A Descriptive Grammar of the Medieval Hebrew of the Cairo Geniza Letters

by

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Christ's College
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This study consists of a thorough description of the phonology, orthography and
morphology of the Medieval Hebrew language attested in letters from the Cairo
Geniza. These letters date principally from the ninth to the twelfth centuries C.E. and
were mostly produced by members of the Jewish communities in Egypt, Palestine,
Syria and Iraq. The study focuses on a core selection of about three-hundred of the
letters and offers a description examining the different layers of Hebrew language
which have been fused to form the letters' idiom.

The phonology of the letters, where it can be determined, shows a background
pronunciation that is basically Tiberian with some evidence of Palestinian-Sefardi
interference; examples of genuine Babylonian pronunciation are doubtful.

The orthography of the texts shows the use of vowel letters for most long vowels and
many short vowels, except for some distinctive biblical vocabulary. Practice, though,
can differ widely across the corpus. The orthography of both the Babylonian and
Palestinian traditions of Rabbinic Hebrew appears in the corpus, sometimes in the
same letter.

Pronouns and particles show a use of Rabbinic and Biblical Hebrew forms side by
side. Medieval Hebrew is well-attested in the conjunctions.

The morphology of the noun shows a move away from biblical forms towards those
favoured by Rabbinic Hebrew and the piyyut.

Examination of the morphology of the verb shows the influence of Rabbinic Hebrew
in the weak verbs, particularly the final-weaks and geminates, as well as in the use of
the rabbinic nipta'al stem. However, the writers attest many examples of biblical
forms such as the paragogic nun, the cohortative, the infinitive absolute, the jussive
and the waw-consecutive.

Elements of Biblical Hebrew, Rabbinic Hebrew, Talmudic Hebrew and Medieval
Hebrew can all be found in the language, demonstrating that the writers were using a
Hebrew that borrowed freely from all these layers, though the idiom is based around
an essentially biblical core. There is very little evidence of the influence of the Arabic
vernacular.
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The entire work, including all text, notes and bibliography, comes to a total of 79203 words.

I am extremely grateful to the Humanities Research Board of the British Academy for awarding me a Research Studentship and thereby enabling me to write this dissertation.

First among those individuals I must thank is my supervisor, Dr. Geoffrey Khan, Reader in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, who inspired me with his enthusiasm for all things philological and who initially pointed me in the direction of the Cairo Geniza and Medieval Hebrew studies.

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In addition I would like to thank my parents, who were always ready to encourage me in my studies, and my present colleagues at the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit, particularly Professor Stefan Reif and Dr. Friedrich Niessen, for their advice and patience.
These ruled barriers along which the traced words, run, march, halt, walk, stumble, at doubtful points, stumble up again in comparative safety seem to have been drawn first of all in a pretty checker with lampblack and blackthorn...
But by writing thitheways end to end and turning, turning and end to end hithaways writing and with lines of litters slettering up and louds of latters slettering down, the old semetomyplace and jupetbackagain from tham Let Rise till Hum Lit.

James Joyce, Finnegans Wake
## Contents

### Introduction
- A note on the corpus and the citation of primary sources  
  
### Chapter 1: Vocalisation, phonology and orthography
- Use of vocalisation
- Systems of vocalisation
  - Tiberian vocalisation
    - Tiberian *qames*
    - Tiberian *patḥ*
    - Tiberian *ḥaṭef-patḥ*
    - Tiberian *qibbus*
    - Tiberian *sere*
  - Babylonian vocalisation
    - Simple Babylonian
    - Lined Babylonian
- Other signs
- Consonants
  - Gutturals
  - Sibilants
  - *B⁵gad-K⁵fat* consonants
- Orthography
- Vowel letters
  - Waw
    - The ā vowel
    - The short ə vowel
    - The ē vowel
    - The u vowel
  - Yod
    - The ī vowel
    - The i vowel
    - The ē vowel
    - The e vowel
    - The ū vowel
  - He
    - The ē and ē vowels
    - The ə vowel
    - The ū vowel
  - 'Alef
- Consonantal waw
  - The geminated v
  - The ungeminated v
  - The orthography of word-final -śv
- Consonantal yod
  - The geminated y
  - The ungeminated y
  - The orthography of ay
- Summary
Chapter 2: Pronouns and particles

The personal pronoun
The demonstrative pronoun
The possessive ה
The direct object marker וה
The negative particle ו
Numerals
The relativizer
The conjunctions
The complementizer
The causal conjunction
The comparative conjunction
The concessive conjunction
The adversative conjunction
The conditional conjunction
The final and consecutive conjunction
The temporal conjunction
The copulative and disjunctive conjunction
The prepositions
Suffixes of the preposition
The adverbs
Adverbs of manner
Adverbs of time
Adverbs of place

Summary

Chapter 3: the Noun

Adverbial endings of the noun
Gender of the noun
The construct
The dual
The plural noun
The noun with pronominal suffixes
Pronominal suffixes of the noun
Noun patterns
Biblical vocabulary
Post-biblical vocabulary

Summary

Chapter 4: the Verb

The strong verb
The qal
The suffix conjugation
The prefix conjugation
The prefix conjugation with paragogic nun
The cohortative
The jussive
The waw-consecutive
The imperative
The pausal forms of the verb 109
The active participle 110
The passive participle 111
The infinitive absolute 111
The infinitive construct 112
The suffix conjugation with pronominal suffixes 113
The prefix conjugation with pronominal suffixes 114
The stative verb 115
The verbal stems 116
The nif'al 116
The pi'el 117
The pu'al 118
The hif'il 119
The huf'al 120
The hitpa'el/hitpa'al 121
Verbs with guttural root letters 124
The initial-guttural verb 124
The middle-guttural verb 125
The final-guttural verb 126
The weak verb 127
The initial-'alef verb 127
The initial-nun verb 128
The final-'alef verb 132
The initial-weak verb 135
The middle-weak verb 137
The final-weak verb 140
The geminate verb 142
The quadriliteral verb 146

Summary 146
Conclusion 148
Sources 150
Taylor-Schechter Old Series 150
Taylor-Schechter Additional Series 157
Taylor-Schechter New Series 158
Other T-S 159
Bibliography 160
Introduction

The purpose of the present study is to provide a thorough analysis of the phonology, orthography and morphology of the written Medieval Hebrew language used in hundreds of letters from the Cairo Geniza. Although similar studies have been carried out on other Medieval Hebrew texts, the letters from the geniza have as yet only been exploited as a source of historical information for the period.¹ Yet as a corpus of material, they provide a very large and accessible source for the study of the Hebrew language as it was used by the Jewish communities of the Near East on an everyday basis in a period covering the ninth to the fifteenth century.

The Cairo Geniza is the name given to the huge collection of manuscripts discovered in the geniza of the Ben 'Ezra synagogue in Fustat, Old Cairo.² The total haul of material covers a time period of many centuries, with the earliest palimpsests dating from approximately the sixth century C.E., a wide geographical area, with texts originating in Spain, Italy, Byzantium, Palestine, Iraq, India and elsewhere, and many different literary types from liturgy, to Bible, Mišna, Talmud, Midraš, linguistics, philosophy, medicine and a great many letters in Hebrew, Arabic and Judaeo-Arabic.³

The letters in the collection, and specifically those that form the corpus for this study, are dated mostly between the tenth and the twelfth centuries C.E., the classical period of the geniza. One or two earlier and later letters are included, a letter from Pumbāḏīta in Iraq is dated around 850 C.E. and there is a letter from a wife to an errant husband from the fifteenth century, but these are used principally for comparative purposes.⁴ The number of letters reflects the strength and power of the communities generating them. A large number of the letters in the collection are from and to the gə'onim, the heads of the academies in Jerusalem, Pumbāḏīta and Sura. At the height of their prestige, they were communicating on a regular basis across national borders with the scattered communities that made up the rešaṭ, or area of influence, of each academy. Most of the letters from Iraq are dated to the end of the tenth century, before the decline of the Babylonian academies caused them to lose their international influence and their need for communication with Egypt and elsewhere in the West.⁵ The letters from the Palestinian Academy, yəśīaḥ ḥaṣṣ aṭṭi, predominate in the tenth and eleventh centuries but become far fewer subsequently as the academy was displaced and eventually disappeared.⁶

The letters in the corpus are mostly from Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Many of them are to or from the academies. They are not only written by the gə'onim, however, but also from dayyanim, ha'averim (notables of the Palestinian Academy), 'allufim (notables of the Babylonian academies),

¹A good example of the kind of linguistic study done on other areas of MH is that of Goshen-Gottstein. Work on the letters, notably by Gil, Bareqet, Goitein and Mann have all focused on the historical and socio-economic aspects of the texts.

²A geniza is specifically a storeroom for sacred texts, intended for their temporary storage before they are interred more permanently, cf. Reif (2000) pp. 11–13.

³Brody pp. 30–34.

⁴The Iraqi letter is NS 308.122, the wife’s letter 13J21.10.

⁵The decline of the Babylonian academies is covered in Brody pp. 11–18.

⁶The end of the Palestinian Academy is described in Gil (1992) §916.
sofrin, pilgrims, merchants, family men (and women) and those in need: the kidnapped by pirates, the victims of slander and the imprisoned for debt. Anyone with a complaint or who needed a favour could put pen to paper. Those who were unable to write could employ a scribe, but since most of the Jewish community of Egypt, and the Near East in general, learnt Hebrew from an early age they were able to some degree to write the language.7

The ability to write the Hebrew script enabled the letter-writers of the geniza to use one of two languages, Hebrew or Judaeo-Arabic. In addition, some in the community were able to write Arabic in Arabic script, but the ability was less widespread. Most letters were written in Judaeo-Arabic, and a large proportion of those are commercial letters. Judaeo-Arabic was the language of commerce. The Arabic vernacular was the language in which the deals were done, in which prices were discussed and in which sales were made, so when it came to writing them down, the vernacular was naturally used. These commercial communications are more prosaic, more businesslike and more transparent. They fulfilled a communicative purpose. There are Judaeo-Arabic letters that are not commercial in content—when Șalom ben Șamra, the eleventh-century Palestinian ga’on and prodigious letter-writer, writes to his son, he does so in Judaeo-Arabic (Gil 1983) no. 80–13136.5)—and Blau is right to deny that all Judaeo-Arabic letters are lacking in aesthetic qualities.8 However, it is noticeable among the Judaeo-Arabic letters that the praescriptio (the formulaic opening of the letter where the recipient is praised and much poetic language occurs) is often written in Hebrew and the change to Judaeo-Arabic only takes place for the main body of the letter.9 The Hebrew letter, however, while often sharing the functions of the Judaeo-Arabic letter was open to being judged on different levels. Proficiency in Arabic was certainly a desirable quality but the Jewish scholar was judged on his knowledge of the Hebrew language above all else.10 There was also a linguistic “nationalistic” quality to the Hebrew letter: a desire to show that the community had its own language and that Hebrew could function in the ‘modern’ world.11 Therefore, the Hebrew letter was not a transparent communication since, unavoidably, the medium itself became significant.

