Studies in Rabbinic Hebrew

EDITED BY SHAI HEIJMANS
1. INTRODUCTION

In the Babylonian Talmud there frequently occur two similar proper names that differ in spelling as well as pronunciation: רבָה Rabba and רבא Rava; the former ends with a heh and has a doubled bet, while the latter ends with an alef and has singleton bet. Since these similar names tended to be confused with each other, Rav Hai Gaon was sent a question in which he was asked to attribute each name to the proper Amora. In his response he divided all the bearers of one of these names into two lists according to the correct form. At the end he added an explanation for the difference between the names — it stems from a difference between the nouns from which they are derived:

1 This topic was the subject of a paper presented at a workshop on Mishnaic Hebrew which took place at the University of Cambridge on 5–6 July, 2016. I thank the organisers, Geoffrey Khan and Shai Heijmans, and all the participants for their enriching comments. I also thank Chanan Ariel for his important comments on a previous version of this article.
At the outset Rav Hai explains that the name רַבָּא Rabba — his name is אַבָּה ’Abba, and the resh which was added to it stands for Rav; and רַבָּא Rava — his name is אֲבָא ’Ava, and the resh which is added to it stands for Rav. And the meaning of אַבָּה ’Abba is as one says ‘my father’; and the meaning of אֲבָא ’Ava is as one says only ‘a father’. Because the translation of אָבִי ’abi ‘my father’ is אַבָּה ’Abba, and the translation of יוֹשִימִני לָאֵב ’yoshimni la’ab ‘and he has made me as a father’ (Gen. 45.8) is ושוֹיִנִי אֲבָא ’Ava.

2 Shraga Abramson, Tractate ʿAbodah Zarah of the Babylonian Talmud (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1957), p. 129. The vocalisation is copied from the source. Another version of this responsum was published by Benjamin M. Lewin, ʾIggeret Rav Sherira Gaʾon (in Hebrew; Haifa: Golda-Itskovski, 1921), appendices, pp. xiv–xv, according to MS Parma 327, but this version is missing and incomprehensible, and it is a wonder that Lewin did not comment on this.

3 For a discussion of this responsum see Shraga Abramson, “Qetaʿ geniza mi-Yerushalmi Shabbat pereq ha-matsniaʿ” (in Hebrew), Kobez Al Yad: Minora Manuscripta Hebraica 8/18 (1976), pp. 1–13, at pp. 7–9. He notes that he could not find a text that preserved this distinction, but Rav Hai may have had a Targum version where this distinction did exist. I, too,
It is not clear whether this distinction existed in the living language or only in the copying and reading tradition of the Targum. The structure of the response seems to point to living language, since the distinction is introduced at the outset, while the Targum is only presented at the end in order to supply a proof or an example. In any case, we have here an important testimony of a distinction so far unknown from any other source. This distinction deserves an explanation: how did this threefold distinction evolved, according to which אבה ʾabba means ‘my father’ while אבא ʾava means ‘a father’?

I will first introduce the classical forms in Hebrew and Aramaic relevant to our discussion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1: a father</th>
<th>2: the father</th>
<th>3: my father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td>ʾav</td>
<td>ha-ʾav</td>
<td>ʾavi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

have been unable to find any text that preserves this distinction; see the appendix below. Of course, the parallel distinction between רבא Rabba and רבא Rava does exist. In the case of proper names there is a recognisable tendency to use heh for a final a vowel even in the Babylonian Talmud; see Yechiel Kara, “Babylonian Aramaic in the Yemenite Manuscripts of the Babylonian Talmud” (in Hebrew; PhD dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1982), p. 41; Shamma Yehuda Friedman, “Early Manuscripts of Tractate Bava Metzia” (in Hebrew), Alei Sefer 9 (1981), pp. 5–55, at pp. 14–16. It seems that this tendency, together with the influence of Rav Hai’s response and the necessity to differentiate between personalities, combined to preserve this distinction specifically in these proper names. However, even in these names it is not preserved in all sources, and this has led some scholars to conclude that the very distinction is not original; see Shamma Yehuda Friedman, “Orthography of the Names Rabbah and Rava in the Babylonian Talmud” (in Hebrew), Sinai 110 (1992), pp. 140–164; Eljakim Wajsberg, “The spelling of the Name of Rava bar Yosef in the Sabbath Halakhot and Tosefta” (in Hebrew), Leshonenu 57 (1993), pp. 157–173; idem, “The Orthography of the Names Rabba and Rava: Rav Hai’s and Rivalling Rules” (in Hebrew), Language Studies 5–6 (1992; Israel Yeivin Festschrift), pp. 181–214; Kara, Babylonian Aramaic, p. 41.
This system underwent certain changes in Late Hebrew as well as in Late Aramaic.

