

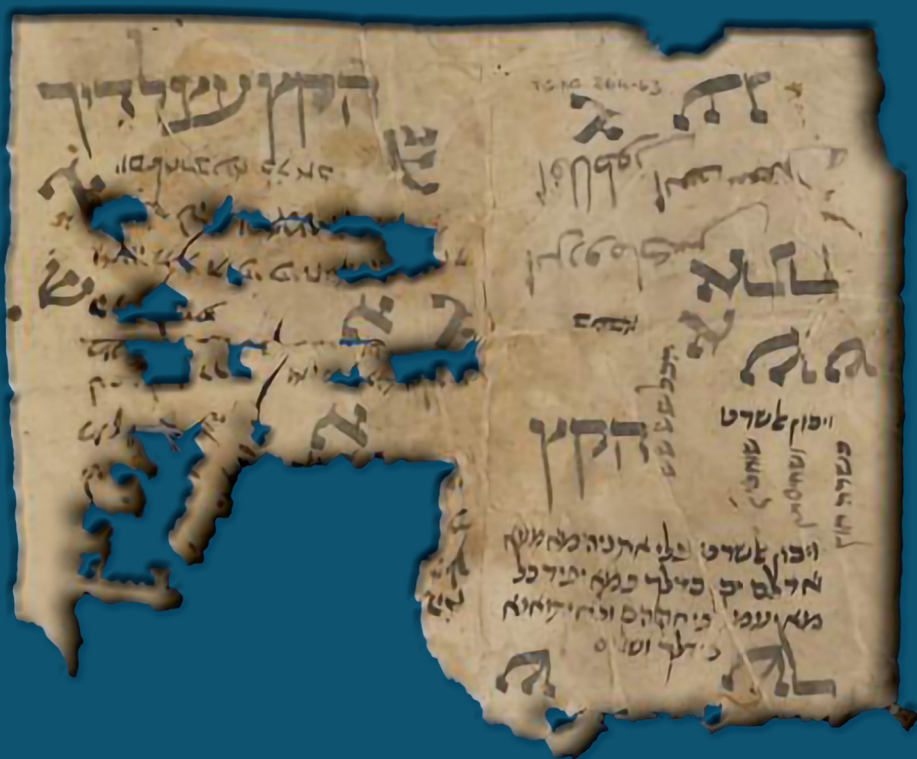
Interconnected Traditions

Semitic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

A Festschrift for Geoffrey Khan

Volume 1: Hebrew and the Wider Semitic World

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THE PRONUNCIATION OF תִּזְכָּרוֹ (NUM. 15.40) IN RABBINIC SOURCES AND IN LIGHT OF PHOENICIAN*

Gary A. Rendsburg

The breadth of our honouree's scholarship is truly astounding, though the one constant throughout his career has been the pronunciation of Hebrew in its various oral reading traditions, from his early article 'Vowel Length and Syllable Structure in the Tiberian Tradition' (Khan 1987) to the more recent and magisterial two-volume *The Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition of Biblical Hebrew* (Khan 2020). I am, accordingly, very happy to offer this small contribution on the subject to this *Festschrift* in honour of Geoffrey Khan, as a token of our friendship reaching back

* My thanks to the following colleagues for a thorough reading of the pre-final draft and many helpful suggestions: Vincent Beiler (my former MA student, now a recent Cambridge PhD under the tutelage of our honouree), Joshua Blachorsky (my former BA student, now a recent PhD from New York University), and Aaron Rubin (University of Georgia). In addition, both Josh and Vince provided yeoman assistance by tracking down some hard-to-find references in the Bobst Library and Cambridge University Library, respectively. Two additional colleagues are thanked for specific items in fns 12 and 37.

to the 1990–1991 academic year, when we first met in Jerusalem.¹

1.0. Num. 15.40 and the Ensuing Discussion in y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d)

Num. 15.40 reads as follows: לִמְעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת־כָּל־מִצְוֹתַי וְהֵייתֶם לְאֱלֹהֵיכֶם: קְדָשִׁים לַאֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ‘so that you may remember, and you shall do all of my commandments, and you shall be holy unto your God’. Because this verse appears within the third paragraph of the traditional recitation of the *Shema*² prayer (in both the Rabbinic and Karaite liturgies),² and because the second word was patient of mispronunciation (see anon), said word received particular attention throughout the ages, especially in the Rabbinic corpus of texts.

¹ Geoffrey spent that year as a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies, while I was on sabbatical from my then home institution, Cornell University. Two young scholars, each pursuing his research at the National Library of Israel (then still known as the Jewish National and University Library) on the Giv‘at Ram campus of the Hebrew University: naturally, it did not take us long to meet and share our academic interests with one another. From that point forward, עד היום הזה, our paths have continued to cross, always most fruitfully and collegially.

² Its presence in the Rabbinic liturgy is well-known. For its place in the Karaite liturgy, see <https://opensiddur.org/compilations/liturgical/siddurim/karaite-prayer/karaite-siddur-for-weekdays-and-sabbaths/> (pp. 14, 40, 51, 76).

The earliest source is y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d), which reads as follows (according to MS Leiden [Scaliger 3], fol. 8a; see Figure 1, overleaf):³

ר' לוי ר' אבדימא דחיפא בשם ר' לוי בר סיס: צריך להתיז "למען תזכרו".
ר' יונה בשם רב חסדא: צריך להתי(ס/ז) "כי לעולם חסדו".

R. Levi, R. Avdima of Ḥaifa, in the name of R. Levi bar Sisi: one must articulate [the *zayin* in] *ləma'an tizkərū*. R. Jonah in the name of R. Ḥisda: one must articulate [the *samekh* in] *kī lā-ʿōlām ḥasdō*.⁴

Per the title of this article, our main concern here is with the dictum "למען תזכרו" צריך להתיז 'one must articulate [the *zayin* in] *ləma'an tizkərū*'.⁵ As indicated by the conventional notation,

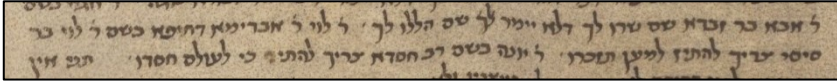
³ For ease of reading (here and below), I have added double inverted commas (quotation marks) around the quoted biblical passages, colon to offset the reciter(s) of the maxim from the maxim itself, and full stop (period) to indicate the end of a sentence. See the similar techniques used by Sussman (2001, 17).