7Goitein (1988) vol. 2, p. 177–178 states that the aim of education in Hebrew was, for the majority of people, to enable them to read the language, which was done initially through the writing out of the alphabet in order to learn it. Once sufficient fluency in reading had been achieved, however, the art of writing was not pursued any further.


9For instance Gil (1983) no. 183=ENA 4020.6, a letter of Naṭan ben ‘Avraham. The first six and a half lines are in Hebrew. Only when the main business is reached in line 7 does it switch to Judaeo-Arabic. Conversely, the Hebrew letter also often dispenses with formal praescriptio and opens immediately with the business of the letter. This is particularly common where the letter is a reply to a regular correspondent’s letter, for instance Șalom ben Șamra replies to ‘Efraim ben Șamra, opening his letter with ‘the Haver’s letter arrived’ (NS 321.2 r.1).

10For instance Drory pp. 58–59 quotes a letter of Sahl ben Mašilah replying to Ya’aqov ben Șem’el: ‘So far I have found nearly sixty errors in your letters, some of spelling, some of meaning; and you do not qualify as one worthy of arguing with Ṣafra’. It is notable for instance that Hebrew letters are, with extremely rare exceptions, entirely written in Hebrew (apart from the address which often had to be in Arabic in order for the letter to reach its destination), with never a single word of Arabic or Judaeo-Arabic used. This is different from the Judaeo-Arabic letter which, as stated, often has a Hebrew praescriptio of, at the very least, blessings and praises in Hebrew.
The average letter-writer of the geniza was a well-educated man or woman. Most letters come from the class that could travel, the city dwellers, the officials, the skilled classes and the aristocrats, people who had been well educated. They would have learnt the biblical language to a high level of proficiency, for to be able to read from the Tora they would have had to know it almost by heart. The large number of private ('vulgar') biblical texts that are found in the geniza show how much attention was paid to personal study of the Bible. However, their knowledge of Hebrew would have gone beyond simply the Tora and the rest of the Hebrew Bible. The synagogue service would have immersed them in the biblical language, for the vernacular, Arabic, was never used in the service. They would have heard and recited the Hebrew of the liturgy, they would have sat through sermons quoting from rabbinic literature, Midraš and other sources; they would have listened to the obscure poetic language of piyyut. Therefore, the writers had a wide range of Hebrew expressions and techniques at their fingertips through constant exposure to the liturgical language.

This study is intended to be the first thorough examination of the idiom of the Hebrew letters from a grammatical standpoint. Ideally, it should provide a complete guide to the phonology (as far as it can be ascertained), orthography and morphology of the letters, and by these means answer a number of questions concerning the sources that have influenced the writers, the effect that the vernacular has had and the extent to which it reflects an idiom of its own. Is the epistolary language mainly an amalgam of biblical quotation or, like the prose of Maimonides's Mišne Tora, do the writers show a preference for the rabbinic sources? Is the vernacular a major influence? Do the writers appear to be drawing upon a common idiom or style, or perhaps even an existing tradition of epistolary Hebrew? Does the language resemble other strains of Medieval Hebrew? The letters come from a wide area geographically and cover several centuries, can we expect uniformity? Are we able to speak of a medieval epistolary Hebrew? It is hoped that the present study will demonstrate that the language attested in the geniza letters deserves consideration as an important part of the whole disparate group of written idioms referred to as Medieval Hebrew.

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12 Goitein, vol. 2, p. 175

13 It was intended that this study would also feature a comprehensive syntax. However, while much syntactic information has been gathered it was not possible due to the limit on the size of the thesis to include it. Therefore, the study concentrates on phonology, orthography and morphology and only draws upon syntax when it is required to explain morphological features.
A note on the corpus and the citation of primary sources

The main corpus on which this study is based is composed of approximately 300 letters and fragments of letters in Hebrew from the Taylor-Schechter collection (listed at the end of this study). This is something of an artificial limit, since there are similar letters in other geniza collections, such as those of Westminster College or the Adler collection, and there are undoubtedly more than 300 letters in the Taylor-Schechter archive. However, in choosing to study only the Taylor-Schechter texts it provided an upper limit on the size of the study as well as ensuring that all letters were accessible to me here in Cambridge for the checking of the manuscripts against the texts of published editions, where available, or the reading of unpublished letters, where not. The number 300 was considered a suitable number for the purposes of the length both in time and word limit of the present study.\(^1\)

In practice, a great many more texts have been read and often cited in the study, particular where not to do so would leave an incorrect impression of the language from the corpus alone, though in the case of letters or other texts from outside the Taylor-Schechter collection these are all based on the published editions, principally the works of M. Gil and J. Mann. These two writers on the geniza provided the majority of published letters used in the study. Gil’s various volumes of texts are indispensable for geniza research and are thoroughly reliable in their transcriptions. J. Mann’s volumes, notably “The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs” (Oxford, 1920–22), are also major works of scholarship, and staggering in the amount of material covered, however, for the purposes of close linguistic study the transcriptions of texts are unreliable in detail and in most cases I have also had to check the original manuscript carefully.\(^2\)

In citing the primary sources in the texts I have used an abbreviated form when referring to manuscripts of the Taylor-Schechter collection, omitting in each case only the initial T-S of the full classmark, thus (16.62 r.4) refers to recto, line 4 of T-S 16.62. Manuscripts from other collections are referenced in full and include the reference of the primary published version, e.g., (Gil (1997) no. 73=TJS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.26) refers to a manuscript from the geniza collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the principal edition of which is edited as text number 73 in M. Gil’s 1997 publication (identified in the bibliography). Where it is not clear from the published edition whether it is recto, verso or a line from the margin, I have referenced it only according to the line number of the edited text, e.g., (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 line 16).

Abbreviations referring to line numbers used in the references are: r. =recto; v. =verso; m. =(recto) margin; mv. = (verso) margin. In manuscripts covering more than one leaf, the first leaf is the one being referred to unless stated otherwise.

Square brackets [ ] in citations indicate where a lacuna occurs in the manuscript (a reconstruction

\(^1\)As well as the Taylor-Schechter collection, the University Library in Cambridge has a great many texts which originated from the Cairo Geniza under a different classmark, Or, e.g., Or 1080 J4. That the difference between the T-S manuscripts and the Or manuscripts was only one of nomenclature was initially unclear to me when I began the study and so those were also excluded from the main corpus. Nevertheless, I have cited from a number of texts with this classmark along with the others from outside the corpus where necessary.

\(^2\)I have made a note in the study where readings that I give differ from those of the published versions except in one or two cases where it seemed pertinent to do so.
may occur within the brackets). The mark of ellipsis ... indicates where text has been omitted as unnecessary.

Other abbreviations used in the text are:

MT    Masoretic Text
BH    Biblical Hebrew
LBH  Late Biblical Hebrew: the language found in such books as Chronicles
RH    Rabbinic Hebrew: the language of the Mišna and early Midrašim
MH    Medieval Hebrew: a catch all term for post-Talmudic Hebrew, including the language of the prose and poetry of Spain
M     Mišna
B     Babylonian Talmud, Bavli
Y     Palestinian Talmud, Yerusalmi

Other terms used are Talmudic Hebrew, which refers to the language of the Babylonian Talmud and late Midrašim, and Paytannic Hebrew, the language of piyyut in all its forms.

Vocalisation, Phonology and Orthography

Vocalisation and phonology

Only a tiny proportion of the text in the corpus is vocalised, often just one or two words in a letter, and most letters remain completely unvocalised. In many cases the vocalisation may have served little purpose other than for the writer to show his erudition and command of the language traditions than actually to aid pronunciation or understanding. The vocalisation attested mostly represents the Tiberian system, but the writers also employ vowels from various Babylonian systems.

Use of vocalisation

The use of vocalisation often appears random and is limited to only occasional words in the texts, e.g., ‘in the sacrifice of their burnt offering’ (13)14.10 r.11). Usually the whole word is not vocalised but just one or two vowels are written, e.g., ‘may he add’ (18)4.17 r.25) and יִשָּׂע "leaders" (13)31.1 r.4). Vowels from both the Tiberian system and the Babylonian system may be found in the same text, e.g., in a letter of Hayya Ga’on, ‘he did’ (10)5.8 v.11) and יִשָּׂע ‘standing’ (20)100 r.32).1 The different systems can even be used on the same word, e.g., in a letter of Nathan ben ‘Avraham, יִשָּׂע ‘towers’ (13)31.1 r.4) and יִשָּׂע ‘of holy men’ (13)31.1 r.16) and יִשָּׂע ‘cut’ (13)31.1 r.18), or in a copy of a letter by Shiriya and Hayya, יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר יִשָּׁר ‘from gloom and from darkness’ (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.3).

Apart from the vowels signs proper, other diacritics such as dages and ga’ya are equally rare. When they do occur they often appear unnecessary: שֵּׂעִי ben ‘Eli is probably just doodling when he writes the dages in יִשָּׂע ‘because’ (NS 309.20 r.4). The rafe is infrequently attested: יִשָּׂע ‘from the daughter of’ (13)14.10 r.28). The the diacritical dots on the ו and ל are employed more often, perhaps indicating that there was some uncertainty over the correct pronunciation of ו and ל, e.g., יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘the princes’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.10) and יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘his presence’ (13)14.10 r.10).2

It is difficult to determine why the vowels occur on some words and not others, or on just one syllable of a word and not the whole thing; occasionally they seem to be placed on common words about which there can be little confusion over pronunciation, e.g., יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘the academy’ (13)31.1 r.5), יִשָּׂע ‘then’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 4 v.17) or יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘and they judged’ (8)20.1 r.8). However, it is possible to identify some main areas of language where vocalisation is more frequently used.

Vocalisation can indicate the pronunciation of non-Hebrew names and places, e.g., יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘Zoe’ (13)11.4 r.6); יִשָּׂע הַבּוֹרֶה ‘in Bëneh’ (10)9.14 r.7); יִשָּׂע לְצִיְמַהא ‘to Sicily’ (12)114.15).3

Vocalisation can be used to elucidate a complicated or obscure biblical form, e.g., יִשָּׂע תַּמָּר ‘and when we remember’ (8)20.1 r.3), especially pausal forms, e.g., יִשָּׂע ‘and go’ (13)20.25 r.9) and יִשָּׂע יִשָּׁר ‘they

1Despite the different classmarks these two examples both belong to the same letter, Gil (1997) no. 37.
2The diacritics on sin and šin are always written with the dot above the sin/shin, i.e., as ו and ל, according to Standard Tiberian practice and not within the boundaries of the letter itself as can often be found in contemporary biblical manuscripts which exhibit non-standard and Palestinian features; cf. Dotan p. 1464.
3Note that the form shows an o vowel in the first syllable, resulting from the vocalised pronunciation of the ש; the Arabic name for ‘Sicily’ usually shows an i vowel, i.e., is _COLLAPSE_.
will perish' 32.8 r.44).

It is used once to mark a feminine suffix: יִתְנָה 'your eye' (13)20.9 r.8).

It can be used to distinguish an unusual form from its more common, consonantally identical counterpart, e.g., 'our helmsman [=leader]' (20.114 r.8) as opposed to 'our word'; יִתְנָה 'sea' (8)20.1 r.5) rather than יִתְנָה 'days'.