2. THE DAGESH

The bet of this noun was originally singleton, as in Hebrew ʾavīkā and Aramaic ʾavūk. At a certain point, only the bet of the Aramaic emphatic form was geminated: ʾabba. This happened only in Western Aramaic. In Eastern Aramaic, as far as we know, the bet was not doubled. Accordingly, a difference between Western and

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4 Thus the transcription αββα in the New Testament: καὶ ἔλεγεν, Ἄββα ὁ πατὴρ ‘and he said, Abba, Father’ (Mark 14.36); ἐν ὦ κραζομεν, Ἄββα ὁ πατὴρ ‘whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8.15); κραζον, Ἄββα ὁ πατὴρ ‘crying, Abba, Father’ (Gal. 4.6). So also in the Palestinian Targumim, in Christian Palestinian Aramaic and in manuscripts of Rabbinic Literature; see Steven E. Fassberg, A Grammar of the Palestinian Targum Fragments from the Cairo Genizah (Harvard Semitic Studies, vol. 38, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), pp. 66, 126, 137; Friedrich Schulthess, Grammatik des christlich-palästinensischen Aramäisch (Tübingen: Mohr–Siebeck, 1924), pp. 42–43; Eduard Y. Kutscher, Words and Their History (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1961, p. 2. For examples see below, sections 4–5. According to Schulthess, the dagesh was added under the influence of īmma (so also Kutscher, see ibid.). As Schulthess noted, the vowel of the first syllable was also changed into an e vowel, this also under the influence of īmma. However, it seems that this change is attested only in Aramaic.

5 In Syriac the bet is not doubled; see Theodor Nöldeke, Compendious Syriac Grammar, transl. James A. Crichton (London: Williams and Norgate, 1904), p. 91; Carl Brockelmann, Syrische Grammatik (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1960), pp. 58, 149*. Kutscher, Words, p. 2, too, pointed out that in Syriac there is no dagesh, while in Palestine at the end of the Second Temple period and afterwards both forms lived side by side, which means that the dagesh is to be found only in Western Aramaic.
Eastern Aramaic evolved: in Eastern Aramaic ‘ava, in Western Aramaic ‘abba.

3. EASTERN ARAMAIC

In Eastern Aramaic two general processes changed the original system: first, the (originally) emphatic form came to be used in all circumstances, so columns 1–2 integrated. Second, the vowel that stands for the 1 sg. pronominal suffix dropped, and the pronominal suffix came to be expressed by the absence of a vowel. Accordingly, the form of column 3 is ‘av; this is the form in Syriac and Mandaic and to some extent also in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. Examples:

Meanings 1–2 — ‘ava:

Syriac: יֶשׁ־לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן 'we have an old father' (Gen. 44.20) — אית לן סבא (Peshitta).

Mandaic: לאו של אתלאן אבא 'we have no father'.

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Rudolf Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965), p. 33, also wrote that the bet has no dagesh, but since there is no vocalisation system, this pronunciation is only conjectured; see Theodor Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), pp. 36–37.


Babylonian Aramaic: ‘א_relative of R. Yochanan had a father’s wife’ (b.Ketuboth 52b); ‘but what we said concern only the father’s brothers, but concerning the mother’s brothers this is not valid’ (b.Baba Metzia 39b). 8

Meaning 3 — ‘א: Syriac: ‘אבך את חווה ואתך אבך ברכני גם אביך — Is that the only blessing you have, my father? Give a blessing also to me, even me, my father’ (Gen. 27.38) — בורכתי تحון המלך אבי ברכמי אף לי אביך.

Mandaic: ‘how will be the conversation of my father’. 9

Babylonian Aramaic: ‘א who planted this carob tree, so he said, my father’s father’ (b.Taanith 23a according to He). 10

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8 The text of the quotations from Rabbinic Literature, unless otherwise specified, is according to the text that is presented in the Maagarim database of the Historical Dictionary Project of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, accessible at http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il.

