Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia

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מהתם להכא, from There to Here (*bSanh* 5a), Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia: An Introduction

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This collection of studies is about differences between the rabbinic Palestinian literature and its parallels in the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli). The fact that differences exist may be considered banal, and therefore it is legitimate to inquire why such a volume is at all necessary. To explain this it is helpful to note that a vast part of the Bavli comprises texts that have Palestinian parallels. These include citations of the Mishnah, of baraitot, and of sayings attributed to Palestinian sages up to the fourth century (which include biblical interpretation, midrash, as well as legal discussion, halakhah). Recently, scholars have even argued that Palestinian tractates form the foundation of Babylonian ones.[1] The reason for this enormous volume of Palestinian traditions which the Babylonians incorporated in their composition is likely their self-perception as being the heirs to this sacred canon. In a tradition formulated in extreme terms, the Babylonian rabbis convey the notion that they are responsible not only for the texts they composed in their own land after the Mishnah was published, but also that all the wealth of knowledge that was produced in Palestine between the biblical period and the publication of the Talmud would not have been possible without intensive Babylonian support: "In the beginning, when the Torah was forgotten from Israel, Ezra went up (to the Land of Israel) from Babylon and restored it. (When) it was again forgotten, Hillel the Babylonian went up and restored it. (When) it was again forgotten Rabbi Hiyya and his sons went up and restored it" (*bSuk* 20a). The ideology voiced in this tradition is that the entire rabbinic Palestinian corpus is in fact the Torah of Babylonia. This of course makes it authoritative for the Babylonians and worthy of citation in their own composition (the Bavli).

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* This volume began as a session in the International SBL meeting in Rome 2009. However, not all presenters in the session contributed to this volume and not all contributors to this volume participated in the session. The editors take this opportunity to thank Amram Tropper for reading the contributions of the non-English speakers and suggesting corrections. We are, of course, responsible for the final product and all its shortcomings.

1 A. M. Gray, *A Talmud in Exile: The Influence of Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah on the Formation of Bavli Avodah Zarah* (Providence RI 2005) 199.

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In addition, over the course of time, the Babylonians who composed the Bavli became convinced that not only is their knowledge the foundation of the Torah of the Land of Israel, but also that their interpretation of the Mishnah (the Bavli) is more authentic and divinely blessed than that of their Palestinian brethren (the Yerushalmi).[2] Historically speaking, this claim gained credence in Babylonian eyes as the Bavli triumphed over its Palestinian counterpart in becoming the most prominent canonical Jewish text.

1 Theorizing Diaspora

The Babylonian–Palestinian axis is a particular case of what was conceptualized in the last decades among scholars of cultural studies as "diaspora studies"; in fact, diaspora studies were constructed first and foremost with the Jewish case in mind,[3] though not necessarily the Palestinian–Babylonian example. Rather, the Jewish diaspora in Medieval through Modern times was in view.

When more than 150 people are declared a unified group, a tribe, a nation, we have an imagined community.[4] The imagined community, regardless of whether it was created because of political, economic or other reasons, drives or motivations, shares a narrative that serves as a basis for its self-definition as a group; this could be a story of a common ancestor, stories about shared events in the past, or a divine command. Throughout human history, the imagined community to which people belonged constantly grew in size. From a natural group of some 150, it grew to a few tens of thousands in a common ancient city (Babylon, Nippur), several hundreds of thousands in an ancient nation (Solomon's kingdom), or a few millions in an ancient empire (the Assyrian).

The importance of narrative in creating a sense of a unified group becomes very clear in cases of diaspora. Migrations happened, of course, throughout the history and prehistory of the human race, and groups of humans separated from their land of birth, migrated and intermixed with other groups

2 I. M. Gafni, *Land Center and Diaspora* (Sheffield 1997) 96–7; J. L. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore 2003) 159–60.

3 R. Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (2005) 1–19.

4 Scientists calculated that, up until this group size, people can know each other personally, and are therefore a "natural" group; for larger groups one need a story that will explain why a person belongs to the same group as people that he or she does not know and will probably never know; see D. S. Massey, "A Brief History of Human Society: The Origin and Role of Emotion in Social Life," *American Sociological Review* 67 (2002) 1–29; B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 2006—new edition); the concept of the "imagined community" is the major thesis of the book.

(or killed each other). For a migration to become a diaspora, a narrative is needed. According to Brubaker's balanced definition, being a diaspora means having the following three criteria: (1) dispersion in space, (2) orientation to a homeland, and (3) boundary maintenance of the group in the host country.[5] Aside from physical grounds such as skin color, and resistance to integration into the host-society's ways, a story of self-separation serves as a significant cultural tool for demarcation. This story usually involves cultural memory of the home-country, but the demarcation also entails continuing to use the original cultural canon that migrated with the people. All this holds true for the Jewish diaspora in Babylonia. If the second and third criteria mentioned above are not maintained, the group will assimilate into the local society within a few decades, with old customs being forgotten, and physical diversity being tolerated after some time.

Exile, or rather the contrast between Land and Exile, is part and parcel of the mega-narrative of the Deuteronomistic culture of the Hebrew Bible. It is part of the God–People–Land triangle as the following quotation shows:

> And now, Hear O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the ordinances, which I teach you, to do them; that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you (Deut 4:1).

The Deuteronomist here makes the connection between adhering to God's statutes and possessing the land. Later, he reveals what will happen if the Children of Israel should not adhere to his commandments:

> When you shall beget children, and children's children, and you shall have been long in the land, and shall deal corruptly, and make a graven image, even the form of anything, and shall do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, to provoke Him . . . the Lord shall scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the Lord shall lead you away (Deut 4:25–7).

Indeed, this is how the Bible explains the exile of the northern tribes in the time of Shalmaneser:

> And the king of Assyria carried Israel away to Assyria, and put them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, because they hearkened not to the voice of the Lord their God, but

5 Brubaker, "Diaspora," 5.

> transgressed His covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear it, nor do it (2Kgs 18:11–2).

Later on, this is how the Bible explains the exile of the Judeans, in the hand of Nebuzaradan, the army commander of Nebuchadnezzar:

> And he (Zedekiah) did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done . . . And the residue of the people that were left in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the residue of the multitude, did Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carry away captive. (2Kgs 24:19 and 25:11).

Regardless of what Shalmaneser thought when he exiled the northern tribes into Mesopotamia, or what Nebuchadnezzar thought when he brought the Judeans there, or what the rulers of the Roman or the Parthian empires thought when they allowed freedom of movement of Jews (and others) throughout the empire, the Jews knew for certain that their exile was a God-sent punishment, and that they were bound to return to their land when God saw fit. They therefore held to and developed the idea of keeping themselves as a separate group.

The awareness of, and the particular view on, the conditions of exile and return in Jewish culture made the Jews construct strategies and ideologies for dealing with their circumstances. These perspectives pronounced already in the biblical text, first and foremost in the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, who instructed the exiles of Judah how to behave in the host country:

> Thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, to all the captivity, whom I have caused to be carried away captive from Jerusalem unto Babylon: Build houses, and dwell in them, and plant gardens, and eat their fruit; take wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there, and be not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to God for it; for in its peace shall you have peace. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Let not your prophets that are in the midst of you, and your diviners, beguile you, neither hearken to your dreams which you dreamed, for they prophesy falsely in My name; I have not sent them, said the Lord (Jer 29:4–9).

The message of Jeremiah here is twofold. On the one hand, he calls the exiles to continue their physical and emotional existence to the best of their ability in

their host country, to participate in the country's economy (build houses), and to connect themselves emotionally to the new mother-land (pray for the well-being of the city of their dwelling). On the other hand, Jeremiah warns them against developing culturally on their own: no prophet from among the exiles should be heeded. This restriction asserts that the people in the diaspora will not be able to develop their own separate culture, and would therefore remain dependent on the original culture that had developed in their homeland and was brought with them when they came to their new home.

Perhaps the Jews followed Jeremiah's advice in the early period of their stay in Babylonia, but by the time we read about them in the Bavli, their view on diaspora and on themselves as carriers of authentic Jewish culture is certainly a turn away from the biblical instruction; their move challenges the idea of diaspora as a secondary place. Their assertiveness about their own culture, and the legitimacy of their creativity, found its expression in the vast literature embedded in the Bavli. How they managed the balance between the original holy cultural canon—one that should be taken authoritatively—and the new ideas they developed throughout their new homeland, is a complicated and sophisticated process. Here we will only dwell on one aspect among many ways of juggling cultural heritage. It has to do with the exegetical approach of Rabbi Aqiva.

In early Palestinian sources we know of two schools of rabbinic thought, the one of Rabbi Yishmael and the one of Rabbi Aqiva.[6] The major difference between the way they approached Scripture was that while Rabbi Yishmael interpreted difficulties in the biblical story in light of their literary context, assuming that "the Torah spoke in a language of humans" (*SifNum* 112), Rabbi Aqiva did not hesitate to deconstruct the texts of the Bible (to use the term anachronistically), identifying in banal texts obscurities which he interpreted as wholly meaningful. This method of Rabbi Aqiva opened up the Bible to extreme interpretation, at the price of losing some of the original meaning of the biblical narrative. However, this approach enabled the rabbis to keep the Bible as an unchanged canonical text, while interpreting it to fit their changing circumstances.[7]

The Yerushalmi kept the memory of the two schools of thought. In the Bavli, by contrast, Rabbi Yishmael's school is hardly mentioned, while Rabbi Aqiva,

6 See M. I. Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," in: S. Safrai, Z. Safrai, J. Schwartz, and P. J. Tomson (eds.), *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature* (Assen 2006) 3–105.

