

1. RABBA AND RAVA, ׳ABBA AND ׳AVA

SPELLING, PRONUNCIATION AND MEANING

*Yochanan Breuer*¹

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Babylonian Talmud there frequently occur two similar proper names that differ in spelling as well as pronunciation: רבָּה *Rabba* and רבָּא *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:

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- 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.

ודעו כי ראבה — אָבָה שמו, וזה ריש שהוסיפו עליו במקום רב;
 וראבא — אָבָא שמו, וזה ריש המוסף עליו כמו רב. ופירוש אָבָה — כמי
 שאומר אָבִי; ופירוש אָבָא — כמי שאומר אבא סתם. כי תרגום
 אבי — אבה; ותרגום וישימני לאב — ושוני אבא.

You should know that Rabba — his name is אָבָה 'Abba, and the *resh* which was added to it stands for Rav; and Rava — his name is אָבָא 'Ava, and the *resh* which is added to it stands for Rav. And the meaning of אָבָה 'Abba is as one says 'my father'; and the meaning of אָבָא 'Ava is as one says only 'a father'. Because the translation of אבי 'my father' is אבה, and the translation of לאב 'and he has made me as a father' (Gen. 45.8) is ושוני אבא.²

At the outset Rav Hai explains that the name רבה *Rabba* derives from the compound רב אבה *Rav 'Abba*, while the name רבא *Rava* derives from the compound רב אבא *Rav 'Ava*. According to this explanation, the difference between the proper names results from a difference between the nouns 'abba and 'ava. He goes on to explain the difference between these nouns, which is one not only of spelling and pronunciation, but also of meaning: the meaning of 'abba is 'my father', and that of 'ava is 'a father'. He concludes by bringing examples from the Aramaic Targum: the Hebrew אָבִי 'my father' translated by the Aramaic אָבָה 'abba, while the Hebrew אָב 'a father' is translated by the Aramaic אָבָא 'ava.³

2 Shraga Abramson, *Tractate 'Abodah 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, *'Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon* (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, "Qeta' geniza mi-Yerushalmi Shabbat pereq ha-matsnia'" (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 אבא 'abba means 'my father' while אבא 'ava means 'a father'?

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

	1: a father	2: the father	3: my father
Hebrew:	'av	ha-'av	'avi

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 הלכות גאונים למסכת שבת" (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.

	1: a father	2: the father	3: my father
Aramaic:	ʾav	ʾava	ʾavi

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 ʾavika and Aramaic ʾavuk. At a certain point, only the *bet* of the Aramaic emphatic form was geminated: ʾabba. This happened only in Western Aramaic.⁴ In Eastern Aramaic, as far as we know, the *bet* was not doubled.⁵ Accordingly, a difference between Western and

4 Thus the transcription αββα in the New Testament: καὶ ἔλεγεν, Αββα ὁ πατήρ ‘and he said, Abba, Father’ (Mark 14.36); ἐν ᾧ κρᾶζομεν, Αββα ὁ πατήρ ‘whereby we cry, Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8.15); κρᾶζον, Αββα ὁ πατήρ ‘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 ʾimma (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 ʾimma. 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 ʾava, in Western Aramaic ʾabba.

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.⁶ Accordingly, the form of column 3 is ʾav; this is the form in Syriac and Mandaic and to some extent also in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. Examples:

Meanings 1–2 — ʾava:

Syriac: יֶשׁ-לָנוּ אָב זָקֵן ‘we have an old father’ (Gen. 44.20) — אִית לִן
אבא סבא (Peshitta).

Mandaic: לִדִּילָאן לִיתֵּלָאן אבא ‘we have no father’.⁷

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.

- 6 For Syriac see, e.g., Brockelmann, *Syrische Grammatik*, p. 58. For Mandaic see Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, pp. 88, 175; Macuch, *Handbook*, pp. 132, 169; Ethel S. Drower and Rudolf Macuch, *A Mandaic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p. 1. For Babylonian Aramaic see Jacob N. Epstein, *A Grammar of Babylonian Aramaic* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960), p. 122; Michael Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2002), p. 72; Yochanan Breuer, “Rabbi is Greater than Rav, Rabban is Greater than Rabbi, the Simple Name is Greater than Rabban” (in Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 66 (1997), pp. 41–59, at pp. 53–54.

- 7 Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, p. 431.