9 The final yod in Syriac is only an archaic spelling, and the pronunciation is ‘א.

10 Nöldeke, Mandäische Grammatik, p. 437.

11 This form survived only rarely in Babylonian Aramaic due to the penetration of ʾabba (see below, paragraph 6). For example, in this quotation the reading is אבוה דאבא in the following manuscripts: GF22 LH M95 M140 O23 V134 (for these abbreviations see the end of this footnote). Beyond this case, I have found it only in two places (both are mentioned in Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, p. 72): (1) in b.Baba Bathra 159a it appears in all the witnesses, including once in the printed editions (the full quotations are according to the printed editions) ‘אבה דאבא אמר מה אמר אמר אמר מה אמר מה אמר אמר אמר אבוה דאבא (the first occurrence) ‘What objection is this! Could he not reply, I succeed to the rights of the
The following is the system in Eastern Aramaic:

1. a father
   ʾav
2. the father
   ʾava
3. my father
   ʾav

father of my father?': — E F Ha165 M95 Ps1337;

in this case also he might plead, I come as successor to
the rights of my father's father': — Ha165; E F M95 Ps1337;

if I come as successor to the rights of my father's
father': — E Ha165 M95 Ps1337; E M95; Ha165
the second occurrence) ‘But what difficulty is this?
Could he not reply, I succeed to the rights of my father's father?': — E F Ps1337; E M95; Ha165 missing
‘but take also
the place of my father': so also E F Ha165 M95 Ps1337.
In the last two
cases the reading is
also also in a Geonic responsum; see Simcha Asaf,
Geonic Responsa and Fragments of Halachic Literature from the Genizah and
Other Sources (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Darom, 1933), p. 28. (2)

my paternal, but not my maternal,
brother, and he is the husband of my mother, and I am the daughter
of his wife’ (b.Yebamoth 97b according to the printed editions, similarly
M141); compare Rashi ad loc., who ‘restored’ the unseen pronominal
suffixes in his Hebrew rendering:

I complain about my brother who is my father
and my husband and the son of my husband’. See also Eliezer Shimshon
Rosenthal, “Rav ben-ahi R. Hiyya gam ben-ahoto?”, in Saul Lieberman,
Shraga Abramson, Eduard Y. Kutscher and Shaul Esh (eds.), Henoch
Yalon Jubilee Volume (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1963), pp. 281–337, at
p. 287, n. 14, who mentioned the case in b.Yebamoth. The following are
the abbreviations for the Manuscripts: Co = Columbia X893-T141; E =
Escorial G-I-3; F = Florence II-I-7; G = Göttingen 3; GF22 = Genizah
fragment, Oxford Heb. e. 22/10; Ha165 = Hamburg 165; He = Yad
Harav Herzog; LH = London Harley 5508; M140 = Munich 140; M141
= Munich 141; M6 = Munich 6; M95 = Munich 95; O23 = Oxford
Opp. Add. Fol. 23; Ps1337 = Paris 1337; V109 = Vatican 109; V125
= Vatican 125; V134 = Vatican 134.
4. Western Aramaic

In Western Aramaic the distinction between the emphatic and non-emphatic forms was preserved, so the difference between columns 1–2 was maintained. On the other hand, the meaning of the emphatic form ʾabba was expanded to include meaning 3 ‘my father’ and it supplanted the original form ʾavi altogether. The following examples demonstrate only meaning 3 (in meanings 1–2 the original forms were maintained):

Galilean Aramaic: ‘from my relations and my father’s house’ (Gen. 24.40) — ‘מן זרעיתי ומן ביתיה דאבא’ (Targum Neophiti);13 אוֹלֵדָה אָבֵה הֵוָה בֶּשֶׁדוֹ ‘he said to him: did you hear this from your father? He said to him: my father said so only in Ein Tav’ (y.Berakhoth 7c [4.1]); וֵֽאלֹהֵ֣י אָבִ֔י הָיָ֖ה עִמָּדִֽי ‘but the God of my father has been with me’ (Gen. 31.5) — אַבָּא, אָבִּי אָלֹהִי הָיָּה עִמָּדִי.

