The Studies on the Hebrew Language / İbrani Dili Üzerine Araştırmalar

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of organizing a symposium on the history of the Hebrew language took shape in the thoughts of Professor Dr. M. Metin Hülagü, a distinguished historian and Associate Rector of Erciyes University in Kayseri. Several years earlier, he had undertaken to introduce the study of the Hebrew language into this institution, so beautifully located at the foot of the Erciyes Mountains. As the department of Hebrew grew and entered its third year, he thought it beneficial to invite a group of scholars to lecture before the department's staff and students and present to them some of the issues on which research into Hebrew focuses.

The lectures and debates were held over one long day, the 16th October 2012, and were followed the next day by a deeply interesting guided tour in Cappadocia, which was as well-organized as the previous day and praised by everybody. The guests greatly enjoyed the traditional Turkish hospitality throughout the tour.

The symposium, greeted by Professor Dr. Hülagü, was comprised of seven Israeli and three Turkish speakers. The Israeli participants came from four of Israel's best-known universities: the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv University, Haifa University and Bar-Ilan University; there was also a senior official from Israel's Ministry of Education, with another Israeli coming from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. The Turkish scholars were from Bilkent University, the University of Ankara and Erciyes University itself. Evidently, ten lectures could not cover the entire history of the Hebrew language. Several of its most characteristic aspects were therefore selected, aiming to cover the field from the time of the making of the Bible to the present.

The subjects were defined by historical periods and contemporary relevance. For the ancient period, lecturers discussed the language of the Bible and the Mishnah as well as that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which give us an additional insight into what kind of Hebrew was used at the time of their writing. For the Middle Ages the focus was on the Hebrew of the Genizah documents, mostly from Arabic speaking countries, and also on Hebrew printing in Istanbul, which pioneered the first printing presses in the Ottoman Empire. For the modern period the emphasis was on the renaissance of Hebrew and its vicissitudes, together with a comparison with the modernization of Turkish. Linguistic lectures were devoted to the

relations of Hebrew with Aramaic, on the one hand, and with Arabic on the other. A review of the current study of Hebrew in Erciyes and other Turkish universities provided a suitable conclusion to the programme. All in all, the symposium and the publication of its proceedings provide an entry for those interested in the history of Hebrew as an ancient language revived today in the State of Israel and not unknown among many Jews outside it.

Special thanks are due to Professor Dr. Hülagü, to Dr. Ali Küçükler, Indologist at Erciyes University, who not only assisted in the organization of the symposium but is also the editor of this volume; to the participating lecturers and, no less, to the students who attended all presentations, providing a very special feeling of youth to the entire enterprise.

Prof. Dr. Jacob M. Landau
Jerusalem, December 2012

CHAPTER ONE

THE LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE AND THE MISHNAH

MOSHE FLORENTIN[1]

Surveying Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew in twenty minutes is quite impossible. Therefore, I will only try to mention in a nutshell some of the main topics and problems connected with the research of classical Hebrew.

Texts whose language is clearly distinct from other Canaanite languages, and according to their political and cultural provenance are entitled as "Hebrew", are known from the beginning of the first millennium BC. Those evidences, such as the inscription found in Gezer, located between the Mediterranean coast and Jerusalem, enjoy the advantage of authenticity since they are engraved on stones by their original writers. On the other hand, they lack any signs of vowels and because of their limited scope and quantity they cannot give us a comprehensive picture of ancient Hebrew.

It is thus the Bible, the twenty-four books of the Old Testament, which is the main source from which we draw our knowledge about ancient Hebrew. No wonder, then, that the term *Biblical Hebrew* usually refers to *Ancient* or *Classical Hebrew* in general.

The advantages of this unique source are clear. Comprising about 8,000 lexical entries it may give us a comprehensive, though far from complete, picture of ancient Hebrew. However, one should not ignore the inherent problems of this precious document. Let us mention some of them:

The oldest complete manuscript of the Bible known to us is a copy made at the beginning of the 11th century. As known it is the Leningrad codex dated AD 1008. Indeed, other findings, such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, prove that the Masoretic Version, which is faithfully represented in this codex, was in use already at the beginning of the common era. Yet, the

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biblical text no doubt contains a lot of scribal errors. These, of course, do not reflect the genuine language of the author – or the authors – of the text. Thus, learning about ancient Hebrew from the Bible is quite problematic.

