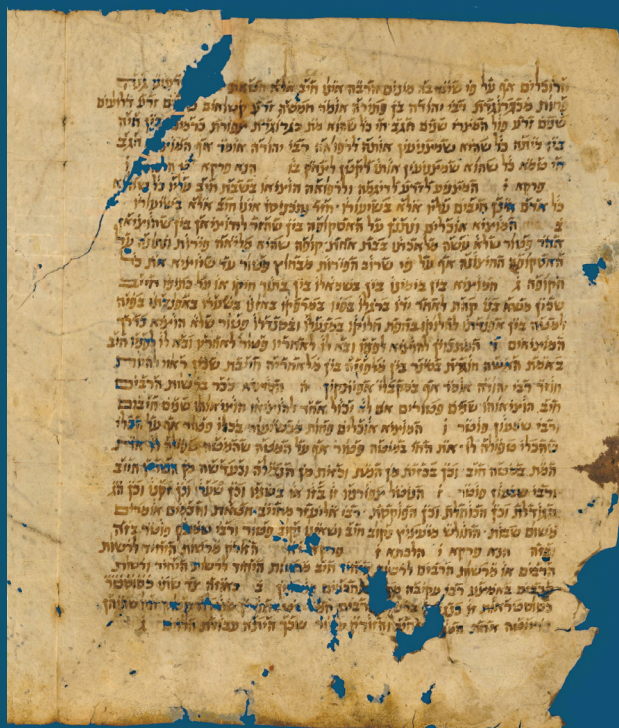


Studies in Rabbinic Hebrew

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Cover image: A fragment from the Cairo Genizah, containing Mishnah Shabbat 9:7-12:4 with Babylonian vocalisation (Cambridge University Library, T-S E1.47). Courtesy of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

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6. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN BRANCHES OF RABBINIC HEBREW IN LIGHT OF THE HEBREW OF THE LATE MIDRASH

*Yehonatan Wormser*¹

The distinction between the two branches of Rabbinic Hebrew — the Palestinian branch and the Babylonian branch — has been well accepted from the very beginning of the modern study of Rabbinic Hebrew. Zacharias Frankel was probably the first to comment on this distinction, in 1859.² More than fifty years later, in 1912, Jacob Nahum Epstein briefly mentioned this distinction as a known fact.³ In 1933, Harold Louis Ginsberg published a comprehensive study about it,⁴ and five years later Epstein introduced a detailed description of this subject in his monumental introduction to the text

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- 1 This paper is based on a research performed in the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research of the Cairo Genizah of University of Haifa. I would like to express my deep thanks to Dr Moshe Lavee, head of the Centre, for his inspiring cooperation in this research. This research was also conducted with the support of the Russian Science Foundation (project no. 17-18-01295), Saint Petersburg State University.
 - 2 Zacharias Frankel, *Darkhe ha-Mishnah* (in Hebrew; Leipzig: Hunger, 1859), p. 222.
 - 3 Jacob N. Epstein, in his review article “Otsar Leshon ha-Mishnah” (in Hebrew), *Hatequfah* 13 (1912), pp. 503–516, at pp. 505–506.
 - 4 Harald L. Ginsberg, “Zu den Dialekten des Talmudisch-Hebräischen”, *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 77 (1933), pp. 413–429.

of the Mishnah.⁵ Later scholars, such as Kutscher,⁶ Bendavid,⁷ Rosenthal,⁸ Bar-Asher,⁹ and Breuer,¹⁰ continued in this course, expanding and detailing the basic distinction. However, the latest developments in this domain, in which numerous details of this distinction have been questioned or proven wrong (that is to say, linguistic features which were considered characteristic only of one branch were also found in texts of the other branch), have blurred this distinction. The two most important scholars who have dealt with such cases are Friedman¹¹ and Breuer.¹²

