Megadim in the next section.

Sefarim:

Note: I have written this mostly from memory and is based on my limited experience. It is not a thorough treatment.

Chiddushei HaRaavad on Avoda Zara – It is quoted a few times and is available on Hebrew Books at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/40645>. It is good to be aware of the Chiddushei HaRaavad's existence but I believe one can still learn Yoreh De'ah well without looking up these Raavads.

Toras HaBayis – Written by the Rashba, the Toras HaBayis serves as the backbone to the Shulchan Aruch's psak in many areas of halacha, our limud included. There are two parts to the Toras HaBayis, the Toras HaBayis HaAruch and Toras HaBayis HaKatzar. The Aruch is where the Rashba elaborates and proves his psakim. The Katzar is a summary of the conclusions in the Aruch. However, the Katzar often includes information not found in the Aruch. Two additional notes: First, in the standard printing of the Toras HaBayis, the Katzar is often not printed on the same page as the corresponding passage in the Aruch. Second, for whatever reason, the Tur only had the Katzar.

The Toras HaBayis has seven batim and the batim have multiple she'arim. For this limud, the relevant passages will usually be in Bayis 4.

A final note, while the Rashba is often very consistent, I am aware of several places where the Rashba's shita in Toras HaBayis seemingly differs from his shita in the chiddushim on Chullin. I do not know which was written first.

⁶ The US Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter stated "In law the right answer usually depends on putting the right question." While he obviously was not referring to halacha, his statement is often true of our G-d given law as well.

Bedek HaBayis – Rabbenu Aharon HaLevy (the Ra"ah) wrote critical comments on the Toras HaBayis and this was entitled the Bedek HaBayis. My experience is that disputes between the Rashba and Ra"ah frequently are really older disputes between the Baalei HaTosafos and the Ramban, with the Rashba following the Baalei HaTosafos and the Ra"ah following the Ramban. There are many exceptions and it is still extremely worthwhile to learn both the Ramban and the Ra"ah. The Ra"ah original shittos are often extremely novel and while they often are rejected l'halacha, their originality adds to the value of learning Bedek HaBayis.

Mishmeres HaBayis – The Rashba wrote the Mishmeres HaBayis anonymously and its purpose is to defend the Toras HaBayis against the Bedek HaBayis. In teshuvos however, the Rashba admits he wrote the Mishmeres HaBayis. While the Rashba also makes significant points in the Mishmeres, in my limited experience, a significant portion of the Mishmeres HaBayis consists of polemics against the Ra"ah.

Chiddushei HaRa"ah – The Ra"ah wrote "chiddushim" on Chullin. In reality however, they are a commentary on the Rif. Many opinions in the Bedek HaBayis are found in greater clarity in these Chiddushim. At the end of each perek, the Ra"ah also wrote brief piskei halacha which summarize his shittos. Like the Chiddushei HaRashba and Toras HaBayis, the Chiddushei HaRa"ah and Bedek HaBayis may not always be entirely consistent.

I will note that the Ra"ah wrote some sort of Chiddushim on Avoda Zar but I did not find the sefer to be very substantial.

Shaarei Dura – The Shaarei Dura was written by Rabbi Yitzchak ben Meir HaLevi of Dura and was an Ashkenazi posek and corresponded with the Rosh. (Some of the Rosh's teshuvos have both the Rosh and the Shaarei Dura's signature.) The Shaarei Dura became a staple for Ashkenazi psak in hilchos Kashrus.

HaGaos Shaarei Dura – The HaGaos Shaarei Dura, a long commentary on the Shaarei Dura, were written by the Terumas HaDeshen. The HaGaos Shaarei Dura, together with a few other sefarim, have a critical role in Ashkenazi halacha. An important note is in order: While the Terumas HaDeshen obviously lived before the Shulchan Aruch, Dr. Grach (Dr. Chaim Soloveitchik) notes that the Terumas HaDeshen lived in a different intellectual world than the Baalei HaTosafos. Dr. Grach argues the Tosafos era ended with the death of the Maharam M'Rutenberg in prison, the murder of the Mordechai, the Rosh's flight to Spain, etc. While 80+ years later, there was an intellectual renaissance among the Rabbanim of Ashkenaz such as the Terumas HaDeshen, it was not the same intellectual world of the Baalei HaTosafos. (My impression also is that the Shach and Taz were more willing to argue on these Ashkenazi poskim than on earlier Rishonim such as the Rif and the Rashba.)