⁴ At various places in this article, including in the title, I include the Tiberian Masorah and/or transliteration reflecting such, for ease of reading and analysis, though the graphic representation of the oral reading tradition was not created for centuries after the time period under discussion here (that is, the early third century CE, when R. Levi bar Sisi lived).

⁵ For brief comments on our passage, see Weinberg (1985, 138–39) and Miller (2006, 154–55). On the second dictum, see Guggenheimer (2000, 203, fn. 177), with reference to Frankel (1874, *ad loc.*), who called attention to the presence of the root חס"ד 'shame, disgrace', in the *paʿel* form, in various Aramaic dialects, (see, e.g., Sokoloff 2009, 474; 2014, 134): hence, one should be careful to recite חסדו 'his kindness' with sin-

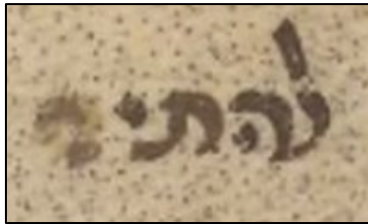
the last letter on the second word in this phrase, להתי(ס/ז), is frustratingly unclear (see Figure 2), though see further below.

Figure 1: MS Leiden (Rome, 1289), fol. 8a (lns 10–11 from bottom).⁶



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Figure 2: Close-up of להתי(ס/ז) in MS Leiden, fol. 8a (ln. 10 from bottom)



1.1. Cairo Geniza Documents

For the record, note that two Cairo Geniza documents contain this passage, to wit, C.U.L. T-S F17.20 and C.U.L. T-S F17.7. The former reads as follows, with no significant variants when compared to the Leiden manuscript (see Figure 3, facing page):

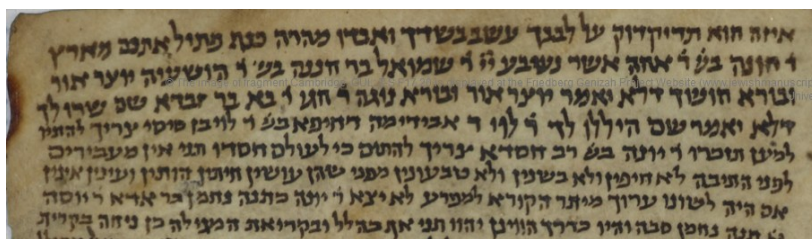
ר' לוי ר אבידימה דחיפא בש' ר' לוי בן סיסי: צריך להתיז "למען תזכרו".
ר' יונה בש' רב חסדא: צריך להתיס[!] "כי לעולם חסדו".

gle /s/, and not with double /ss/. One wonders if R. Ḥisda was particularly sensitive to the matter, given his name and the potential for mispronunciation.

⁶ Manuscript available online at <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/937041>.

Though I do take the opportunity to note what looks like a final *mem* on the word להתיס, one must perforce assume it to be a *sa-mekh* (hence the exclamation mark in the above transcription), as an inspection of the following final *mem* in לעולם (and others on the page) and the following *samekh* in חסדו (and others on the page) makes clear.

Figure 3: C.U.L. T-S F17.20, fol. 1v (left) (FGP no. C97881) (see lns 4–5 for the relevant text)



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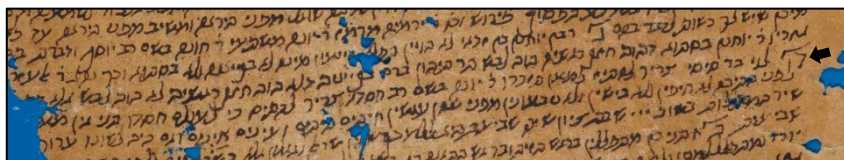
The second Cairo Geniza document is not a Talmud Yerushalmi manuscript *per se*, but rather one of the few extant manuscripts of Maimonides's *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi*, written, in fact, in his own hand (see Figure 4, overleaf). This document was published early on in the history of Geniza research by Louis Ginzberg in his well-known and path-finding book, *Yerushalmi Fragments from the Genizah* (1909, 29–36, esp. 31). The relevant passage once again provides no major textual variants:⁷

⁷ Ginzberg (1909, 31) incorrectly wrote להתיס in the second instance, though the manuscript shows clearly להתיס. In the apparatus Ginzberg noted only the spelling חסדה instead of חסדא.

לוי בר סיסי: צריך להתיז "למען תזכרו". ר' יונה בשם רב חסדה: צריך להתיס "כי לעולם חסדו".

Note, however, the lack of the introductory formula, 'R. Levi, R. Avdima of Ḥaifa, in the name of...'—an issue of no major consequence, though it does point to the more digest-like nature of *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi* (as opposed to the full Talmud Yerushalmi text). As the title of his book makes clear, Ginzberg did not realise that he had before him a copy of the long-lost Maimonides, *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi*, nor of course he have known at that early stage of Cairo Geniza research that the document was in fact written by the great sage himself. The true identity of T-S F17.7—both its contents and its handwriting—were determined only later, during the 1940s, by Saul Lieberman and Morris Lutzki, based on philological and palaeographical analysis, respectively.⁸

Figure 4: C.U.L. T-S F17.7, fol. 2r (FGP no. C97850) (the arrow points to line 42 of the manuscript page, commencing with the large τ to indicate the new *halakha* section)



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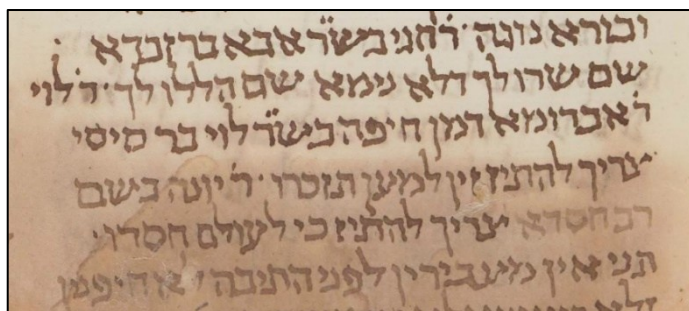
⁸ For further details, see Hopkins (1983, 277–82).