Speaking about the Masoretic version, one must remember that in addition to the consonantal skeleton it contains also the vowel sings, called *niqud,* i.e. punctuation, of the Masoretes. As just mentioned, the oldest manuscript, which contains this important evidence, dates to the beginning of the 11th century, i.e. more than one thousand years after the composition of the text itself. The system of this vocalization was probably not in use before the seventh century. What stage of language therefore does this punctuation represent? Indeed, all classical grammars of Biblical Hebrew are based entirely on these late signs, which pretend to represent the language of the First Temple Period, i.e. the four hundred years till its destruction at the beginning of the 6th century BC, and most of the second Temple period, i.e. till the beginning of the common era. However, nobody denies that quite a few language phenomena reflected in the Masoretic punctuation are not part of Classical Hebrew of the First Temple Era, but rather are the result of penetration of late language characteristics through the punctuation of the Masoretes.

Moreover, the language evidence of the Masoretes, with all its problems, reveals only one form of ancient Hebrew. Other systems of vocalization – i.e. the so called *Babylonian* and the so called *Palestinian*, reveal other faces – i.e. dialects - of Hebrew. Other evidence of ancient Hebrew, such as those embedded in Greek and Latin transcriptions of the first centuries of the common era, add further details which are different from the evidence of the Masoretic vocalization.

Scholars do not agree about the relative dating of these sources. If so, what should we think about the grammatical description based on the Masoretic vocalization, using the evidence of the second column of the Hexapla only as a secondary source, while quite a few scholars tend to believe that the latter is older than the first?

Fortunately, these problems are not only obstacles in the long and Sisyphean way of the Hebrew linguist. It is thanks to these contradictory evidence that we may have some notion about dialects and variety of language in ancient times. However, the relationships between all these evidences are complicated and obscure. Yet, it seems that the main problem which the Hebrew linguist confronts is the origin and nature of the Biblical text itself. While we can exactly locate Shakespeare and Charles Baudelaire in frame of time and cultural and political circumstances, we cannot do it in regard to the Bible and its language.

Who is then the author of the Bible? When and where was this eternal piece composed? Well, as is well known, the Bible is a collection of many compositions, each of which is the result of a long and complicated process of editing.

We do not have an exact idea who were the authors of those compositions, when and where exactly they operated and what exactly were the sources upon which they based their writings. Take for example the wonderful piece of the *Song of Songs*. Is it a late composition, as quite a few important scholars tend to believe, or rather it is, on the contrary, an ancient book, whose language deviations from what we call "Classical Biblical" Hebrew are due to its northern origin, i.e. the old Palestinian regions whose language was deeply influenced by northern Canaanite dialects?

The severe problems of such literary sources are quite obvious. Imagine that we have to represent Hebrew in court, and we, the advocate team, do not possess anything but this anonymous undated document.

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However, from the point of view of the history of Hebrew, the complex nature of the biblical text has its important advantages. An extensive comparison of Biblical Hebrew to other Semitic dialects and other strata of Hebrew, as well as firm historical facts, teach us that the text in its contemporary condition contains linguistic phenomena, the oldest of which go back to the very beginning of ancient Hebrew, i.e. the beginning of the first millennium BC, while the latest can be firmly dated to the second century BC. Thus, a spectrum of about one thousand years is exposed before the historian of Hebrew. One should stress again: we do not know when and where exactly all the portions of this fantastic collection were composed. Yet, scholars have managed to distinguish between two main language strata in the Hebrew Bible, and even to discern with quite a high degree of certainty more than two strata.

I shall describe these strata below, however a short notice is required regarding this glance over biblical Hebrew and the division of Hebrew to historical periods, especially due to the fact that the title of my lecture is "The language of the Bible and the Mishna". I keep this notice to the end of this article.

1. Classical Biblical Hebrew

This term refers to the written Hebrew, which was in use during the First Temple Era, i.e. the first four centuries of the first millennium BC. This Hebrew is well reflected in the early books of the Bible, i.e., the Pentateuch and the books of Joshua, Judges and Kings. It is characterized by a relatively regular and firm organization of the verbal forms – the *waw consecutive, the cohortative, the jussive, etc.* Let us see, for example, the first two verses of Genesis 30:

וַתֵּרֶא רָחֵל, כִּי לֹא יָלְדָה לְיַעֲקֹב, וַתְּקַנֵּא רָחֵל, בַּאֲחֹתָהּ; וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-יַעֲקֹב הָבָה-לִּי בָנִים, וְאִם-אַיִן מֵתָה אָנֹכִי. **ב** וַיִּחַר-אַף יַעֲקֹב, בְּרָחֵל; וַיֹּאמֶר, הֲתַחַת אֱלֹהִים אָנֹכִי, אֲשֶׁר-מָנַע מִמֵּךְ, פְּרִי- בָּטֶן.

"And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and she said to Jacob: 'Give me children, or I shall die.' And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said: 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?'"