Unlike Rav Yosef Karo, the Rama greatly stressed the concept that hilchasa k'basra, that we follow the later opinions, because they were able to evaluate the earlier opinions. As a result, the Rama gives great weight to these later Ashkenazi poskim as they lived after other Rishonim. Nonetheless, because they are not from the era of the earlier Rishonim, I would recommend focusing energy on the earlier Rishonim and the Shach and Taz and only look up the late Ashkenazi Rishonim when there is something one doesn't understand or when there is a machlokes as to what they mean.

The Terumas HaDeshen is also often referred to as the "מהרא"י.

Issur V'Heter – The Issur V'Heter (also referred to as Issur V'Heter Ha'Aruch), was written by Rabbenu Yona Ashkenazi, who was an Ashkenazi posek who lived in the mid to late 1400s. As an Ashkenazi and a student of the Terumas HaDeshen, Rabbenu Yona codifies many Ashkenazi practices

and his sefer came to be regarded as a core source of Ashkenazi psak for hilchos Kashrus. Some printers attributed this sefer to Rabbenu Yona of Gerona but this is obviously incorrect.

Toras Chatas – If I remember correctly, the Rama wrote that he believed the Shaarei Dura was too short and the HaGaos Shaarei Dura were too long. As a result, he decided to write his own sefer on hilchos kashrus and he titled it Toras Chatas. Since the Toras Chatas was written by the Rama, it obviously possesses halachic significance. However, it is not as authoritative as the Rama's comments on Shulchan Aruch.

Minchas Yaakov – While there are many commentaries on the Toras Chatas, the Minchas Yaakov is the commentary cited the most frequently and as such, it has halachic significance. It was written by the Rav Yaakov Reisher (c. 1670-1733), the same author as the Chok Yaakov on Orach Chaim.

Yam Shel Shelomo – The Beis Yosef decided halacha based on majority rule of the Rif, Rambam, and Rosh. (This obviously is an oversimplification of the Beis Yosef's approach.) The Maharshal believed that a posek must always attempt to decide halacha based on proofs and evidence, not majority rule. The Maharshal also quoted the Ramban's letter to the French Rabbanim where the Ramban says the Baalei HaTosafos were the Gedolei HaDor. Thus, the Maharshal believes the Baalei HaTosafos were greater than the Rambam. (This also is an oversimplification of the Maharshal's approach.) The Maharshal wrote Yam Shel Shelomo where he decided halacha based on his approach and he attempted to replace the Beis Yosef. While the Maharshal failed, his sefer is still important for halacha. In general, the Taz takes the Maharshal very seriously. The Shach also takes him seriously but not nearly as seriously as the Taz.

The Maharshal wrote several other seforim, including a commentary on the Smag known as the Maharshal's Issur V'Heter.

Darkei Moshe (and Darkei Moshe HaAruch) – Rav Moshe Isserless wrote what is known as the Darkei Moshe HaAruch. Since most of it is already found in the Beis Yosef, the printers identified the places where the Rama adds new information and printed it at the bottom of the Beis Yosef. This is what is known as the stam Darkei Moshe. These passages are quotes from the Rama but lack context. Usually, they are understandable on their own but occasionally, seeing the quote in the larger context will aid significantly in understanding the Darkei Moshe. Personally, when I learned Yoreh De'ah, I learned every Darkei Moshe but only looked up the Aruch when I couldn't understand something. It is important to note that the printers didn't do a thorough job identifying the new points in the Darkei Moshe. Newer Turs, such as Machon Yerushalayim, added the passages that the printers missed.