7 See description of the two schools in Kahana, "Halakhic Midrashim," 17–39.

and his method of interpretation, is highly honored, frequently used, and even developed further.[8] The freedom this approach provided the rabbis for dealing with the ancient sanctified, and therefore crystallized texts, found favor in the eyes of the Babylonians, and allowed them to maintain a balance between claims of authenticity and the introduction of necessary innovations.

2 A Brief History of Babylonian Jewry

As shown by many and summed up convincingly by I. Gafni, what we know about Babylonian Jewry between the return from the Babylonian Exile (end of the sixth century BCE) and up to the time when the Mishnah was edited and published (ca. 200 CE)—a period of almost a millennium—is next to nothing.[9] From around 200 CE, a wealth of information is provided by the Bavli, which, although a later composition, describes a reality and quotes scores of traditions from the third century onward. Thus, we know almost nothing about Jewish society in Babylonia prior to the infiltration of rabbinic culture into it, but we receive the impression that we know a lot about it once rabbinic Judaism became established in Babylonia. The Bavli describes, *inter alia*, a diaspora concentrated in many cities and villages in Mesopotamia, one which enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. It had its own leadership—the exilarchate, which functioned like a royal dynasty to all intents and purposes—and its own civil and criminal courts of law, which in extreme cases also administered capital punishment. And of course it also nurtured a wide network of study houses, all busy studying and interpreting the Mishnah, keeping in touch with each other, exchanging ideas and maintaining constant contact with the rabbinic study houses in Palestine through a number of traveling scholars (*nehutei*) who transmitted the most recent innovations from one center to another.

As time went by, a new self-perception of themselves developed among Babylonian rabbis, which included the assertion that they received their absolute halakhic authority together with the Mishnah, which was brought from Palestine by Rav (Abba Arikha). The latter had studied with Rabbi Yehudah

8 Kahana, "Halakhic Midrashim," 59–60.

9 I. M. Gafni, *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era: A Social and Cultural History* (Jerusalem 1990) 20–35 [Hebrew]; G. Herman, "The Jews of Parthian Babylonia," in: P. Wick and M. Zehnder (eds.), *The Parthian Empire and its Religions: Studies in the Dynamics of Religious Diversities* (Gutenburg 2012) 141–50.

Ha-Nasi, the father of the Mishnah, and in 219 CE returned to Babylonia and founded the rabbinic study houses where the Mishnah was interpreted.[10]

3 Scholarship on the Bavli and Yerushalmi Parallels

A significant amount of Palestinian material is included in the Bavli, and there are substantial differences between the way these texts appear in the Yerushalmi and other Palestinian sources and the way they are presented in the Bavli. These differences have interested scholars for decades and this volume is another link in the chain of scholarship. It takes into account dramatic shifts in recent scholarship of the Talmud and the influence these have had on the study and understanding of talmudic parallels, making the Bavli the focus of the discussion. The following is a general, and by no means comprehensive, overview of the scholarship on the issue. We concentrate here on two approaches to the question of Palestinian and Babylonian parallels—the historical and the literary—because we believe they demonstrate both the leaps scholarship has made since the middle of the 20th century, and how the gap between the two approaches, which at one time seemed unbridgeable, is slowly closing.

In order to demonstrate how attitudes to the way rabbinic texts should be read have changed over the years, we will look at one story that has repeatedly drawn scholarly attention, both because of its literary qualities, and because of its supposed historical significance. It relates the events that led to the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh (from what? patriarchate? head of the assembly? head of the law court? head of the *yeshivah*?) and the appointment of another sage, Eleazar ben Azariah, in his place. The story is related both in the Yerushalmi (*yBer* 4:1, 7d; cf. *yTaan* 4:1, 67d) and in the Bavli (*bBer* 27b–28a), making it ideal for the demonstration of the relationship between parallel sources in the two centers.

Here is the outline of the story as it is told in the Bavli (some interpretations having been inserted in the summarizing process):

1. **In the form of a tannaitic *baraita* in Hebrew:** Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehoshua differ on whether the evening prayer is obligatory or not. When this question is addressed publicly in the study house, Rabbi Yehoshua does not openly oppose Rabban Gamaliel's position. Nonetheless Rabban Gamaliel openly puts Rabbi Yehoshua to shame by forcing him to stand

10 On this foundational event, see Gafni, *Jews of Babylonia*, 31, 256.

while he himself sits and teaches. The people resent this and ask Hutspit the translator to stop [translating].

2. **In Aramaic:** This attitude of Rabban Gamaliel catalyzes a rebellion and his subsequent deposition. The position is then offered to Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, since he is wise, rich, and a tenth generation descendant of (the biblical) Ezra.
3. **In a mix of Hebrew Aramaic, tannaitic and amoraic:** As soon as Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah becomes the head of the Study House, the number of students rises significantly. The change occurs because of Rabban Gamaliel's strict rules of entry into the study house, according to which a student whose external and internal intentions are not equal is barred, are lifted.
4. **In Hebrew:** Rabban Gamaliel attends the study house as well, and on that day another halakhic debate arises between Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehoshua, on whether or not a converted Ammonite is allowed to join the congregation of Israel. Rabbi Yehoshua's opinion—to embrace the Ammonites—is accepted (cf. *mYad* 4:4).
5. **In Aramaic:** Rabban Gamaliel now decides to apologize to Rabbi Yehoshua, and goes to his house for this purpose. After some discussion, and when the honor of Rabban Gamaliel's house is invoked, Rabbi Yehoshua is appeased.
6. **In Aramaic:** First a messenger, and then Rabbi Yehoshua himself, come to the rabbis in the study house to inform them (in a form of a riddle) that Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehoshua have made peace, and that Rabban Gamaliel will now regain his position.
7. **In Hebrew:** The rabbis, represented by Rabbi Aqiva, fear Rabban Gamaliel and are reluctant to re-establish his authority, but consent when they realize that Rabbi Yehoshua has indeed been appeased,
8. **In Aramaic:** Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah willingly steps down from his position; still, he is not altogether demoted, but is appointed to preach once every four Shabbatot.
9. The Bavli adds here that the student (who started the whole sequence of events rolling) was Rabbi Shimeon ben Yohai.

The story in the Yerushalmi is different. It is much shorter, lacking many of the narrative details, but still presents a very lively and focused story. Some of the differences are relatively minor; for instance the figure mentioned in the Yerushalmi is Zenon the Cantor, whereas the Bavli refers to Hutzpit the Translator. There are, however, some more significant points of difference:

- In the Bavli Rabban Gamaliel himself provokes Rabbi Yehoshua by forcing him to either enter into a debate or retract what he had said earlier; in the Yerushalmi, while still putting Rabbi Yehoshua to shame, Rabban Gamaliel is not the one to provoke Rabbi Yehoshua—he "only" instructs the student to raise the question in the assembly house (בית הועד, not the study house, ישיבה, as in the Bavli).
- After the appointment of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah, in the Yerushalmi (but not the Bavli) Rabbi Aqiva becomes jealous, pointing out the fact that Rabbi Eleazar was chosen instead of him not because of his better scholarship, but because of his lineage.
- In the Bavli, Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehushua quarrel over the conversion of an Ammonite, and later Rabban Gamaliel visits Rabbi Yeshoshua in order to appease him. By contrast, in the Yerushalmi, the story of the Ammonite comvert is missing altogether, and Rabban Gamaliel visits all his students in order to appease them.
- In the Yerushalmi it is Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah who asks whether Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehoshua have made up, and not Rabbi Aqiva, as in the Bavli.[11]
- In the Bavli an arrangement is described, according to which Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah preach on alternating Shabbatot. In the Yerushalmi, there is no such arrangement, and after being demoted, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah is appointed head of the court.
- This story will accompany us as we move through the various stages of Bavli–Yerushalmi scholarship.

In the 19th and first half of the 20th century, scholars used the differences between the Babylonian Talmud and its Palestinian *Vorlage* in order to explain the latter. In other words, if the Palestinian text displayed difficulties, scholars believed that the explanations supplied by the Bavli were the ones intended by the original authors of the texts.[12] In his article, "Status and Leadership in

11 The different role assigned to Rabbi Aqiva in the Bavli in comparison to the Yerushalmi is interesting, but there is no room here to study it; apparently it has to do with the Babylonian favoritism of Rabbi Aqiva, an issue that still has to be further studied.