Very rarely vowels distinguish definite and indefinite nouns: יִתְנָה 'to the boy' (13)20.3 r.9); יִתְנָה 'in rejoicing' (13)111.1 r.11).

Vocalisation can be used to distinguish a construct from an absolute noun, e.g., יִתְנָה 'for the reward' (10)111.29 r.17); יִתְנָה 'from the daughter of' (13)1410 r.28).

Vocalisation sometimes serves as an alternative to full orthography, e.g., יִתְנָה 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8), יִתְנָה 'from entering' (13)20.18 r.13), יִתְנָה 'they will come' (13)111.1 r.9), יִתְנָה 'the Tummim' (13)20.9 r.8) and יִתְנָה 'and may they perish' (13)1410 r.14). This use of vowel signs is found particularly in Nathan ben 'Avraham's letters since he shows a preference for defective orthography in the manner of BH, e.g., יִתְנָה 'he [cannot] be compared' (8.3 r.4). However, in other texts we can find both full orthography and vocalisation, a kind of 'belt and braces' approach, e.g., יִתְנָה 'to be judged' (Gil (1983) no. 408=ULC Add 3347 r.6).

Also in Nathan ben 'Avraham's letters and occasionally elsewhere we find that vowels can be used to draw attention to a rhyme scheme, e.g., יִתְנָה 'to our friend, our considered, our valiant, our great, our noble Masos of our heart' (13)311.1 r.3).

**Systems of vocalisation**

Vocalisation signs from three different systems are attested in the corpus:

(i) Tiberian

(ii) Simple Babylonian

(iii) Lined Babylonian (this is not Complex Babylonian)

**Tiberian vocalisation**

The principal vocalisation system displayed in the corpus is the Tiberian. By the time of the letters, the Tiberian system had been fixed and become pre-eminent as the main system for the vocalisation of the biblical text. Tiberian vocalisation is therefore found throughout the corpus, in letters from North Africa to Babylon. It is far more commonly attested than the Babylonian systems, which were disappearing from use during this period (tenth to the twelfth centuries), and the few texts which evidence Babylonian vowels often show examples of Tiberian vocalisation as well.

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4This approach is not unusual in texts from the geniza, particularly those intended for private use. For instance a liturgical text from the tenth-eleventh centuries exhibits the same full orthography together with vocalisation: יִתְנָה (NS 15729 v.14).

All the graphemes of the Tiberian vowel system are attested with the exception of two *haṭefš,* *haṭef-sgol* and *haṭef-games; haṭef-patÔh* is also very rare. The most frequently attested signs are those for *sere* and *games.

**Tiberian games**

The Tiberian *games* sign, ג, is the commonest sign in the corpus and is used to mark both the long, unreduced *games* found in some construct, suffixed or plural nominal forms, and the short *games* (*games-haṭuf*) used in the closed syllables of some suffixed segolate nouns and infinitive constructs.

**Long games:** The vowel sign marks the long *games* in the open first syllable which is retained despite the addition of an affix to the base form of the noun. Perhaps it is used to indicate the retention of the *games* which under the influence of the regular noun might have been prone to elision, since in לֹא, for example, the first syllable is reduced to *šewa* with the addition of an affix, כָּרַט. The vocalisation is used primarily, therefore, to indicate the correct pronunciation of these words.

**Short games:** The texts attest no incidence of the vowel *games* used in conjunction with the vowel-letter *waw,* such as may be found in some manuscripts with a background Palestinian or Sefardi pronunciation, although in a few unvocalised words *waw* is found where Standard Tiberian attests a short *games,* e.g., מְחַרָבָה 'to sell us' (10:27.8 r.13). There is little evidence to indicate how *games* was pronounced by the letter-writers. The correct writing of short *games* in the above forms indicates only that they had a good knowledge of the MT's spelling but it doesn't really help to establish how they were being pronounced. It is possible that they adhered strictly to the correct pronunciation of the biblical text, but that the few instances of the realisation of short *games* as ø may be the influence of the other reading traditions associated with the liturgy and rabbinic literature.

An interchange of *games* and *patÔh* is attested in the corpus. Moše the scribe writes the suffix conjugation verb יָשָׁב, 'and I spent the Sabbath' (13:20.9 r.25) with a *patÔh* rather than *games* under the *šin.* This is perhaps an indication of the influence of the Palestinian or Sefardi pronunciation tradition, which doesn't distinguish between the two vowels. Many vulgar biblical texts (i.e., not model codices) from the *geniza* which evidence Tiberian vocalisation with non-standard features often show the same uncertainty over the two a vowels, sometimes interchanging one or two, sometimes employing only one of the two vowels.

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6 For further examples see Orthography.

7 Cf. Eldar pp. 46–47; Dotan p. 1126. Reading traditions varied between those used for the Hebrew Bible, which had a fixed text and consistent vocalisation, and those used for other literatures, such as the liturgy or rabbinic texts, whose vocalisation was often neither fixed nor consistent and could reflect different post-biblical traditions of Hebrew. Dotan notes concerning the Sefardi reading traditions that the בּ ool-bed-קַפַּט letters in the biblical language retain their dual pronunciation of spirant (fricative) and non-spirant (plosive) when recited but that they are pronounced only as stops, i.e., as if all with *dagesh,* when the Mišna is being read.

8 Morag (1971) p. 1125; Dotan p. 1464.

9 Dotan p. 1464; many examples can be found in Davis, e.g., T-S AS 15.31 or T-S AS 8.3.
Tiberian patah

There is some small evidence for the furtive patah דינור ‘diminished’ (13:14.10 r.19), which occurs in a letter of the Palestinian ga’on, Yošiyahu.10

Yošiyahu Ga’on attests patah for segol in a number of possessive suffixes, e.g., וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘their plunderers’ (13:14.10 r.14); וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘their miraculous deeds (?)’ (13:14.10 r.14). The patah דֵּשׁmu’el Haššiši shows the opposite interchange in a construct noun, וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘praise [of]’ (16.68 r.16). The interchange of patah and segol can be explained as the influence of the Babylonian tradition of BH, which originally used only one sign for Tiberian patah and segol.11 However, it is more likely, given the Palestinian background of both writers, that this is a feature of the same, presumably Palestinian, pronunciation that frequently causes the same vowel interchange and uncertainty in ‘vulgar’ geniza biblical and liturgical manuscripts of the period.12

Tiberian hatef-patah

Hatef-patah is only attested rarely in the corpus, e.g., וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘causes to sigh’ (10:10.5 r.13). Instead, we often find the full patah sign being written: וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘the westerners’ (Arabic Box 47.243 r.8); וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘and may he cause you rejoicing’ (Gill (1997) no. 73=JTS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.26); וֹסֶלֶשׁ ‘when’ (Gill (1997) no. 52=ENA 4050 r.8). This transgresses the graphical conventions of the Standard Tiberian vocalisation system but does not indicate a phonetic difference. Such readings are extremely common in medieval vulgar biblical texts which show various degrees of non-standard Tiberian vocalisation.13

Tiberian qibbuṣ

The Tiberian sign qibbuṣ, ב, is sometimes unusually attested in conjunction with a vowel-letter waw, although this does not represent a phonetic change: בַּר ‘they have built’ (Gill (1983) no. 284=ENA 4010.47 vm.1); בַּר ‘and they humbled them’ (Gill (1997) no. 52=ENA 4050 v.9).

Tiberian šere

The most common use of the Tiberian šere sign, ב, is to mark the internal šere of feminine nouns and adjectives: בַּר ‘springing up’ (13:11.7 r.5); בַּר ‘full’ (13:13.28 r.4); בַּר ‘to his synagogue’ NS 321.22 r.12); בַּר ‘the one same’ (13:14.10 r.15), from Micah 4:6.

Two examples of interchange of šere with other vowels are attested. בַּר ‘what was done’ (8:20.3

10Many geniza Hebrew Bible manuscripts of this period which display non-Standard Tiberian vocalisation show no evidence of furtive patah, so a similar lack in the letters would not be unexpected; cf. Dotan p. 1462.
11Ibid., p. 1443. In later Babylonian manuscripts an additional sign is sometimes used to indicate Tiberian segol.
12Davis has many examples of patah/segol interchanges; they occur often in the region of the laryngeals. The interchange reflects a breakdown in the vowel system subsequent to the codifying of the Tiberian tradition and is well-attested in Palestinian vocalised manuscripts; however, early examples of the process are noticeable in the MT; cf. Revell (1970) p. 102. It cannot be ruled out either that this vowel breakdown might owe something to the influence of the Arabic vernacular and that possibly some incidences of e vowels for a vowels are due to ‘imāla. cf. Wolf, vol. 1, p.10
13There are frequent examples in Davis, e.g., T-S AS 3.56 Numbers 11:12 הַשְּׁבָא for the MT’s הַשְּׁבָא.
r.8) is found in a copy of a letter by the Babylonian ga' on Nāḥemya Hakohen. Standard Tiberian Hebrew attests טְהִיר, e.g., Exodus 3:16. The interchange of Tiberian sere and segol is a feature of the Palestinian and Sefardi traditions, and can be encountered in many contemporary texts from the geniza, both biblical and non-biblical. The problem with most texts of the Babylonian ג"א' onim in the corpus is that they are not autographs but copies produced by local scribes and dignitaries in Fustat and elsewhere, in some cases long after the letter was written, and, as such, cannot be relied upon to have preserved accurately all the tiny details of the letter-writer’s original text. Another letter, by Sā'ira and Hayya, is also a copy and attests a different vowel interchange, sere for šewa, הבש in his deeds’ (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.11). This is an unusual exchange of vowels, effectively ē for a, but not unknown in geniza texts. Whether it is at all original or the result of a copyist’s error is impossible to know.

The sparsity of the Tiberian vocalisation does not give much evidence for the pronunciation of the letter-writers. Moreover, most letters were written by the well-educated who obviously had a very deep knowledge of the biblical text and its vocalisation, so that, on the whole, the few examples of vocalisation found in the texts match those of the Standard Tiberian tradition of the Bible. Only one or two divergences from Standard Tiberian give any clue as to the writers’ background pronunciation. We can discern occasionally the influence of the popular traditions, notably in the interchange of the a and o vowels or of the a and é vowels, similar to what can often be seen in the private biblical texts and siddurim recovered from the geniza.

Babylonian vocalisation

Two types of Babylonian vocalisation are attested: the Babylonian simple system of supralinear vocalisation and a variant of it in which lines are placed above the supralinear vowels but which in other aspects does not differ from the simple system.

