
A GENIZAH FRAGMENT OF BAVLI ERUVIN 54A

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Abstract

The article presents a Genizah fragment related to Bavli, Eruvin tractate 54a, identified as Cambridge, UL T-S F1 (2) 114, FGP No. C 93386. The article begins with a description of the Genizah fragment, and presents the contents of the fragment in writing together with a reproduction of the fragment itself. At the end of the article, reference is made to the content and several comments are brought in an effort to characterize the fragment.

Keywords: Genizah, Eruvin, sugya

1. Introduction

The fragment consists of three joined pages made of paper; pages a-b are continuous and there is a part missing between pages b-c. The pages have been damaged and the edges are missing, and there are also some holes. Only few of the lines in this fragment are complete. The page size is 13.2×18.1 cm. The size of the written space is 11.5×15 cm. Each page contains about 20 lines.

The goal of this paper is to present the Genizah fragment and the differences between the fragment's version and the printed version, and to examine the contribution of the fragment as an addition to the printed version.

The process of the work on this paper involved examining the manuscripts referring to Tractate Eruvin and noting them, as well as the other versions found in other sources and concentrated in the book *Dikdukei Sofrim* and different versions available to the ancient commentators who lived in Kairouan, Tunisia (10th-11th centuries), in order to explore whether they include significant changes that affect the understanding of the printed version.

The background of the sugya (Eruvin 54a) as reflected in the Genizah fragment is the educational message whereby one must have patience and not be uncivil, like the wilderness that everyone treads on and it does not complain. In this context the translation of that sugya is as follows: it is a story that aims to confirm this message and that displays Rav Joseph's patience, who on one hand was not uncivil but rather forgave the sage called Raba son of R. Joseph bar Hama despite his (R. Joseph's) anger on him. On the other, R. Joseph is willing to be reconciled and to forgive Raba son of R. Joseph bar Hama only if the latter shall interpret a certain verse "and from wilderness to Mattanah". This verse

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implicitly emphasizes the quality that a person should adopt, which is patience, like the desert that people tread on and it does not complain. Such a person will receive the gift of Torah study.

The fragment refers to Tractate Eruvin 54a in the Babylonian Talmud, from "נוצר תאנה" [לו במתנה] [רבה בריה דרב יוסף בר חמא הוה] ליה מלתא לרב יוסף" [יאכל פריה]".

The scribe designates breaks in the text by means of a dot and three spaces. He maintains a left hand justification by squeezing in irregular words or stretching the last letter. The scribe marks biblical verses by placing two dots above each word.

The script used is the Solitreo semi-cursive style with spaced lines.

Compared to specimens in the Hebrew Paleography Project, the script used is Solitreo. The script employs the ancient form of plene spelling, for example: (5) דאמי instead of דמי.

The features of the script closely resemble the description of the script utilized in 1240; the letter *aleph* is written in the same form as the letter N, characteristic of the script customary in the city of Erbil (or Arbil, Irbil), Iraq, in 1275 and in the city of Tabriz, Iran, in 1310 [1].

2. The text of the printed version (bEruvin 54a)

... His study will be retained by him, otherwise it will not.

R. Joseph had a grievance against Raba son of R. Joseph b. Hama. When the eve of the Day of Atonement approached the latter thought, 'I shall go and pacify him'. Proceeding to R. Joseph's house he found his attendant engaged in mixing for him a cup of wine. 'Give it to me', Raba said to him, 'and I will mix it'. He gave it to him and the latter duly mixed it. As he tasted it, he remarked, 'This mixing is like that Raba son of R. Joseph b. Hama'. 'I am here' the other answered. 'Do not sit down upon your legs', R. Joseph said to him, 'before you have explained to me these verses'. What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *And from wilderness to Mattanah, and from Mattanah to Nahaliel, and from Nahaliel to Bamot, and from Bamoth to the valley?* (Num. 21:18-19) – 'If', the other replied, 'a man allows himself to be treated as the wilderness upon which everybody treads, the Torah will be given to him as a gift; and so soon as it is given to him as a gift, he will be the inheritance of God as it says, *And from Mattanah to Nahaliel*; and as soon as he is inheritance of God he rises to greatness, since it says, *And from Nahaliel to Bamoth*. But if he is haughty, the Holy One, blessed be He, humbles him, as it says, *And from Bamoth to the valley*. If, however, he repents, the Holy One, blessed be He, raises him, as it says, *Every valley shall be lifted up* (Jes. 40:4). R. Huna said: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *Thy flock settled therein; Thou preparedst in Thy goodness for the poor, O God?* (Ps. 68:11) If a man behaves like an animal that treads upon its prey and eats it or, as others say, that drags it and eats it, his learning will be preserved by him, otherwise it will not. If, however, he does behave in this manner the Holy One, blessed be He, will himself prepare a banquet for him, as it says in Scripture, *Thou didst prepare in Thy goodness for*