2. Late Biblical Hebrew

A sharp turn in the shape of Hebrew happened at the beginning of the sixth century BC, after the destruction of the first temple in Jerusalem and the exile of the majority of the Jewish population to Babylonia. With this decisive event the political and cultural circumstances totally changed and the language has been affected accordingly. A deep influence of Aramaic is now discernible and old uses of the languages are profoundly undermined. This late language was in use during a very long period – from the beginning of the 6th century BC up to the end of the 2nd century AD, i.e. about hundred years after the destruction of the second temple. This stratum is well reflected in the books of Chronicles, Nehemiah, Esther, Ezra and Daniel. The fact that considerable parts of Ezra and Daniel are written in Aramaic is of course not coincident. Let us see, for example, the first two verses of Nehemiah 2:

וַיְהִי בְּחֹדֶשׁ נִיסָן, שְׁנַת עֶשְׂרִים לְאַרְתַּחְשַׁסְתְּא הַמֶּלֶךְ--יַיִן לְפָנָיו; וָאֶשָּׂא אֶת-הַיַּיִן וָאֶתְּנָה לַמֶּלֶךְ, וְלֹא-הָיִיתִי רַע לְפָנָיו. **ב** וַיֹּאמֶר לִי הַמֶּלֶךְ מַדּוּעַ פָּנֶיךָ רָעִים, וְאַתָּה אֵינְךָ חוֹלֶה--אֵין זֶה, כִּי-אִם רַע לֵב; וָאִירָא, הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד.

"In the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. And the king said to me, 'Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing else but sadness of the heart.' Then I was very much afraid."

The best way to see clearly the differences between the ancient stratum of Biblical Hebrew and the late one is by comparing the parallel passages in the Bible, i.e. those historical reports which appear firstly in the books of Samuel and Kings, versus the same passages which were edited by the late redactors of the book of Chronicles. Let us have a look at just one pair of parallel verses:

בָּנֹה בָנִיתִי בֵּית זְבֻל לָךְ מָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עוֹלָמִים׃

1 Kings 8:13: "I have surely built You an exalted house, [and] a place for You to dwell in forever."

וַאֲנִי בָּנִיתִי בֵּית זְבֻל לָךְ וּמָכוֹן לְשִׁבְתְּךָ עוֹלָמִים׃

2 Chronicles 6:2: "I have built you an exalted house, and a place for you to dwell in forever."

The difference between the old structure בָּנֹה בָנִיתִי and the late structure וַאֲנִי בָּנִיתִי is not accidental at all. It reflects the use of absolute infinitive [בָּנֹה] in ancient Hebrew versus the almost total avoidance of such forms in later strata of Hebrew.

These are thus the main strata of Biblical Hebrew. However, reading in the old songs – such as *The Blessing of Jacob, The Blessing of Moses* and *Song of the Sea*, reveals language phenomena, which are older than those characterizing *Classical Hebrew* and may form another stratum of BH. Scholars also discern a forth stratum – the language of the exile epoch reflected in the Books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah.

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In this short paper I tried to explain some of the problems and principles of the research of Biblical Hebrew. There is however another issue which is relevant to the division of Hebrew to historical periods. The common division clearly distinguishes between Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew. Indeed, nobody can deny the essential grammatical differences between the languages of these two distinct texts. At the same time, however, one cannot deny the problematic character of this division. From the point of view of the History of Hebrew, "Mishnaic" Hebrew is not just the term, which defines the language of the Mishna itself. It is rather an epithet, which refers to the relatively late – but still spoken! – language which was in use during the last generations of the second temple, i.e. the time before and after the common era.

However, at least partly this time overlaps the later part of *Late Biblical Hebrew*! If so, the differences between *Biblical Hebrew* and

Mishnaic Hebrew, should be regarded as two distinct styles and norms of writing belonging historically to the same stratum. They both belong to the era in which Hebrew was a vivid spoken language. After all, the grammatical and lexical differences between these two texts are not more essential than, say, the differences between contemporary Hebrew writings such as the compositions of Sh.Y Agnon and H. Hazaz on the one hand, and a scientific article dealing with political issues on the other.

To sum up, not only the language of the Bible is problematic. Even the historical frame of this ancient language is disputable.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LANGUAGE OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

STEVEN E. FASSBERG[1]

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls is the romantic story of a Bedouin shepherd, who, in 1947, while looking for a stray animal, stumbled by chance on manuscripts in a cave above Khirbet Qumran, not far from the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea Sea. This serendipitous find led to the unearthing of many more fragments in the following decades. Since the end of the 1940's, fragments have been found in another ten caves and when pieced together yield more than 900 manuscripts. Most of the manuscripts were written in Hebrew in the Jewish script, a few were written in the ancient paleo-Hebrew script, some manuscripts were written in Aramaic, and a few manuscripts were written in Greek.