The Bach – The Bach, while writing on the Tur, did not try to replicate the Beis Yosef. While my exposure to the Bach is limited, it appears to me that he functions more like the Shach or Taz, asking questions, explaining sources, and deciding halacha, as opposed to the Beis Yosef who primarily only quotes and organizes sources. The Bach was the Taz's father-in-law but nonetheless, it seems that the Taz only quotes the Bach to disagree with him. The Shach takes the Bach more seriously but he too does not feel beholden in the least to the Bach's comments.

Dr. Menachem Elon convincingly argues that the Bach always intended to write a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch which would compliment his commentary on the Tur. Unfortunately, the Bach never finished writing this commentary and we have lost what little of it he already completed.

Ateres Zahav (The Levush) – The Levush was a student of the Rama. He believed the Beis Yosef was too long and the Shulchan Aruch failed to provide sufficient sources. As such, he wrote the Levush

which he hoped would provide the proper balance. The Levush failed to replace the Shulchan Aruch but is still cited by subsequent poskim. Nonetheless, my impression is that other poskim such as the Maharshah and Bach, (and certainly the Taz and Shach,) had a greater impact on halacha than the Levush.

Ma'adanei Yom Tov (also known as the Ma'adanei Melech) and the Divrei Chamudos (also known as the Lechem Chamudos) – These sefarim were written by Rav Yom Tov Heller, also known as the Tosafos Yom Tov. The Tosafos Yom Tov was a student of the Maharal and like his teacher, the Tosafos Yom Tov completely opposed the use of codes such as the Shulchan Aruch, without reference to the earlier sources and the reasoning behind the piskei halacha. As a result, the Tosafos Yom Tov sought to organize halacha around the Gemara and commentary of the Rosh, as opposed to halacha being organized by simanim in the Beis Yosef and the Shulchan Aruch. The Tosafos Yom Tov wrote two commentaries on the Rosh, the Divrei Chamudos and the Ma'adanei Yom Tov. The Ma'adanei Yom Tov's purpose was to ask questions and provide answers for issues in the Rosh. The Divrei Chamudos was to complete the halachic discussion, quoting shittos other than the Rosh, such as the Rashba and the Issur V'Heter. The ultimate goal of the Divrei Chamudos was to replace the Beis Yosef. He failed and we still learn Beis Yosef and later poskim rarely reference the Divrei Chamudos. That being said, for one learning the sugyos and the Rosh, the Divrei Chamudos is useful. Ma'adanei Yom Tov is a good commentary on the Rosh and can be consulted when one has difficulties on the Rosh. The sefarim originally were called Ma'adanei Melech and Lechem Chamudos but the Tosafos Yom Tov changed their names. (There is a story behind this.)

Aruch M'Shach – The Shach references this several times (usually he refers to it as my sefer) so he must have written it prior to his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch. I am not sure what the purpose of the sefer is. I personally only looked at it once or twice. That being said, given its illustrious author, it probably contains a treasure of insights and chiddushim.

Taz – The Taz is one of the major commentaries on Yoreh De'ah and is very important to psak halacha. In addition to commenting on Shulchan Aruch, the Taz also is very interested in understanding the Tur. Besides his goal of clarifying the halacha, the Taz occasionally will also present his own chiddushim on shittos that we do not poskin like. Although the Taz married the Bach's daughter, my impression is that the Taz almost always cites the Bach only to argue on him. While typically disagreeing with the Bach, the Taz seems to take the Maharshah extremely seriously. For information about commentaries on the Taz, see the entry on the Shach.

Shach – The Shach may be perhaps the most important commentary on Yoreh De'ah. His amazing bekiyus and greatness become even more spectacular when one considers that he wrote his commentary on Yoreh De'ah when he was relatively young (in his thirties I believe). While the Shach will often use his vast bekiyus to attack another opinion and say it is against 'everything,' one cannot take the Shach's word for it but rather one should see the earlier sources inside to make sure the Shach's points are as rock-solid as the Shach claimed.