Naṭan ben 'Avraham, whose origins, like those of many geniza personalities, are a little obscure but who probably came from Jerusalem, attests several letters with the lined Babylonian vowels alongside Tiberian vocalisation. 'Aḥad Qallat (Misc. 35.15), 'Avraham of Minyat Zifta (32.8) and Yosef Hakohen ben Sā'irīm Ga'on (13J16.24) are all letter-writers based in Egypt or Palestine who attest the use of Babylonian vowel signs. Another use of Babylonian vocalisation is in the letter sent by the community of Aṣqelon (16.251). They write to Byzantium in Hebrew vocalised with Babylonian vowels, possibly, according to Mann, because they believed that was the system in use there. A letter from Damascus sent to the Palestinian Academy also attests one or two Babylonian vowels (13J26.13). Very few of the letters that stem from Iraq attest any Babylonian vocalisation. An autograph letter of Hayya Ga’on, NS 324.112, attests a single instance of Babylonian qames, more instead of a single instance of Babylonian qames, more instead of יָרִיק: 'Yariqa’ (NS 321.112 r.4), as does a copy of a letter from the same writer, יָשָׁר: ‘he did’

14 Cf. Morag (1988), text 17 (T-S F1(1).65), pp. 5–6, for a similar interchange of sere and segol in a Miṣna text reflecting Palestinian pronunciation. Davis has many examples of similar exchanges, e.g., T-S AS 1.37.

15 Cf. Morag (1988), text 3 (T-S F1(1.19), pp. 2–3, which reads צְרַף for an expected צְרַף; this text attests many deviations from Standard Tiberian vocalisation with a complete lack of consistency.

16 See Gil (1992) 6870–871 for Naṭan ben 'Avraham's early history. He studied in both Jerusalem and the Maghrib and could have picked up his knowledge of Babylonian vocalisation in either place.

17 See Mann’s notes on the text, Mann (1922) vol. 1, pp. 92–93.
During the period of the majority of letters in the corpus, the eleventh-twelfth centuries, the Babylonian tradition was in terminal decline, matching the decline of the Babylonian academies, and the Tiberian was supplanting it. Eventually, the Babylonian tradition only remained in use in isolated areas such as Yemen.\(^{19}\) How then do we account for its use among the scholarly writers of Palestine and Egypt, not all of whom can have come from Iraqi backgrounds? A biblical codex with Tiberian vocalisation, datable to around the tenth century, attests extensive masoretic notes which are vocalised with the Complex Babylonian system.\(^{18}\) Yeivin notes of this and similar early Tiberian manuscripts: ‘it is probable that the use of such signs was in some way fashionable [...]’ In any case these signs represent Tiberian, not Babylonian pronunciation.\(^{20}\) It is likely that a similar reason underlies the use of Babylonian vowels in letters such as those by Na'atan ben 'Avraham: the vowels are a stylistic feature. Certainly this would explain why often the vocalisation appears unnecessary to the reading and understanding of the text, and, in Na'atan’s case, the use of an almost unique system of lined Babylonian vocalisation tends to suggest ‘showing-off’, or to put it another way, the deliberate flaunting of erudition.

**Simple Babylonian**

There are so few simple Babylonian vowels attested in the letters that it is difficult to determine whether they represent genuine Babylonian phonetic features or betray a Tiberian background pronunciation. There are no examples of Babylonian \(\text{pataj} : i\) being used for Tiberian segol, which could be regarded as a Babylonian feature.\(^{21}\) In \(\text{p} \text{p} \text{n} \text{p} \text{n}\) ‘and he decreed a law’ (13J26.13 r.22) we find a Babylonian \(\text{qames}\) for an expected \(\text{pat} \text{a} \text{k}\); this occurs in other manuscripts showing Babylonian vocalisation, but it is not the dominant form which is the same as Tiberian Hebrew.\(^{22}\) This may just be the influence of the morphology of the middle-weak verb, or perhaps could even be indicative of a background Palestinian-Sefardi pronunciation. A different possibility is \(\text{p} \text{p} \text{n} \text{m} \text{m}\) ‘and may he favour them’ (16.251 r.5) which is found in the letter sent from Ašqelon. It shows the Babylonian \(o\) vowel where Tiberian has short \(\text{qames}\), e.g., \(\text{q} \text{n} \text{n} \text{n}\) ‘show them [no] mercy’ Deuteronomy 7:2. The retention of historical short \(o\) for Tiberian \(\text{qames}\) is a feature of the Babylonian pronunciation tradition, although it is usually realised as an \(u\) vowel.\(^{23}\) In the case of \(\text{p} \text{n}\), according to the manuscript evidence assembled by Yeivin, it is usually vocalised with \(\text{sureq}\), i.e., short \(u\), in the prefix conjugation.\(^{24}\) Therefore this form probably does not represent a genuine Babylonian pronunciation. It may instead reflect a Palestinian-Sefardi pronunciation of \(\text{qames-} \text{kaf}\) as \(o\).

\(^{18}\) See Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 98. It is ironic that this whilst the Babylonian pronunciation tradition of BH was declining under pressure from Tiberian, the Babylonian tradition of RH, through the medium of the Babylonian Talmud, was establishing itself as the norm, supplanting western traditions of RH as well as the Palestinian Talmud.

\(^{19}\) The codex is Jerusalem, National and University, Heb. 24°5702, described in Yeivin (1980) p. 21.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 120.

\(^{21}\) Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 101; Yeivin (1985) p. 1144. Although, as mentioned above, many manuscripts of Palestinian provenance attest similar confusion of \(a\) and \(e\).


\(^{23}\) Ibid., pp. 419ff.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., p. 619.
The Simple Babylonian vocalisation of the letters doesn’t conclusively demonstrate any genuine Babylonian features of pronunciation. Neither are any Babylonian diacritics, such as the signs for dagesš or for sin/sin attested. There are really too few examples of the vocalisation to draw concrete conclusions, but it seems that the situation is similar to that of the masoretic notes described by Yeivin and the so-called Young Babylonian texts where the vowels are often simply representing Tiberian pronunciation with Babylonian graphemes.25

**Lined Babylonian**

Some letters by Natan ben 'Avraham attest an unusual form of the Babylonian supralinear vocalisation. In this system, the vowels are written with lines above them; graphically they are similar to some of the signs used in the Complex Babylonian system of vocalisation, but they are not employed in the same way.26

In the corpus, these signs are attested in three letters by Natan ben 'Avraham; he also attests Tiberian vowels.

The following signs are attested:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lined</th>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ṣere</td>
<td>ר&quot;ע</td>
<td>'our heart' (13J31.1 r.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭah</td>
<td>הדר</td>
<td>'may he help him' (13J31.1 r.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qames</td>
<td>יומ</td>
<td>'peace' (10J15.10 r.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hireq</td>
<td>מ&quot;ד</td>
<td>'thanking' (10J15.10 r.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holém</td>
<td>יו</td>
<td>'and his humility' (10J15.10 r.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As examples such as ר"ע 'our heart' (13J31.1 r.3) and יומ 'it longs' (13J31.1 r.15) show, the lined sign is not equivalent to that of the complex system, where a line above a vowel marks a syllable closed by dagesš. In these examples, either the vowel is actually a long vowel in an open syllable, -ַ- and -ֹ-, or the syllable is technically closed by šewa, ה'.

The equivalence of Natan’s lined sere and Tiberian sere is shown when he vocalises the same word with the two different signs, ר"ע 'from a blessing of God' (8.3 r.5) and ו'אל 'by the will of God' (8J20.1 v.2).

Natan’s letters show a number of examples that could be understood as representative of Babylonian pronunciation, but are probably not. In a segolate noun, he attests Babylonian pataẖ for Tiberian segol, e.g., ר"ע 'diadem' (13J31.1 r.12) and יומ 'it longs' (13J31.1 r.15), however, in similar segolates showing Tiberian vowels he uses segol, ו'י 'help' (13J31.1 m.5), thus indicating a knowledge of Tiberian pronunciation.27 It is probable that he is only imitating the Babylonian form when he writes pataẖ. The noun ר"ע 'and cries' (13J31.1 r.11) is conclusive evidence of Natan’s

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26Yeivin (1985) pp. 87–88 discusses this system and notes the very few other texts in which similar lined systems are employed; these include a manuscript of a pīyūt of 56mu’el Haššliši, Bodl. Heb. d. 50.1. Most examples, though, occur in the few letters of Natan ben 'Avraham. For the Complex (or Compound) system see pp. 64ff. Although there are different types, the main features are that the lines above or below short vowels indicate what type of syllable they occur in, whether closed by šewa or closed by dagesš.

27For the vocalisation of segolates in the Babylonian tradition see Yeivin (1985) pp. 817ff, esp. p. 829.
Tiberian pronunciation. He writes a short ֶ vowel, in imitation of Tiberian qames-hapuf. This is not a Babylonian vowel, since Tiberian short ֶ in Babylonian is realised as ֹ or ִ. In this case, the attested genuine Babylonian form is with holem. This is not a Babylonian vowel, since Tiberian ֶ in Babylonian is realised as ֶ. Naṭan ben 'Avraham's letters, then, are similar to the others which show Babylonian vowels in the corpus, reflecting a background Tiberian pronunciation.

Other signs

A number of other signs are used in the letters to indicate either abbreviations or biblical quotations. Biblical quotations may not be marked at all but often they show a single dot over each word in the quote, sometimes two or three dots (like the Babylonian supralinear signs for ִ and ִ) or a horizontal line like ִ. Introducing the quotation may be an abbreviated phrase such as (10:13.22 r.1) in the Tora' (Misc. 35.49 r.12) or just ִ 'as it is written' (13:14.10 r.32), and it is often ended by ֶ (וּוּיִו) 'etc.' (13:14.10 r.32).

Abbreviations are very common in the letters. The polite blessings which follow any names mentioned in the text either to wish long life or, in the case of the deceased, a fitting rest are often abbreviated. They can sometimes occur many times in a single letter; if a lot of names are mentioned to write them all out in full would substantially increase the length of the text and the amount of precious paper required. Thus such abbreviations as the following are commonplace in the corpus:

- 'his rest be in 'Eden' (6:17 r.3); 'may his spirit be enwrapped in the bundle of life' (32.8 r.30); 'his memory be for a blessing' (24.43 r.15); 'protect him O Merciful One' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.16) or just ֶ?
- 'his Rock keep him' (10:25.5 r.3). Other commonly occurring abbreviations are the various names of God, e.g., ֶ (אללה) 'God' (NS 321.2 r.14); (הנה) 'the Place' (Misc. 35.43 r.2) and (הHoly One, blessed be He' (Misc. 35.49 r.5), and certain well-known people, places and concepts from Jewish tradition, e.g., ֶ(יהודה) 'the sages' (8.3 r.17); ֶ(וול הולא) 'from our lord the ga'on' (13:16.17 r.36); ֶ(בֵית בְּר) 'son of a scholar' (12.44 v.1).

As with the use of vow signs, occasionally the reason for abbreviation is not clear, e.g., ֶ abbreviates ֶ 'our dear one' (8.3 r.6) in a letter of Naṭan ben 'Avraham. Although it might sometimes be necessary for the scribe to abbreviate to maintain a straight left margin, this cannot be the reason in this case since it is only the second word in the line.

Consonants

On a purely consonantal level, the letters show very little divergence from standard BH. The
influence of the form of the biblical text is great on the writers and they clearly emulate it in the spellings (e.g., in the use of sin). The Arabic vernacular, with its similar pronunciation, probably helped to maintain the distinct pronunciation of certain consonants (as we can see in modern Oriental traditions of Hebrew), particularly in the gutturals, the b^2 gad-k^2 fet allophones and in the velarised consonants.