the poor, O Lord (Ps. 68:11). R. Hiyya b. Abba in the name of R. Johanan expounded: With reference to the Scriptural text, *Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof* (Prov. 27:18). [2]

3. Discussion and conclusions

לו במתנה ואם לאו אין תורתו נתונה לו במתנה [3]
 ליה לרב יוסף [4] מילתא בהדיה [5] כי מטא מעלי יומי ד...
 אמ איזיל ואיפייסיה אזול ואשכחיה לשמעיה דהוה
 ק... מ... יג ליה כסא [3] אמ' ליה הב לי דאמזיג [3] ליה אנא מ...ג
 5 ל... כד... עים ליה אמ' האי מזגא דאמי למזגא דרבא
 בריה... רב... חמ... מ ליה אנא הוא [3] אמ' ליה לא
 ב... עך עד דמפרשת לי הני קראי מאי דכת'
 ... מתנה (Num. 21:18) וממתנה נחליאל ומנחליאל במות [6] (Num. 21:19) ומ...מ...
 ... אמ' ליה אם משים אדם את עצמו כמ...ב... [3] ז...
 10 ... דשין [3] אותו תורה ניתנה לו במתנה שנ' ומדבר מתנה (Num. 21:18) -
 ... יון שנתנה לו במתנה נחלו אל שנ' וממתנה נחליאל (Num. 21:19) וכיון
 ... חלו [3] אל עולה לגדולה שנ' ומנחליאל במות [6] (Num. 21:19) ואם חס
 ... [3, p. 107]
 ...גיס דעתו הקבה משפילו שנ' ומבמות הג... (Num. 21:20) ואם ח...
 15 בו הקבה מגביהו שנ' כל גיא ינשא (Jes. 40:4) אמ' רב הונא מ...
 דכת' חיתך ישובו בה תכין בטובתך לעני אלהים (Ps. 68:11) אם משים
 אדם את עצמו כחיה זו שדורסת ו...כלת ואמרי [3, p. 107] ...
 ואוכלת תלמודו מתקיים... דו ואם ל... אין תלמודו... תקי...
 ... [3, p. 107] ואם עושה כן אמ' ר' ... ר' ...אי הקבה ע...
 20 סעודה בעצמו שנ' תכין ... עני' א...ה'... (Ps. 68:11.)
 ... אב [3, p. 107]... י דכת' נוצר ת...ה יאל... (Prov. 27:18)

The word “יומי” (2) (= days [of atonement]) in the fragment’s version (Figure 1) is in the plural form [7]. The fragment’s version differs from all the other versions (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366, and the Vilna edition), which have “ומא” – in the singular form (day [of atonement]), the customary word used elsewhere for the Day of Atonement.

The fragment includes the word “דהוה” (3) (= who was), depicted in the story where Raba son of R. Joseph b. Hama found R. Joseph’s attendant (“שמעיה”) “who was” pouring wine for Rav Joseph (and mixing it with water because in ancient times the wine was strong and it would be diluted with water to make it weaker) [8]. Although the word “דהוה” is absent from all the different versions (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366, and the Vilna edition omit the word), the story was understood as if it had included the word “דהוה”. Accordingly, it seems that the fragment’s version is more accurate, as evident from the explicit use of the word “דהוה” as part of the text.

The script utilized in the fragment is ancient, as evident from the use of the word “דאמי” (5) rather than “דמי” as in the other versions (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366 and the Vilna edition). The fragment’s version correctly specifies the name of “רבא” (5) “בריה דרב יוסף בר חמא”, compared to some of the other versions (MS Vatican 109 and MS Oxford 366 have: “דרבה”).