When one has difficulty with a comment of the Shach or Taz, one should consult: 1. The Pri Megadim (see below), 2. The Levushei Serad (sometime printed in the back of the Shulchan Aruch together with the Yalkut Meforshim), 3. The Imrei Binah which is printed in the Mechon Yerushalayim Friedman edition of the Shulchan Aruch.

Nekudos HaKessef – This is the Shach's critique of the Taz. It obviously is very valuable to learn. See what I wrote on the Shach for more. Sometimes, the Nekudas HaKessef is commenting on the Shach.

These comments were written by the Shach's son and he is questioning his father. In my opinion, these are not as important as the comments written by the Shach himself, the latter I personally believe should be learned consistently together with the Taz and Shach.

I recently learned that one of the Taz's grandchildren wrote a sefer entitled *Maginei Zahav* which defends the Taz against the *Nekudas HaKessef*.

Daf Acharon of Turei Zahav (The Taz) – This is the Taz's response to the Shach. It is far from thorough and I believe there are only two or three comments of the Daf Acharon in our limud. Obviously it is valuable to learn but not critical.

Kuntres Acharon of the Shach – The Shach wrote a response to the Daf Acharon of the Taz entitled *Kuntres Acharon of the Shach*. Given that this was a response to the Daf Acharon of the Taz, there are only two or three comments of the *Kuntres Acharon* on our limud. Like the Daf Acharon, I believe they are valuable but not critical.

Beur Hetev – The *Beur Hetev* summarizes the Shach and Taz and a few other opinions. It is useful to help clarify a Shach or Taz or to help get the bottom line. It also has value when used for chazara. However, I have found that does not always contain everything important in the Shachs and Tazes.

Minchas Cohen – The sefer *Minchas Cohen* contains three sections and the second section discusses *Hilchos Kashrus*. It is useful in as much as it is a post-Shach organizations of the halachos. He also has his own insights which are frequently cited by later acharonim. The *Minchas Cohen* is abbreviated as מ"כ.

Pri Chadash – While functioning similar to the Shach and Taz, the *Pri Chadash* was an extremely original thinker who focused on going back to the primary sources. As such, perhaps even more than the Shach, he certainly had no qualms arguing on the *Shulchan Aruch*. (In fact, supposedly, the *Pri Chadash*, who was Sefardi, was sometimes so critical of earlier authorities that it was temporarily banned in some areas of Sefarad.) The fact that the *Gra* frequently cites the *Pri Chadash* attests to the quality of the *Pri Chadash's* analysis. (Similarly, Rav Simon told me that he heard from a reliable source that Rav Aharon Lichtenstein said he never saw a bad sevara in the *Pri Chadash*.) Even when subsequent Acharonim such as the *Pri Megadim* don't explicitly reference the *Pri Chadash*, these Acharonim often are attempting to answer the *Pri Chadash's* questions on the mainstream opinions and the *Shulchan Aruch*.

I only know of two editions of *Shulchan Aruch* which contain the entire *Pri Chadash*: the *Shulchan Aruch Ha'Chadash* with the *Tzuras HaDaf* from *Machon Shulchan Melachim* and the black *Machon Yerushalayim Friedman* edition. Most volumes of *Shulchan Aruch* only contain some *kitzur* of the *Pri Chadash*. I don't know who wrote this but I know that many important comments of the *Pri Chadash* were not included. The *Pri Chadash* and *Pri To'ar* (see below) are printed together in a sefer entitled *Perus Genusar*.

Pri To'ar – The *Pri To'ar* was written by the Sefardi scholar Rav Chaim ben Attar, also known as the *Ohr HaChaim* for his commentary on *Chumash*. I believe the *Pri To'ar* was written as a response to the *Pri Chadash*. While subsequent *poskim* cite the *Pri To'ar*, my impression is that the *Pri Chadash* is cited more frequently than the *Pri To'ar*.