1.2. Additional Textual Witnesses

None of the textual witnesses collated by Peter Schäfer and Hans-Jürgen Becker in their *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi* (1991, 58–59) contain any major deviations from the wording in the Leiden manuscript or the Cairo Geniza documents.

That said, there are some interesting variant readings worthy of citation here. For example, to add greater clarification to the key statement by R. Levi bar Sisi, two sixteenth-century Eretz-Israel manuscripts, namely, MS BnF hebr. 1389 (see Figure 5) and MS BL Or. 2822 (see Figure 6, overleaf), both add the letter name זין after להתיז, so that one reads "למען תזכרו" 'one must articulate the *zayin* in *ləma'an tizkarū*' (using the same translation as above, though now with the brackets removed, since the letter *zayin* is expressly stated).

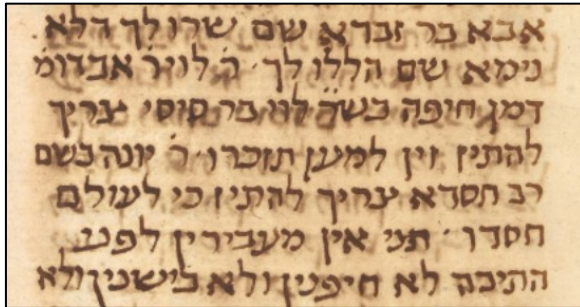
Figure 5: MS Bibliothèque nationale de France hébr. 1389 (Safed, 1542), fol. 17r⁹ (bottom half of the right-hand column)



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⁹ See <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10539966n>. Note that the manuscript includes the important commentary of Solomon ben Joseph Sirillo (d. c. 1558), perhaps as autograph (or at least in part).

Figure 6: MS British Library Or. 2822 (sixteenth century, Safed/Jerusalem), fol. 44r¹⁰ (bottom half of the right-hand column)



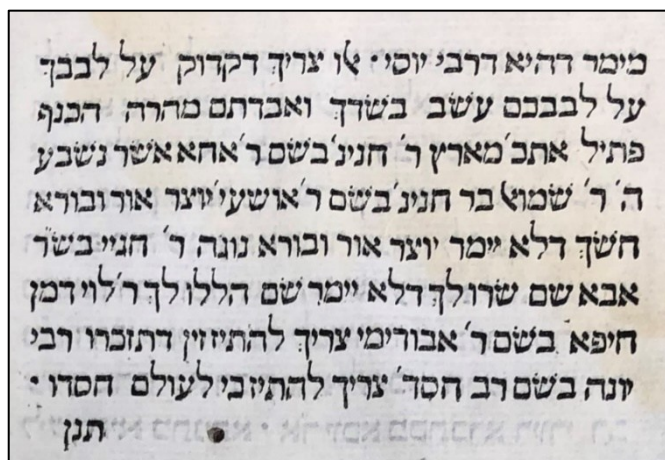
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This reading, with the addition of the letter name זין, clearly must have been ‘in the air’ within Talmudic scholarship in the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth–seventeenth centuries, for it also finds its way into the printed edition of the Talmud Yerushalmi, Seder Zera‘im (selected tractates), in the work known as *Śede Yehoshua* (Constantinople, 1662): צריך להתזין זין דתזכרו: ‘one must articulate the *zayin* of *tizkārū*’ (see Figure 7, facing page).¹¹

¹⁰ Current numbering is fol. 44r, per the digital presentation at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=or_2822. Using the old numbering system, Schäfer and Becker list this folio as p. 38. This manuscript also includes the important commentary of Solomon ben Joseph Sirillo (d. c. 1558), perhaps as autograph (or at least in part).

¹¹ For a description of this early printing, see Schäfer and Becker (1991, xii).

Figure 7: The Gemara section of *Sede Yehoshua*^c (Constantinople, 1662), fol. 15b, with our passage on the next-to-last line.¹²

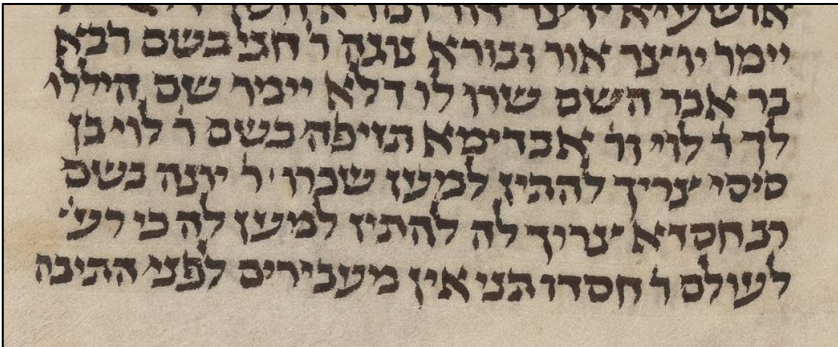


We also may take the opportunity to note MS Vatican ebr. 133, which is riddled with mistakes at this point in the manuscript (see Figure 8, overleaf).¹³ Note, for example, תזיפה for דחיפה, להתין for להתיוון, and שכרו for תזכרו—all meaningless, but also all understandable misreadings, given the letter forms.

¹² My thanks to David Selis, Leon Charney Doctoral Fellow, Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Yeshiva University, for taking this photo of the relevant page from the copy of *Sede Yehoshua*^c held by Special Collections at the Mendel Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University (New York), with the shelfmark Strauss Collection, no. 5461.

¹³ In fact, this is true of the entire manuscript: in the words of Ginzberg (1909, vi): הוא מלא שבויים לאלפים 'it is filled with errors unto the thousands'—though as with every manuscript, there are valuable readings nonetheless (though none in our section), which moved Ginzberg to create a listing of such potentially helpful variants on pp. 345–72. See further Richler, Beit-Arié, and Pasternak (2008, 95–96).

Figure 8: MS Vatican ebr. 133 (Ashkenaz, c. 1400), fol. 29r¹⁴



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2.0. The Root of the Verb להתיז

Thus far, then, the basic statement from y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d), along with its presentation in Maimonides, *Hilkhoh ha-Yerushalmi*, have been presented. The next issue to address is the key verb להתיז (and the follow-up verb להתיס): what is its root and what is its meaning? The answer to the second question is relatively easy, as the connotation may be garnered from the context: to distinguish the /z/ sound (and to distinguish the /s/ sound)—in short, ‘enunciate, articulate’. But what of the first question: from what root might this verb derive?