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- 5 Jacob N. Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah* (in Hebrew; 3rd ed. Jerusalem: Magnes Press and Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 2000), pp. 1207–1269.
 - 6 Eduard Y. Kutscher, “Mibe‘ayot ha-milonut shel leshon hazal” (in Hebrew), in: Eduard Y. Kutscher (ed.), *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinical Literature*, vol. 1 (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1972), pp. 29–82, at p. 40.
 - 7 Abba Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, vol. 1 (in Hebrew; Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1967), pp. 171–222.
 - 8 David Rosenthal, “Mishna Aboda Zara: A Critical Edition with Introduction” (in Hebrew; PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 71–83.
 - 9 Moshe Bar-Asher, “The Different Traditions of Mishnaic Hebrew” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 53 (1984), pp. 187–220, at pp. 209–216.
 - 10 In various studies, especially Yochanan Breuer, *The Hebrew in the Babylonian Talmud according to the Manuscripts of Tractate Pesahim* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002).
 - 11 See Shamma Yehuda Friedman, “Early Manuscripts of Tractate Bava Metzia” (in Hebrew), *Alei Sefer* 9 (1981), pp. 5–55, at pp. 18–22; idem, “An Ancient Scroll Fragment (B. Hullin 101a–105a) and the Rediscovery of the Babylonian Branch of Tannaitic Hebrew”, *Jewish Quarterly Review* 86 (1995), pp. 9–50; idem, “The Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud: A Typology Based upon Orthographic and Linguistic Features” (in Hebrew), in: Moshe Bar-Asher (ed.), *Studies in Hebrew and Jewish Languages Presented to Shelomo Morag* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1996), pp. 163–190, at pp. 165–175, 178–182.
 - 12 E.g., Breuer, *Pesahim*, pp. 70, 86–87, 138–139, 167–168; idem, “The Preposition Hemmenu and the Babylonian Branch of Mishnaic Hebrew” (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 74 (2012), pp. 217–228.

One of the features that has remained a fairly stable distinguishing feature up to present is the spelling of the conjunction אלא 'but (rather)': in Babylonian texts it is frequently (but not always) written with *yod*, אילא, while in Palestinian texts it is written with the standard defective spelling. The different spelling methods reflect different pronunciations: in the Land of Israel the vowel of the initial *alef* was probably the *segol*, but in Babylonia, according to the testimony of manuscripts with Babylonian vocalisation,¹³ along with Yemeni oral traditions,¹⁴ it was *šere* or *hireq*. The first to indicate this difference in spelling was probably Sokoloff, in a short comment in his doctoral dissertation.¹⁵ But the issue became widely known only a few years later, after Yeivin published a thorough study in which he examined the spelling of אלא and אילא in a wide range of different manuscripts.¹⁶ He introduced his conclusions very carefully,

13 Efraim Porat, *Leshon hakhamim: Lefi masorot bavliyyot she-be-khitvei yad yeshanim* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1938), p. 146; Israel Yeivin, *The Hebrew Language Tradition as Reflected in the Babylonian Vocalization* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1985), pp. 1117–1118.

14 Henoah Yalon, "Nimmukim le-mishnayot menukkadot" (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 24 (1960), pp. 157–166, at p. 164; Yitschak Shviti'el, "Massorot ha-temananim be-diqduq leshon ha-mishna (masekhet sanhedrin)" (in Hebrew), in: Saul Lieberman et al. (eds.), *Henoah Yalon Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventy-fifth Birthday* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1963), pp. 338–359, at p. 324; Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 148; Eduard Y. Kutscher, "The Literary and Oral Tradition of Hebrew and Aramaic amongst the Samaritans" (review article, in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 37 (1968), pp. 397–419, at p. 408; Shelomoh Morag, *The Traditions of Hebrew and Aramaic of the Jews of Yemen* (in Hebrew; ed. Yosef Tobi; Tel-Aviv: Afikim 2002), p. 233.

15 Michael Sokoloff, "The Genizah Fragments of Genesis Rabba and MS Vat. Ebr. 60 of Genesis Rabba" (in Hebrew; PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1971), p. *29.