The *Pri To'ar* is printed together with the *Pri Chadash* in a sefer entitled *Perus Genusar*.

Pri Megadim (Mishb'tzos Zahav and Sifsei Daas) – The *Pri Megadim* is a classic on this section of *Yoreh De'ah*. While the *Mishb'tzos Zahav* and the *Sifsei Daas* were written as commentaries on the Taz

and Shach respectively, they also function more broadly. Rav Tzvi Berkowitz told me that perhaps more than any area of halacha, a shayla in hilchos Kashrus may depend on a great number of factors (Bitul b'Rov, Safek Chisarom Yedia, Nosen Ta'am Lifgam, Kli Rishon verses Irui verses Kli Sheni, Derech Bishul, Cham Miktzaso Cham Kulo, Ein B'lia Yotzei M'chaticha l'Chaticha blo Rotev, Chaticha Atzma Na'asis Nevila and more). Since the Shulchan Aruch was for talmidei Chachamim who knew enough to use it as a chazara sefer for the Beis Yosef, the Shach and Taz were also written for talmidei Chachamim. As such, the Taz and Shach often discuss a topic in several places and one needs to put all these comments together to get their full opinion. Rav Tzvi said (including himself), we are little people and the Shulchan Aruch, Shach, and Taz were not written for us. The Pri Megadim helps us little people put everything together.

The Pri Megadim comments on the Shach and Taz, discusses the views of many other Rishonim and Acharonim, and raises many new shaylos. He also often has long introductions and treatises on important concepts. These usually are included in the Mishb'tzos Zahar. While often dense and hard to learn due to his many cross references, he certainly ties issues together to paint a complete picture. The Pri Megadim wrote a useful perush on Masseches Chullin entitled the Rosh Yosef. It functions similar to the Pri Megadim except it is written on the Gemara and the Rishonim instead of the Shach and Taz.

The Pri Megadim wrote a considerable amount and often contradicts himself between his different sefarim and even within the Pri Megadim. Rav Schachter told me that the Pri Megadim's goal was to raise issues and discuss potentially relevant factors that one might not have thought of. (Rav Bleich, in his article cited above, termed this Issue Spotting.) As such, his conclusions, while valuable, are not as critical as the questions and issues he raises. It is incumbent on the posek to consider all these potentially relevant variables and reach his own conclusion. As such, contradictions in the Pri Megadim are not so significant.

Beur HaGra – Rav Chaim of Volozhin wrote in his introduction to the Beur HaGra that the Gra sought to return the Gemara to the center of psak halacha. As such, the Gra tries to provide sources for the opinions in Shulchan Aruch. While the Beur HaGolah often would say for example that the Shulchan Aruch comes from the Rashba, the Gra would go further. Sometimes the Gra would provide novel sources for the Rashba and other times he might critically analyze the Rashba and conclude against the Rashba.

The Gra was seemingly not so interested in resolving contradictions in the Shulchan Aruch or the Rama. One spending significant time learning the sugyos and Rishonim will find Beur HaGra full of insights. However, the Gra is terse and often hard to learn.

Kereisi U-Pleisi – The Kereisi U-Pleisi is Rav Yonasan Eibeshitz's commentary on Yoreh De'ah and it is frequently cited by subsequent poskim. While I rarely learned the sefer, my impression is that Kereisi is a concise commentary for bottom-line halacha and in the Pleisi, he critically analyzes issues and comes to his own conclusions.

Rav Yonasan Eibeshitz also wrote Match Yehonasan on Yoreh De'ah. I do not know what is the relationship between these two sefarim.

The Kereisi U-Pleisi is abbreviated as כר"ו.

Chavas Daas – The Chavas Daas was written by Rav Yaakov of Lisa, also known as the Nesivos HaMishpat. The Bi'urim contain his insights and analysis while the Chiddushim contain his conclusions and also relevant halachic comments culled from earlier sources. While subsequent poskim certainly cite the Chavas Daas in their halachic discussions, it also is an excellent source of lomdus. Thus, one looking for more lomdus will find it in the Chavas Daas.