12 On this story see e.g. H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* vol. 2 (Philadelphia 1956 [English translation—the original German was composed in the 1850s]) 338–40; J. H. Weiss, *dor dor ve-dorshav* vol. 2 (Vilna 1904) 80–9 [Hebrew]; I. Halevy, *dorot ha-rishonim* vol. 2 (Vienna 1923) 313–39 [Hebrew]; G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age* vol. 1 (Tel Aviv 1954) 319–22.

the World of the Palestinian Sages," E. E. Urbach discussed the story of the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel in some detail. How he did this, and how he used the various sources at his disposal demonstrates the premise that was widely accepted by scholars up to the 1970s. First he states that

> the stories concerning the clashes between Rabban Gamaliel and R. Yehoshua ben Hananiah and R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus testify to the intensification of the struggle between divergent principles: The freedom of halakhic decision against the claim on the part of the Patriarch to the right of supervision and organization, that is, the concept of the Patriarch's jurisdiction as national leader—as an authority independent of the Sanhedrin—in opposition to the view of the Sages who did not consider that the Patriarch enjoyed a special status, but regarded him as the head of the *Beth Din* from which he derived his authority.[13]

If we analyze what Urbach wrote here we see first of all that he reads our story together with other stories, both those told about Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gamaliel and those told about Rabbi Eliezer and Rabban Gamaliel, as deriving from the same sort of source and as describing the same historical situation (in this instance Urbach does not even cite the sources that support his assertion, perhaps assuming that they are so well known that no reference is necessary). In the next lines he cites Rabban Gamaliel's attitude toward students based on our story in the Bavli ("a student whose external and internal intentions are not equal should not study"—no. 3 in the summary above) but instead gives examples of confrontations between Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Aqiva, citing three separate Tosefta traditions and one from the Yerushalmi. Then, Urbach describes the actual deposition, not bothering to state whether he is basing his description on the Bavli or on the Yerushalmi. Then he describes the sage chosen to replace Rabban Gamaliel, based on the Bavli's description that he was both rich and wise and one of exalted lineage (unlike the Yerushalmi description, which emphasizes lineage only—see no. 2 in the summary above) without stating this clearly and without explaining why the Bavli's description should be preferred. Urbach continues to paraphrase the story of the deposition and reinstatement of Rabban Gamaliel, suggesting motives for this reversal of policy ("A decisive factor in the matter, doubtless, was the consideration that any weakening of the Patriarch's position held the danger of weakening the authority of the *Beth Din* and of the entire Centre [obviously the center at

13 E. E. Urbach, *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem 1999) 456, based on a Hebrew article first published in 1966.

Yavneh is intended—Eds.] which still lacked stability . . ." p. 457) and bolstering his arguments on the basis of a mixture of Mishnah, Tosefta and Yerushalmi passages. Only when he arrives at the end of the story does Urbach concede that the Bavli and Yerushalmi do not quite agree one with the other. He writes: "According to the Babylonian Talmud, R. Eleazar b. Azaryah continued to lecture once every third Sabbath, and according to the Palestinian Talmud he remained the *Av Beth Din*" (see in text above, under no. 8 and the summary of the Yerushalmi). However, he refrains from explaining why there is a difference between the two sources, and to what institution or institutions they are referring. He ends his short description of the event by stating that Rabbi Eliezer refused to accept the settlement the rabbis reached with Rabban Gamaliel and was, therefore, eventually excommunicated by the rabbis. In a footnote, Urbach refers to a tradition in the Yerushalmi (*yMQ* 3:1, 81c) and to two in the Bavli (*bBM* 59b; *bSanh* 68a) which describe a conflict between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabban Gamaliel, without explaining the difference between them or without explaining why he thinks that, chronologically, the events they describe post-dated the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel that he read in other sources embedded in the same compositions—the Bavli and the Yerushalmi.

Little has to be added to this description to make it abundantly clear that scholars do not read rabbinic texts like this anymore.[14] Only six years after this article by Urbach was published, a completely different treatment of these parallel traditions was published by Robert Goldenberg in the *Journal of Jewish Studies*. In order to understand the revolution that was underway during these years, and which eventually produced Goldenberg's article, we must make a small detour.

The father of this revolution was Jacob Neusner. Between his book *A Life of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai* (Leiden 1962), which was a conventional rabbinic biography, telling the history of a sage based on stories told of him in a jumble of rabbinic source, and his other book on the same sage, *Development of a Legend* (Leiden 1970), in which he denied any possibility to write such a biography, Neusner broke faith with all he had known about how one reads rabbinic texts. It was Neusner who firmly informed us that rabbinic traditions had authors, audiences and a *Sitz im Leben*, and that they are hardly a faithful historical record of events they purport to report. It was he who taught us that the Bavli does not fill in where the Yerushalmi is unclear, for there is no reason that its authors knew better than we do what the Yerushalmi had omitted

14 See also L. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud* vol. 3 (New York 1971) 174–220 [Hebrew], who interprets the story in the Yerushalmi completely in light of the Bavli.

or corrupted.[15] Baraitot—i.e. earlier authoritative Palestinian traditions embedded in the Bavli—according to Neusner are, unless proven otherwise, most probably pseudepigraphic Babylonian compositions. Parallel traditions should be studied side by side *synoptically*, not in order to see how they complement one another, but rather in order to mark the differences between them. Synopsis, a tool taken over from Christian Gospel studies, became a key word in Neusner's studies.

Goldenberg's article is all about synopsis. He first presents the two stories about the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel one after the other, highlighting their literary character. About the Yerushalmi story he concludes that, aside from interpolations and additions, it is probably composed of two original strands—one that reported events associated with Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Yehoshua (nos. 1 and 5 in the summary of the Bavli above), and one that reported events associated with Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah (nos. 2, 3 and 8 in the Bavli summary above). This conclusion is reached because nowhere in the entire text is there any interaction between Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah and Rabbi Yehoshua, and Goldenberg claims that each story could, under certain circumstances, stand alone. He also distinguished between the languages used in the composition, singling Aramaic out as the redactor's language, and texts composed in it as late. Thus he concludes regarding the chronological context of the Yerushalmi version that

> the central interest of the account is political. It revolves around the presidency over the Rabbinic gathering and who might legitimately exercise it . . . From the time of Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, the hold of the Hillelite dynasty on the Patriarchate was secure. Political issues would thereafter have naturally shifted to other issues. The main story seems therefore to antedate the ascendancy of Judah the Patriarch *ca*. 185 C.E.[16]

Next he presents the Bavli version, characterizing it by stating that "here the Rabbis are described as acting exclusively in Joshua's interest [no. 7 in the above text—Eds.] . . . This change reduces the political aspect of the narrative, and turns it into a story about a personal dispute."[17] The bulk of the

15 Actually this is an extreme formulation. For a recent attempt to explain a difficult word in the Yerushalmi in light of its Bavli parallel, see A. Amit, "On the Contribution of the Comparison of the BT and the PT to Lexicography: אגיסטון and האסטו," *Lešonenu* 72 (2010) 135–53 [Hebrew].

16 R. Goldenberg, "The Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel II: An Examination of the Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972) 171.

17 Goldenberg, "Deposition," 175.

article, however, is the synopsis. He divides the story into several parts and discusses the Yerushalmi and Bavli versions. His discussion of the first part is very promising, since he begins by stating categorically: "These tables leave no doubt as to show how the . . . sources are related. In only one case . . . is it even remotely possible that the PT is an expansion of the BT."[18] This claim suggests that the author wishes to show us in which direction the story was altered and argues that the Bavli reworked the Yerushalmi. This, in the final analysis is the direction research of parallels has gone since Neusner's days. However, the rest of the article somehow melts into insignificant, self-evident differences, and when a conclusion is sought, more in the realm of literary and source criticism than in any historical context, we learn that in fact the scholar wishes to show us what he considers the "historical kernel" of the story. He concludes:

> Taking the whole evidence into consideration, we may conclude that some serious disturbance interrupted the period of Raban Gamaliel's leadership. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the three central characters—the Hillelite Gamaliel, the priest Eleazar and Yohanan ben Zakkai's disciple Joshua—represent three of the major political factions of the early post-Destruction period. It is highly plausible that an intense power-struggle should have revolved around these men.[19]

One may well ask if analyzing the Bavli version of the story has added anything to this conclusion. Certainly, nothing is stated here about the significance of Babylonia as the location where the alterations were carried out.

The reason why Neusner, who was a declared historian of Jewish Babylonia, having produced a five-volume study of it,[20] and his student Goldenberg were not able to utilize their analysis of the texts to arrive at meaningful conclusions on the reasons for the differences between the two versions, is the fact that Neusner was a student of the historical school whose methodological approach was described above. Neusner was able to see through the fallacies of the methodology he had been taught, and abandon it, but was not yet able to reconstruct something historically meaningful instead.[21]

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18 Goldenberg, "Deposition," 179.

19 Goldenberg, "Deposition," 190.

20 J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews of Babylonia* (Leiden 1965–70; 5 volumes).

21 Another of Neusner's students who wrote on this episode is David Goodblatt. See D. Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle* (Tübingen 1994) 253, though he only referred to it as part of a general discussion of the leadership in Palestine, and uses this story to dismiss the Babylonian evidence.