This section deals with the gutturals, the sibilants and the b^2 gad-k^2 fet consonants. In respect of the emphatics such as כ or ב no evidence is available from the letters other than that they remain distinct from their non-velarised counterparts, נ and ב. They show no divergence from BH spelling.

**The gutturals**

Because the vernacular of the letter-writers was Arabic, which counts a full complement of pharyngeals and laryngeals within its consonantal inventory, the guttural letters in Hebrew, ק, ת, י and י, show no interchange and only a little evidence of elision, affecting only the weaker gutturals ק and י. There is no evidence of י interchanging with ק or of ת and י swapping places, indicating that the pronunciations of each were distinct, as in modern Oriental traditions of Hebrew.^{30} Quiescent ‘אlefis occasionally elided, principally under the influence of RH morphological forms, e.g., יסרג ‘we have read’ (10J9.25 r.8) and יסר ‘called’ (20.94 r.21), but the BH spelling is as often carefully retained, e.g., נכשא ‘to swallow’ (20.100 r.18). Intervocalic י is elided in the following nifal infinitive constructs only: ילכמ ‘to enter’ (10J9.14 r.21) and ילתפיה ‘and to be opened’ (18J4.20 m.11); as with ‘אlef the BH spelling is more often retained, e.g., ילכלי ‘to be collected’ (13J31.8 r.19). However, one of the major distinctive morphological features of the letters, the pronominal suffix of the prefix conjugation in י, e.g., ישקב ‘may he keep him’ (16.68 v.3), could also be symptomatic of a general weakening of intervocalic he, i.e., ישקב ‘may he keep him’.

**The sibilants**

Sin and samekכ do not interchange to any great extent in the letters, although in all Arabic-speaking traditions of Hebrew they were pronounced identically.^^{31} The few examples of interchanged that do occur are probably mostly a result of the influence of RH orthography, e.g., יפניא ‘spreading out his hands’ (20.94 r.17) for BH פניא, e.g., יפניא ‘and he spread out his hands’ Exodus 9:33, which is always יפניא in rabinic texts. However, there are exceptions. Sin is used for samekכ in the unusual spelling יר ‘prince, leader’ (13J15.14 r.5, r.19, r.24), instead of BH יר, e.g., 2 Samuel 3:38. יר ‘their plunderers’ (13J14.10 r.14) shows Yoṣiyah Ga’on being slightly uncertain as to the correct spelling of the biblical participle. Gil’s transcription (Gil (1983) no. 29) gives the reading as יר, but there is understandable confusion, since one letter has been written over with another, sin over samekכ, indicating that the writer wasn’t sure if it was a ס or a ס but ended up with the hypercorrect יר for the actual biblical root שסח, e.g., יר ‘plunderers’ Judges 2:14. Elsewhere in the same letter, Yoṣiyah Ga’on constantly puts the diacritics on sin and sin, e.g., יר ‘rejoicing’ (13J14.10 r.8); יר ‘may he delight’ (13J14.10 r.10); יר ‘his presence’ (31J14.10 r.10). Because of the correspondence between Arabic ℓ and Hebrew $ in cognate roots, e.g., Arabic sa’ala equals Hebrew שָׁאָל, there could have been some uncertainty over the pronunciation of sin and שָׁאָל in

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^{31}Dotan p. 1132.
particular words. Perhaps then Yośiyahu Ga'on was making sure in his letter.\textsuperscript{32} Evidence of actual confusion is difficult to find, however, there is a single example of the interchange of samek and sin in the corpus: "the two lines" (18J4.4 r.28). Other letters attest the correct RH form, e.g., "'two lines' (20.106 r.1). Arabic influence is almost certainly responsible, since the Arabic equivalent (but not cognate in this case) noun is saṭr 'line, row'.

**The $B^g$ gados-$K^g$ fath consonants**

The Tiberian pronunciation tradition preserved the two different pronunciations of all six $B^g$ gados-$K^g$ fath consonants, 'hard', with dages, and 'soft', without dages. In the hard pronunciation the consonants are pronounced as stops, in the soft, or spirant, pronunciation they are fricatives.\textsuperscript{33} In the modern Oriental traditions of the reading of the Hebrew Bible, the spirant pronunciations are mostly retained due to the influence of Arabic, though they differ from community to community: $\text{ם}$ is pronounced as $t$ and $g$ in the Yemenite and Iraqi traditions, $\text{י}$ preserves a consistent dual pronunciation of $d$ and $g$ in the Yemen, but the Iraqi tradition pronounces 'soft' $\text{י}$, $\text{ג}$, only in particular words. This is a far cry from Spain, where in the rabbinic reading tradition of Sefarad the non-spirant pronunciation of the consonants was generalised.\textsuperscript{34}

Dages and rafe are rarely written in the corpus. Yośiyahu Ga'on writes a small number of diacritics in one of his letters, e.g., "ך' 'surging' (13J14.10 r.16); וּפֶךָּ 'from a daughter' (13J14.10 r.28). This seems to be indicating that there were dual pronunciations of these consonants, as in the modern pronunciation of Arabic-speaking Jews. However, it is also possible that these signs represent not an attempt to assist the reading of the letter, but in imitating biblical text they are purely ornamental in the manner of some of the other vocalisation we have encountered.

There is better evidence regarding the pronunciation of ב which in the Tiberian tradition was pronounced 'hard' as a bilabial stop, $b$, and 'soft' as a labio-dental, $\nu$.\textsuperscript{35} The pronunciation of the spirant ב, i.e. following a vowel, is demonstrated in the rhyme used by شلومו ben יְרִיחוּהָ, e.g., מיושב שם may his name be better than that of his father, and may his honour grow and increase his congregation, and God give them rest from all fear round about' (13J16.14 r.9–10), where the rhyming element is -iv. The same pronunciation of 'soft' ב as $\nu$ is more radically demonstrated by a highly original spelling of the 3 masculine singular pronominal suffix of the plural noun in a draft of a letter by 'Efraim ben שmarya, פָּלָאֵת הַתּוֹרָה 'his wonders' (12.273 v.10), for BH, מְפָלָאָתָו, e.g., Judges 6:13.

**Orthography**

Since vocalisation in the letters is only, at best, sporadic and often non-existent, we are more than usually reliant upon the orthography. A better understanding of the orthographic practices of the letter-writers enables the reader to distinguish with more confidence between different

\textsuperscript{32}This letter, 13J14.10, was addressed to the Jerusalemites in Fustat and was probably intended for public reading in the synagogue.

\textsuperscript{33}Khan p.13.

\textsuperscript{34}Dotan p. 1126.

\textsuperscript{35}Khan p. 3–4.
morphological forms, to identify obscure vocabulary and to attempt to ascertain some aspects of the pronunciation behind the written text. Orthography can also draw attention to the major influences on the language of the writers: a more defective spelling would suggest that the orthography of the biblical text is a model for the writer, whereas frequent use of vowel letters and a more phonetic approach generally would indicate that there is less of a sentimental attachment to BH and a greater necessity for clarity in communication; spellings with word-final י or י would point to the probable influence of the Babylonian Talmud’s Hebrew, whereas י would suggest the Palestinian rabbinic tradition.

Of course, there is not a standard orthography in the letters to which all the writers adhere. There was clearly room for individual style. The geographical and sectarian differences assured that the texts today present a far from uniform spelling. However, it is possible to discern trends shown in the letters: the wider use of vowel letters, the continued adherence to certain biblical spellings and the distinctive effect of RH practice are all to be seen throughout the letters, with few exceptions, and they combine to produce what can be described as the dominant style of the corpus.

The vowel letters

The use of vowel letters, i.e., mater lectionis, relies upon the graphic conventions established in BH for the employment of several of the consonantal signs to represent the Hebrew vowels. The vowel letters attested in the texts are the same as those in BH, waw, yod, he and. to a lesser extent, 'alef. A number of orthographic techniques taken from post-biblical sources are also in evidence. such as the doubling of the signs for waw and yod to indicate either geminated or ungeminated v or y, the use of 'alef-yod for the syllable ay and so on. By necessity, because the texts are mostly unvocalised, the orthography is fuller than in earlier traditions of Hebrew, but perhaps not as full or as consistent as might be expected due to the continual influence on the writers of the Hebrew Bible’s orthography.

Waw

The o vowel

The Tiberian long o vowel is usually marked by mater lectionis waw in the letters: 'who dwells' (10J10.22 r.14); 'who love' (6J3.14 r.8); 'to draw water' (10J11.29 r.17); 'it will reach us' (AS 145.61 r.13). A regular exception is the segolate תוש in the commonly occurring BH phrase תוש 'the Holy City' (12.80 r.6), where the usual spelling of the MT is often followed, although it can also be spelled plene in the letters, תוש (13J27.3 r.2). Very occasionally תוש defective spellings are employed, e.g., רביה 'in his generations' (10G5.8 v.9) and תוש 'in pits' (Gil (1983) no. 50=EN 4020.42 r.32): it is probably the MT’s orthographic practice of avoiding more than one waw appearing in the same word that accounts for such spellings. In a very few cases the feminine plural ending of the regular noun is also spelt defectively, תוש


37Personal preference plays a major part: the letters written by Sλomo ben Yohuda’s son, Avraham, always show the defective spelling תוש while his father’s writings often attest תוש תוש 'to be driven out of the Holy City' (10J10.22 r.5); תוש תוש 'who go up to the Holy City' (13J11.5 r.20).
'sought' (18J4 r.8). Usually, though, the regular feminine plural ending is spelt with \textit{waw}, e.g., \textit{with blessings} (13J11.7) and \textit{salvations} (16.18 r.2).

Common BH words that are historically spelt with \textit{alef} or \textit{he} do not show \textit{waw} for \textit{̀nō} (10J10.22 r.2); \textit{rēš} \textit{head} (10J10.22 r.15); \textit{̀av} \textit{this} (8.3 r.18); \textit{̀amr} \textit{his flock} (13J14.8 r.17); \textit{̀māy} \textit{this way} (16.275 r.23). A unique exception in the corpus occurs in an oddly-written letter addressed to Tovliyya ben 'Eli, where the negative particle is spelt \textit{̀}, so that it resembles the conditional conjunction \textit{̀}, as follows, \textit{̀i} \textit{and not a single word of reply returned to me} (10J25.4 r.6) and \textit{̀i} \textit{and they didn't send me a reply} (10J25.4 r.10). Other decidedly non-standard spellings are found in the same letter, suggesting either a love of innovation on the writer's part, or a lack of knowledge of, or perhaps respect for, classical Hebrew orthography. A far less extreme example of non-biblical orthography occurs in \textit{Salomo} ben \textit{Yahuda}'s letters. He also occasionally spells the negative particle with \textit{waw}, though retaining the \textit{̀alef}, \textit{̀av}, when it is functioning as a negative conjunction in the construction \textit{̀i}, \textit{so as not to} (13J14.5 r.11; 12.217 r.11); it is written defectively when it is simply the negative adverb, \textit{̀i} \textit{which [we have] not} (13J14.8 r.30). As far as can be seen, the same, apparently semantic, distinction is not represented by the orthography of other letters in the corpus.

