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# SEVERAL COMMENTS ON A GENIZAH FRAGMENT OF BAVLI ERUVIN 54A (1)

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## Abstract

The article relates to a Genizah fragment associated with Bavli, Eruvin tractate 54a, identified as Cambridge, UL T-S F1 (2) 114, FGP No. C 93385. The article describes the Genizah fragment, the scribe's manner of work, the style of writing, and the palaeography of the script letters. The article presents the Vilna edition's version (Eruv. 54a) and then the wording of the Genizah fragment itself. Finally, there are several comments that refer to the fragment's contents in light of comparison between the Genizah fragment and the printed and manuscript versions of Tractate Eruvin.

*Keywords:* Genizah, Eruvin, sugya

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## 1. Introduction

The fragment consists of three joined folios made of paper; folios a-b are continuous and there is a part missing between folios b-c. The folios have been damaged and the edges are missing, and there are also some holes. Few of the lines in this fragment are whole. The folio size is: 13.2 × 18.1 cm. The size of the written space is: 11.5 × 15 cm. Each folio consists of about 20 lines. This paper deals with one folio (FGP No. C 93385) chosen randomly. The goal of this paper is to present the Genizah fragment and to examine the contribution of the fragment as an addition to the printed version (Vilna).

The process of the work in this paper involved examining other versions found in other manuscripts and in the book *Dikdukei Sofrim* 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 refers to the word 'סלה' and the virtues required to succeed in Torah studies. The translation of the sugya is as follow: A tannaitic source that deals with the meaning of the word 'סלה'. Then there are four statements of R. Eleazar [1] dealing with the various characters necessary for a scholar who devotes his time to succeed in learning Torah [2]. These statements rely on verses by way of parables.

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The fragment refers to Tractate Eruvin 54a in the Babylonian Talmud, from “ואם לאו אין תלמודו מתקיים בידו... תורתו נתונה” to “כי לא לעולם עולמית נצה דכתיב...רב מתנה”.

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 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 [3].

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

“It was taught at the School of R. Eliezer b. Jacob: Wherever [in Scripture] the expression of *nezah*, *selah* or *wa’ed* occurs the process to which it refers never cease. ‘*Nezah*’? Since it is written *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth* (Jes. 57:16). ‘*Selah*’. Since it is written, *As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God – God establish it for ever. Selah* (Ps. 48: 9). ‘*Wa’ed*’? Since it is written, *The Lord shall reign for ever and ever* (Ex.15: 18). (Mnemonic: *Chains, his cheeks, table graven.*) R. Eleazar said: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *And chains about thy neck?* (Prov. 1:9). If a man trains himself to be like a *chain* that hangs loosely upon the neck, and is sometimes exposed and sometime concealed, his learning will be preserved by him, otherwise it will not. R. Eleazar further stated: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *His cheeks are as a bed of spices?* (Cant. 5:13). If a man allows himself to be treated as a *bed* upon which everybody treads, and as *spices* with which everybody perfumes himself, his learning will be preserved, but otherwise it will not. R. Eleazar further stated: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *tables of stone?* (Ex. 31: 18). If man regards his cheeks as a *stone* that is not easily worn away, his learning will be preserved by him, but otherwise it will not. R. Eleazar further stated: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *Graven upon the tables?* (Ex. 32: 16). If the first tables had not been broken the Torah would never have been forgotten in Israel. R. Aḥa b. Jacob said: No nation or tongue would have had any power over them; for it says, ‘*Graven*’, read not ‘*graven*’ but ‘*freedom*’. R. Mattana expounded: What is the purport of the Scriptural text, *And from the Wilderness to Mattanah?* (Num. 21: 18). If a man allows himself to be treated as a wilderness on which everybody treads, his study will be retained by him, otherwise it will not...” [4]