Aside from Neusner's synoptic approach, which undermined the way historians had read these texts, the 1960s and 70s saw an attack on the historical approach from another angle. The chief representative of this approach was the literary scholar, Yonah Fraenkel. This scholar argued that, regardless of who the rabbis were, about whom rabbinic stories are told, or the supposed historical background against which they are told, the rabbis who composed rabbinic literature never wrote history. They wrote literature. They created small literary units which are stylistically and linguistically formulated, each self-contained in a world of its own. And this world is that of the rabbinic academy. The rabbis told these stories about themselves for themselves.[22] Reading them one with the other, or against a common background, is to do damage to the literary integrity of the text. Fraenkel would rather ignore the existence of parallels and read each story as a separate composition. Or as put by Hillel Newman: "While Fraenkel nowhere explicitly objects to the trend of current scholarship to seek out and underscore the social and cultural distinctions between the Jews of Babylonia and Palestine as reflected in the stories of the two talmudim . . . neither does he express much interest in such inquiry. This is probably a result . . . of his methodological insistence on 'closure' of the rabbinic story."[23] Time and again Fraenkel demonstrated his methodology, but he never employed the story of the deposition of Rabban Gamaliel for this purpose, even though there is hardly a more fitting composition against which to test the rabbis' attitude to their study house and the relations therein.

Not so long ago (2004), however, a student of Fraenkel, J. Klikstein, published an article on this episode from a purely literary point of view.[24] His approach demonstrates nicely the kind of message Fraenkel instilled in his students, for he begins by stating: "From a historical point of view it is possible to derive much material on the spiritual—and perhaps even political—leadership in the period after the destruction of the Temple . . . The existence of the story in the Yerushalmi has encouraged scholars to attempt tracing customs of Babylonia and the Land of Israel concerning the laws of the study

22 We use Hillel I. Newman's review article on Fraenkel to describe his work, see H. I. Newman, "Closing the Circle: Yonah Fraenkel, the Talmudic Story and Rabbinic History," in: M. Kraus (ed.), *How Should Rabbinic Literature be Read in the Modern World?* (Piscataway NJ 2006) 118.

23 Newman, "Closing the Circle," 112. For an example of how Fraenkel discusses parallel stories, in order to argue that the fact that they are parallels is literarily unimportant, see J. Fraenkel, "Hermeneutic Problems in the Study of the Aggadic Narrative," *Tarbiz* 47 (1978) 139–72 [Hebrew], esp. pp. 146–57.

24 J. Klikstein, "The Deposition of Rabban Gamaliel from his Presidency," *Shma'atin* 156 (2004) 110–34 [Hebrew].

house, as reflected in the analysis and comparison between the two stories."[25] Immediately following these words, however, the author assures us that this is not his scholarly project, for he writes: "In this article we do not deal with the historical aspects. We shall analyze this aggadah in order to learn what lessons it was bent on teaching. This study will be based on an analysis of the structure of the story and its composition." Klikstein's loyalty to Fraenkel's lesson begins by his refusal even to look at the Yerushalmi version, while analyzing its Bavli counterpart. The scholar shows compositional elements found in the story, based on linguistic repetitions (like the use of עמוד—"stand"—both for Rabban Gamaliel's punishment of Rabbi Yehoshua and for the commandment to Hutspit the Translator to cease translating—both under no. 1 in the text above), and explains how each part of the story functions together with the other (for example, how the first part of the story describes the study house of Rabban Gamaliel [nos. 1 and 2 in the Bavli summary above] and the second part, that of Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah [nos. 3 and 4 in the Bavli summary above] and how they can be compared one to the other, almost element for element.[26] This sort of literary analysis is employed in order to present the psychology of the characters involved and to convey a clear didactic message. The story is told as a whole, in the words of Klikstein, in order to demonstrate that "paradoxical as it may appear, it was precisely on the day that all those students 'whose external and internal intentions are not equal' were allowed in that the best study results were achieved . . . It follows that the results produced by the study house are not a direct function of the quality and level of students. The number of students has its own power, which is translated into academic results. The good students were not required to compromise as a result of integration in the study house. On the contrary, the added value for the study house as a result of the opening of its doors to all students had a good influence on the choice ones."[27]

Yet, as Newman showed regarding Fraenkel himself,[28] Klikstein too assumes some *a priori* historical information acknowledged by the reader when approaching this story. Thus he writes: "We are dealing with Rabban Gamaliel II, namely Rabban Gamaliel of Yavneh. The people of Israel have just undergone a traumatic crisis—the destruction of the Temple . . . [T]he Sanhedrin which instructed all of Israel goes into a series of ten exiles and loses its status

25 Klikstein, "Deposition," 110.

26 Klikstein, "Deposition," 118, 128.

27 Klikstein, "Deposition," 129.

28 Newman, "Closing the Circle," 121.

and authority . . ."[29] In other words, despite his disavowal of any interest in the historical value of the story, Klikstein takes a certain historical background for granted. This is important because it shows how, even when doing their best to avoid any historical reference, the truth is that scholars of literature cannot really do without it. Yet, unlike the discerning historian, the literary critic takes for granted historical information (like the existence of a Sanhedrin) that is neither mentioned in the story, nor accepted unquestioningly by historians.

Thus, closest to the goal of the present volume comes the article published more than a decade ago by the historian Haim Shapira. Dealing with the very story we have been discussing, Shapira, using both the synoptic and literary approaches, deconstructs the two versions of the story, inquires where, when, and why they were composed, and explains the differences between the Yerushalmi and the Bavli versions on the basis of their different historical and cultural backgrounds.

Shapira begins by stating categorically that the story is not tannaitic. It contains references to tannaitic stories and tannaitic sources (the ones described above as in Hebrew and tannaitic), but it does not, in and of itself, contain a tannaitic kernel, and therefore reflects no specific historical event that took place in the tannaitic period.[30] Shapira claims that the focus of the Yerushalmi version of the story is the political question whether a Nasi of the House of Hillel may be deposed, and the negative answer provided suggests a time when the patriarchate was firmly established, while being strongly criticized by the rabbis. He suggests the third century, under the sage Rabbi Yohanan and the Patriarch Rabbi Yudan Nasia, as just such a time, and claims this would be the period when such a story would have been told.[31]

When he turns to the Bavli version, Shapira claims that the story the Babylonian editors had before their eyes was similar to the one we find in the Yerushalmi and that the differences between them derive from one of three sorts of alterations the editors made: (1) alterations based on literary considerations; (2) additional tannaitic sources; (3) alterations made based on the influence of a Babylonian context.[32] Since the last of the three is the one that most interests us, let us observe what Shapira understood as Babylonian influence. First, he identifies the leadership role that is disputed in the text as described differently from its Palestinian counterpart. While in the Yerushalmi the leadership is political, the Babylonians present it as the position of head of the

29 Klikstein, "Deposition," 122.

30 Shapira, "Deposition," 13–4.

31 Shapira, "Deposition," 19–23.

32 Shapira, "Deposition," 30.

yeshivah ("Would the master accept to become head of the *yeshivah*?"—no. 2 in the Bavli summary above).[33] Secondly, Shapira claims that the fear Rabbi Aqiva expresses of Rabban Gamaliel's servants (no. 7 in the text above) reflects the relationship between the exilarch and the rabbis in Babylonia, rather than anything Palestinian.[34] Thirdly, Shapira interprets the different outcome of the story as deriving from the Babylonian setting of the *yeshivah* (no. 8 in the summary above and the Yerushalmi summary). The preaching that Eleazar Ben Azariah is allowed once every three weeks is the famous Babylonian *pirqa* in their *yeshivot*.[35] Finally, Shapira points to the image of the doorkeeper, and of the limited accessibility to the study house (no. 3, in the Bavli summary above: "A student whose external and internal intentions are not equal should not enter the study house") as typically Babylonian, the latter statement even assigned to Rava elsewhere in the Bavli (*bYom* 72b). He concludes that the Babylonian story displays Babylonian rabbis and their concerns *vis à vis* the head of the *yeshivah* in the 4th century.

Jeffrey Rubenstein, in his book *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, blends his discussion of this story into a chapter on the elitism of the Babylonian rabbis. He does not conduct a long analysis of this story and its comparison with the Yerushalmi version, for in this book, only the end-product, as it appears in the Bavli, is of interest to him, and he uses what he concluded from this story, together with the conclusions derived from many other stories, in order to draw a picture of Babylonian rabbinic society, based on clearly Babylonian presentations of themselves, and on the Babylonian changes that were introduced into Palestinian stories. His conclusion in this chapter is: "The sages perhaps perceived their academic world of Torah study as increasingly professionalized, elitist, and isolated from the general population. As a result, non-rabbis outside of the academy were viewed as 'Others' and even included with other categories of 'Others'—slaves, gentiles, and animals."[36] Yet in his discussion of our story he basically accepts Shapira's observations, for he writes: "The story thus contains an internal debate concerning the merits of limiting access to the academy. While the storytellers ultimately reject Rabban Gamaliel's restrictive policy, the internal debate and the motivation for the story suggest that some sages—perhaps the leadership of the academy itself—thought that the academy should be closed to outsiders."[37] That Rubenstein agrees with Shapira's

33 Shapira, "Deposition," 31.

34 Shapira, "Deposition," 31–2.

35 Shapira, "Deposition," 32–3.

36 Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 141.