The name of God always retains the defective form in which it is found in the MT: \textit{אֱלֹהִים} 'our God' (AS 145.107 r.7); \textit{אֱלֹהָינוּ 'and God'} (13J20.25 r.19). Other names and titles are also usually written defectively: \textit{Moshe} (10J12.17 r.21); \textit{Avishai} 'Yošiyyahu' (Misc. 35.44 r.1); \textit{̀Ya'aqov} (8J36.10 r.6); \textit{Hakkohen} (18J4.4 r.35); \textit{̀Ya'aqov} (8J36.10 r.6); \textit{the judge} (13J20.13 r.11); although we can find them written \textit{plene} \textit{̀Ya'aqob} (13J16.24 r.9; 13J42.9, 13J16.18 r.10) and \textit{̀Ya'aqub} (13J18.14 r.12). Only the drafts of letters by 'Efraim ben Samarya are orthographically-unusual enough for us to encounter a reading such as \textit{Salomo} ' (Gil (1983) no. 334=PER H 135 r.16) for \textit{Salmu}, a spelling that was probably corrected by the time the final draft of the letter was produced.

Certain BH pronouns and other particles always occur in a defective form: \textit{̀i} 'I' (13J11.4 r.11); \textit{̀nm} 'everyone' (13J9.2 r.24); \textit{̀m} 'before' (13J25.5 r.7).

In BH inflected forms of the direct object marker \textit{̀} are usually written defectively.\footnote{For the practice of avoiding two \textit{yods} or two \textit{waw}s see Jotion §7c. \textit{Salomo} Hakkohen Ga'on's unusual use of \textit{̀} is probably occasioned by the \textit{plene} spelling having been used in the eprevious line, \textit{in pits} (Gil (1983) no. 50=E 4020.42 r.31), an example of the \textit{geniza} letters' tendency to avoid writing identical forms in close proximity; when he uses the noun in a different letter, where it only occurs once, he spells it with \textit{waw}, Gil (1983) no. 49=E 2804.8 r.26.} Both \textit{plene} and defective spellings occur in the letters, with the former predominating: \textit{̀} 'us' (18J4.4 r.12); \textit{̀} 'from the same' (13J20.3 r.16); however, letters of Babylonian provenance, under the influence\footnote{Although it could also be the case that the writer is intending to write \textit{̀} and using it as an optative, albeit with a nuance of regret, as is perfectly acceptable in Hebrew and in Arabic, 'O that he had replied!'\footnote{The same spelling, \textit{̀}, is the dominant form of the negative in the Dead Sea scrolls, Abegg, p. 329.}.

\footnote{The same spelling, \textit{̀}, is the dominant form of the negative in the Dead Sea scrolls, Abegg, p. 329.} of Arabic orthography, where the name is written with \textit{waw}, \textit{Yaqqōb}.\footnote{These names are always defective in the Hebrew Bible. \textit{ברכּ}, for example, occurs 250 times in the MT, never with a \textit{mater lectionis} \textit{waw}; Andersen and Forbes p. 129. \textit{̀Ya'aqob} written \textit{plene} is probably under the influence of Arabic orthography, where the name is written with \textit{waw}, \textit{Yaqqōb}.\footnote{Andersen and Forbes p. 129.}
of conservative biblical orthography, show a greater proportion of defective spellings of 'him' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.20; NS 308.122 v.19). Contemporary Karaite marriage documents also attest both spellings. The adverbial modifier מַזְמָר הָאָרֶץ is another particle that occurs in both plene and defective form in the letters: מַזְמָר הָאָרֶץ (13)16.13 r.12; מַזְמָר הָאָרֶץ (13)17.17 r.2; מַזְמָר הָאָרֶץ (16.275 r.22); מַזְמָר הָאָרֶץ (18)4.17 r.19. Both spellings are employed side by side, probably as a deliberate orthographic device, in the writings of סֵלִומְנ בן יָהוּדָה 'greatly' (13)9.2 r.18).

The pe- 'alef verbs are always written defectively in the 3 singular and plural prefix conjugation: 'they will say' (10)14.19 r.7; 'they will perish' (16.68 r.18); 'and it will vanish' (13)14.14 r.25; 'it shall not devour' (13)14.14 m.1. The infinitive of 'alef also only marks an ㅇ vowel with ָוָו when the RH form is employed, i.e., 'to say' (28.24 r.57) but always 'saying' (13)14.14 r.29. The 1 singular prefix conjugation is always plene, 'and I said' (10)10.22 r.4, as is the participle, 'and saying' (13)9.9 r.8. Verbs middle or final- 'alef are often written defectively, although overall the plene spelling is more frequent: 'asking' (18)4.5 v.15; 12.44 v.3 and elsewhere) and 'to ask' (13)19.15 r.18; 'and to ask' (18)4.5 r.31 and 'to ask' (10)12.22 r.19; 'his coming' (16.261 r.11) and 'he will come' (10)10.9 r.8; 'to fill' (32.8 r.8) and 'to fill' (13)23.7 r.12. Regular verbs in the 2 and 3 masculine singular prefix conjugation very occasionally write the ㅇ vowel defectively: 'will sell' (13)13.28 r.23; 'will write' (8.3 r.16); a letter from Aleppo writes plene and defective side by side, 'may he inquire and seek' (12.17 r.11); but by far the more common spelling is plene: 'will decree' (13)16.17 r.22; 'may he spare' (NS 92 r.13). The regular qal infinitive is also rarely found written defectively, 'to write' (13)14.5 r.10 but 'to write' (13)13.14 r.23, both cases from letters written by סֵלִומְנ ben יָהוּדָה.

Numerals that have an ㅇ vowel are mostly written defectively, as is the usual style in BH: 'three' (13)20.3 r.2; 'from three' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.15); 'eight' (NS 308.122 v.19); 'and thirty' (12.338 v.8). Plene spellings are far less frequent, 'three' (6)3.14 r.6 and 'three' (13)15.14 r.9.44

In summary, the trend observed in the letters is for ָוָו to mark ㅇ in most positions, with comparatively few exceptions, although the numerals are, almost as a rule, defectively written. Other common defective spellings occur in verbs with a root initial- or middle- 'alef. There is probably a desire to emulate BH orthography of these forms but an appreciation of the 'alefs other role as a mater lectionis in archaic BH may have played a part.

The short ֶ vowel

Tiberian short qames, qames-haṭuf, is not usually represented by a vowel letter: קָמֶשׁ 'his holiness'

43Olszowy-Schlanger p. 100.
44Oxford MS Heb. d. 69 is a sixth-century Hebrew letter on papyrus which probably originates from Palestine. It is described by Mishor (1989) and serves as an interesting comparison. The letter attests ָוָו consistently marking ㅇ even in the numerals, e.g., 'seventy' (16)6 r.6 and 'twenty two' (22), whereas our much later letters tend towards conservatism in the writing of numbers. This is no doubt due to the increased prominence that BH enjoyed in the Middle Ages, in the period of the later גֶט onim, whereas the earlier letter, written in the Hebrew of the 'Amora'im, was still in a position to draw upon a more recent, and perhaps more 'alive', tradition of RH and Talmudic Hebrew.
Waw marks the prefix vowel of the hofal conjugation: 'he tilled me' (12.273 v.20); 'my finishing' (12.273 v.17); 'as an offering' (6.1.12); 'and his wisdom' (12.272 r.14); 'his head' (10.30.3 r.12). However, particular attention is shown to it in the letters, demonstrated by the frequent vocalised examples: 'his report' (13.11.2 r.7); 'my thumb' (20.114 r.25); 'their donation' (Gil (1983) no. 405=Dropsie 392 r.6).

Waw marks the prefix vowel of the hofal conjugation: 'I was forced' (12.338 r.14).
However, it stands for u rather than ə, i.e., morphologically reflecting the RH hufal rather than the BH hofal, as can be seen from the vocalised example הַוָּמ (and he had to' (13.30.3 r.4).

Sai'momo ben_Yhuda does not normally employ a mater lectionis for short ə, 'my way' (10.11.29 r.18); 'and he dwelt' (10.11.30 r.10); 'when I heard' (10.27.2 r.17); 'when they said' (13.16.14 v.17). Although once the reading הַוָּמ (when he said' (Gil (1983) no. 72=ENA 2804.15 r.13) is attested. Drafts of letters by 'Efraim benŠmarya (who tends towards a more individual style of vocalisation) also employ waw on occasion, e.g., 'when he keeps' (12.273 v.13) and, possibly, his greatness' (12.273 r.7) but not אַבַּס אָבוֹ (your ear' (12.273 r.15). Saliomomo Hakkohen Ga'on once writes הַוָּמ a Babylonian title that is often attested in BH texts, though it occurs among many defective spellings, and a letter addressed to Yhuda ben Sa'adya has 'let us' (10.27.8 r.13), i.e., מָכָּש. Thus, despite the fact that the dominant spelling of short qames reflects a Standard Tiberian orthography, like that of the MT, the occasional plene forms show that the vowel was possibly realised as an o, as in the traditions evidenced in some RH manuscripts, in the main Palestinian traditions of BH as well as the Sefardi pronunciation.

The ə vowel

Waw marks the Tiberian long ə vowel in nearly all cases: 'lines' (13.24.11 r.20); 'his' (6.14 r.7); 'summons' (10.25.5 r.5); 'the suspect' (13.9.2 r.19); 'closed' (10.22 r.3).

Only two definite cases of defective ə may be found in the corpus: הַוָּמ 'his poverty and his exile' (NS 309.20 v.9) is attested in a letter of Šai'mu'el Ga'on ben Eli; maybe the writer preferred to vary the orthography to avoid writing two very similar forms together. The second is from a letter of Saliomomo ben_Yhuda: יְהוָּמ 'the Alluf' (12.217 r.1) is a Babylonian title that is often attested in geniza texts, but usually with waw. There is biblical precedent for a defective orthography in this case, though, at Zechariah 9:7 the MT reads יְהוָּמ.

The u vowel

The Tiberian short u vowel usually takes mater lectionis waw in the letters, in the pu'al: 'the
distinguished' (13J11.2 r.1); distinguished 'the threefold' (13J31.1 r.18); in the huf'al: 'and he was forced' (NS 309.20 v.7); in nouns: 'inheritance' (13J33.12 r.8); 'his people' (13J33.2 r.4).

The common spelling of the widely used qattâl nominal form is with waw: 'the great and holy' (6J3.14 r.3; 10J9.14 r.1 and frequently elsewhere); 'our treasure' (16.261 r.29). Only one letter attests the defective spellings 'the great and holy' (32.8 v.5).

The particle הָיָה, when taking pronominal suffixes, is written both without waw, as in BH, and with it: all of us' (10J24.1 leaf 1 r.2) and all of them' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.10).

The particle יְאֶרֶץ, 'their acquaintance' (12.336 r.11) is written in a defective form in a letter of Dani'el ben 'Azarya, probably because this participle is always defective in BH, e.g., יְאֶרֶץ 'my companions' Psalms 88:9.