From the strict view of morphology, two roots are possible: תו"ז and נת"ז. The former is relatively well attested in Rabbinic Hebrew (RH), including in Tannaitic texts, with the meanings ‘splash’ (*qal*) (e.g., m. Makhshirin 5.2), ‘spurt, squirt’ (*nif'al*) (e.g., m. Hullin 6.6), ‘cut off, decapitate’ (*hif'il*) (e.g., m. Sanhedrin

¹⁴ Available online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.133.

7.3).¹⁵ And while it is difficult to see the semantic extension from these meanings to ‘enunciate, articulate’, Marcus Jastrow (1903, 2:943), for one, included this meaning (from Amoraic Hebrew, with our passage the only attestation) with those above in the same dictionary entry.

A different tack was taken by the scholars at the Academy of the Hebrew Language, for *Ma’agarim* lists our word להתיז under the root תז"ז, with our passage as the only attestation thereof (see Figure 9).¹⁶ This analysis, of course, implies that our word is a neologism or nonce word—eminently suitable to the singular purpose of R. Levi bar Sisi (and in his wake R. Ḥisda, with slight alteration from להתיז to להתיס).

Figure 9: Results of the search for the root תז"ז at *Ma’agarim* (<https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/>)

★ 1 #ר' לוי ר' אבידימא דחיפא בשם ר' לוי בר סיסיא. צריך להתיז "למען תזכרו". #ר' יונה בשם רב חסדא. צריך להתיס(ולו) "כי לעולם חסדו". מראה מקום: פרק ב, משנה ג' דף ד, ע"ד > המסירה: 3, Scaliger, Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit שם החיבור: תלמוד ירושלמי, ברכות מחבר לא ידוע זמן החיבור: בין שנת 400 לשנת 450 סוגה: תלמוד ומדרש
★ 2 #ר' לוי? ר' אבידימא דחיפא בש' ר' לוי בן סיסיא. צריך להתיז? "למען תזכרו". #ר' יונה בש' רב חסדא. צריך להתיס? "כי לעולם חסדו". מראה מקום: פרק ב, משנה ג' דף ד, ע"ד > (גרסה) המסירה: 20, F 17, Cambridge, University Library, T-S Collection שם החיבור: תלמוד ירושלמי, ברכות מחבר לא ידוע זמן החיבור: בין שנת 400 לשנת 450 סוגה: תלמוד ומדרש

Above I used the expression “from the strict view of morphology,” if only to observe that in theory at least a third root is possible, namely תז"ז (“in theory,” because the *hif'il* infinitive construct of this root would be להתיז, not להתיז).¹⁷ This verbal root occurs once in the Bible, in the expression וְאֶת־הַנְּטִישׁוֹת הַקִּיר הַתִּי

¹⁵ For a complete survey, see Moreshet (1980, 236–37). For additional insights into the root, see Bar-Asher (2014, 307, 331, 337, fn. 57).

¹⁶ A search under the root תז"ז reveals the same two passages, with attention to the comment by R. Jonah in the name of R. Ḥisda.

¹⁷ See, e.g., Segal (1927, 89); Blau (2010, 310).

‘and the branches, remove and lop off’ (Isa. 18.5).¹⁸ This usage clearly anticipates the aforementioned RH *hif'il* of נָתַח ‘cut off, decapitate’, though we must also posit the interchange of I-*n* (נָ) and geminate (ע"ע) verbs, as observed by scholars previously.¹⁹ Once again, though, one is hard pressed to imagine the semantic extension from any of the meanings of תָּזַח or נָתַח applicable to the statement of R. Levi bar Sisi.²⁰

2.1. The Noun תָּזַח ‘wasp, hornet’

There is one more lead which we need to follow, namely, the noun תָּזַח ‘wasp, hornet’, which occurs a single time in ancient Hebrew (*DCH* 8:617), to wit, in יֵעֶשֶׂה דְּבַשׁ לֹא וְתָזַח ‘and the wasp/hornet shall not make honey’ (4QpsEzek^b [4Q386] f1ii.5).²¹ Quite possibly, the noun תָּזַח is an onomatopoetic creation, evoking the sound of the buzzing produced by these members of the

¹⁸ BDB (1064); *HALOT* (2:1715); *DCH* (8:617). For discussion, see Greenspahn (1984, 166). Of course, one would expect ‘lop off’ to precede ‘remove’, and, in fact, some translations adjust the rendering accordingly. Thus, for example, Alter (2019, 2:680): ‘lop off, take away the slack branches’.

¹⁹ See, e.g., *HALOT* (2:1715); and in greater detail Moreshet (1980, 237 fn. 45*).

²⁰ Unless I have missed the information somewhere, there appears to be no discussion of לִהְיוֹת in the ‘*Arukh*, per Kohut (1926). One would expect to find such in one of the following places: 3:250 (s.v. הִתְזַח), 5:397 (s.v. נָתַח), 8:212 (s.v. תָּזַח); but y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d) makes no appearance in any of these entries.

²¹ For discussion, see Dimant (1998, 513, 516) and Bar-Asher (2012, 150–51).

Apocrita suborder. If such be the case, might this be the source of R. Levi bar Sisi's nonce word להתיז 'enunciate, articulate', with special attention to the proper voiced sibilant pronunciation of the sound /z/ in the word תִּזְכְּרוּ (Num. 15.40)? With no other promising lead, I am inclined to think so.

2.2. The Aramaic Verbal Root נת"ז

A survey of the Semitic languages reveals only one cognate to any of the proposed roots, namely, Aramaic נת"ז, used in three Targumic renderings, including Targum Onqelos to Deut. 1.44 (Cook 2008, 184), as follows:²²

- MT וַיִּרְדְּפוּ אֶתְכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשִׂינָה הַדְּבָרִים
 'and they will pursue you, as bees do'
- Tg.O. וַיִּרְדְּפוּ יִתְכוֹן כְּמֵא דְנִתְזוֹ דְּבִרְיָתָא
 'and they will pursue you, as bees **swarm**'

Note how the basic verb עָשָׂה 'do' is glossed with the rarer and more technical נִתְזוֹ 'swarm' (per the context). In theory, this meaning could be related to the RH verb 'splash, spurt, squirt', though I am inclined to see it as an independent verb. Most strikingly, this Aramaic verb connects to the aforementioned Hebrew noun תִּזְיוֹ 'wasp, hornet', once again with onomatopoeitic resonance.