37 Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 140.

conclusions is significant, because this story actually contradicts the thesis he is promoting in this chapter.

Elsewhere, Rubenstein acknowledges his debt to Fraenkel's enormous contribution to the literary study of talmudic stories by stating: "Fraenkel must be acclaimed for the scope of his work, the depth of his analysis, and his success in defining and describing the literary characteristics of the rabbinic story."[38] Yet several pages later he goes beyond Fraenkel's approach by stating: "Stories embedded in the BT should be considered in relation to talmudic halakhah in general, as well as with the particular halakhot to which they are juxtaposed—which brings us back to the immediate literary context. These considerations contest the view of talmudic stories as closed and self-contained texts."[39] In his first book, *Talmudic Stories*, Rubenstein analyzed talmudic stories according to the principles outlined by Fraenkel, while also adding the context element just outlined. In his second book, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* he analyzes our story. Here he goes a step further and uses the central messages he identifies in the stories he analyzes in order to describe and assess the rabbinic values and culture in which these stories were composed. Thus, from a pure literary critic, Rubenstein has become a cultural historian.

From our point of view, what is interesting to note is that all three major analyses of the story we are following since the 1990s have come to the same conclusions about its message. Klikstein, the literary critique, concluded that the message of the story is didactic. He thinks the story promoted egalitarian education, criticizing elitism. Shapira, the historian, agreed, claiming that this is a reflection of a historical debate in the Babylonian academies of the fourth century. Even Rubenstein, whose main thesis is that the Babylonian rabbis who told these stories (the *stammaim* of the 5th–6th centuries in his opinion) were elitists, who thought the academy should not allow within its walls "A student whose external and internal intentions are not equal," agrees that our story's main message is a criticism of this approach. All that is left is to agree with Newman's assessment that "our two heroes, the historian and the literary critic, had difficulty finding a common language. Yet increasingly the methodological boundaries separating the two disciplines are becoming less distinct. Historians are conceding the significance of the literary components of rabbinic literature; literary criticism is rediscovering the importance of context, including historical context."[40]

38 Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition and Structure* (Baltimore 1999) 10.

39 Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, 15.

40 Newman, "Closing the Circle," 133.

4 Post-Amoraic Contact between Palestine and Babylonia

The Babylonian acceptance of Palestinian rabbinic authority lasted throughout the amoraic period. Yet, as we have already intimated, the two centers were different to begin with, regarding customs, lifestyles, even language. During the amoraic period, when constant contact between the centers was maintained, an effort was invested in keeping halakhah in both centers common—not necessarily unified, but accommodating both its Palestinian and its Babylonian versions. Throughout the fifth century, however, communication between the two centers became increasingly sporadic, and both centers continued to develop independently.

The Jews in the Land of Israel suffered greatly under the pagan Romans and even more under the decrees of the Christian Byzantine authorities. After the death of Rabban Gamaliel VI, the office of Nasi was abolished (425 CE). Nonetheless, Jewish culture continued to flourish in Palestine, as is apparent from archeological evidence (synagogues and amulets) and literary activity (aggadah, *piyyut*, apocalyptic and *hekhalot* literature, as well as halakhah).[41] While the second half of the first millennium witnessed a huge upsurge of aggadah and *piyyut*, less is known about the development of the halakhah of Eretz Israel after the Yerushalmi was edited. It is obvious that halakhic activity did take place there, especially in Tiberias, but Eretz Israel suffered a decline, relative to its dominance in the first half of the first millennium.[42]

In Babylonia, with the exception of magic bowls, the only literary and intellectual source known to us today from the end of Late Antiquity is the Bavli, which in spite of being of an encyclopedic nature, is oriented toward halakhah.

Based on David Weiss-Halivni's intensive study of the Bavli, it is now a scholarly consensus that its main text was created by the *stammaim* (meaning "anonymous"), a term coined by Halivni for the authors of the anonymous give-and-take added to discussions of the amoraim. According to Halivni, the early *stammaim* (mid-fifth century) could still reconstruct the original halakhic give-and-take, based on remembered oral traditions. Toward the end of the period (8th century) stammaitic editorial work was founded more on the initiative of these scholars. Halivni goes on to argue that by the end of the talmudic period, the *savoraim*, the very last rabbis of the stammaitic period,

41 See now H. I. Newman, *The Ma'asim of the People of the Land of Israel: Halakhah and History in Byzantine Palestine* (Jerusalem 2011) 1–119 [Hebrew].

42 Newman, *Ma'asim*, 10.

added short editorial remarks to the text of the Bavli, which was by then almost in its final form. The very last layer of the Bavli was added in the Gaonic period.[43]

The situation with regard to the aggadic material in the Bavli is slightly different. The aggadah is less authoritative, less accurate in its transmission, not always attributed to a rabbi even in the early periods, and not limited to one inference from one verse;[44] much aggadah was also written earlier than the talmudic text of the Bavli.[45]

The period during which contact was scarce between the centers in Babylonian and the Land of Israel lasted at the most 200 years (5th to 7th centuries). Although the halakhah was basically the same in the two Jewish cultures, the differences that developed in this period are highly meaningful because of the all-encompassing and exclusive nature of halakhah. Palestinian halakhah was prominent, aside from the Land of Israel, also in other parts of the Byzantine Empire, and later in Ashkenaz.[46] In the 10th–12th centuries, the Bavli became prominent not just in the Muslim countries but also in the Jewish communities of Europe. The image of the halakhically weak Palestinian sages came into vogue as part of the promotion of the Bavli.[47]

But what about the Land of Israel itself? Scholars usually maintain, quite vehemently, that Jewish literature from Eretz Israel does not exhibit any influence of the Babylonian culture or of the Bavli.[48] This attitude is surprising, since some contact between the two centers did exist throughout the period under discussion, and the wave of Babylonian immigrants to the Land of Israel increased dramatically once it was conquered by the Muslims

43 D. Halivni, *Introduction to "Sources and Traditions": Studies in the Formation of the Talmud* (Jerusalem 2009) 3–8 [Hebrew].

44 On this concept see the contribution to the present volume by D. Brodsky, pp. 188–250.

45 Halivni, *Introduction*, 141–3.

46 See e.g. M. Gil, "Between Two Worlds: The Connections between Babylonia and the Communities in Europe," in: Daniel Carpi et al. (eds.), *Shlomo Simonsohn Jubilee Volume: Studies of the History of the Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Period* (Tel-Aviv 1993) 45–52 [Hebrew]; I. M. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature, Volume 3: Italy and Byzantium* (Jerusalem 2005) 232; Newman, *Ma'asim*, 19, 117; but see A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz: Their Lives, Leadership and Works* (*900–1096*) (Jerusalem 2001) 426–7 [Hebrew], who restricts this influence to Jews of Italian origin, in contrast to the Jews in France who came from Spain.

47 R. Bonfil, "Between Eretz Israel and Babylonia: Contribution to the Study of the Culture of the Jews in South Italy and in Christian Europe in the Early Middle-Ages," *Shalem: Studies in the History of the Jews in Eretz Israel* 5 (1987) 14; Ta-Shma, *Studies*, 231–7.

48 See Newman, *Ma'asim*, 46 in the footnotes, referring to the scholarly discussions about evidence of Babylonian influence on liturgy and Torah reading.

(mid-7th century) and both centers were part of the same empire. We know (from Genizah documents) that communities of rabbinic Babylonians were present in various cities of Palestine.[49]

It seems that research has not yet begun discussing the question of Babylonian influence on Palestinian Jewish culture of the Byzantine period. Most of the research is still busy identifying and defining the unique Palestinian culture which had been hidden away until the discovery of the Genizah.[50] Thus, when Babylonian influence is recognized, it is usually discarded as a late interpolation. The present volume suggests, however, that it is now the right time to begin taking this topic more seriously. Historically, we should probably talk about Palestinian resistance to Babylonian culture more than about a lack of acquaintance with it, and Babylonian influences can certainly be clearly identified. Some of the contributions in this book begin to do exactly this.

5 This Book

5.1 *Internal Development*

Jeffrey Rubenstein is one of the recent scholars whose approach to the Bavli and to its reworking of Palestinian sources is the same as that adopted by several of our contributors to this volume.[51] His approach—which suggests that

49 J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs: A Contribution to their Political and Communal History Based Chiefly on Genizah Material hitherto Unpublished* (London etc. 1920) 148–50. Mann states (p. 171): "That Palestine had a considerable number of Babylonian Jews already in the eighth century can be gathered from an interesting Halakhic fragment in *Geonica* II (see *J.Q.R.*, N.S., VII, 474). We have also seen above (p. 148) that Ramlah possessed a כנסת אלשאמיין, presupposing a 'synagogue of the "Babylonians" with s at the end.' Also Tiberias probably had two such congregations and likewise Damascus (above, pp. 150, 167)." See also: M. Margalioth, *The Halakha of the Land of Israel from the Geniza, with Introductions, Notes, Commentaries, and Reference*, Compiled by I. M. Ta-Shma (Jerusalem 1973) 8; A. Grossman, *The Early Sages* 433; *idem*, "The Yeshiva of Eretz Israel, its Spiritual Work and the Affinity to It," in: Y. Prawer (ed.), *The History of Jerusalem, Early Islamic Period* (*638–1099*) (Jerusalem 1987) 191.