All books of the Hebrew Bible with the exception of Esther are attested in the caves above Qumran, and they constitute a quarter of all the manuscripts. Some manuscripts are classified as "rewritten Bible" in that they seem to be paraphrases of biblical texts. Other manuscripts appear to be sectarian writings (e.g., the Community Rule relates the regulations for joining the Sect and for proper behavior), yet others are non-sectarian, and roughly 10% of the manuscripts remain unidentified. The earliest manuscripts are dated to the beginning of the second century B.C.E. based on paleographic sequences and radio-carbon 14 tests. The youngest of the manuscripts belong to the period before the destruction of Qumran in 68 C.E. during the First Jewish Revolt against Rome. It was suggested early on in the scholarly literature, and it still is generally maintained today, that the manuscripts were part of a library of an Essene community that lived at Qumran and whose scribes wrote and copied many of the documents found in the caves. The claim of scribal activity at Qumran has been based partially upon the archaeological evidence of a scriptorium (i.e., a room for scribes) that the original excavator identified among the ruins at

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Qumran. Not all, however, have interpreted the archaeological evidence as pointing to a scriptorium, nor have all accepted the identification of the community as Essene. Those who do believe that the Essenes were at Qumran find support in the sectarian writings found in the Qumran caves, which depict a lifestyle similar to that mentioned in the classical sources of Philo, Pliny the Elder, and Josephus; moreover, Pliny located the Essenes near the Dead Sea, which is exactly where Qumran happens to be situated.

When the Scrolls were first discovered, many Hebrew scholars held to the view espoused by Paul Kahle and his students that certain aspects of Biblical Hebrew as transmitted by the Tiberian Masoretes were unauthentic. Similarly, Hebrew at the end of the Second Temple Period and during the Mishnaic period, commonly known as Mishnaic Hebrew, was considered by many an artificial and learned language created by the Rabbis. Abraham Geiger helped to popularize this view in the middle of the 19th century, and though his theory of artificiality, like that of Kahle, was refuted already by M. H. Segal in 1908, back in 1947 it too still commanded widespread support, especially among those who could not follow the pathbreaking research on Mishnaic Hebrew that was being conducted in Modern Hebrew.

This was the general background of the study of Second Temple Period Hebrew when the first Dead Sea Scrolls appeared. Although the Scrolls alone did not demolish the arguments that the Tiberian Biblical Hebrew and Mishnaic Hebrew traditions were artificial, the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls contributed greatly to showing that this scholarly approach was incorrect. As the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls were published and their language became available for study, Hebrew linguists noticed, in particular Henoch Yalon, Ze'ev Ben-Ḥayyim, and Eduard Yechezkel Kutscher in his monumental book *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll*, that many linguistic phenomena found in the Scrolls were also attested in the post-exilic books of the Bible (i.e., Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, 1st and 2nd Chronicles), in the Hebrew manuscripts of Ben-Sira discovered in the Cairo Geniza, in the Samaritan written and oral traditions of the Pentateuch, in Greek and Latin transcriptions of Hebrew, and also in the Mishna. Moreover, these and other linguists noted the significant influence of Aramaic on the Hebrew of the Scrolls. The most convincing explanation for the distribution of these features was that they all were current during the Second Temple Period. Though one might argue that some of the salient features that are common to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other contemporaneous sources stem from the acquaintance with and attempts of scribes to imitate the language of the Hebrew Bible, such reasoning fails to explain why scribes often imitated

phenomena that diverged notably from the earlier Hebrew writings of the First Temple Period. This is readily apparent in an examination of the so-called sectarian works, e.g., the Community Rule (1QS) or the War Scroll (1QM), for which there were no biblical models whose language the scribes could imitate.

Current Hebrew linguistic scholarship holds that Hebrew was still spoken and written during the Second Temple Period, though there are still a few dissenters among historians and New Testament scholars. Today, linguists accept that the Hebrew of the Second Temple Period differed from Classical Biblical Hebrew as reflected in the older books of the Hebrew Bible and in the epigraphic evidence from the First Temple Period. The precise nature of the language of the Scrolls, however, is hotly debated. Most scholars believe that scribes strove, with great success, to imitate the classical biblical style. Yet, on occasion, they failed to write in a classical Hebrew because their underlying spoken language interfered. The attempt to write classically, while at the same time speaking a colloquial form of the language, resulted, according to the majority of scholars, in the creation of a literary Hebrew with both archaisms and vernacular features. A different view, however, is held by others who research the language of the Scrolls. Led today by Elisha Qimron (who is also the author of the only grammar of the Hebrew of the Scrolls), and before him to a more limited extent by Ze'ev Ben-Ḥayyim and Shelomo Morag, there are scholars who view the language of the Scrolls as an accurate reflection of a dialect spoken in Palestine during the Second Temple Period. These scholars maintain that the written texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls should not be viewed as a literary creation made up of an amalgamation of old and new, but rather reflect a natural, unified linguistic system that was actually spoken by a number of speakers. It must be noted, however, that, in fact, sometimes the two schools disagree merely as to the extent of the phenomena: those who hold to the more traditional view of the Scrolls as reflecting a literary language also acknowledge that spoken features have found their way into the language, whereas those who insist that the language reflects a living Hebrew dialect of the Second Temple Period admit that archaisms exist. Scholars quibble over the extent and nature of what may be taken as either a pseudo-classicism or a genuine neologism.