12 For Christian Palestinian Aramaic see Friedrich Schulthess, Lexicon Syropalaestinum (Berlin: Reimer, 1903), p. 1. For Samaritan Aramaic see Abraham Tal, A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 1. For Galilean Aramaic see Michael Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine period (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), p. 31; Caspar Levias, A Grammar of Galilean Aramaic (in Hebrew; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1986), p. 55, n. 1, where he notes that the nouns אַבָּא ʾabba, אִמָּא ʾimma, אָחָא ʾaḥa never take the 1 sg. pronominal suffix. Indeed, I have not found in Galilean Aramaic sources the form ʾavi in this function. According to Gustaf Dalman, Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch (2nd ed.; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905), pp. 90–91, the final a vowel in this function does not reflect the definite article but is a form of the 1 sg. pronominal suffix ay which was contracted into a. Even if this is correct, the result is a merge of columns 2–3.


Samaritan Aramaic: ‘from my relations and my father’s house’ (Gen. 24.40) — מִמִּשְׁפַּחְתִּי וּמִבֵּית אָבִי.

Christian Palestinian Aramaic: ‘my father made me take an oath’ (Gen. 50.5) — אָבִ֥י הִשְׁבִּיעַ֥נִי אֲשֶׁ֣ר שָׁמַ֗רְתָּ לְעַבְדְּךָ֙ דָּוִ֣ד אֲבָא

which you gave to your servant David, my father’ (1 Kgs 8.24) — מַא דֶּנְּרָת לעבְדך דוֹֽהֵד אֲבָא.

Accordingly, in contrast with Eastern Aramaic, where columns 1–2 merged, in Western Aramaic it was columns 2–3 that merged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1: a father</th>
<th>2: the father</th>
<th>3: my father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʾav</td>
<td>ʾabba</td>
<td>ʾabba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. MISHNAIC HEbrew

The Aramaic form ʾabba was borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew and is very common in Rabbinic Literature. However, it is used only in the (new) meaning ‘my father’. It is never used in the original Aramaic meaning ‘the father’, where the original Hebrew form ha-ʾav is maintained. Here are some examples of the different forms:


17 Ibid., p. 55.


19 Geiger, *Lehr- und Lesebuch*, p. 50, brought the following mishnah as an example: אומד לנאִשֵת הָרָא אֱצ מַקוֹדֶשֶׁת לַא ... על מנח שירֵיה אָבָא רֶמֶז אָבָא.
1. **ʾav ‘a father’**: אב ובנו שראו את החודש ילכו (m.Rosh ha-Shanah 1.7).

2. **ha-ʾav ‘the father’**: האב זכאי בבתו בקידושיה בכסף ובשטר ובביאה ‘the father has control over his daughter as regards her betrothal, whether it is effected by money, by writ, or by intercourse’ (m.Ketuboth 4.4).

3. **ʾabba ‘my father’**: שמונה מאות דינר היניח אַבָּא ונטל אחי ארבע ‘my father left 800 dinars and my brother took 400 and I took 400’ (m.Nedarim 9.5); שלא יאמר(ו) אדם לחבירו אַבָּא גדול מאביך ‘so that people should not say to each other: my father is bigger than your father’ (m.Sanhedrin 4.5). In contrast, the original form ʾavi almost entirely disappeared. It is important to note

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מְקוֹדָשָׁה ‘if a man said to a woman: be you betrothed to me [...] on the condition that my father consents, and the father consented, her betrothal is valid’ (m.Kiddushin 3.6). Similarly, in the following quotation there is a distinction between ‘abba ‘my father’ and ha-ʾav ‘the father’, and also between ‘abba ‘my father’ and bni ‘my child’ (with the normal first person pronominal suffix):

על מניח שיסמך אב אַבָּא ונתן שנה על mercenaries of אב נין ‘if he said: here is your get] on condition that you wait on my father for two years, or suckle my child two years, and the child dies, or the father says: I do not want you to wait on me, without being angry with her, the get is not valid’ (m.Gittin 7.6). In Modern Hebrew ʾabba has the meaning ‘the father’, but mainly within the family circle, making clear to which father is referred, as in ‘the king’ within that king’s monarchy; see Shoshana Bahat and Mordechay Mishor, *Dictionary of Contemporary Hebrew* (Jerusalem: Ma’ariv and Eitav, 1995), p. 9. Thus, it takes the function of (and may have been influenced by) similar words in European languages, such as English *dad*, German *Papa* and Yiddish *tate* — showing a clear difference from ha-ʾav.