50 Newman, *Ma'asim*, 9.

51 See also a representative sample: S. Safrai, "The Tales of the Sages in Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud," in: J. Heinemann and D. Noy (eds.), *Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature* (Scripta Hierosolymitana 22; Jerusalem 1971) 209–32; D. Goodblatt, "The Beruriah Traditions," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 26 (1975) 68–85; S. J. D. Cohen, "The Conversion of Antoninus," in: P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture* vol. 1 (Tübingen 1997) 140–71; C. E. Hayes, *Between Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds: Accounting for Halakhic Difference in Selected Sugyot from Tractate Avodah*

if a phenomenon is present often enough in the reworked Palestinian texts of the Bavli, but absent from the same texts in their original setting, this reflects a Babylonian phenomenon—serves as a starting point for the discussion of the articles presented in this volume.

Shamma Friedman discusses a number of tannaitic traditions about magic in which important tannaim are involved in studying the legal status of sorcerers and the way to combat sorcery. He demonstrates from these stories, which view magic negatively, that the Yerushalmi, and even more so the Bavli, transform the rabbis involved first into experts in magic itself and then into powerful magicians. From this Friedman concludes that in Babylonia magic was to a far greater extent incorporated into, and tolerated by, rabbinic culture than in Palestine. This assertion is implicit in the words of the Bavli, which purports to describe the Palestinian tanna, Rabbi Eliezer as a great magician.

Moshe Lavee shows how Palestinian traditions about conversion into Judaism are systematically and tendentiously reworked in the Bavli so that it is made more difficult (from a halakhic perspective), and at the same time is looked upon negatively (in narratives on conversion). The Babylonians present these alterations as authentic Palestinian halakhah. Lavee suggests that the Babylonians here are implicitly referring to their own culture, in which they tried to discourage conversion to Judaism.

There are only a handful of Palestinian sources that describe and discuss Babylonia and Babylonians. It is of special interest, therefore, to see how these traditions are adopted and reworked by the Babylonians because these are obviously cases where the latter know much more about the subject matter than their Palestinian counterparts. We may assume that when they make alterations they are explicitly (in this case) presenting their view of themselves. Geoffrey Herman discusses just such a tradition. In a story told in the Yerushalmi about tannaim who travel to Arsacid Babylonia, the local Babylonians are described as wicked and violent hosts. The Bavli chooses to reproduce the Palestinian story, but in its version the Babylonians are substituted for Nehardeans, members of the exilarch's court, transforming the story into one about internal Babylonian strife, and the wicked Babylonians become specific Babylonians who are wicked. The Babylonian point of view here is not

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Zarah (Oxford 1997); R. Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society in Late Antiquity* (New York 1999) 27–79 and see his other books as well; S. Friedman, "The Further Adventures of Rav Kahana: Between Babylonia and Palestine," in: P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Greco-Roman Culture* vol. 3 (Tübingen 2002) 247–71; T. Ilan, "Stolen Water is Sweet: Women and their Stories between Bavli and Yerushalmi" in: *ibid*., 185–223; Gray, *Talmud in Exile*, esp. 199–234.

necessarily historically more accurate, since the Palestinians tell of their contemporary Arsacid dynasty, and the Babylonians, who rework this story, live under Sasanian domination. The Babylonians' version of the story thus reflects their own understanding of their own culture.

Martyrdom is the topic of the next contribution to this volume. Christiane Tzuberi shows how the Bavli faithfully quotes the Palestinian halakhic sources on martyrdom, which claim that a person should always die rather than transgress commandments against bloodshed, sexual immorality, and idolatry, and in times of religious persecutions, should die rather than transgress any commandment. Tzuberi shows how the Bavli then elegantly overturns this halakhah so as to claim that one may transgress any commandment rather than die. They do this in a short midrash on the actions of Queen Esther, who saves herself and her people by committing sexual transgression.

The book of Esther was indeed of major significance for the Babylonian rabbis, as can be seen from the fact that it is the only biblical book on which an entire verse-for-verse midrash was composed in the Bavli (*bMeg* 11a–17a), which usually quotes most of its midrashim from collections of Palestinian origin. The prominence of the Esther story in the eastern provinces is also evident from its appearance among the frescoes of the Dura Europos synagogue.[52] This should come as no surprise, because the events recounted in the book of Esther take place in a Persian setting under a Persian monarchy, a situation similar to the one current in the Babylonian rabbis' time and well known to them.

"Heroizing" local figures in a diasporic setup is a known phenomenon in Jewish history down to the present. It is found, for example, in the way Joseph was "lionized" in Jewish Hellenistic Egypt, as is evident from books like Joseph and Aseneth, the Testament of Joseph, Philo, and a composition quoted by Josephus.[53] More recent examples may include the way Moses Mendelssohn is admired and idolized among German Jews in Berlin or Spinoza among Dutch Jews to this day.[54] Perhaps more relevant in this context is the way the Palestinian Talmud was revived and revered among scholars of Talmud

52 In contrast to Qumran, where Esther is not found at all. On the Dura Europos frescoes see e.g. K. Weitzmann and H. L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington 1990) 114–7.

53 On the last two see e.g. M. Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Leiden 1992).

54 The editors of this volume are the source for this observation. Ronit Nikolsky teaches Jewish Studies in Groningen, Netherlands, and Tal Ilan teaches Jewish Studies in Berlin, Germany.

in the modern State of Israel. Thus, scholars like Saul Lieberman and Yaacov Sussmann devoted their major academic output to this composition and its superior linguistic and literary qualities.[55] Joshua Efron even declared it a historical source far superior to the Bavli.[56]

The use of the book of Esther is a definite marker of a Babylonian point of view, and therefore it is not surprising to find it used to counter the Palestinian halakhah on martyrdom as demonstrated in Tzuberi's article. The book of Esther is also the focus of Amram Tropper's article. Tropper reads two Palestinian traditions and their transformation in the Bavli. Although the book of Esther is mentioned already in the tannaitic source (*tSot* 7:7), its use is so drastically transformed in the Bavli, that with it, the Babylonians deny any validity to the Torah before it was willingly accepted by the Jews in the time of Mordechai and Esther, presumably in the Babylonian–Persian diaspora. Thus, Tropper shows how one of the most defining moments in Jewish history—receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai—is downgraded in favor of another defining moment that takes place in the eastern diaspora.

The book of Esther is not the only biblical text that the Babylonians promoted because of its Babylonian setting; it is also true regarding other biblical accounts that take place in Mesopotamia. The Babylonians endow their place of residence with meaning derived from the Jewish cultural canon, first and foremost the Bible. For example, they see themselves as residents in the place of origin of Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. Thus in *bPes* 87b, as one among three answers to the question "Why did God exile the Jews to Babylonia, of all places?," we read: "Said Rabbi Yohanan: Because He sent them [back] to their mother's house. This is like a person who becomes angry with his wife. To where does he banish her? To her mother's house."[57] Here we see the rabbis' understanding of Babylonia as the birthplace and cradle of the Jewish people.

In addition, the Babylonians identify their homeland as the landscape in which human beings first trod the earth—the Garden of Eden. In Gen 2:14, one

55 E.g. Y. Sussmann, "pirqei yerushalmi," in: M. Bar-Asher and D. Rosenthal (eds), *Mehqarei Talmud: Talmudic Studies Dedicated to the Memory of Professor Eliezer Shimshon Rosenthal* vol. 2 (Jerusalem 1993) 220–77, and esp. "Before and After the Leiden Manuscript of the Talmud Yerushalmi" *Bar Ilan* 26–7 (1995) 203–20 [both in Hebrew]; S. Lieberman, *ha-yerushalmi kiphshuto: A Commentary* (New York 1935), and other studies by these two prominent scholars.

56 See J. Efron, *Studies on the Hasmonean Period* (Leiden 1987) 143–218.

57 And on this text see also J. L. Rubenstein, "Addressing the Attributes of the Land of Israel: An Analysis of Bavli Ketubbot 110b–112a," in: I. M. Gafni (ed.), *Center and Diaspora: The Land of Israel and the Diaspora in the Second Temple, Mishnah and Talmud Periods* (Jerusalem 2004) 159–88 [Hebrew].

reads that two of the rivers watering the Garden of Eden are the Euphrates and the Tigris. This is the exact geographical location in which the main centers of the Babylonian diaspora were situated. In her essay, Tal Ilan discusses the Babylonians' local patriotism which identifies their residence as the Garden of Eden. She shows how, when manipulating a text from the Yerushalmi that showers scorn on wicked Babylonia, the Babylonian rabbis claim, based on explicit biblical verses, that they live at the entrance of Paradise, while claiming at the same time, that the Jews of Jerusalem live at the entrance of Hell (Gehenna).