These are not the only approaches to the language of the Scrolls, however. William Schniedewind, followed by Gary Rendsburg, seeks to explain the unique type of Hebrew at Qumran as an 'anti-language', i.e., a language chosen especially by the speakers at Qumran in order to distinguish themselves from the regular Hebrew language of their

ideological opponents (i.e., the Pharisees and the Sadducees). In a similar vein, Steve Weitzman has argued that the Qumran sect wrote in Hebrew for ideological reasons. According to Weitzman, the Essenes chose to write in Hebrew because it was the language of holiness and the Essenes were preoccupied with the notion of holiness. Writing in Aramaic, the everyday lingua franca, would have been, in their eyes, a profane act.

There is not only one type of Hebrew attested in the Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls. The languages of the Copper Scroll (3Q15) and of *Miq at Ma*[]*aśe ha-Torah* (4QMMT) have both been described as close to, but not identical with, Mishnaic Hebrew. Yet, at the same time, these two Scrolls differ from each other and from the language of most other Dead Sea Scrolls. In a survey and analysis of the different language types found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Morag characterized most of the Hebrew scrolls as having been written in 'General Qumran Hebrew', 4QMMT as written in 'Qumran Mishnaic', and the Copper Scroll as written in what he called, for lack of a better term, simply 'Copper Scroll Hebrew'.

The following is a partial list of salient features found in the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Many of them are also found in the post-exilic biblical books and other Second Temple Period corpora.

Orthography

- *Plene* (i.e., "full") spelling with *matres lectionis* is much more frequent than in Classical Biblical Hebrew. This is particularly true for the use of *waw* to represent the *o* and *u* vowel sounds.
- The letter *aleph* is often suffixed to short words that end in a vowel, e.g., כיא 'thus', לוא 'no'.

Phonology

- The guttural consonants are weakened.
- The diphthong *aw* > *ō*.

Morphology

- There is a preference for long forms of independent, suffixed, and object pronouns (e.g., הואה, היאה, אתמה, יכתבמה)
- Unexpected *plene* spellings are thought by some to reflect increased use in context of pausal forms, e.g., יכתובו instead of יכתבו.
- Aramaic elements occur on verbs and nouns.

- There is a general tendency towards pluralization. It appears in the pluralization of both members of a construct chain (גבורי חילים vs. גבורי חיל ‘men of valor’), pluralization of abstract nouns (e.g., גבורות vs. גבורה ‘bravery’), and pluralization of collective nouns (העם ההלכים vs. העם ההולך)
- The consecutive tense system with *waw ha-hippukh* is on the wane and is in the process of being replaced by the non-consecutive forms as in Mishnaic Hebrew.
- There is a weakening of the relationship between modal forms and function with the result that the lengthened imperfect (אכתבה, נכתבה) does not always express modality; rather its occurrence is dependent upon its (initial) position in the sentence.
- Some transitive verbs abandon the Qal stem for Piel and Hiphil, and some intransitive verbs move from the Qal to Niphal
- There is an increase in the use of periphrastic tenses based on forms of the verb ‘to be’ היה and the participle.

Syntax

- Word order changes and one finds evidence of a shift from VS (verb-subject) to SV (subject-verb).
- The object may precede the infinitive.
- Imperatives may be preceded by temporal phrases.
- A noun and its modifier, when a title, reverse places, e.g., המלך דוד < ‘King David’ > ‘David, the King’; similarly a numeral and noun reverse their order, e.g., שלושה ימים < ימים שלושה ‘three days’ > ‘days, three’; the same is true for nouns marking weights or measure and the object weighed or measure, e.g., כִּכָּרִים כֶּסֶף < כסף ככרים ‘silver talents’ > ‘talents, silver’;
- The elements of binominal expressions invert their position with regard to the classical period (this has been called ‘diachronic chiasm’), e.g., זהב וכסף < כסף וזהב ‘silver and gold’ > ‘gold and silver’, מבאר שבע ועד דן < מדן ועד באר שבע ‘from Dan to Beer Sheva’ > ‘from Beer Sheva to Dan’.
- The conjunction *waw* is added in the so-called *quivis* construction יום יום ‘day by day, daily’ becomes יום ויום ‘day and day’ and similarly the conjunction *waw* is repeated before a list of similar prepositions and the direct object marker.
- The compound לאין negates infinitives and abstract nouns.
- The preposition עם + infinitive function as a temporal clause.