For the record, the other two instances within the Targumim more closely correspond to the different RH connotations, with Job 3.24 meaning 'spurt, squirt' (with reference to water)

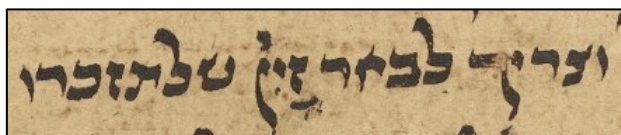
²² The Targum Onqelos version is taken from Sperber (2004, 948 [= 1:291]), with the Babylonian vocalisation marks converted to their Tiberian equivalents (see also at *CAL*).

and with 1 Chron. 10.9 meaning ‘cut off’ (with reference to the Philistines decapitating Saul).

2.3. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*

I end this section of the article with one further observation: no doubt due to the rareness and opacity of the term להתיז, when Maimonides wrote his *Mishneh Torah* (Code of Jewish Law), with its aim of a simple and accessible Hebrew, he opted for a much more basic Hebrew verb, stating simply: וצריך לבאר זיין שלתזכרו ‘and one must pronounce clearly the *zayin* of *tizkərū*’ (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Bodleian MS Huntington 80, fol. 95v, ln. 5 (Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Hilkhhot Qeri’at Shema²³)



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3.0. Sibilant Interchange

The foregoing excursion into the identification of the root of להתיז is only the forecourt to the discussion adumbrated in the title of this article. Hence, we now move to the pronunciation issue. As many scholars have recognised, the issue with תזכרו (Num. 15.40) was the devoicing of the voiced sibilant /z/ at the onset of the voiceless velar /k/, “due to partial regressive assimilation”

²³ See <https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/objects/60f5a5d4-8e17-457a-8280-0e0fdd43a1b6/>.

(Kutscher 1965, 30), so that תִּזְכְּרוּ *tizkərū* would be realised as תִּסְכְּרוּ *tiskərū*. Such is noted already by the early grammarians, such as Jonah ibn Janah (1856, 144) and David Qimḥi (1862, 72b), in their basic phonological discussions.²⁴

3.1. The Verbal Root ש"ר 'earn'

According to later medieval rabbinic sources, which codify the instruction from y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d), and then comment upon it, the main concern is that the devoicing of the *zayin* in למען תזכרו *ləma'an tizkərū* would yield a pronunciation identical to that of למען תשכרו *ləma'an tiškərū*, with the resultant meaning 'so that you will earn', as if people would recite the *Shema* for the goal of worldly earnings. In the words of R. Jacob ben Asher (ca 1269–ca 1343), author of the *'Arba'a Turim*: והוי כעבדים המשמשים את הרב ע"מ לקבל פרס 'and be like workers who serve the master in order to receive their salary' ('Orah Hayyim 61.17).

3.2. The Verbal Root ש"ק 'lie'

Another concern, less likely, though possible, is that the mispronunciation of למען תזכרו *ləma'an tizkərū* could lead to the sense of למען תשקרו *ləma'an tišqərū* 'so that you will lie'—produced through an alternative sibilant interchange (along with velar interchange between /k/ and /q/). Once again, in the words of R. Jacob ben Asher: דלא לישתמע תשקרו 'so that it does not sound like *tišqərū*' ('Orah Hayyim 61.17).

²⁴ The latter is summarised in Chomsky (1952, 11, fn. b); see also Bacher (1895, 6, fn. 6).

3.3. The Verbal Root סכ"ר 'dam up, stop up'

And then there is a third concern, which in fact may be the most likely, that the devoicing of the /z/ in למען תזכרו *ləma'an tizkarū* would produce למען תסכרו *ləma'an tiskarū*, derived from the root סכ"ר 'dam up, stop up', the relatively rare Biblical Hebrew verb, but well known from וַיִּסְכְּרוּ מַעֲיִנֹת תְּהוֹם וְאַרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם 'and the fountains of the deep and the openings of the heaven were stopped up' (Gen. 8.2).²⁵ True, the result is essentially the same as למען תשכרו *ləma'an tiškarū* discussed above, but now the sense is that the reciting of the *Shema* would create a stoppage or a damming up of God's commandments.²⁶

To the best of my knowledge, only one early rabbinic commentator expressed this concern, namely, the little-known R. Manoaḥ of Narbonne.²⁷ So little is known of R. Manoaḥ that we can only estimate his dates: end of the thirteenth century / first half of the fourteenth century. He is best (or perhaps only) known for his commentary on Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*, which scholars designate as *Sefer ha-Menuḥa*, though in truth we have no real evidence for the name of the work. A portion of this composition was published (Constantinople, 1718 / Pressburg, 1879), though not the section dealing with the laws of reading the *Shema*. For

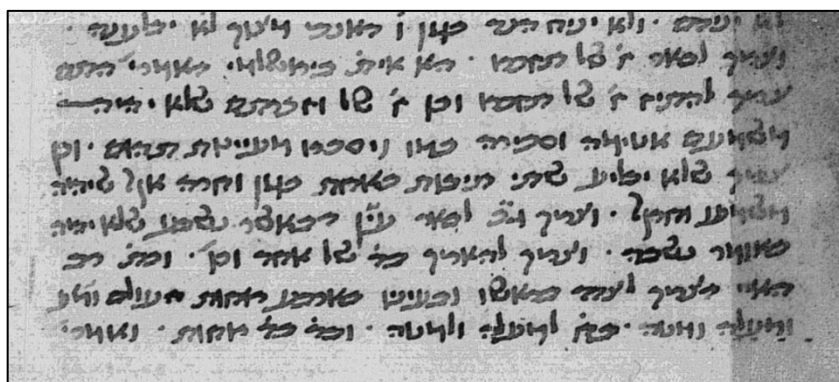
²⁵ The verb also occurs in סכרי שמין בעבכי 'bolt up the heavens in your cloud' (Deir 'Alla 1.6), spoken by the gods addressing feminine Šemeš (Ahituv 2008, 446–47).

²⁶ See Guggenheimer (2000, 203) for a summary of all the options presented here.