Dagul M'Revavah – These are the Nodah B'Yehudah's comments on Shulchan Aruch. His comments on Shulchan Aruch are very insightful and are usually relatively short. The second edition of Dagul M'Revavah is typically printed among the Yalkut Meforshim.

Rebbi Akiva Eiger – Rebbi Akiva Eiger was the gadol ha'dor at a time when there were many great gedolim. As such, he needs no haskama. Similar to the Dagul M'Revavah, Rebbi Akiva Eiger's comments on Shulchan Aruch are incredibly insightful and typically relatively short. Different editions of Shulchan Aruch may have additional comments from various Kisvei Yad.

Pischei Teshuva – The primary goal of the Pischei Teshuva is summarize and present the views of major poskim who lived after the Shach and Taz. He also sometimes analyzes these poskim and presents his own opinions. The Pischei Teshuva became a classic and is extremely worthwhile to learn.

Yad Yehudah – The Yad Yehudah is a very thorough commentary on Shulchan Aruch which discusses many issues in great detail. He is cited by subsequent poskim. In addition to his very long commentary, he also has an abridged summary.

Chazon Ish – The Chazon Ish starts from the most basic sources and works his way to the classic commentaries on the Shulchan Aruch. Since the sefer Chazon Ish is not a commentary on Shulchan Aruch, sometimes it can be hard to find the relevant passages one is looking for.

Shiurei Rav – This sefer presents the Rav's Torah on Yoreh De'ah and likely contains many excellent insights and lomdus. Rav Koenigsberg put this sefer together and did an excellent job. For those looking for more lomdus, Shiurei HaRav is a great place to go.

Shechitas Chullin – Rav Itamar Garboz (author of Mishnas HaShabbas) authored this very good raid sefer on Chullin. The sefer also contains many of the author's own thoughts, which also are good.

Megillas Sefer – This is a very good raid sefer on Shulchan Aruch which also has a lot of his own thoughts, which also are good. It is available on Hebrew Books at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/47717>.

Contemporary Teshuvos – Many contemporary issues, such as gelatin and microwaves are discussed thoroughly in teshuvos. Each posek has his unique style and a teshuva from Reb Moshe will differ greatly from a teshuva from Rav Ovadia Yosef. Teshuvos obviously can greatly enhance the limud and many teshuvos are classics and are critically important. However, there also is no end to the number of relevant teshuvos one can learn. One should look to one's Rabbi for guidance.

Bottom-Line Seforim:

I have classified these last six seforim as bottom-line seforim which should be used to get a bottom-line psak halacha. While most comments in most seforim here are trying to arrive at the halacha, I believe these seforim are different for two reasons. First, they are late acharonim who saw most of what came before them. Second, they can be used as reference seforim to find a psak. (Thus, even though the Chazon Ish came after the Chochmas Adam, the Chazon Ish does not comment systematically and even when he does discuss an issue, the Chazon Ish is not organized in a way suited to quickly finding a bottom-line psak.) While I classified these seforim as bottom-line seforim, they often also have tremendous utility for lomdus.

These sefarim follow Ashkenazi Halacha. While I cannot make any definitive statements, presumably, Sefardim, depending on their mesorah, should consult either the Ben Ish Chai or Yalkut Yosef.

Chochmas Adam – Written by Rav Avraham Danzig, the Chochmas Adam is similar to his sefer on Orach Chaim, the Chayei Adam. In his brief comments, he poskins on issues argued about by the Shach, Taz, and others. The Chochmas Adam was the one Acharon which Rav Moshe Heinemann recommended me to have handy. Rabbi Yossi Berger also recommended that after completing any siman of Shulchan Aruch, one then learn the corresponding siman in Chochmas Adam to see how he understood the issues, organized them, and poskined on them. Despite having been written around two-hundred years ago, the Chochmas Adam's piskei halacha are frequently quoted. Still, for halacha l'maaseh, ideally one should also ideally learn more contemporary poskim such as the Aruch HaShulchan and Reb Moshe Feinstein. Nonetheless, Rav Schachter told me that while not ideal, if a person follows the Chochmas Adam without knowing what later poskim say, such a person will certainly be ok.