Babylonian Aramaic: קריביה דר' יוחנן הוה ליה איתת אבא 'a relative of R. Yochanan had a father's wife' (*b.Ketuboth* 52b); ולא אמרן אלא 'and 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 — 'av:

Syriac: הַבְּרָכָה אַחַת הוּא-לְךָ אֲבִי בְרַכְנִי גַם-אֲנִי אָבִי 'Is that the only blessing you have, my father? Give a blessing also to me, even me, my father' (Gen. 27.38) — בורכתא חדא הי לך אבי ברכיני אף לי — אבי.⁹

Mandaic: 'how will be the conversation of my father'.¹⁰

Babylonian Aramaic: 'who planted this carob tree, so he said, my father's father' (*b.Taanith* 23a according to **He**).¹¹

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 'av.

10 Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, p. 437.

11 This form survived only rarely in Babylonian Aramaic due to the penetration of 'abba (see below, paragraph 6). For example, in this quotation the reading is אבוא 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) ומאי קושיא דלמא מצי אמר מבח אבוא דאבא קאתינא (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

ʿava

2: the father

ʿava

3: my father

ʿav

father of my father?': דאב — E F Ha165 M95 Ps1337; הכא נמי אמר מכא 'in this case also he might plead, I come as successor to the rights of my father's father': דאבא — Ha165; דאב — E F M95 Ps1337; ומאי קושיא דלמא מצי אמר: 'if I come as successor to the rights of my father's father': דאב — E Ha165 Ps1337; דאביד — M95; מכא אבוה דאבא קא אתינא (the second occurrence) 'But what difficulty is this? Could he not reply, I succeed to the rights of my father's father?': דאב — E F Ps1337; דאכ — M95; missing — Ha165; ובמקום אב קאימנא 'but take also the place of my father': so also E F Ha165 M95 Ps1337. In the last two cases the reading is דאב אב, 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) אה מאב ולא '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); בייא בייא מאח והוא אב והוא בעל והוא בר בעל והוא דאם ואנא ברתה דאנתתיה 'woe, woe, for my brother who is my father; he is my husband and the son of my husband; he is the husband of my mother and I am the daughter of his wife' (*ibid.*, according to the printed editions, similarly M141); compare Rashi ad loc., who 'restored' the unseen pronominal suffixes in his Hebrew rendering: קובלת אני על אחי שהוא אבי ובעלי 'bayya me'ah — 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-aḥi R. Ḥiyya gam ben-aḥoto?", 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 *'abba* was expanded to include meaning 3 'my father' and it supplanted the original form *'avi* altogether.¹² The following examples demonstrate only meaning 3 (in meanings 1–2 the original forms were maintained):

Galilean Aramaic: מִמְשַׁפְּחָתִי וּמִבֵּית אָבִי 'from my relations and my father's house' (Gen. 24.40) — מִן זִרְעִיתִי וּמִן בֵּיתָהּ דְּאָבָא (Targum Neophiti);¹³ אִמִּי לִיה אַת שְׁמַעַת מֵאֲבוּךְ הָדָא מִלֵּתָא אִמִּי לִיה אָבָא לֹא הוּא אִמִּר '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]); וְאֵלֹהֵי אָבִי הֵיָּה עִמָּדִי 'but the God of my father has been with me' (Gen. 31.5) — וְאֵלֵּדָה אָבָה הוּוּה בְּסַעְדִּי.¹⁴

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 אָבָא *'abba*, אִמָּא *'imma*, אָחָא *'aha* never take the 1 sg. pronominal suffix. Indeed, I have not found in Galilean Aramaic sources the form *'avi* 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.

13 Alejandro Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense*, vol. 1 (Textos y Estudios, vol. 7; Madrid-Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1968), p. 143.

14 Michael L. Klein, *Genizah manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986), vol. 1, p. 53.

Samaritan Aramaic: מִמְשַׁפְּחַתִּי וּמִבֵּית אָבִי 'from my relations and my father's house' (Gen. 24.40) — מִכְרַנִּי וּמִבֵּית אָבָה.¹⁵

Christian Palestinian Aramaic: אָבִי הַשְּׂבִיעִנִי 'my father made me take an oath' (Gen. 50.5) — אָבָא אוּמִי יְתִי;¹⁶ אֲשֶׁר שְׁמַרְתָּ לְעִבְדְּךָ דָּוִד 'which you gave to your servant David, my father' (1 Kgs 8.24) — מַא דְּנִטְרַת לְעִבְדְּךָ דּוּיִד אָבָא.¹⁷

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

1: a father	2: the father	3: my father
ʿav	ʿabba	ʿabba

5. MISHNAIC HEBREW

The Aramaic form ʿabba was borrowed into Mishnaic Hebrew and is very common in Rabbinic Literature. However, it is used only in the (new) meaning 'my father'.¹⁸ It is never used in the original Aramaic meaning 'the father', where the original Hebrew form *ha-ʿav* is maintained.¹⁹ Here are some examples of the different forms:

15 Abraham Tal, *The Samaritan Targum of the Pentateuch: A Critical Edition*, vol. 1 (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1980), p. 86.