16 Israel Yeivin, "Ketivah shel tevat אלא", *Leshonenu* 40 (1976), pp. 254–258.

emphasising that they were liable to necessitate revision on the basis of future manuscript research. Nevertheless, this distinction has been well accepted, even though, as we shall see, it has not always enjoyed complete confirmation in further findings. This acceptance was also strengthened by the parallel Aramaic dialects of the period: the form אִילָא is very common in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic texts,¹⁷ but in Palestinian Aramaic it occurs very rarely.¹⁸

In this paper I would like to examine what can be learnt about this matter from texts of the well-known and widespread genre of the late Midrash, the *Tanḥuma-Yelammedenu* (TY) genre. TY literature, according to most studies, was created in the Land of Israel after the Amoraic period. Initially it included written summaries of oral sermons (*derashot*), which were compiled into unified collections.¹⁹ A few of those collections are known nowadays as the two editions of *Tanḥuma* (the ‘standard’ edition

17 Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), p. 132. For another occurrence in epigraphic material cf. Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford, and Siam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p. 81. Yechiel Bin-Nun, “Le-inyan ketivah shel tevat אִילָא”, *Leshonenu* 41 (1976), p. 77, proposed an etymological explanation based upon Babylonian Aramaic forms.

18 This matter requires a separate study. For partial findings see Kutscher, “The Literary and Oral Tradition”, p. 408; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan, 1992), p. 58; Johannes de Moor (ed.), *A Bilingual Concordance to the Targum of the Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 1995–2005), vol. 1, p. 18; vol. 2, p. 20; vol. 9, p. 35.

19 Most of the material was created, according to common opinion, between the 6th and 8th centuries CE. For additional background on TY literature see Mark Bregman, *The Tanḥuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolutions of the Versions* (in Hebrew; Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2003), pp. 5–13, 176–186; Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 302–306; Anat Reizel, *Introduction to the Midrashic Literature* (in Hebrew; Alon Shevut: Tevunot — Mikhlelet Herzog, 2011), pp. 236–237.

and Buber edition), *Shemot Rabbah*, *Bemidbar Rabbah* and *Devarim Rabbah* (two different editions). But it is clear that there were more TY editions, from which we have only remnants preserved in Cairo and European Genizah fragments, and in short quotations in *yalkutim* (medieval collections of Midrashim), while their full texts have been lost. As to its linguistic character, the Hebrew of TY literature reflects its Palestinian sources very clearly.²⁰ Indeed, the Palestinian linguistic features were not equally preserved in all TY editions, and in at least a few of them, some of these features were considerably blurred.²¹

From the perspective of the Palestinian linguistic features we can single out a group of Cairo Genizah fragments of lost TY editions,²² the Palestinian linguistic character of which is very clear and consistent in a manner not common in other TY texts.²³ The Hebrew of these fragments is very similar to the Hebrew of the well-known early manuscripts of Tannaitic and Amoraic literature, like MS Kaufmann of the Mishnah and MS Vatican 30 of *Bereshit Rabbah*. For example, the famous Palestinian spelling of the final diphthong *-ay* with double *yod*

20 Yehonatan Wormser, "On Some Features of the Language of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu", *Leshonenu* 75 (2013), pp. 191–219, at pp. 198–210.

21 Idem, pp. 209–210.

22 At the current state of the research, this group is known to contain nine fragments, remnants of four different editions. Two of those fragments (Cambridge University Library, T-S Misc.36.198 and T-S C1.46) were already recognised as good textual representatives of early Palestinian Hebrew (Mordechai Mishor, "Talmudic Hebrew in the Light of Epigraphy" (in Hebrew), *Mehqerei Lashon* 4 (1990), pp. 253–270, at p. 169; Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, pp. 163–164). The other fragments are: Cambridge University Library T-S Misc.35–36.129; T-S C2.68; T-S C1.71; T-S C2.38; Or.1081 2.51; New York, Jewish Theological Seminary, ENA 3692.7 and ENA 691.18.

23 A comprehensive linguistic description of these fragments and a thorough discussion of their importance will be published in a separate study currently in preparation.

is consistently employed in those texts (e.g., עליי 'on me', בניי 'my sons' etc.),²⁴ final *nun* frequently substitutes radical final *mem* (e.g., אדן instead of אדם 'man, person', כשן meaning כשם 'like'),²⁵ and consonantal *alef* is always omitted in certain words (e.g., in the name אלעזר, which is written לעזר, or in the construct כאילו 'as if', which appears as כילו).²⁶

From this group, our main interest here is in one TY edition, which is represented in four Genizah fragments.²⁷ The Palestinian linguistic character of this edition is obvious: except for the above-mentioned features, which all appear in those texts, we find here the extraordinary form כיויכול instead of כביכול 'seemingly'. That is, a *waw* had substituted the *bet*, a well-known Palestinian spelling phenomenon.²⁸ Other striking forms in these texts are the

24 The most important discussion on this famous feature appears in Eduard Y. Kutscher, "Leshon ḥazal" (in Hebrew), in: Saul Lieberman et al. (eds.), *Henoch Yalon Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventy-fifth Birthday* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1963), pp. 246–280, at pp. 251–253.