### 3. Discussion and conclusions

- ...מי עולמים·נצה דכת כי לא לעולם אריב  
... אקצוף (Jes. 57:16)·סלה דכת' כאשר שמענו כן ראינו בעיר  
...באות בעיר אלהינו אלהים יכונייה עד עולם סלה (Ps. 48:9)·  
ועד דכת' יי ימלך לעולם ועד (Ex. 15:18) [5]·אמ' ר' אלעזר מאי ...  
5 וענקים לגרגרותיך (Prov. 1:9) אם משים אדם עצמו ...ענק זה שרף [6, 7]  
לצואר שנראה ואינו נראה...וודו מתקיים ... ואם  
לאו אין תלמודו מתקיים בידו·אמ' ר' ... אי דכת'  
לחייו כערוגת הבושם (Cant. 5:13)·אם משים אדם עצמו... כערוגה  
זו שהכל דשין אותה ואי נמי כבושם הזה שהכ... מת...  
10 מתבשמין הימנו תלמודו מתקיים בידו ואם לא...  
תלמודו מתקיים בידו·אמ' ר' אלעזר מאי דכת' ...  
כתובים (Ex. 31:18) אם משים אדם את עצמו נא' את לחייו כאב... זו  
שאינה נמ...חה תלמודו מתקיים בידו ואם לאו אין תלמ...  
מתקיים בידו·אמ' ר' אלעזר מאי דכת' הוא' חרות על'... (Ex. 32:16)  
15 שאילמלא לא נשתברו הלוחות הראשונים לא נשתכחה  
תורה מישראל·רב אחא בריה דרב יעקב אמ' אף אין אומה  
לשון שולטת בהן שנ' הוא חרות אל תיקרא חרות אלא  
חירות·אמ' רב מתנ...ת' ומדבר מתנה (Num. 21:18) אם  
משים אדם את עצמו כמדב... זה שהכל דשין אותו נתקיים  
20 תלמודו בידו אם לאו אין נתקיים תלמודו ביד... [5, p. 212] ... תורתו נתונה

Some of the Scriptural verses in the fragment (Figure 1) were written as they appear in the Scriptures (1-2, 14, 18) and some with slight changes ('יכונייה' - 3, - 4 - 'לעולם', - 5 - 'לגרגרותיך', - 8 - 'הבושם', 'לחייו', - 12) - 'כתובים', - 8 - 'הבושם', 'לחייו', - 5 - 'לגרגרותיך', - 4 - 'לעולם', - 3 - 'יכונייה').

The fragment preserves a version that has no 'סימן' (Mnemonic) (MS Oxford 366 and Vilna edition have '... סימן') intended to remember the orally conveyed signs [8] given on behalf of R. Eleazer [1]. In addition, the fragment preserves all the sayings of R. Eleazer (4, 11, 14) without the conjunctive *vav* ('אמ' ר' אלעזר').

The form of R. Eleazer's homilies ('תלמודו מתקיים בידו') is maintained almost throughout the entire fragment (5-7, 8-11, 12-14), aside from one exception ('את עצמו' - 12), compared to the different versions of R. Eleazer's words. However, the same homiletic style appears differently in R. Mattena's saying (18-20).

The fragment preserves the terminology used to denote additional options (9 - 'ואי נמי'), (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109 have 'אינמי'. MS Oxford 366 has 'אי נמי') and (12 - 'נא') (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366 miss 'את עצמו נא') in sayings by R. Eleazer that do not explicitly appear in the printed version (Vilna).

In R. Eleazer's fourth saying in the fragment, the word 'הוא' (14), is also cited as part of the saying. This word is absent from all the different versions (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366 and the printed version miss 'הוא'). Including the word in the citation is intended to indicate its subject - Israel. Thus too in the following saying quoting R. Aḥa b. Jacob, the word 'הוא'

(17) (MS Munich 95, MS Vatican 109, MS Oxford 366 and the printed version miss 'הוא') was cited once again to its subject – Israel.