16 Christa Müller-Kessler and Michael Sokoloff, *The Christian Palestinian Aramaic Old Testament and Apocrypha Version from the Early Period* (Corpus of Christian Palestinian Aramaic, vol. 1; Groningen: Styx, 1997), p. 22.

17 Ibid., p. 55.

18 See Abraham Geiger, *Lehr- und Lesebuch zur Sprache der Mischnah* (Breslau: Leuckart, 1845), p. 50; Jacob Levy, *Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1876), p. 3; Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (London: Luzac, 1903), p. 2. Levy and Jastrow combined Hebrew and Aramaic in the same entry.

19 Geiger, *Lehr- und Lesebuch*, p. 50, brought the following mishnah as an example: האומ' לאשה הרי את מקודשת לי [...] על מנת שירצה אבא רצה האב

1. 'av 'a father': ילכו 'a father and his son who saw the new moon will go' (*m.Rosh ha-Shanah* 1.7).
2. ha-'av '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. 'abba 'my father': שמונה מאות דינר היניח אבא ונטל אחי ארבע: 'my father left 800 dinars and my brother took 400 and I took 400' (*m.Nedarim* 9.5); שלא '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 'avi almost entirely disappeared.²⁰ It is important to note

על מנת שתשמישי את אבא שתי שנים ועל מנת שתניקי את בני: '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 'abba 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 Mordechai 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-'av.

- 20 It appears only twice in Tannaitic literature and in seven places in Amoraic literature, e.g., 'זכור אני שהיה אבי מקרא אותי את הפסוק הזה בבית הכנסת' '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:

1: a father	2: the father	3: my father
'av	ha-'av	'abba

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 'Mar son of Amemar ליה מר בר אממר לרב אשי אבא מגמע ליה גמועי said to Rav Ashe: my father did indeed drink it' (*b.Pesahim* 74b);²² הכי שלחא ליה בר אהוריאריה דאבא את אבא לקביל אלפא חמרא שתי ולא הוי רוי '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 מאימא ולא מאבא לי בהדה דאחווא אית לי '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 אַחֲתִי בִתְאָבִי הִוא '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 $\alpha\beta\beta\alpha$ 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. In Western Aramaic, where the only way to express 'my father' is *ʾabba*, there is no way but to repeat it, whereas in Syriac it is translated by *ʾav*. This is a clear manifestation of the difference between Western and Eastern Aramaic.

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 'ava, while in column 3 it is 'abba. At least the *dagesh* (if not the very use) must have resulted from Mishnaic Hebrew influence.²⁷ I will reintroduce the two systems in the two languages used by Babylonian Jews, vocalised according to Rav Hai's testimony:

	1: a father	2: the father	3: my father
Mishnaic Hebrew	'av	ha-'av	'abba
Babylonian Aramaic	'ava	'ava	'abba

The difference between the columns is now explained: in Mishnaic Hebrew, 'abba 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.²⁸

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., תנא מעולם (b.Yoma 26a) 'it was taught, no one ever repeated it' (b.Yoma 26a); אמ' ליה אב'י ובלבד שיכניסם בצנעה לתוך ביתו אמ' ליה צנעא דהני יממא (b.Yoma 26a) 'Abbaya said to him, [have we not learnt that] he should bring them into his house privately? He answered, the day is the

disappeared, while in Eastern Aramaic the original 'av appears in all three dialects, so 'abba seems to be foreign.

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.

[time of] privacy for these' (*b.Moed Katan* 12b).²⁹ 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 EASTERN ARAMAIC

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.³⁰ Accordingly, Mishnaic Hebrew, which was studied

29 On the spelling with *alef* in Babylonian Aramaic see Shelomo Morag, *The Book of Daniel: A Babylonian-Yemenite Manuscript* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1973), p. 15 and n. 6; Kara, *Babylonian Aramaic*, pp. 38–42; Eduard Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll (1 Q Isa^a)* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), p. 164; idem, "Studies in Galilean Aramaic" (in Hebrew), in: Zeev Ben-Ḥayyim, Aharon Dotan, and Gad Sarfatti (eds.), *Hebrew and Aramaic Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977), p. קטז and n. 8. On the spelling with *heh* in the Hebrew of the Babylonian Talmud see Yochanan Breuer, *The Hebrew in the Babylonian Talmud According to the Manuscripts of Tractate Pesahim* (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), pp. 27–37.