25 See Shlomo Naeh, "Shte sugiyot nedoshot bi-leshon ḥazal" (in Hebrew), in: Moshe Bar-Asher and David Rosenthal (eds.), *Mehqerei Talmud: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal*, vol. 2 (1993), pp. 364–392, at pp. 382–383, and the references there.

26 See Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, pp. 1236, 1266; Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, pp. 171–222; Michael Sokoloff, "The Hebrew of *Bereshit Rabba* According to MS Vat. Ebr. 30" (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 33 (1969), pp. 25–42, 135–149, 270–279, at pp. 34–42; Shimon Sharvit, "Two Phonological Phenomena in Mishnaic Hebrew", in: Aron Dotan (ed.), *Studies in Hebrew and Arabic: In Memory of Dov Eron* (Teuda, vol. 6; Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1988), pp. 115–134, at pp. 44–45; Naeh, "Shte sugiyot", pp. 364–368.

27 New York, Jewish Theological Seminary ENA 3692.7; Cambridge University Library Or.1081 2.51; T-S C2.38; New York, JTS: ENA 691.18.

28 Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, pp. 1123–1226; Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 218; Sokoloff, "The Hebrew of *Bereshit Rabba*", p. 30; Kutscher, "Mi-be'ayot ha-milonut", pp. 36–37; Shimon Sharvit, *A Phonology of Mishnaic Hebrew: Analyzed Materials* (Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2016), p. 309.

constructs ש and שׁ , meaning שההוא ‘that he’, שההיא ‘that she’. The elision of h is witnessed also in the equivalent form in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine period דו , shortened form of דההוא , which frequently occurs in this dialect.²⁹ Considering all these features, it seems beyond doubt that this text represents an original early Palestinian linguistic tradition.

There is only one feature in this text that seemingly contradicts this assumption — the spelling of אל , which occurs twenty-six times in the text, all of them in the ‘Babylonian’ form איל . Given the frequency, it cannot be explained as a scribe’s spelling mistake. It also cannot be assumed that *yod* was used as a vowel letter representing the vowel of *segol* in the initial *alef* — because *yod* is employed frequently in this text to represent *šere*, but it never comes with *segol*.

Rather we should raise the question, how did it come about that a typical Babylonian form appears in an otherwise Palestinian text? We are not able to provide a certain explanation, but there are three reasonable options: it could be an independent development in the Hebrew of the Land of Israel; it may be due to the influence of a foreign linguistic tradition; or the explanation might involve a combination of the two aforementioned options. According to the first alternative, it may be that the gemination of the *lamed* was simplified for some reason. The loss of gemination might then have brought about the lengthening of the preceding vowel, the *segol*. This lengthening could then have been realised as substitution of the *segol* by a *šere*: $\text{אֵלָּ} > \text{אֵלָּ}^* > \text{אִלָּ}^*$, a common process in the Tiberian vocalization system.³⁰ As for the second

29 Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, p. 159; Shai Heijmans, “Morphology of The Aramaic Dialect in The Palestinian Talmud According to Geniza Manuscripts” (in Hebrew; MA dissertation, Tel-Aviv University, 2005), p. 18.

30 Compare, for example, the form אֵש ‘fire’ when a suffix is added: אֵשְׁכֶם ‘your fire’. It seems probable that this is a natural phonetic shift, which

option, since TY literature is considered a relatively late stratum of Rabbinic Hebrew, i.e., from after the Amoraic period, it is possible that when this text was written, the Babylonian Talmud and even Geonic literature had already reached an exclusive and authoritative position in the Jewish literary canon. In such a situation, the Babylonian linguistic tradition could have had an impact even in regions where the Palestinian traditions were practiced.