²⁷ For a brief summary of his life and work, see Havlin (2007); the most detailed study remains Hurvitz (1965).

that portion of the work, one must consult RSL Moscow MS Guenzburg 123 (fifteenth century, Ashkenaz), available at the National Library of Israel website (see Figure 11). There one learns that R. Manoah indeed related the careless pronunciation of both תִּזְכְּרוּ (Num. 15.40) and וְזָכַרְתֶּם (Num. 15.39) to potential confusion with סבירה ‘damming up, stopping up’, with explicit citation of the aforecited passage in Gen. 8.2.

Figure 11: R. Manoah, *Sefer ha-Menuḥa* (RSL Moscow MS Guenzburg 123, fol. 7r) (fifteenth century, Ashkenaz) (see especially ln. 6 from the bottom of the page)²⁸



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Scholars are aware of this relatively obscure reference due to the good fortune of R. Manoah's opinion being cited by R. Joseph Qaro (1488–1575), specifically in his halakhic work *Kesef Mishneh* (published in Venice in the year of the author's death),

²⁸ See [https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/view-erpage?vid=MANUSCRIPTS#d= \[\[PNX MANUSCRIPTS990000863000205171-1,FL73163797\]\]](https://www.nli.org.il/en/discover/manuscripts/hebrew-manuscripts/view-erpage?vid=MANUSCRIPTS#d= [[PNX MANUSCRIPTS990000863000205171-1,FL73163797]]).

which in turn constitutes his own commentary to Maimonides's *Mishneh Torah*. There one reads as follows (*Kesef Mishneh*, Qeri'at Shema' 2.9):²⁹

וצריך לבאר זי"ן של תזכרו – ירושלמי שם. והטעם לומר שלא יהא נראה
כאומר למען תשכרו והוי כעובדים את ה' על מנת לקבל פרס. וכתב ה"ר
מנחם או שלא יהא נראה מלשון סכירה כמו ויסכרו מעינות תהום רבה.
וה"ה לזי"ן של וזכרתם:

4.0 Phoenician סכ"ר/זכ"ר 'remember'

Our journey has brought us to the early modern period (in the personage of Joseph Qaro), though at this point, we need to return to an earlier epoch, when Phoenician was still a living language. A data point remarkably relevant to our discussion is the well-nigh universal shift of the basic root זכ"ר 'remember' to סכ"ר in Phoenician and Punic, as witnessed by the following attestations (the sole verbal form is placed first; the remaining entries are different nominal forms):³⁰

(1) ויסכרן מלקרת

'and may Melqart **remember me**' (*KAI* 43.15, Lapethos, Cyprus)

²⁹ Taken from <https://rambam.alhatorah.org/Full/Keriat Shema/2/9#e0n6>.

³⁰ The sources are culled mainly from the indices to the standard reference works: *KAI* (III:17); Tombaek (1978, 228–29); and Krahmalkov (2000, 343–44).

- (2) לִבְנִי לִי לִסְכָּר וְשֵׁם נָעִם
 ‘to be for me **as a memorial** and a good name’ (KAI 18.6 = Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 1)³¹
- (3) מִצֵּבַת סְכָר בְּחַיִּים
 ‘a **memorial** stele among the living’ (KAI 53.1, Athens, Greece)
- (4) סְכָר כְּבֹד עַל פְּעֻלַּת מַעֲשָׂרָה
 ‘a **monument** of honour for righteous deeds’ (KAI 123.4–5, Leptis Magna, Libya)³²
- (5) סְכָר כְּבֹד עַל גַּם אֲדָר
 ‘a **monument** of honour for the noble *gm??*’ (KAI 161.5, Cherchel, Algeria)³³
- (6) סְכָר דְּרָא לְאֵלִים
 ‘the **memorial** of his family forever’ (KAI 165.7–8, Guelaat Bou-Sba, Algeria)
- (7) ז מִצֵּבַת סְכָר
 ‘this is the **memorial** stele’ (RES [I:207], no. 250 = Slouschz [1942, 40, no. 23]) = Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 5)

³¹ The various inscriptions from Umm el-‘Amed listed here (six in total) are conveniently published in Dunand and Duru (1962, 1:181–96), though three of them also appear in standard collections (KAI, etc.), as indicated. As an aside, note that Umm el-‘Amed, no. 1, was discovered by Ernest Renan already in 1861.

³² The final word is understood as derived from the root יֶשֶׁר ‘upright, righteous’, per KAI (2:130) ‘gerechte’.

³³ For possible interpretations of גַּם, see KAI (2:151); and Krahmalkov (2000, 141).

- (8) ז מצבת סכר
 ‘this is the **memorial** stele’ (Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 10)
- (9) ז מצבת סכר
 ‘this is the **memorial** stele’ (Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 11)
- (10) סכר אש טנא לאב לי
 ‘a **memorial** which he erected for his father’ (Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 16)
- (11) סכר [] א לאשת נעמת מהרת
 ‘**memorial** [] to a good and efficient woman’ (Cooke 1903, 147, no. 56.1, Cherchel, Algeria)
- (12) ובכבד תעצמתי אדר שפח סכ[ר ירח מד] ירח
 ‘and in honour of his great deeds his family has magnified his **memo[ry]** month by] month’ (CIS, no. 6000.7–8, Carthage)³⁴
- (13) לסכר על מאספת עצמי
 ‘as a **memorial** for the collection of my bones’ (RES I:9 [no. 13] = Slouschz [1942, 180, no. 155], Carthage)
- (14) לסכרן בחים
 ‘as a **memorial** among the living’ (Lapethos, Cypros, no. 3, ln. 5; Honeyman 1938, 286)

Finally, for the sake of completeness, consider *Mu Ponnim sucartim* ‘do **you remember** (any) Punic’ (*Poenulus* 1023),³⁵ which

³⁴ The text is broken at the key spot, but the reconstruction seems assured, based on the context (see Krahmalkov 2000, 344–45).

³⁵ I cite the text as presented by Krahmalkov (2000, 343). See also Sznycer (1967, 144).

corresponds to *ecquid commeministi Punice* (Poenulus 985), with the same meaning.

And for further completeness, let us recall Sychaeus, husband of Dido, introduced by Virgil in *Aeneid* 1.343, whose name may derive from the root סכ"ר, the lack of the final /r/ consonant notwithstanding (Levy 1869, 28).