- The common verbal form *wayhi* ויהי ‘and it was’ before an infinitive construct (e.g., ויהי בקטלו) is omitted (ובקטלו).

Lexicon

- Several new lexemes and phrases appear that differ from corresponding lexemes and phrases of the First Temple Period, e.g., אורה light’, חשבון ‘reckoning’, נשא אישה ‘take a wife’, ספר משה ‘the book of Moses’, אוט ‘secret’, אוש ‘foundation’, בדנים ‘forms’, בעול ‘accustomed’ (qal passive participle), גער ‘drive away’, זרק ‘dart’, מזקנה ‘chin’, מלוש ‘constellation, horoscope’, עצה ‘council’, תכמים ‘limbs of the body’, תעודה ‘appointed time, assembly’, תסובות ‘revolutions’.

Summary

In closing, the contribution of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the study of the history of the Hebrew language cannot be overestimated. The Scrolls corroborate the use of Hebrew during the Second Temple Period, known previously from the evidence of Late Biblical Hebrew, Mishnaic Hebrew, Samaritan Hebrew, and the Hebrew from Greek and Latin inscriptions. It is now clear to all linguists that Hebrew did not die before the Common Era. Scholars are divided, however, over whether or not the Hebrew in the Scrolls reflects an attempt to write Classical Biblical Hebrew into which penetrated colloquial elements or a spoken dialect of the period. That remains for future scholars to decide.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CAIRO GENIZAH

AVIHAI SHIVTIEL[1]

What is the Cairo Genizah?

The name "The Cairo Genizah" was given to a collection of over 250,000 fragments, which were discovered in Cairo in the second half of the nineteenth century and were removed and scattered around some twenty institutes all over the world. In addition, an unknown number of documents from the same source are assumed to have reached private hands.

The word *genizah* means in Hebrew 'hiding' and subsequently 'a hoard of precious things'. Originally, the word comes from the Persian language and was borrowed by some of the Semitic languages and probably by many of the European languages. (See, A. Shivtiel, The Genizah and its roots).

The Jewish and later the Muslim custom of burial in the ground or depositing in special places of worn-out scrolls, codices, books and, as a matter of fact, odd leaves and even tiny pieces of documents, is based on a decree issued by Jewish rabbis (See, Babylonian Talmud, Megilla, 26:2) and is intended to avoid the disposal by fire and the like of written materials which may contain the word God or any other word that refers to Him.

The bulk of the Genizah of Cairo was found inside a special room on the first floor of the ancient Jewish synagogue of Ben Ezra and in the Basatin cemetery which are situated in Old Cairo (Fustat). Early information about the Genizah came to our attention from travellers, such as Simon van Gelderen (18th century) and Jacob Saphir (1822-1886), who reported its existence as early as almost one hundred years prior to its final removal from Cairo, but since they presumably had only discerned the worn-out printed books which were lying on top of the pile, they misjudged the importance of the material.

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Later, an unknown number of fragments reached some antique dealers who sold them to interested parties without knowing anything about their contents and value. Then, when the hoard started to 'leak out', a large amount of it was transferred to Russia as from 1863 by Abraham Firkovich (1786-1874), who was a Polish-Russian Karaite Jew and a collector of manuscripts and Jewish artefacts. All these materials were later moved to the state library in St. Petersburgh. However, it was only after two Scottish twin sisters, who were associated with Cambridge University, Agnes Smith Lewis (1843-1926) and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (1843-1920), had returned from Cairo in 1896, bringing with them one leaf written in Hebrew characters, and consulted the then lecturer in Judaism at the University of Cambridge, Dr. Solomon Schechter, (1847-1915) about its nature, that the breakthrough of Genizah research had begun.

The leaf showed to Schechter turned to be one page from the Book of Ecclesiasticus, which was originally composed in the second century BC and is known as the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach. Similar to the biblical Book of Proverbs, this work contains aphorisms that where later incorporated in the Apocrypha.

Until the discovery of this leaf no proof for the claim by Jewish sources that the book had originally been written in Hebrew could have been found, except for an early translation into Greek. However, when Schechter identified the fragment his interest in its source grew and with the assistance of Dr. Charles Taylor (1840-1908), formerly vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge and later Master of St John's College, he set off to Cairo in 1897 and obtained permission from the Jewish community to transfer the collection to Cambridge. This treasure was the largest collection of Genizah fragments, comprising some 140,000 fragments to which two more collections, which were in private hands, have lately been added. Hence, the total number of Genizah documents now found at Cambridge exceeds 150,000 out of an estimated 250,000 fragments in total which are scattered across other places of learning.