All other defective forms showing Tiberian short u are vocalised with qibbûs: 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8); 'and Tummim' (13J20.9 r.15); 'and he had to' (13J30.3 r.4); 'divided' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.4). Thus, the pu'al verb, with only the single exception noted above, is always found either in a plene form or vocalised thereby distinguishing it from the pi'el.48

**Yod**

**The i vowel**

**Yod** marks the Tiberian long i vowel: 'third' (24.43 r.11); 'his pious ones' (8.3 r.15); 'their call' (13J14.10 r.13); 'his companions' (13J14.10:r.13); 'a girding' (NS J92 r.4); 'letters' (10J32.5 r.5). Only the historical spelling of words derived from יד 'head' doesn't use the mater lectionis yod for i: 'the first' (10J11.29 r.20); 'the first ones' (13J14.8 r.15).

BH allows for the defective spelling of long i in words other than יד, רָאָשׁ, אִישׁ, but it is very rare.49 Two verb forms with stem vowel i appear to have been written defectively in the letters, לְדוֹת 'to bear witness' (13J13.14 r.12) and לְדוֹת 'and to loosen' (13J16.24 r.23); in both examples, the syntactic context would lead us to expect the infinitive construct. On the other hand, neither קְרָא nor דָּבָר are attested in the hif'il infinitive construct in the Hebrew Bible but both their infinitive absolute forms are, קְרָא (Genesis 43:3; 1 Samuel .8:9; Jeremiah 11:7) and דָּבָר (Isaiah 58:6). Thus it is equally possible that morphologically we have the absolute forms standing for the missing constructs of these two verbs.

The defective יָאָסָפְתָה 'to his death' (NS 298.27 r.9) is found in an orthographically irregular letter from Iraq; the plene spelling, e.g., יָאָסָפְתָה 'his death' (10J27.7 r.10), is found frequently elsewhere. Another problematic spelling is found in a letter of Moše ben 'Eliyyahu Hallelvi: יָאָסָפְתָה 'I would have changed my handwriting' (13J20.18 v.5). Although possibly the consonants could be read as the BH noun יְאֶסַף 'writing, mark' with the 1 singular pronominal suffix, the use of the הָבָתְהוּ indicates that the spelling is far more likely to represent

48The similar use of plene waw to mark passive forms, against classical orthographic practice, is found in Judaeo-Arabic; see Blau (1999) p. 72 n.1.

49Gesenius §9g.
The *i* vowel

The Tiberian short *i* vowel may be written with or without *yod* in nouns and particles according to the taste of the writer: *‘the communities’* (13J16.24 r.4) and *‘community’* (13J17.4 r.5); *‘the prayer’* (10J32.9 r.8) and *‘prayer’* (13J26.16 r.20); *‘from her’* (10J27.7 r.11) and *‘from him’* (8J16.12 r.12); *‘our letters’* (10J27.7 r.8) and *‘and a letter’* (16.6 r.24). The spelling can vary across the letters of a single writer; Yośiyahu Ga’on attests both *‘and love’* (AS 149.60 r.7) and *‘and his love’* (10J32.8 r.6).

Some archaic BH particles always retain the defective spelling in which they are found in the MT, e.g., לֶבֶלֶת ‘so as not to’ (20.114 r.42), as do the numerals, e.g., חמשה ‘five’ (24.43 r.35) and בְּבֵשָׁה ‘on the [twenty-] sixth’ (10G5.7 r.5). However, most other words may be found written in different letters with both *plene* and defective orthography. The *plene* writing of short *i* in prepositions and particles is mainly limited to syllables where the following consonant is geminated: *‘with me’* (10J14.19 r.22); the use of *plene* orthography before an ungeminated consonant is extremely unusual; the spelling אִם and *if* (De Lange–Or. 1080 J1 v.1) is not repeated in the corpus. The short *i* vowel that occurs in Tiberian Hebrew when the inseparable prepositions are prefixed to a word is never marked by *yod*, although the vowel *heqeq* is sometimes written, e.g., המִי ‘and from the cold’ (13J20.3 r.14) and בְּבֵשָׁה ‘with joy’ (13J11.1 r.10).

Short *i* is nearly always written with *yod* in the *qittūl* noun pattern: רְגֵּס ‘summons’ (10J25.5 r.5); בְּכַלְכֵלָה ‘in the apportioning’ (13J20.3 r.19); בְּרֵבִים ‘in the teaching’ (20.141 r.28); the defective spelling is particularly unusual: יִבְּכִּים ‘and the gathering’ (Box Misc. 26.22 r.6). The defective spelling is preferred in the related quadrilitaral *gilqūl* pattern: בְּכַלָּכֲלָה ‘in their upkeep’ (12.99 r.5); וַתְּמָסְמוּ ‘and’ (Misc.36.203 leaf 1 v.4); מָסָכֲנָה ‘because of the conflict’ (13J26.1 r.15); although *plene* spellings do occur: *‘the debate’* (12.17 r.5). The majority of writers never spell the short *i* under preformative *m*- in certain noun patterns with *yod*: מֵהָסְמִין ‘our trust’ (8J20.1 r.10); מֵהָסָס ‘our support’ (13J26.16 r.2); although the unusually full orthography of סֵלָמוֹ הַחַכּוֹן Ga’on provides a number of exceptional examples, מְנַצֵּיר for the commandments (24.43 r.34) and מְנַשֵּׁי ‘a sanctuary’ (24.43 r.32).

Verbs of the *pi’el* suffix conjugation are frequently written *plene*: אֲשֵׁר ‘he blessed’ (10J12.17 r.4); יָדוּר ‘and he strengthened’ (13J33.6 r.7); יָדוּר ‘and they have excommunicated’ (10J9.25 r.4). However, when the verb’s principal form is the *piel* (rather than the *qal*) it may often be written defectively: *‘that we ordered’* (8J20.1 r.11); יָדוּר ‘and we received’ (13J13.17 r.8); יָדוּר ‘I spoke’ (10J10.22 r.13); though there is considerable variation; we find both *yod* and *heqeq* in *‘we sought’* (13J11.9 r.9) and *‘we sought’* (13J16.24 r.19), and the post-biblical verb שָׁר ‘to send’ always shows *yod*, e.g., שָׁר ‘he sent’ (NS 308.122 v.2) and שָׁר ‘she sent’ (24.6 r.39). Note that the *i* vowel

50The orthography could be deliberate due to the frequent occurrence of the noun מֵי, in order to inject a little variation into the spelling, but, to be fair to Moše, it may not be intentional since he had other concerns, as he explains: ‘I am so sick in my bowels and eyes that I cannot stand; were I not sick I would have changed my mind’ (13J20.18 v.4–5).

51The latter occurs in a quotation from Ezekiel 11:16, showing an orthography radically different from that of the MT (and, indeed, most other medieval Bible texts).
of the masculine plural qal imperative is not marked by yod: הכתיב ‘write’ (13)16.17 m.8.

The verbal preformatives -י, -ן and -ן are written without yod in most letters: העקרות ‘who are called’ (18)4.4 r.15; ‘and it grows’ (13)16.14 r.32; ‘to be counted’ (10)11.29 r.7;

although, again, the plene forms are employed sporadically: הנחתות ‘to be counted’ (13)16.17 r.26;

 lạcות ‘and to stand at the threshold’ (13)20.18 r.10; ‘which are increasing’ (Misc. 36.140 r.32);

לписыва ‘and when it became clear’ (10)27.7 r.4; ‘the honoured’ (13)15.13 r.11;

לנר ‘which was sent’ (NS 323.2 r.17). Both plene and defective forms of the nifal participle occur side by side in a letter of ‘Efraim ben Ṣimarya, the mentioned...mentioned’ (13)8.14 r.7.

In summary, the marking of short i with yod shows great variation across the corpus. Ṣolomo Hakkohen Ga’on, for example, gives a very full orthography, writing the nominal preformative mi- as מ erected ‘we shall write’ (24.43 r.11); such full orthography is rarely used by other writers. Naṭan ben ‘Avraham represents the opposite approach, far more biblical in style: he only writes yod for i in post-biblical nouns and never under a nominal or verbal preformative, however, along with the majority of writers, he does usually write yod in the pi’el suffix conjugation. Ṣolomo ben Ṣimuda rests between the two extremes and is a representative of the practice of most other writers of the corpus; he marks short i occasionally in biblical nouns, considerably more often in post-biblical nouns, regularly in all but the most common pi’el verbs and rarely if at all after the other preformatives of nouns and verbs.

The e vowel

Tiberian long e is regularly marked with yod in the 2 masculine and 3 feminine pronominal suffixes of the plural noun and in the 2 masculine and 3 feminine suffixes of prepositions of the type יא, all of which represent standard biblical orthography: יהו ‘your sons’ (10)11.25 m.22; יהא ‘your gifts’ (13)9.2 r.17; ‘its sections’ (20.141 r.22); ‘to her’ (10)11.30 r.15. In one letter, yod also marks e in a number of pausal forms of the infinitive construct with the 2 masculine singular suffix, לתחילה ‘to save you’ (NS 325.81 r.9) and ליתיעל ‘to benefit you’ (NS 325.81 r.9), and in the preposition לבא ‘for you’ (NS 325.81 r.8).

In addition, yod marks e in other suffixes. Once it is found in the 3 masculine plural suffix of the preposition ליעל ‘upon them’ (13)26.3 r.21). However, we do not find this orthography with the 3 masculine plural suffix repeated in any of his other letters: ליעל ‘between them’ (13)18.1 r.20; ליעל ‘upon them’ (10)12.25 r.12). The yod is written clearly, but it was either an error or deliberately intended to add length to the word since all the letters are stretched to fill to the end of the line and preserve a neat left margin.

Yod marks Tiberian e in the 3 feminine singular pronominal suffix on the prefix conjugation verb in letters of the g’tonim Ṣolomo ben Ṣimuda and Ṣolomo Hakkohen: יכטריה ‘may he establish it’ (18)4.26 r.27; 10)11.30 r.10; 13)9.2 r.56; 20.181 r.7); יטריה ‘may he protect it’ (13)9.2 r.15). The plene orthography may represent a merging of e and a, such as is typical in texts representing the Palestinian-Sefardi pronunciation tradition.52 However, it is more likely to be the orthographic influence of the 3 feminine singular suffix of the plural noun, i.e., ליאו ‘and her scholars’ (13)6.3 r.1). This orthographic practice was not universal since it is not followed in the same construction as


In other cases the ε vowel is not usually marked with yod: 'from us' (10J10.22 r.2); 'wound' (18J4.4 r.11); 'the synagoge' (8J22.7 r.11); 'the governor' (13J14.5 r.9); 'the fruit' (16.68 r.14). The form 'I am not' (13J11.4 r.8), showing plene ε, found in a letter from Byzantium, is a rare exception (although it is probably an error by metathesis of ι and ε in אינר בראב).

The ε vowel

Tiberian short ε is not usually marked with a mater lectionis: length ε (13J15.1 r.24); 'with might' (13J23.1 r.23).

The occasional RH orthography of yod for short ε is barely found at all in the corpus. However, it is attested in the RH word אמשך 'it is possible' (10J1 leaf 1 r.8) from a copy of a letter of [5]vira Ga'on; a different copy of the same text attests אמשך (28.24 r.31) so it is unwise to make any connections between Babylonian practice and this particular spelling on this example alone.