5.2 *External Influence*

By the end of the 19th and throughout the 20th century, rabbinic literature has been read side by side with classical Graeco-Roman texts. This move placed rabbinic literature in its wider cultural context, since it was composed in Hellenistic and later Roman-dominated Palestine. Historians of rabbinics tended to study Greek and Latin alongside their immersion in rabbinic literature. The foremost representative of this approach was undoubtedly Saul Lieberman.[58] Lieberman demonstrated the rabbinic acquaintance with the Graeco-Roman culture, and the penetration of this culture into rabbinic literature. Many followed in his footsteps, and the presentation of parallels between Graeco-Roman and rabbinic texts is still widely practiced.[59] This methodology proved very productive in studying Palestinian sources. However, it is problematic when applied in the same vein to the Babylonian Talmud.

So what happens when a Palestinian text, heavily influenced by Graeco-Roman culture, is adopted by the Babylonians? Obviously many such texts made this journey from Palestine to Babylonia. David Brodsky's essay addresses this question on a grand scale. He searches for the origins of the rabbinic give-and-take (*shakla ve-tarya*) in the Babylonian sugya. This is perhaps the most defining literary characteristic of the Bavli, found, practically, on every one of its pages. Scholars have claimed that this genre is the most important literary invention of the Bavli.[60] Brodsky convincingly demonstrates not only that this

58 See S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York 1942), and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York 1950).

59 E.g. D. Sperber, *Essays on Greek and Latin in the Mishna, Talmud and Midrashic Literature* (Jerusalem 1982); E. Halevy-Epstein, *The World of the Aggadah in Light of Greek Sources* (Tel Aviv 1972) [Hebrew]. These are two prominent examples, and there are many others.

60 See A. Goldberg, "The Babylonian Talmud," in: S. Safrai and P. J. Tomson (eds.), *The Literature of the Sage, First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (Assen 1987) 337–9 for a discussion and literature.

genre is to be found in Palestinian halakhic midrashim and in the Yerushalmi, but that it was deeply influenced by contemporary Hellenistic rhetorical practices. In this he is clearly following Lieberman's scholarly heritage. But Brodsky goes further, to demonstrate how the Bavli develops and appropriates this rhetorical tool in a unique manner. What started as an external influence on the Palestinian rabbinic scholastic culture, ended as an internal development, characterizing the Babylonian one.

Recently, Lieberman's model of studying Palestinian rabbinic literature in light of Greek and Latin sources has been copied by scholars onto the Babylonian milieu. Just as the Palestinian rabbinic culture is embedded in a Graeco-Roman context, and just as it proved methodologically sound to resort to studying the parallels between the two, so too we must assume that the Babylonian rabbinic culture is embedded in the Sasanian milieu, and must have been deeply influenced by it. It is, therefore, unsound to assume that the Graeco-Roman backdrop is *a priori* the correct one against which to study the Bavli,[61] and indeed, immersing oneself in the study of Middle-Iranian languages and literature can be most rewarding.[62] A new school of scholarship is steadily developing in this direction, under the visionary guidance of Yaakov Elman, who has been forcefully promoting the study of Middle-Persian and its literatures among the students of rabbinics in the last decade.[63]

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61 We should stay open to the possibility of Graeco-Roman influence originating in the Christian academies of Syria. This influence increased in the academy of Nisibis as of the middle of the 6th century. See Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 35–8; G. J. Reinik, " 'Edessa Grew Dim and Nisibis Shone Forth': The School of Nisibis at the Transition of the Sixth-Seventh Century," in: H. J. W. Drijvers and A. MacDonald (eds.), *Centres of Learning: Learning and Location in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East* (Leiden 1995) 77–89; A. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia 2006).

62 It should, however, be noted that the major part of this literature was put down in writing a century or two later than the stammaitic layer of the Bavli, see M. Macuch, "Pahlavi Literature," in: R. E. Emmerick and M. Macuch (eds.), *The Literature of Pre-Islamic Iran* (History of Persian Literature 17; London 2009) 116–96, especially 116–21.

63 Elman wrote many articles on the topic; see e.g. Y. Elman, "Acculturation to Elite Persian Norms and Modes of Thought in the Babylonian Jewish Community of Late Antiquity," in: E. B. Halivni and Z. A. Steinfeld (eds), *Neti'ot Le-David: Jubilee Volume for David Weiss Halivni* (Jerusalem 2004) 31–56; "The Other in the Mirror: Iranians and Jews View One Another: Questions of Identity, Conversion and Exogamy in the Fifth-Century Iranian Empire," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 19 (2005) 15–25; "Who are the Kings of East and West in Ber 7a?: Roman Religion, Syrian Gods and Zoroastrianism in the Babylonian Talmud," in: S. J. D. Cohen and S. Schwartz (eds.), *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism* (Leiden 2007) 43–80; "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian

While it is still too early to assess the impact of this scholarly approach, in this volume too there are contributions that demonstrate how its application to traditions that originated in Palestine enriches our insights into Babylonian rabbinic culture. In his article, Reuven Kiperwasser discusses a Palestinian midrash, which, when transferred to Babylonia, while keeping its Palestinian theological message, acquired some enigmatic additions. Kiperwasser shows that these additions are best understood when read against the background of Iranian myth. Kiperwasser's study presents a Palestinian tradition which is highly embellished by the Babylonian rabbis, reflecting their own culture. In this case, however, unlike in the other studies in this volume, we can see unambiguously the influence of the external Iranian culture on the formation of the story.

And yet, the study of parallels between Zoroastrian texts and the Bavli is not in itself as straightforward as one would expect. In other words, not every parallel between the two points to Zoroastrian influence. Yaakov Elman's article in the present volume is an example of this complexity. He shows that in the field of fraud legislation the moral concerns shown by the Bavli are similar to those of Zoroastrian law; both protecting the victim of fraud. On the face of it one could assume that the Bavli is here influenced by Zoroastrian law; however, these same concerns for the weaker party in a case of fraud are already voiced in the Mishnah, and it is doubtful whether this can be assigned to Zoroastrian influence (not just because the rabbis of the Mishnah acted beyond the pale of Zoroastrian influence, but also because the Mishnah was composed during the Parthian period, when the empire exercised little influence on local cultures). Was the Mishnah here, as elsewhere, influenced by Roman law? Evidently not. Elman shows that Roman law had a completely different attitude toward fraud, favoring the stronger party.

Sages: Accommodation and Resistance in the Shaping of Rabbinic Legal Tradition," in: C. E. Fonrobert and M. S. Jaffee (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge 2007) 165–97; "Toward an Intellectual History of Sasanian Law: An Intergenerational Dispute in 'Herbedestan' 9 and its Rabbinic and Roman Parallels," in: C. Bakhos and M. R. Shayeqan (eds.), *The Talmud in its Iranian Context* (Tübingen 2010) 21–57; see also S. Secunda, "Talmudic Text and Iranian Context: On the Development of Two Talmudic Narratives," *AJS Review* 33 (2009) 45–69; "Reading the Bavli in Iran," *JQR* 100 (2010) 310–42; R. Kiperwasser, "Rabba bar Bar Channa's Voyages," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 22 (2007–8) 215–42 [Hebrew].

5.3 *Back from Babylonia to Palestine*

We began this overview by arguing that the Babylonian alterations of Palestinian traditions were based on the Babylonians' strong conviction concerning the authenticity of their traditions and superiority of their learning. This approach is of course a polemical stance taken against the intuitive understanding that the Palestinian rabbinic culture is the authentic one.

The *Tanhuma*, a late Palestinian midrashic corpus, forcefully demonstrates Palestinian acknowledgment of Babylonian superiority claims. In a text whose origin is not quite clear and still much debated[64] the *Tanhuma* states the following:

> ואף הקב״ה כרת ברית עם ישראל שלא תשכח תורה שבע״פ מפיהם ומפי זרעם עד סוף כל הדורות, שנא׳: ״ואני זאת בריתי אותם אמר ה׳ רוחי אשר עליך ודברי אשר שמתי בפיך לא ימושו וגו׳״ (ישעיה נט כא)...ולפיכך קבע הקב״ה שתי ישיבות לישראל שיהיו הוגין בתורה יומם ולילה ומתקבצין שתי פעמים בשנה באדר ובאלול מכל המקומות ונושאין ונותנין במלחמתה של תורה...ואותן ב׳ ישיבות לא ראו שבי ולא שמד ולא שלל, ולא שלט בהן לא יון ולא אדום, והוציאן הקב״ה י״ב שנה קודם חרבן ירושלים בתורתן ובתלמודן שכך כתיב ״והגלה את כל ירושלים ואת כל השרים ואת כל גבורי החיל עשרת אלפים גולה וכל החרש והמסגר ולא נשאר זולת דלת עם הארץ״ (מלכים ב כד), וכי מה גבורה יש בבני אדם ההולכים בגולה? אלא אלו גבורי תורה, שכך נאמר בה: ״על כן יאמר בספר מלחמות ה׳״ (במדבר כא יד)...חרש, שבשעה שאחד מהן מדבר נעשו הכל כחרשין. מסגר, כיון שאחד מהן סוגר דברי טומאה וטהרה או איסור והתר, אין בעולם שיכול לפתוח לטהר ולהתיר...וכתיב ״וישקד ה׳ על הרעה ויביאה עלינו כי צדיק ה׳ אלהינו״ (דניאל ט יד). וכי משום דצדיק ״וישקד ה׳ על הרעה ויבא את הרעה״? אלא צדקה עשה הקב״ה עם ישראל שהקדים והגלה את גלות יכניה לגלות צדקיה כדי שלא תשתכח מהן תורה שבע״פ, וישבו בתורתן בבבל מן אותה שעה עד היום, ולא שלט בהן לא אדום ולא יון, ולא גזרו עליהם שמד. ואף לימות המשיח אין חבלי של משיח רואין (תנחומא נח ג).
>
> And the Holy One blessed be He also made a covenant with Israel that the Oral Torah would never be forgotten from their mouths and from the mouths of their descendants till the end of all generations, as it is written: "And this shall be my covenant with them, said the Lord: My spirit which is upon you, and the words which I have put in your mouth shall not be absent [from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your children's children—said the Lord—from now on for all time]" (Isa 59:21)... thus the Holy One blessed be He instituted two *yeshivot* for Israel in which one would contemplate the Torah