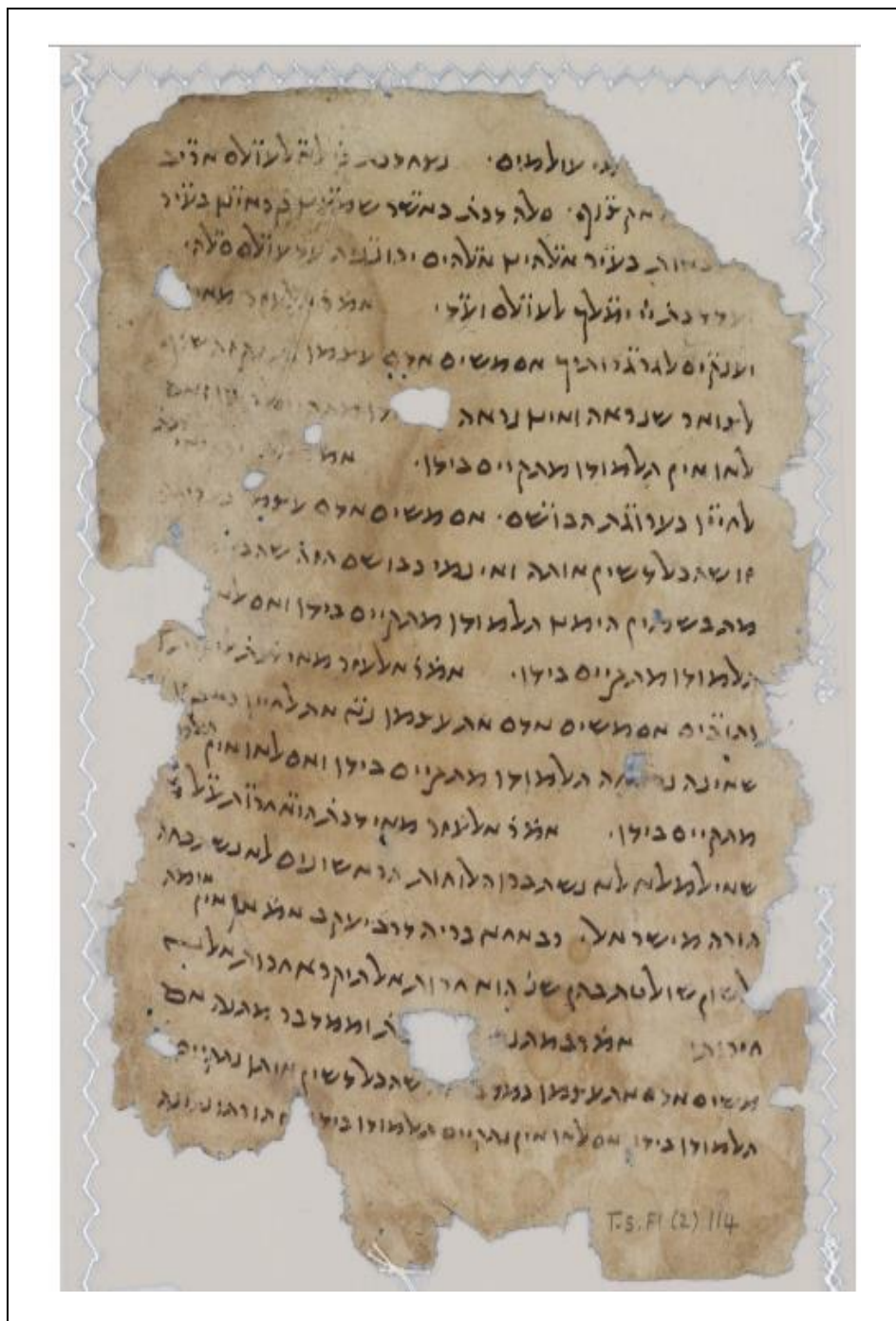


Figure 1. A Genizah fragment of Bavli Eruvin 54a.

The name of 'רב אחא בריה דרב יעקב' (16) in the fragment is a mistake, as all the other versions are uniform in the name they use for the *amora* [8, p. 276] – 'רב אחא בר יעקב' [9].

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