Since, however, the sound /z/ essentially does not occur in Latin, and thus the letter *z* was dropped from the early Latin alphabet (borrowed from Etruscan), both the passage in Plautus's *Poenulus* and the potential derivation of the name Sychaeus from our root are non-probative.

To put the panoply of examples above into perspective, note that in all of Phoenician there are only two instances (to the best of my knowledge) with the *zayin* retained in this root (verb or noun), to wit:

- (15) אש נדר עבדך עבדאסר בן ארש זכרן
 ‘which your servant PN¹ son of PN² vowed **as a memorial**’
 (Naveh 1966, 234, no. 11 = Umm el-‘Amed, Lebanon, no. 14)
- (16) לזכר העלם
 ‘**in memory of** the youth’ (Slouschz 1942, 208, no. 209; Carthage)

As to the dates of all these inscriptions, the majority (if not all) of them are late, from the fifth century BCE onward—though this includes the two examples with *zayin* as the first root letter, in addition to those with *samekh*.

We may expand our database by incorporating Phoenician and Punic personal names (PNs) containing the root סכ"ר / זכ"ר

‘remember’ into the picture. There is no need to enter into the same amount of detail here, however, as the basic reference works may be consulted. Suffice to mention the following: זכר as a personal name in an unprovenanced seal (Levy 1869, 28); four inscribed arrowheads with the names [זכרב]על (Golub 2021, no. 3), זכרבעל (no. 9), זכר (no. 42), [זכרב]על (no. 53); and then examples such as בעלסכר (*RES*, no. 1314), סכר (*CIS*, no. 3751.4), סכרבעל (*CIS*, nos. 1218; 1354.2, 2871.4)—most of these registered in the standard treatment by Frank Benz (1972, 96, 109, 147).

In the case of these PNs, the former five with זכר are all early, while the latter three containing the element סכר are late. Though we should add some commentary regarding the unprovenanced seal, especially since it harks back to the early days of Phoenician studies. During the mid-nineteenth century this small object formed part of the collection of antiquities owned by Viscomte Emmanuel de Rougé (1811–1872); it was studied and described by Melchior de Vogüé (1829–1916); and then it was published by M. A. Levy, as follows:³⁶

(17) לאבעד בן זכר

‘(belonging) to PN son of ZKR’ (Levy 1869, 28, no. 13)

Unfortunately, we have no way of firmly establishing the date or provenance of this object, and its whereabouts today are unclear.³⁷ Thus we must rely solely on the palaeographical analysis

³⁶ See also the line drawing at Tafel II, no. 12, between pp. 22–23.

³⁷ I am especially grateful to Matthieu Richelle (Université catholique de Louvain) for his research into the whereabouts of the seal, which

conducted by J. T. Milik (1956, 4), who dated the seal to the eighth–seventh century.

The same holds true for the aforementioned inscribed arrowheads (in fact, of the 63 items in the corpus, only one was found in a controlled excavation; all the others were obtained through the antiquities market), but all scholars agree to an eleventh–tenth century dating for these objects (Golub 2021, 22–23). In light of all the above evidence, we may wish to conclude that the shift of /z/ to /s/ in the root סִכַּר / זָכַר ‘remember’ most likely occurred at a later time, say, the sixth or fifth century BCE.

There is, however, one striking piece of counter-evidence to this conclusion, to wit, the name of the prince of Byblos in the tale of Wenamun, dated to ca 1050 BCE, written in hieratic/hieroglyphic script³⁸ as either $\underline{t}^3-k^3-l-b-^c-r$ (1.16–17) or $\underline{t}^3-k^3-r-b-^c-[x]$ (1.29 [3.7]) (Gardiner 1932, 62, 64),³⁹ typically anglicised as Tjekker-baal (Lichtheim 1973–1980, II:225; Wente 2003, 117–18). As Anson Rainey (1982b, 133–34) astutely noted, the Egyptian sign $\underline{t}$ (and related biliterals, as here with sign G47 [duckling,

confirms its present unknown location. The seal is not recorded in Bordreuil (1986), and thus a home in one of the major Paris repositories is excluded. The standard collection of Avigad and Sass (1997, 270, no. 724) remarks “present location not reported.”

³⁸ Technically hieratic script, hence I use the term ‘hieroglyphic’ here loosely.

³⁹ In the latter version, the third consonant, whether it had been *l* or *r*, was accidentally omitted (hence, my use of *[x]*). Both forms are followed by the recumbant Seth classifier (E21), reflecting the common identification of Seth and Ba‘al in New Kingdom religious texts (Allon 2007).

nestling] representing ḡ) most frequently correlates with Hebrew/Phoenician *samekh*, and *never* with *zayin* (which is always represented by the Egyptian sign ḏ (and related biliterals)).⁴⁰ As such, one must assume that the Egyptian scribe heard /s/ at the onset of the name of the prince of Byblos, rather than /z/, reflecting the root סכ"ר as opposed to זכ"ר.⁴¹

This last point leaves us with an unsettled question regarding the date of the phonological shift, though one may wish to suggest that the shift was present in Byblos at an early stage in the history of Phoenician and then spread southward and westward (across the Mediterranean) at a later stage. Fortunately, regardless of how the issue is to be decided, the question of the date of the phonological shift is not truly germane to the main goal of the present article (see below, §5.0).

Naturally, this shift from /z/ to /s/ in the root סכ"ר / זכ"ר is noted by the standard grammars of Phoenician (Harris 1936,

⁴⁰ For a counter view, see Hoch (1984, 373–74, no. 556). However, Hoch's own data (for which see the charts on pp. 432–33, 436–37) only confirm Rainey's position.

⁴¹ There is yet another relevant item, namely, the patronymic $\text{ḡ-k}^3\text{-l-mu}$ in P. Anastasi III, verso 6.6, perhaps reflecting סכרם (though the final element is unclear), whose son hails from the town of $\text{ḡ-k}^3\text{-t}^3$ (an unknown toponym, unless it is a scribal error for $\text{ḡ-d}^3\text{-t}^3$ 'Gaza'). See Gardiner (1937, 31–31a); and Caminos (1954, 108, 111–12).