Whatever the reason behind this form, if we consider a few findings from Tannaitic Hebrew, its absolute attribution to the Babylonian branch seems quite dubious: Eldar³¹ and Yeivin³² have found a few occurrences of the form אֶלֶּא, vocalised with *šere* and without *dagesh* in Tiberian manuscripts; Eldar also commented on the occurrence of the spelling אֶלֶּא in MS Cambridge, Add.470.1 (widely known due the edition published by Lowe);³³ Birnbaum³⁴ found the form with *šere* in two Genizah fragments of the Mishnah, in which, according to his examination, there are no other signs of Babylonian influence on the language.³⁵

took place in Palestinian Hebrew and which is reflected in both the Tiberian vocalization and TY texts.

- 31 Ilan Eldar, *The Hebrew Language Tradition in Medieval Ashkenaz (ca. 950–1350 C.E.)* (in Hebrew), vol. 2 (Edah ve-Lashon, vol. 5; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), p. 229.
- 32 Israel Yeivin, *The Hebrew Language Tradition as Reflected in the Babylonian Vocalization* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 1985), pp. 1117–1118.
- 33 Prof. Yehudit Henshke notified me that it is found in this manuscript only once.
- 34 Gabriel Birnbaum, *The Language of the Mishna in the Cairo Geniza: Phonology and Morphology* (in Hebrew; Sources and Studies [New Series], vol. 10; Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2008), p. 334.
- 35 Yet, since we do not know exactly when those texts were written, we cannot conclude, at the current stage of research, that the form with *šere* or the spelling with *yod* have sources in the Palestinian Tannaitic Hebrew.

Furthermore, this spelling was found in other Genizah fragments of TY texts, side by side with Palestinian linguistic features (although the Palestinian linguistic character of those fragments is not as well-proven as it is in the case of the fragments discussed above). Hence, in Genizah fragment T-S Misc.36.125³⁶ we encounter the Palestinian forms כולה (i.e., כולם) 'everybody',³⁷ נעמוד ואזדוג (i.e., אעמוד ואזדוג) 'I will attack him';³⁸ in fragment T-S Misc.36.127 we find the aforementioned have already seen the forms אדן and בשן, and similarly in fragment JTS ENA.2365.69 we find the name לעזר and the final double *yod* spelling לפני 'in front of me'; this spelling is also employed in a fragment from Oxford, MS heb. C. 18/11, in the word גני (i.e., גנאי) 'disgrace', where we also witness the defective form כפת in the phrase מה כפת לך (i.e., מה אכפת לך?) 'what do you care?', which is known from Jewish Palestinian Aramaic as well.³⁹ The form אילא appears in all these fragments. This form, therefore, may no longer be considered a feature exclusively distinctive of Babylonian Rabbinic Hebrew, especially when we consider the Hebrew of TY literature.

This conclusion about אילא leads us to sharpen a more valid fundamental approach to the distinction between the two

36 Published by Louis Ginzberg, "Tanhuma qadmon al qetsat parashat va-yishlach" (in Hebrew), in: *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter*, vol. 1 (Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, vol. 7; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928), pp. 57–61.

37 Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal, "Leshonot sofrim" (in Hebrew), in: Baruch Kurzweil (ed.), *Yuval Shay: A Jubilee Volume Dedicated to S.Y. Agnon on Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1958), pp. 293–324, at pp. 324–323; Naeh, "Shtei sugiyot", pp. 374–375.

38 On this form see Sokoloff, "The Hebrew of *Bereshit Rabba*", pp. 144–148; Wormser, "On Some Features", p. 201. I have left untranslated the verb נעמוד, because it is employed here not in its regular meaning 'stand', but as an auxiliary verb; compare, for example, the phrase נעמוד ונברח מפניהם 'we will run away from them' (*Midrash Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, p. 67).

39 Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, p. 58.

branches. We actually find ourselves in line with the attitude advocated by Bendavid more than fifty years ago:⁴⁰

Now, after detailing hundreds of tiny differences between the Palestinian version and the Babylonian version, it is advisable to qualify our words and resist an overly schematic division. In reality, there is no clear Palestinian or Babylonian type. The literature of the sages of the Land of Israel abounded in Babylon for generations, and the formulation of their sayings was sometimes precisely and sometimes less precisely preserved. [...] There is but a difference of proportions between the two types — Palestinian and Babylonian — (linguistic) features occurring frequently (in one branch), rarely (in the other branch).