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*.³¹ 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 הכא *haka* alongside the Western Aramaic loan *kan*.³²

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

Aramaic see Yochanan Breuer, “The Hebrew Component in the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud” (in Hebrew), *Leshonenu* 62 (1999), pp. 23–80.

31 See, e.g., Harold L. Ginsberg, “Zu den Dialekten des Talmudisch-Hebräischen”, *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 77 (1933), pp. 413–429, at pp. 428–429.

32 See, e.g., ר' נתן הכא דכוזת בעי רביעית אלא בין דקליש, ‘R. Nathan states that it [sc. a congealed piece the size of an olive] requires a *rebi'ith* [of liquid] only here in the case of wine, which is thin’ (*b.Shabbath* 77a). It seems to me that in a similar way the co-existence in Babylonian Aramaic of *mammasha* and *meshasha* can be explained, e.g., הנני עוני דצפרא לית בהו, ‘the morning clouds have no significance’ (*b.Taanith* 6b) as against משא ‘but here it is different, because there is nothing concrete at all’ (*b.Shabbath* 62b). *Meshaha* is the eastern form and is also found in Syriac, while *mammash* or *mammasha* is found in Western Aramaic and in Mishnaic Hebrew, so it was probably borrowed from Mishnaic Hebrew into Babylonian Aramaic; see Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, p. 312; idem, *A Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, pp. 683, 717.

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.³³ 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 *ʾabba* 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.³⁴ I omitted proper names altogether, since according to the testimony of Rav Hai there are two distinct proper names, *ʾabba* and *ʾava*. 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):

	אבא	אבה
<i>Mishnah</i>	29	2

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*.

	אבא	אבה
<i>Sifra</i>	1	5
<i>Sifre Be-midbar</i>	2	2
<i>Sifre Devarim</i>	3	5
<i>Tosefta</i>	55	8
<i>Mekhilta de-Rashbi</i>	2	1
<i>Palestinian Talmud</i>	71	
<i>Bereshith Rabbah</i>	33	6
<i>b. Sukkah</i>	2	1
<i>b. Taanith</i>	2	
<i>b. Ketuboth</i>	12	6
<i>b. Baba Kamma</i>	6	2
<i>b. Baba Metzia</i>	9	
<i>b. Baba Bathra</i>	10	
<i>b. Sanhedrin</i>	9	7
<i>Halachot Pesuqot</i>	6	11

Aramaic:

	1: a father		2: the father		3: my father	
	אבא	אבה	אבא	אבה	אבא	אבה
<i>Palestinian Talmud</i>	5		2		34	1
<i>Bereshit Rabba</i>					11	
<i>b. Sukkah</i>					2	
<i>b. Taanith</i>						2
<i>b. Ketuboth</i>	2		1			
<i>b. Baba Kamma</i>	2					
<i>b. Baba Metzia</i>			3		3	
<i>b. Baba Bathra</i>	4		9		2	
<i>b. Sanhedrin</i>	3		1		5	1
<i>Halachot Pesuqot</i>	2		10		1	

Here are some examples:³⁵

Hebrew:

Mishnah:

Alef: בית אבא 'my father's house' (*m.Betzah* 2.6).

Heh: שאמ' לי אבה 'that my father said to me' (*m.Menahoth* 13.9).

Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Sukkah*:

Alef: כשבאתי אצל אחי אבא 'when I came to my father's brother' (20b).

Heh: כך אמ' אבה 'so said my father' (18a).

Halachot Pesuqot:

Alef/heh: שלא פיקדנו אבה שלא אמר לנו אבה שלא מצינו בין שטרותיו שלאבא שטר זה פרוע '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: ונכיסנא אבא אפום ברא 'I will slaughter father with son' (25b).

Meaning 2:

Alef: טבא קולפי דאימא מן שוקיתא דאבא '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 תתנינה הכי 'my father, teach it not thus' (80b).

Heh: קורבא דאחוזה אית לי בהדה מאבה ולא מאימא '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.