20 It appears only twice in Tannaitic literature and in seven places in Amoraic literature, e.g., I recall my father read with me this verse in the synagogue’ (y.Sanhedrin 28c [10.2]).
that it does not appear in the Mishna; it may have been reintroduced towards the end of the Tannaitic period.

This is the system in Mishnaic Hebrew:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1: a father</th>
<th>Column 2: the father</th>
<th>Column 3: my father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘av</td>
<td>ha-‘av</td>
<td>‘abba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. BABYLONIAN ARAMAIC

In Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, which belongs to Eastern Aramaic, columns 1–2 are in accordance with Eastern Aramaic. However, in column 3, the expected form ‘av almost completely vanished and the form ‘abba took its place.²¹ Here are two examples: אמר ‘לה מר בר אמימר לרב אשי אבא מגמע ליה גמועי ‘Mar son of Amemar said to Rav Ashe: my father did indeed drink it’ (b.Pesahim 74b);²² והכי שלחא ליה בר אהוריאריה דאבא את אבא לקביל אלפא חמרא שתי ולא ‘She sent him back an answer: you, son of my father’s steward. My father drank wine in the presence of a thousand and did not get drunk’ (b.Megillah 12b).²³ This means that two of the aforementioned processes operated in Babylonian Aramaic: columns 1–2 merged as in Eastern Aramaic, columns 2–3 merged as in Western Aramaic, and as a result the same form appears in all three columns.²⁴

²¹ See Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, p. 72.
²² So also Co M6 M95 V125 V109 V134.
²³ So also G LH M95 M140. See also קורבא דאחותו אתיה ולבחודה מסבנה ולא מסיבא ‘I am fraternally related to her on my father’s side but not on my mother’s side’ (b.Sanhedrin 58b), which refers to the Biblical verse אחותי בתאמה והא ‘she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother’ (Gen. 20.12).
²⁴ This is also the case in Targum Onkelos, to which the quotation cited from Rav Hai refers.
How did the form ʾabba reach column 3 (‘my father’)? There are two possibilities: either it was an independent process, similar to what happened in Western Aramaic,25 or it is a borrowing from Mishnaic Hebrew.26 Here we should point once again to

25 This possibility also depends on the question of the extent to which this phenomenon occurs in Syriac. As noted above, the normal form for this meaning in Syriac is ʾav. I have checked the entire Pentateuch according to the version of the Leiden edition (accessible via the site of The Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project: http://cal1.cn.huc.edu) and found that Hebrew ʾavi is always translated by ʾav, except for Gen. 22.7, where it is translated by ʾava. According to some readings, it appears several times in the New Testament: Matthew 10.32; 15.13; Luke 2.49; John 6.32; see Michael Sokoloff, A Syriac Lexicon: A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann’s Lexicon Syriacum (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009), p. 1. However, in all these places the reading is ʾav according to the British Foreign Bible Society edition (presented on the site mentioned above). In CAL ʾava is listed in this meaning according to Matthew 6.15, but according to the above-mentioned edition the reading is ʾavukon. It seems thus that the main form is ʾav, not ʾava. This is supported by the fact that where the Greek has αββα ὁ πατήρ (see above, note 3) it is translated ʾava ʾav (Mark 14.36) or ʾava ʾavun (Romans 8.15; Galatians 4.6), which shows that ʾava alone did not express this meaning (this translation is mentioned by Kutscher, Words, p. 1). However, it may also reflect a desire to translate each word. It is interesting to note that in Mark 14.36 it is translated in the Peshitta ʾava ʾav, while in Christian Palestinian Aramaic it is translated ʾabba ʾabba; see Christa Müller–Kessler and Michael Sokoloff, The Christian Palestinian Aramaic New Testament Version from the Early Period: Gospels (Corpus of Christian Palestinian Aramaic, vol. IIA, Groningen: Styx, 1998), p. 118.