29; Friedrich, Röllig, and Amadasi Guzzo 1999, 27, §46a; Krahmalkov 2001, 22).⁴² Moreover, the explanation is readily forthcoming, as recognised first (to the best of my knowledge) by Zellig Harris (1936, 29): “It is the only case of such assimilation of a voiced sound to a voiceless known from Phoenician writing, and must have arisen in forms like יִזְכֵּר, where the *z* immediately preceded the *k*.” Similarly, see the words of Friedrich, Röllig, and Amadasi Guzzo (1997, 27, §46a): “erklären sich vielleicht so, daß die in Imperfektformen wie **īazkur* > *īaskur* in unmittelbarer Berührung mit dem folgenden stimmlosen *k* lautgesetzlich entstandene Aussprache mit stimmlosem *s* in andere Stellungen übertragen wurde.”⁴³

5.0. The Rabbinic Maxim and Phoenician Phonology

By this point the reader of this article should have discovered on his or her own the ultimate connection between the two main portions of my treatment, as adumbrated in the title: (a) the rabbinic maxim to articulate clearly the /z/ in תִּזְכְּרוּ (Num. 15.40), as recorded in y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d), so as not to devoice the sibilant to /s/; and (b) the wealth of Phoenician evidence pointing to this selfsame shift inherent in this selfsame verb.

And now an admission: I have known of these two phenomena for several decades, and have long intended to present this

⁴² See also Lipinski (1997, 123, §14.2). Somewhat oddly, Segert (1976, 65, §33.543.3) mentions the use of *samekh* for original /z/, but he refers only to the Late Punic demonstrative pronoun forms, *s* for *z*, etc.

⁴³ See also Rainey (1982b, 133–34).

material to the academic world via a dedicated scholarly article such as the present one. In my naïveté, I had assumed that I was the first to correlate the two aspects treated herein, from discrete sub-fields within the study of Northwest Semitic languages.

Only upon researching the material for the present article, however, did I learn that, in fact, previous scholars had already noticed the connection between the rabbinic maxim and the Phoenician sound shift. The first appears to have been Zellig Harris (or better: his father), for in a footnote to his Phoenician grammar (Harris 1936, 29, fn. 11), the author states, “Dr. H. H. Harris calls my attention to the Talmudic statement that the word תִּזְכֹּר in Numbers 15.40 should be articulated with special clarity (or with a ‘buzzing’ sound).”⁴⁴ Next one may cite E. Y. Kutscher (1965, 30, with fn. 3), who also connected the two phenomena, apparently independently of Harris, even though he cites his predecessor, albeit a different work.⁴⁵

Most scholars, presumably, have experienced the same: one devises what one thinks is an original contribution—only to learn, upon further reading, that someone else has already stated the same thing. In this case, I am fine with such circumstance, especially since my contribution was anticipated by two of the

⁴⁴ How interesting that Harris should use the term “‘buzzing’ sound” in light of our discussion above regarding תִּזְז ‘wasp, hornet’ (§2.1), a word which, discovered at Qumran, he clearly could not have known.

⁴⁵ That is to say, Kutscher cited Harris (1939, 79), in which Harris mentions “formation of root *skr* from *zkr* ‘remember’,” though without reference to the Talmudic passage in this instance.

giants of Northwest Semitic studies of the past century (Harris and Kutscher).

Though I am not the first to correlate the two phenomena studied herein, this article hopefully still has value, given the detail of research and analysis. Moreover, I also am able to contribute something original, not observed by either Harris or Kutscher. I refer here to the geographical component, namely, the western Galilee and the Plain of Akko.

We began this article with reference to R. Levi bar Sisi, whose dictum is cited by two other rabbinic figures. While we do not know the hometown of R. Levi bar Sisi (a contemporary of R. Judah ha-Nasi), we do know that he served the Jewish community in Simoniya (y. Yevamot 12.6 [13a] // Genesis Rabba 81.2) = biblical Shim'on = Tell Samunieh, located ca 30 km southeast of Haifa (just to the west of the present-day communal settlement of Timrat), attributed to the territory of Zebulun in Josh. 19.15 (under the ghost-word name Shimron, as observed by Anson Rainey 1982a, 140–42; 1998, 73) (see also Ezek. 48.24–25; 2 Chron. 15.9, 34.6).⁴⁶

And then there are the two Amoraim who cite the dictum in the name of R. Levi bar Sisi. We can say little about R. Levi, especially without a patronymic and further identification, though we may observe that he is often associated with R. Joshua

⁴⁶ Note that some LXX manuscripts reflect Shim'on (Συμων), while others reflect Shimron (Σεμρων) (for details, see Margolis 1931, 3:368). For a recent study, see Fulton (f.c.); I am grateful to Deirdre Fulton for furnishing me with a copy of her forthcoming article and for permission to cite it here in advance of publication.

of Sikhnin (Strack and Stemberger 1991, 98), 23 km east of Akko. We can say more about R. Avdima of Ḥaifa (himself a student of R. Levi bar Sisi), since he is associated with a city with deep connections to Phoenician culture—regardless of whether Ḥaifa is identified with Shiqmona or Tell Abu Hawam, since both archaeological sites have yielded material culture objects associated with the Phoenicians (Elgavish 1993; Balensi, Herrera, and Artzy 1993; Artzy, 2008).

In sum, from what we know about these two individuals, R. Levi bar Sisi the teacher and R. Avdima the student, the geography places us at the precise meeting ground of the Hebrew and Phoenician dialects of ancient Canaanite. Indeed, such is true of Mishnaic Hebrew generally, as I have proposed in several studies (Rendsburg 1992; 2003), especially given the compilation of the Mishna (and related texts) in Sepphoris (a bit farther inland, ca 12 km northeast of Shim'on/Simoniya).

And that is how the two discrete portions of this research intersect: for the Jews of the western Galilee and the Plain of Akko, the shift of *tizkərū* to *tiskərū* was very real. The background of R. Levi bar Sisi's comment in y. Berakhot 2.3 (4d) aligns with Phoenician perfectly: both linguistically and geographically.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ One final thought which crossed my mind, though naturally one must assume a singular coincidence: note that, of all the later rabbinic authorities, R. Manoaḥ of Narbonne came closest to the Phoenician reality with his reference to the root סב"ר 'dam up, stop up'. True, Phoenician texts have been found in the Occitan/Provençal region (e.g., *KAI*, nos 69–70) (even if the root זכ"ר / סב"ר 'remember' does not occur in these texts), but they date to one millennium earlier.

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