The general physical description of the documents

The overwhelming majority of the fragments are single leaves usually written on both sides (recto and verso) often by different hands. The materials used were paper and to a lesser extent parchment and very rarely papyrus and cloth. The ink is mainly black, while red ink may be used for titles of chapters, for emphasizing certain words or in illustrations. Other colours are extremely rare and are mainly used in illustrations. Most

documents use semi-cursive letters in texts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Judaeo-Arabic, Persian, Spanish, Yiddish, Armenian, Georgian and others, while Arabic, Greek, Coptic and Latin are usually written in their own alphabets.

Since a large number of the documents are fragments their size may vary between foolscap and minute pieces, usually torn from a larger document. Several pages are bi-folios, which originally belonged to larger treatises or codices.

What do the Cambridge collections contain?

Since the documents found were composed between the ninth and the nineteenth centuries, the collection comprises materials, which almost cover any discipline and literary genre, in addition to daily correspondence. The major items include:

Biblical texts, including commentaries, translations into Aramaic, Greek and Arabic.

Post-biblical materials such as portions of Ben Sirach, the Damascus Document which was later found in full among the Dead Sea Scrolls and various portions from the Mishnah, the two Talmuds and the Midrash.

Thousands of piyyuts and other poems, mainly composed by medieval Jewish poets.

Responsa. Legal documents, Rabbinic court records, appeals and court verdicts.

Parts of essays on philosophy, sciences, including mathematics, physics, medicine, pharmacology, botany, astronomy and astrology.

Commerce and business and banking correspondence. Social correspondence, including public and private letters, and magic, amulets and children's note-books.

Who were the writers of the documents?

While the overwhelming majority of the composers of the materials are anonymous, a number of the writers could be identified by their known literary works or from their signatures. Thus, leading personalities of the time and heads of various Jewish communities are widely represented in the Genizah, such as the famous philosopher, commentator, physician and scientist Moshe ben Maimon (=Maimonides) and the renowned poet Yehuda Ha-Levi. Moreover, some scholars have succeeded in ascribing

many documents to various writers by identifying their hand-writing and it is hoped that many more will be unveiled with the help of the computer.

What are the languages that are used in the documents?

The major languages used in the documents are Hebrew, Judaeo-Arabic, Arabic and Aramaic, and to a lesser extent, Judaeo-Spanish, Georgian, Armenian, Yiddish, as well as Coptic, Greek and Latin. To this list one may add now one document recently discovered which is written in Turkish-Karamenli.

What can the documents teach us?

The contribution of the Genizah to our knowledge of the history of the Middle Ages is invaluable since it has brought to our attention information hitherto unknown about many spheres of life. Moreover, while the documents have helped us confirm many facts known from other sources, they have also enabled us to reach fresh conclusions, which have sometimes invalidated claims previously made by scholars.

For example, we find in the Genizah thousands of new piyyutim hitherto unknown as well as new commentaries, responsa and new information about personalities who lived in the Middle Ages in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond. Furthermore, the documents teach us many facts about daily life of the community, including information on the education system, the economy, the customs and manners, the relationship inside the community and with the Muslim authorities and the Christian neighbours. Book-lists teach us about books found in private libraries, while lists of medicines and herbs disclose to us the methods of treatment current in those days. The scores of documents relating to trade and commerce teach us about practices of export and import, marketing methods and the banking system. Thus we find in the Genizah samples of the early version of bank cheques, orders of goods and I.O.U. statements as well as common practices and codes of law regarding pricing, account-keeping and invoices.

Moreover, the Genizah documents are a rich source of information on international trade around the Muslim Empire, India and China.

Also, valuable information is provided about various professions and occupations, vocational education and apprenticeship.

The literary crop contains, apart from poetry, scores of parts of works in prose, some famous, some unknown, including parts of Hebrew literature, as well as Arabic texts including some chapters from the Qur'an,

the Hadith, and other works which clearly indicate the interest among Jews, Christians and Muslims in each other's culture.

However, perhaps the most interesting 'genre', which is not only piquant but which is an inexhaustible source of information is no doubt the private correspondence, which reflects views and notions, moods and feelings and also attitudes and mentality of the individual as well as the society at large.

Finally, one should also mention the valuable information found in the Genizah concerning the Karaites, whose one of their most important centres was in Cairo.

Who are the "giants" of the Genizah studies?