Rav Danzig also wrote the Binas Adam which explains and elaborates on certain chiddushim found in the Chochmas Adam.

Darkei Teshuva – The Darkei Teshuva is an encyclopedic work which is similar to the Pischei Teshuva, but written later and cites far more authorities. My impression is that Rav Schachter likes the Darkei Teshuva but was critical of the fact that the Darkei Teshuva does not sufficiently weight acharonim (give more credence to greater poskim than lesser ones), but rather more or less tallies opinions.

Aruch HaShulchan – The Aruch HaShulchan wrote systematically on Hilchos Kashrus and is an important posek. Unlike the Mishnah Berurah which is a commentary on the Shulchan Aruch, the Aruch HaShulchan goes back to the Gemaras and directly discusses the major Rishonim and Acharonim. Rav Bleich told me that no sefer puts the halachos into a framework like the Aruch HaShulchan. The Aruch HaShulchan also has his own insights and different talmidei Chachamim relate to these insights differently. One should ask one's rebbi how much weight to give to these insights.

Mishnah Berurah – One might wonder why I listed the Mishnah Berurah here. The answer is that he often addresses halachos in Kashrus (especially in Hilchos Pesach). For example, hechsher keilim is found in simanim 451 and 452 and siman 173 parallels Yoreh De'ah siman 89. Much has been written about the relationship between the Aruch HaShulchan and the Mishnah Berurah and their respective standing in halacha. One should speak with one's rebbi. Additionally, see *The Making of a Halachic Decision*, pages 94-97, and Teshuvos Bnei Banim volume 2, siman 8, available at Hebrew Books at <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/pdfpager.aspx?req=21434&st=&pgnum=31>.

Badei HaShulchan – The Badei HaShulchan is a massive work on several sections of Yoreh De'ah. It is modeled after the Mishnah Berurah and the Bi'urim serve the same purpose as the Beur Halacha. Like the Mishnah Berurah, the Badei HaShulchan often writes important information, beyond citations, in his Tziyunim, so be to see learn them. The Badei HaShulchan is so well done that it is cited by other contemporary seforim such as Megillas Sefer and Rav Forst's Artscroll Hilchos Kashrus. The Badei HaShulchan deals with modern technology such as microwaves. However, since it is written as a commentary on Shulchan Aruch, things sometimes can be hard to find, and the index could be a little easier to use. (For example, microwave is not its own entry but rather is under Bishul Basar B'Chalav.) The Badei HaShulchan contains an index to Shas and the Rambam which is useful.

While incredibly useful and insightful, the Badei HaShulchan can often present so much information that he can also be overwhelming. Thus, I would not recommend most students to learn it כסדר the first time around.

The Laws of Kashrus (Artscroll) – Like other seforim written by Rav Forst, this is a quality English halacha sefer. Clear and organized, he presents the practical principles of hilchos Kashrus. Rav Forst obviously discusses modern technology and the table of contents and index make it easy to find topics. Rav Forst writes that his goal is to inform readers of the principles so they know when (and when not) to ask questions to a Rav. Still, I have found this sefer to be an excellent supplement to the Shulchan Aruch and its primary commentaries. Rav Forst seemingly had this in mind as the sefer also contains an index for Masseches Chullin, the Shulchan Aruch, the Isser V’Heter, and the Shach and Taz. As mentioned earlier, The Laws of Kashrus also contains a detailed glossary which defines many terms in this limud.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch on Basar B’Chalav and Taaroves (two separate seforim) – Rav Dovid Miller recommends these seforim, written by רב אהרן פפויפר (Rav Pfoifer in the YU library database).