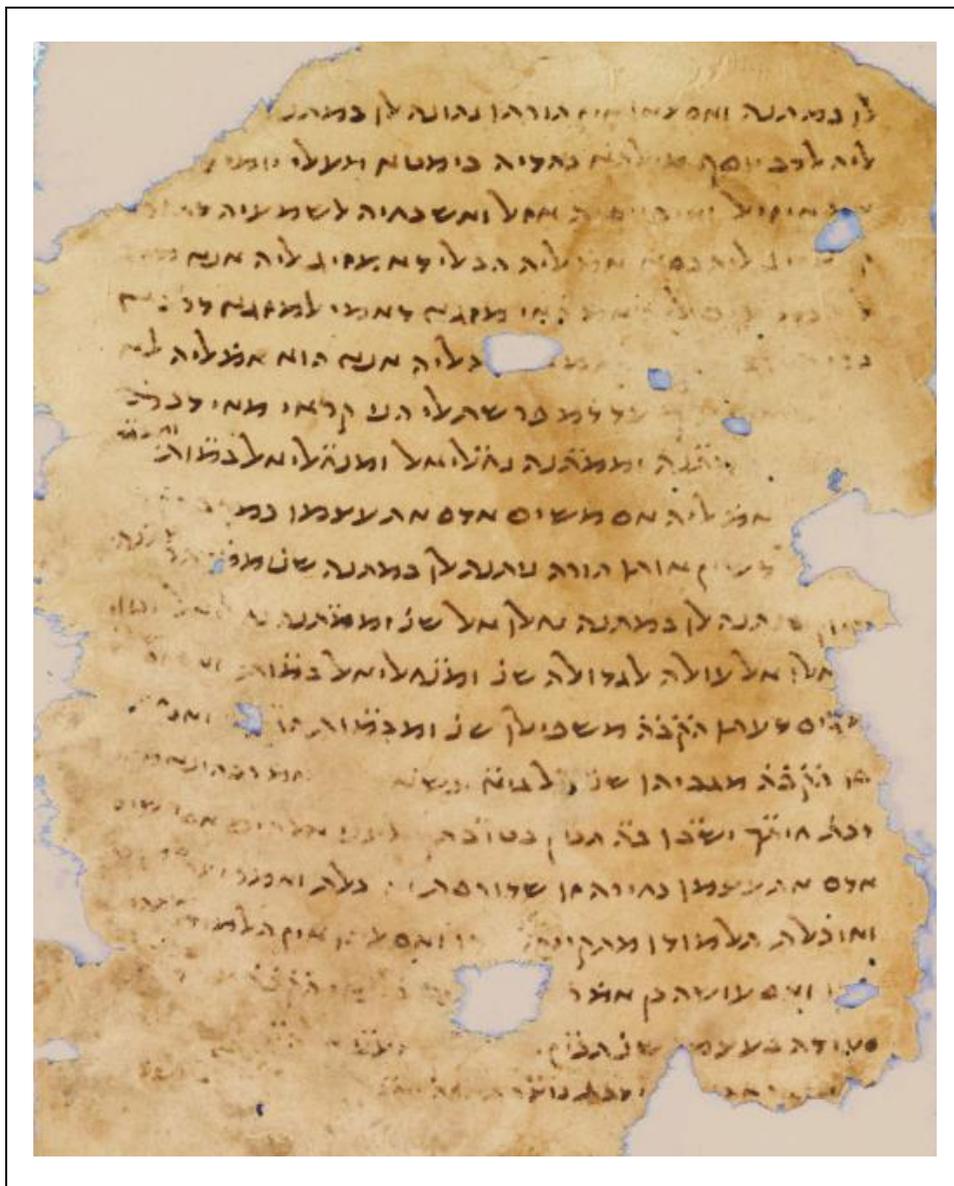


Figure 1. Cambridge U-L T-S F1(2) 114.

The form of the homily “אם משים אדם את עצמו” (9, 15-16) is maintained consistently in the fragment’s version. The fragment’s version makes consistent use of the word “את” (9, 16) to indicate the accusative case, compared to the other versions (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366 and the Vilna edition) from which the word “את” is absent.

The verses cited in the fragment’s version are identical to the wording in the Scriptures, aside from the last verse, where the letter *vav* is added to the word “נורר” (20) as a vowel, unlike the Scriptural verse [9].

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