It seems that this view has not gained sufficient attention among researchers of Rabbinic Hebrew, who, in many cases, have tended to attribute linguistic features only to one branch, ignoring or objecting to the possibility of their presence in the other branch.⁴¹

In my opinion, the distinction between Palestinian Hebrew and Babylonian Hebrew should most often be regarded as a relative rather than absolute distinction. Bendavid pointed to the influence of the sages of the Land of Israel on Babylonian Jews, but, as a matter of fact, the influence was mutual. There was continual interaction between the two communities during the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods and thereafter, with scholars travelling or migrating from one country to the other. By this

40 Bendavid, *Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew*, p. 221; in Hebrew: עתה, לאחר פירוט מאות החילופים הזעירים שבין נוסח ארץ ישראל לנוסח בבל, ראוי שניתן סיג לדברינו ולא ניתפס להפרדה סכימתית יותר מדיי. לאמיתו של הדבר אין בנמצא טיפוס ארץ ישראלי מובהק ולא בבלי מובהק. תורתם של חכמי ארץ ישראל הייתה שופעת לבבל דורי דורות, ונוסח דבריהם עתים נשתמרו בדיוקם ועתים שלא כדיוקם [...] ואין בין שני הטיפוסים, הארץ-ישראלי והבבלי, אלא הפרשי פרופורציה, איזה יסוד מרובה ואיזה ממועט.

41 For examples and discussion on this approach, see Friedman, "An Ancient Scroll Fragment", pp. 12–16; idem, "The Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud", pp. 166–175, 178–182. The conclusion presented below correlates to a large extent with Friedman's approach.

way, customs and traditions incessantly moved from one place to the other.⁴² Accordingly, the linguistic traditions of both areas have a few common phenomena, in which the Palestinian and the Babylonian Amoraic layer developed a new character, different from the Tannaitic layer.⁴³ It is likely that, in many cases, even the written texts moved from one place to another, and continued to be edited in their new location. The result of such cases is a kind of combination of the different traditions, as may have happened, according to Epstein's assumption,⁴⁴ in a few manuscripts that were written in the Land of Israel, but vocalised in Babylon.⁴⁵

Therefore, we should rarely if ever expect to find a criterion on the basis of which it is possible absolutely to distinguish between the branches. Whenever an apparently distinctive feature is

42 Cf. Simcha Asaf, *Tekufat ha-geonim ve-sifrutah* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1955), p. 102; Saul Lieberman, "That Is How It Was and That Is How It Shall Be: The Jews of Eretz Israel and World Jewry During Mishnah and Talmud Times" (in Hebrew), *Cathedra* 17 (1980), pp. 3–10; Joshua Schwartz, "Aliyah from Babylonia During the Amoraic Period", *Cathedra* 21 (1981), pp. 23–30; Moshe David Herr (ed.), *The Roman Byzantine Period: The Mishnah and Talmud Period and the Byzantine Rule (70–640)* (in Hebrew; *Ha-historia shel Erets Israel*, vol. 4; Jerusalem: Keter, 1985), pp. 133–135, 167, 338.

43 Breuer, *Pesahim*, pp. 11–12.

44 Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah*, p. 1269. But cf. Friedman, "An Ancient Scroll Fragment", pp. 12–16, which criticised Epstein's assumption.

45 In most cases it is probably impossible to determine whether the fusion of traditions represents testimony authentic of living Hebrew, i.e., the language of an author of a rabbinic text as an actual representation of a Palestinian or Babylonian tradition, or just late corruptions introduced by a copyist. The reason for the importance of the findings presented here is that the main text discussed is clearly an original text of the Palestinian tradition, so the assumption that the appearance of אִילָא here is an original feature seems very reasonable.

proposal — namely, that one should regard the fundamental distinction between the two branches always as a relative rather than absolute distinction — our findings about אֵילָא in no way stand in opposition to its Babylonian attribution: the form אֵילָא is typical of Babylonian Rabbinic Hebrew and appears occasionally in the Palestinian Rabbinic Hebrew.