26 Even if this form did exist in Syriac, it is very marginal, while in Babylonian Aramaic this is the main form, so at least its wide distribution has to be attributed to Hebrew influence. It should be emphasised that in Western Aramaic ʾabba is the only form in all dialects, and the original ʾavi
the testimony of Rav Hai, according to which the forms are not absolutely identical: in columns 1–2 it is ʾava, while in column 3 it is ʾabba. At least the dagesh (if not the very use) must have resulted from Mishnaic Hebrew influence. I will reintroduce the two systems in the two languages used by Babylonian Jews, vocalised according to Rav Hai’s testimony:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1: a father</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mishnaic Hebrew</td>
<td>ʾav</td>
<td>ha-ʾav</td>
<td>ʾabba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Babylonian Aramaic</td>
<td>ʾava</td>
<td>ʾava</td>
<td>ʾabba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The difference between the columns is now explained: in Mishnaic Hebrew, ʾabba only exists in column 3 and has a dagesh. This form was borrowed by Babylonian Aramaic, and this is why the dagesh appears only in column 3. In columns 1–2 it does not exist in Mishnaic Hebrew and could not affect Babylonian Aramaic, so the original Eastern Aramaic forms were maintained.

This explanation may also account for the difference in spelling. In the Babylonian Talmud a final a vowel is marked by alef in Aramaic words and by heh in Hebrew words, e.g., ‘it was taught, no one ever repeated it’ (b.Yoma 26a); ‘Abbaye said to him, [have we not learnt that] he should bring them into his house privately? He answered, the day is the

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27 To the best of my knowledge, there is no proof of direct influence of Galilean Aramaic on Babylonian Aramaic, so the only language which can be considered is Mishnaic Hebrew.

28 Even if we assume that the use of this form developed independently and only the dagesh is influenced by Mishnaic Hebrew, in columns 1–2 it does not exist in Mishnaic Hebrew, so the original eastern form was preserved.
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[time of] privacy for these’ (b.Moed Katan 12b). According to my suggestion, the word in columns 1–2 is written with *alef* as an authentic Aramaic word, while in column 3 it is written with *heh* because it was borrowed from Hebrew.

For this explanation we need not assume a tradition of exceptional conservative power. In Babylonian Aramaic the form ʾava was the ordinary form. Speakers of Babylonian Aramaic were exposed to Tannaitic texts, where they found only ʾabba and only in the meaning ‘my father’, so the form and the meaning seemed to them connected. Since these two phenomena are typical of Hebrew texts, they viewed it as Hebrew, different from their Aramaic form ʾava.

7. MISHNAIC HEBREW — A BRIDGE BETWEEN WESTERN AND EASTERNARAMAIC

According to this suggestion, the form ʾabba ‘my father’ was created in Western Aramaic, borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew, and then made its way into Babylonian Aramaic. Both phenomena — influence of Western Aramaic on Mishnaic Hebrew and influence of Mishnaic Hebrew on Babylonian Aramaic — are well attested. Accordingly, Mishnaic Hebrew, which was studied

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30 Aramaic influence is one of the most important factors in the shaping of Mishnaic Hebrew. For the influence of Mishnaic Hebrew on Babylonian
by Jews in Palestine and Babylon alike, became a bridge between Western and Eastern Aramaic.

I will adduce another example for this process. The word כאן kan ‘here’ was created in Western Aramaic. Its Aramaic origin is proven by the lack of the Canaanite Shift (in contrast with its Hebrew cognate ko), and its Palestinian origin is proven by the addition of final nun. This word was borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew and then again into Babylonian Aramaic. As a result, we have in Babylonian Aramaic a doublet: the original Babylonian Aramaic here haka alongside the Western Aramaic loan kan.

APPENDIX: DID THE DISTINCTION OF SPELLING SURVIVE IN THE MANUSCRIPTS?

In the second footnote of this article I mentioned Shraga Abramson’s conclusion, that the distinction of spelling according to meaning has not been preserved in the texts that have reached us. I have rechecked a list of manuscripts and have been unable
to confirm this distinction. I do not claim that such a distinction never existed. There is no reason to doubt Rav Hai’s clear testimony that he was familiar with texts that exhibited this distinction, but so far we have not been able to trace them.

It is true that the spelling with *heh* is widespread in certain manuscripts, and one may conclude that this distinction does exist in them. Therefore I would like to present the considerations for my claim that this distinction has not yet been found.