The list of scholars who have studied the Genizah documents and provided us with an in-depth analysis and valuable conclusions contains many names. It will therefore be impossible to mention all of them in such a brief account. Hence, it will suffice to mention here those whose contribution is particularly extraordinary.

Solomon Schechter, who not only brought the Genizah over to Cambridge, but also published several important documents from the collection. S. D. Goitein, who produced the most comprehensive study of the Genizah under the title *Mediterranean Society* and Moshe Gil who deciphered several thousands of the fragments which were published in eight volumes and in several articles.

Present and future

The Taylor-Schechter Genizah Unit at Cambridge founded by Professor Stefan Reif in 1973 has catalogued up until now most of the materials and work is on going to complete the description of all the documents in the collection. Moreover, thanks to close co-operation between scholars in Cambridge, Israel and the United States projects to digitize all the materials and cross-reference all the documents are on-going. When both projects will be completed in the near future all Genizah materials will be put at the disposal of scholars worldwide. Future work will also include identification and matching of fragments that will be carried out with the help of the computer, so that students of the Genizah will continue to study the documents and reach fresh conclusions that will enrich our knowledge of one of the most thrilling periods of the Mediterranean society.

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CHAPTER FOUR

HEBREW PRINTING IN OTTOMAN ISTANBUL

JACOB M. LANDAU[1]

1. Introduction

I am honoured and grateful for being invited to participate in this congress.

Permit me to explain briefly the title of my paper. By 'Hebrew,' I refer to the alphabet of the works printed in Ottoman Istanbul. This alphabet was used in the Ottoman Empire not only for the Hebrew language, but also for Ladino (sometimes called 'Judeo-Spanish'). Ladino was a Spanish language brought over from Spain and used by Jews exiled from the Iberian Peninsula. It was frequently employed by Ottoman Jews. Although very different from Hebrew, it is written in Hebrew characters (like all 'Jewish languages' such as Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian) – so that my paper will deal with printing in both Hebrew and Ladino in Istanbul.

Research on works printed in Ottoman Istanbul has almost solely been carried out by bibliographers. They have listed many works, their titles and years of publication, more rarely other details, generally where a copy of the work can be found at present (usually in Israel, France or the United States). This is important and useful research but, having been carried out by bibliographers and subject to their professional skills, there has been no attempt to investigate the general circumstances, that is, the characteristic methods of printing, proofreading and distribution. What is particularly lacking is a more general analysis of the character of the printed works and of their topics – not one by one but in a general view and in what may be deduced regarding the contribution of Hebrew printings to the overall culture of Ottoman Istanbul. I shall try to fill this gap, at least in part.

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2. Jewish Printers in Istanbul

For most of the long history of the Ottoman Empire, the Jewish community of Istanbul lived in closed social and religious parameters within its own *millet*, with hardly any cultural interactions with the large Muslim environment, which had a different religion and, anyway, did not read Hebrew script. Cultural relations were usually established, however, with other Jewish communities in the empire and abroad during the first centuries of Ottoman rule, for many of which the Istanbul community served as an intellectual resource. While at first exiles from Spain (where Hebrew printing had started in the 1470s) formed the bulk of the Hebrew printers in Istanbul, others were later attracted to the empire's capital and Hebrew printers came from Salonica, Izmir, Venice, Prague, Poland, Russia and elsewhere.

Istanbul became an important centre of Hebrew-language printing from the early sixteenth century to the mid-eighteenth, and the printers were its active agents in this process. However, in the last generations of the Ottoman Empire, a change occurred and publications in Ladino supplemented those in Hebrew and soon became more common than the Hebrew-language ones. Some of the publications in Ladino focused on more practical matters, such as translations of Ottoman laws, while others reacted to political events, such as the Young Turk revolution (as will be described below). Also, a few Hebrew and Ladino newspapers reported events in the Ottoman Empire.

Unlike today, when there is an established division of labour between the publisher, printer and bookseller, the Jewish printer in Ottoman Istanbul performed all three functions. Consequently, he sometimes listed his name on the title page, but more frequently in the introduction or in the collophon at the very end of the work he had printed. In this collophon he usually said something about the date of printing (always according to the Jewish calendar), about the author and about himself, the printer, as well as about the contents of the work, generally concluding with praise and good wishes for the reigning Sultan. Therefore, since we know the names of the printers, we can deduce that frequently the same Jewish families were active in Hebrew printing in Istanbul, transmitting the trade from father to son (this applies both when a printer worked alone or with a partner). A famous example is that of the Jabez brothers in the second half of the sixteenth century, from 1559 to 1586, who printed rabbinic, philosophical and Karaite works.

Regrettably, we do not know how many copies were printed of each work; it is probable that the number was between one-hundred and one-