64 So we were informed by I. Gafni in a personal conversation.

> night and day and congregate twice a year in Adar and in Elul[65] of all places and negotiate in the war of Torah . . . and these two *yeshivot* have not been persecuted or looted and were ruled neither by Greece nor by Edom (i.e. Rome), and the Holy One blessed be He removed them from Jerusalem twelve years before the destruction with all their Torah and Talmud, as it is written: "He exiled all of Jerusalem: all the commanders and all the valiant heroes—ten thousand exiles—as well as the craftsmen and smiths; only the poorest people in the land were left" (2Kgs 24:14). What is valiant about people going into exile? These are the heroes of the Torah, as it is written of it: "Therefore it is said in the Book of the War of the Lord" (Num 21:14) . . . "the craftsman" (*harash*) because when one of them speaks all become as the deaf (*heresh*); "smiths" (*masger*) because if one of them locks (*soger*) impurities and purities or permissions and prohibitions, no one in the world can open to purify or permit (*SifDeut* 321) . . . And it is written: "Hence the Lord was intent on bringing calamity upon us, for the Lord our God is righteous" (Dan 9:14). Because he is "righteous" he "was intent on bringing calamity upon us"?! Rather, the Holy One blessed be He was righteous with Israel by first exiling Yechonia and only then Zedekiah, so that the Oral Torah not be forgotten from them, and so that they reside with their Torah in Babylonia from that time on to this day and they were not subjected to Edom (Rome) and to Greece, and they were not persecuted, and even in the messianic future, they will not suffer the pangs of the Messiah (cf. *bKet* 111a) (*Tan Noah* 3).

This tradition, although not found anywhere in the Bavli, is obviously Babylonian. Scholars agree that in the beginning, when speaking of scholarly gatherings twice a year, it describes the institute of *yarhei kalah*, known from the Gaonic period. Scholars have even used this Palestinian source to argue that this institution dates back to the amoraic period.[66] But in itself, this passage in the *Tanhuma* is a masterful literary composition, one which employs a plethora of earlier rabbinic motifs.

The history of this passage's components can be reconstructed as follows: In *Sifre* on Deuteronomy we find a midrash that interprets the *harash* and the *masger* of 2Kgs 24:14 as two types of Torah scholars. The Bavli takes up this midrash several times (*bGit* 88a; *bSanh* 38a; *bHag* 14a), creating a narrative about the two exiles of the Judeans (one under Yehoyachin and one under

65 These are the famous *kallah* months known from Gaonic tradition, see next note.

66 Gafni, *Jews of Babylonia*, 213–26; R. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven 1998) 43–8.

Zedekiah), asserting that the first exile was of Torah scholars (*harash* and *masger*), and the second was exiled while these scholars were still alive and active, so that a continuous line of transmission remained unbroken. This is acknowledged as divine grace.

The *Tanhuma Buber*, the more "Palestinian" of the two *Tanhuma* compilations,[67] includes this midrash in the pericope of *Tazria*. It adds but a few words here and there, asserting that the midrash refers to the scholars in Babylonia, and adding that those who descended to Babylonia trusted Jeremiah's words (probably referring to Jeremiah's letter to the exiles that was discussed above). The assertion that Babylonia will be spared the suffering connected to the coming of the Messiah, which it also incorporates in its text, is an idea already found in the Bavli (*bKet* 111a). If the line of development of this passage that we are suggesting here is correct, we observe that the penetration of Babylonian culture into Palestinian literature can be followed within the *Tanhuma* corpus itself. Evidently the *Tanhuma* here is not only presenting a Babylonian agenda; it is also using the text of the Bavli itself in its aggrandizement of Babylonia and its culture.

The final two contributions to this book deal with Babylonian traditions traveling back to Palestine. Ronit Nikolsky discusses two midrashic traditions that travel from early Palestinian midrashic compilations to the Bavli, and that are later found together with Babylonian embellishments in the *Tanhuma*. Evidently the Bavli has left many markers in the text of this midrash, as can be seen both from Nikolsky's essay, and the quote from the *Tanhuma* discussed above.

Paul Mandel's project is of a similar nature. He goes back to discussing the famous story about Rabbi Aqiva's martyrdom as it is related in the two talmudim. Surprisingly, he shows, based on manuscripts, that certainly in the Yerushalmi, and probably also in an early version of the Bavli, this was not a martyrdom story at all. The Yerushalmi story tells about Rabbi Aqiva's verbal contest with the governor of Judaea Tineius Rufus; in the Bavli, although Rabbi Aqiva is executed, this too is not a martyrdom story but turns into a moment of teaching, as is typical in Babylonian stories. Having seen the Babylonian attitude toward martyrdom as presented in the article of Christiane Tzuberi, it should come as no surprise that the Babylonians did not voluntarily change a simple story about a debate between a foreign potentate and a Jew into martyrdom. Only when the story, together with major sections of the Bavli, returned to Palestine in the late Byzantine period was it influenced by Christian martyrdom stories, and updated to acquire the martyrdom plot that is so familiar

67 M. Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (New Jersey 2003) 6, 12, 17 and 18.

to us. Mandel illustrates, therefore, the Bavli's widening circle of influence in Palestine but also its own ingestion of Palestinian culture tropes on the way to acquiring its canonic version.[68]

The phenomenon identified in these last two essays supports what we claimed above, that some time after the Bavli was already in an advanced stage of formation, its traditions traveled back to Palestine and were eventually accepted as authoritative. This is perhaps best illustrated through the proliferation of the Esther midrashim in Palestine in very late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. As we argued above, Esther became a favorite role-model for diaspora Jews. Two contributions to this book highlight her formative role in shaping Babylonian Jewish identity. In a number of recent articles, Arnon Atzmon conjectures[69] that the abundance of what he terms neo-classical midrashim[70] on Esther stems from a process that he designates "Babylonization" of the later Palestinian material.[71]

We hope that this volume will constitute an additional contribution to ongoing discourse on the relations between the culture of the Land of Israel and the Babylonian culture; or to use a different metaphor, perhaps will build another bridge over the divide between the two. We have no doubt, though, that in this book, we have not even uncovered the tip of the iceberg of the fascinating cultural, literary, and historical relationship between these two rabbinic centers of learning.

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68 Mandel identified Babylonization also with regard to the Palestinian midrash *Lamentations Rabba*, which he claimed had two recensions, one of them heavily Babylonized, see P. Mandel, "Between Byzantium and Islam: The Transmission of a Jewish Book in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," in: Y. Elman and I. Gershoni (eds.), *Transmitting Tradition: Orality, Textuality and Cultural Diffusion* (New Haven 2000) 94–5.

69 A. Atzmon, "Haman is the Satan: The Development of a Midrash Narrative of the Esther Scroll," in: N. Ilan et al. (eds.), *Carmi Sheli: Mehkarim Ba'agada U-ve-Pharshanuta* (Boston 2012) 162 [Hebrew].

70 This term was coined by Arnon Atzmon in his article "Old Wine in New Flasks: The Story of Late Neo-Classical Midrash," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 3 (2009) 183–203, and it refers to the early medieval midrashim of the 11th century. The last half of the 11th century was also the time that saw the end of the process of the Babylonian "takeover" of the European Jewish culture of Byzantion, Italy, and Ashkenaz, that was essentially of Palestinian nature. See e.g. the work of A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem 2001) 424–35 and the addenda and corrigenda [Hebrew]; or I. M. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature vol. 3: Italy and Byzantium* (Jerusalem 2005) 9–19, 177–87, and 231–7 [Hebrew].

71 A. Atzmon, "Hagadata de-Megilat Esther: Toward the Anthologist's Methodology," in: B. J. Schwartz, A. Melammed, and A. Shemesh (eds.), *Iggud: Mivhar Ma'amarim Be-Mada'ei Ha-Yahadut* vol. 1 (Jerusalem 2008) 35 [Hebrew].