In my view, the distinction is proven only if the two spellings are distributed according to meaning, not according to language; i.e., if one spelling is typical of Hebrew and one of Aramaic, then the spelling is governed by language, not by meaning. Since within Hebrew ʿ*abba* is used in only meaning 3 (‘my father’), this distinction cannot be found in Hebrew. Therefore, the question is only if this distinction is to be found in Aramaic. In order to check it, I chose a group of texts where a spelling with *heh* was preserved, and separated the data between Hebrew and Aramaic. I omitted proper names altogether, since according to the testimony of Rav Hai there are two distinct proper names, ʿ*abba* and ʿ*ava*. In proper names it is impossible to know, whether by form or by context, the meaning of the name and, consequently, whether the spelling is dependent on the meaning. Spelling of names is thus useless for this investigation.

Hebrew, meaning 3 (‘my father’; in Hebrew only this meaning is used):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mishnah</th>
<th>אבב</th>
<th>אבב</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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33 See Friedman, “Orthography”, p. 141 n. 10.
34 The data is collected from *Maagarim*, where it is easy to survey numerous sources, so the reading in each source is decided according to the manuscript selected for this source in *Maagarim*. 
1. Rabba and Rava, ʾAbba and ʾAva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sifra</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifre Be-midbar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifre Devarim</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tosefta</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekhila de-Rashi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Talmud</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereshith Rabbah</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Sukkah</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Taanith</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ketuboth</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Kamma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Metzia</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Bathra</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Sanhedrin</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halachot Pesuqot</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Aramaic:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>1: a father</th>
<th>2: the father</th>
<th>3: my father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Talmud</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bereshit Rabbah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Sukkah</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Taanith</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ketuboth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Kamma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Metzia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Baba Bathra</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Sanhedrin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halachot Pesuqot</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here are some examples:\(^{35}\)

**Hebrew:**

*Mishnah:*

*Alef:* ‘my father’s house’ (*m.Betzah* 2.6).

*Heh:* ‘that my father said to me’ (*m.Menahoth* 13.9).

*Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sukkah:*

*Alef:* ‘when I came to my father’s brother’ (20b).

*Heh:* ‘so said my father’ (18a).

*Halachot Pesuqot:*

*Alef/heh:* ‘that our father did not leave us any order, nor did our father tell us, nor have we found in the documents of our father that this note of indebtedness has been paid’ (ed. Sassoon, p. קכד, line 19).

**Aramaic (all the examples are from the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sanhedrin:*

**Meaning 1:**

*Alef:* ‘I will slaughter father with son’ (25b).

**Meaning 2:**

*Alef:* ‘the blows of the mother are better than the kisses of the father’ (106a).

\(^{35}\) The examples are brought to demonstrate the various kinds, while the conclusion relies on the numbers in the table.
Meaning 3:

*Alef*: אבא לא תתןניهي ‘my father, teach it not thus’ (80b).

*Heh*: קורבא דאחווה איתי ли בהדה מאבה ולאי מאימה ‘I am fraternally related to her on my father’s side but not on my mother’s side’ (58b).

According to these findings, the spelling with *heh* is widespread in Hebrew, but rare in Aramaic, as will be emphasised by two facts: (1) in Aramaic the spelling with *heh* occurs only four times, which is less than 4 percent of the occurrences of this word in Aramaic, and a little more than 6 percent of the occurrences of this word in meaning 3 in Aramaic. If we add to the total the Hebrew and the proper names, these four occurrences become such a small portion that no conclusion can be based on them. (2) In the book of *Halachot Pesuqot*, there are twice as many occurrences of the spelling with *heh* in Hebrew as with *alef*, while in Aramaic there is no spelling with *heh* whatsoever.

Accordingly, in these texts the spelling with *heh* is typical only of Hebrew, and if so, the spelling is dependent on language, not meaning.

This survey also explains the illusion that the distinction does exist in these texts: since the spelling with *heh* is widespread in Hebrew and is restricted to meaning 3 (which is the only meaning in Hebrew), while in Aramaic the normal spelling is with *alef* and is used in all meanings, it seems as if the spelling with *heh* is typical of meaning 3. However, separating the languages leads to the opposite conclusion: this distinction exists neither in Hebrew — where only meaning 3 exists, nor in Aramaic — where only the spelling with *alef* exists (with a few exceptions).
However, this very illusion seems to have created the distinction that probably existed in the texts mentioned by Rav Hai: since the spelling with *heh* is typical of Hebrew and only in meaning 3, it penetrated Aramaic only in this meaning, but not in the other meanings that do not exist in Hebrew.