Hatef-se gol, ultra-short ε, takes a mater lectionis yod on two occasions, in the Hebrew opening to a Judaeo-Arabic letter from [5]lomo ben Me'ir Ga'on, 'the faithful ones' (8J14.24 r.5), and in a noun of the same root in a letter of [5]lomo ben Yhuda, 'faithfulness' (NS J172 r.8). Though an isolated case in the letters, a phonetic shift of ε > i can be found in other geniza manuscripts as well as being attested in the pronunciation of some modern North-African communities. Elsewhere hatef-se gol is not marked: 'in his faith' (12.338 r.8); שאלות 'God' (13J15.4 r.5).

The η vowel

Yod, of course, marks Tiberian η in the masculine plural construct: 'and like laws' (8J20.1 r.8). The RH demonstrative בלו is often written plene, 'these lines' (13J24.11 r.20), whereas the BH demonstrative בלו is always written without yod, בלו, 'these lines' (13J34.3 r.11). The RH prefix conjugation form בלו only occasionally features yod, בלו, 'it will be' (13J26.3 r.5); BH pausal forms are never spelled plene, בלו, 'they are mighty' (20.114 r.26, from Psalms 38:20). Nifal infinitive constructs may or may not show yod after preformative -n: Yosef Hakkohen writes יָלַד 'to be gathered in' (10J27.7 r.11) with yod whereas [5]lomo ben Yhuda does not write a yod in יָלַד 'to be helped' (13J9.2 r.8, r.18; 13J23.1 r.22) nor in the 1 singular prefix conjugation of irregular verbs, יָשֵׁב 'I will be considered' (10J11.29 r.16). For the ye- preformative of the nifal3 singular and plural, see the remarks on the consonantal yod.

53Mann's reading of אָשֶׁר, Mann (1922), vol. 2, p. 54, should be corrected since yod is clearly visible in the MS.

54For instance the relativizer י is pointed with hireq in a talmudic text, T-S F1(1)33, described by Morag (1988), p. 2-3 §7 and see his note, p. 3 §7 n. 2. A possible alternative is that the hireq of the examples from the letters reflects not a global change but a specific case of assimilation, the first vowel e raising to i due to the following high vowel, u, i.e., [h5'imunim] and [yimn5]. Another explanation could be that the yod is marking sere thereby demonstrating a general merging of the e and ε vowels, such as is attested in a number of geniza Bible MSS which show various elements of non-standard Tiberian vocalisation, probably under the influence of the Palestinian tradition of pronunciation, e.g., T-SAS 1.37, an Isaiah text, where the Tiberian sere, segol and hatef-se gol are used more or less interchangeably.
The Tiberian ē vowel is often indicated by yod in nouns and adjectives: ‘with a decree’ (18)4.17 v.4); ‘the congregation’ (13)15.4 r.5); this is especially the case when the word derives from post-biblical Hebrew: ‘from trouble’ (10)10.22 r.13); ‘from demons’ (10)11.30 r.6). However, not all long ē vowels are indicated in this way; nouns of BH provenance are as likely to be written without yod, particularly by the more biblicising letter-writers: דַּבֵּד ‘provisions’ (13)14.20 r.6); רֶוֶץ ‘a crown’ (8)14.24 r.12); מַלְשָׁנָה ‘part’ (12.336 r.17). Natan ben 'Avraham, more conservative than most, very rarely uses yod to mark internal sere, in either biblical or rabbinic vocabulary: אָחָרֶם ‘others’ (10)9.25 r.12); מֵרָכַב ‘world’ (13)31.1 r.6); הַהוֹון ‘the Christian’ (8)20.1 m.2); מַלְשָׁנָה ‘of secondary import’ (10)9.25 r.14). He only employs a plene orthography in nouns of the pattern q̱aṭṭās: לָדֵיָה ‘its fire’ (8.3 r.10); שֵׁאָלִית ‘your request’ (8.3 m.2). This pattern is usually plene throughout the letters: סֶמּוּאֵל ben Moše of Tyre attests ‘the questions’ (13)26.3 r.8) and שֶׁלמּוּאֵל ben Yehuda regularly writes the yod, e.g., אהבה ‘with the loss’ (16.275 r.8); overall the defective form is rare and limited to occasional BH nouns, e.g., לַפֵּית ‘for a remnant’ (12.775 r.13).

Participles and nouns derived from participles, such as the qəṭāl pattern, show both defective and plene spelling of ē in the letters as a whole: לְמַעַל ‘for an advocate’ (13)23.13 r.21) and לְמַעַל ‘and an advocate’ (13)24.11 r.22); מַעַל ‘with the dead’ (13)23.13 r.15) and מַעַל ‘the dead’ (13)11.9 r.9); מַעַל ‘happy’ (13)14.20 r.7) and מַעַל ‘happy’ (6)3.1 r.2). Different versions of forms of, in particular, abound: מַעַל ‘to our elder’ (13)20.12 r.12) and מַעַל ‘our elder’ (16.261 r.29); both plene and defective spellings occur within a few lines of each other in the same letter of 'Evyaṭar Hakkohen Ga’on, מַעַל ‘the elders’ (10)24.1 leaf 2 v.25) and מַעַל ‘and the elders’ (10)24.1 leaf 2 v.27).

One letter of Yošiyahu Ga’on, whose letters as a whole show considerably plene orthography, attests many examples of the 3 masculine plural pronominal suffix on the prefix conjugation written with yod, e.g., לַמַעַל ‘he will save them’ (13)14.10 r.12). The letter is intended for a public reading to the community of the Jerusalmites in Fustat and is mostly written in rhyming prose: ... יָרְכֵב רְבִּיהוּ ‘and I will introduce you...to our elder...and give them...delight in them...not disturb them’ (13)14.10 r.5). The full orthography emphasising the rhyming elements perhaps served to aid its public recitation. However, the spelling is not unique and may be found in use by other writers, but only rarely, e.g., in a letter of an unknown writer, יָרְכֵב ‘may he keep them’ (10)15.31 r.7); the usual spelling of the suffix across the corpus is defective: יָיְנָתְנָה יָרְכֵב רְבִּיהוּ ‘may our God make them strong, bless them and give them might’ (NS 324.104 r.7). In nouns and participles, yod is also very infrequently used to mark ē in closed, stressed syllables. יָוֹבְר ‘the haver’ (20.102 r.30) and יָוֹבְר ‘who girds himself’ (13)14.10 r.22) are two of the very few examples that the letters provide. The first is from שֶׁלמּוּאֵל ben Yehuda who, in his other writings as well as elsewhere in the same letter, employs only the form without yod, יָוֹבְר ‘the haver’ (20.102 r.1, 13)9.2 r.1, etc.); the second example comes again from Yošiyahu Ga’on. Similar forms with yod in the hitpael/ninthpael verbal conjugations are attested in other letters, יָתְחֵו ‘the victorious’ (18)4.26 r.12) and יָתְחֵו ‘to be joined’ (AS 145.61 r.3). However, there is slim evidence from the letters that furtive paṭach was pronounced before final guttural letters, e.g., רֶוֶץ ‘diminished’ (13)14.10 r.19) and thus the Tiberian sere is occupying an open syllable; where the furtive vowel is not present — and the writer is not Yošiyahu Ga’on—the orthography of the final closed syllable is usually defective: לְמַעַל ‘to pray’ (18)4.26 r.23).55

55 יִמְתָּח ‘astonished’ (12.217 r.11), also spelled defectively יִמְתָּח ‘and surprised’ (10)13.2 r.17), is a similar case.
The 3 masculine singular and 1 plural pronominal suffixes of the prefix conjugation, imperative and, less often, on the infinitive construct, are often written *plene*, ‘may he bless him’ (10:15.31 r.4); יִזְכָּר ‘and give him’ (18:4.26 r.8); וְיַעֲבֹד ‘and to honour him’ (NS 309.20 v.10); let it reach us’ (AS 145.61 r.13). This orthography is widespread, but once again the more conservative writers do not regularly employ it. Naţan ben ‘Avraham avoids it entirely, יְנָשֶׁה יֵלְכוּ ‘may he protect him’ (13:31.1 r.7) and יָכְרוּ ‘and when we remember’ (8:20.1 r.3); נְבֵיהוּמוּ Hakkohen Ga’on is similar (as are many Babylonian writers), יִרְכָּר ‘and keep him’ (16.6 v.2). שְׁוָלוּמוּ ben Yָחְדָּה’s usual style is defective, יְנָשֶׁה יֵלְכוּ ‘and that waters him’ (13:9.2 r.32) and יֵלְכָה יָכְרָתוּ ‘may he keep him’ (13:33.6 r.3), but we can find isolated examples with mater lectionis *yod*, יְרִיבָר ‘and bless him’ (18:4.15 v.2); when ‘Avraham ben Hagg’a’on, שְׁוָלוּמָו son, acts as his scribe the spelling with *yod* is more prevalent: יְנָשֶׁה יֵלְכוּ ‘give him praise’ (13:11.9 r.7); יָכְרָתוּ ‘and cause him to see’ (13:17.4 r.7).56

BH preserves a semantic distinction between -ֶו and -ֶו in certain forms of the noun with suffixes.57 In BH, as preserved in the MT, the plural noun with possessive suffixes usually indicates Tiberian *e* with *yod*, while the singular noun does not, allowing otherwise identically written and pronounced words to be distinguished in unpointed text. While this distinction is evident in the the orthography of a minority of our letters, e.g., יִבְרָהֹמ ‘our knees’ (13:9.2 r.10) but יָבְרוֹמ ‘our Nasî’ (13:15.1 r.16) and יִהְמָר ‘this letter of ours’ (13:19.15 r.13), it is no longer a feature of the dominant style. We regularly find unquestionably singular nouns written *plene* with *yod*: יַלְכָּר ‘our prayer’ (8:14.202 r.2); יַלְכִּי ‘and you are our beloved’ (AS 145.61 r.4); יַבְרֹמ ‘this letter of ours’ (10:24.1 leaf 1 r.8); יַמְשַׂכֶּר ‘from this year of ours’ (13:16.24 r.14); יְשַׁלְשָׁב ‘of our academy’ (NS 324.112 r.4). *Pleine* spellings are sometimes employed alongside those presenting a more biblicising orthography: יְשָׁלִּית לָכֵן ‘to our dear...and great one’ (13:17.4 r.2); אַוְרִאֲנוּ לָכְכֶּר תִּקְרִי ‘our lord, our ga’on and our crown and our diadem’ (13:20.18 r.17). שְׁוָלוּמָו ben Yָחְדָּה, while usually maintaining the semantic distinction, occasionally uses a *plene* form, particularly on regular feminine nouns (i.e., those that take -ֶו before the suffixes), יָפַנְתִּי ‘our jealousy’ (13:15.1 r.5) and יָפַנְתוּ ‘our prayer’ (AS 151.20 r.19).58 Naţan ben ‘Avraham prefers to follow BH practice, even spelling the suffixes of prepositions according to their BH forms, i.e., יִפְנִי ‘to us’ (8:20.1 m.9) but יַפְנִי ‘with us’ (8:20.1 v.1), but twice uses *yod* on nouns from bilateral roots, יָפְנִי ‘to our [~my] father-in-law’ (8:20.1 m.2) and יָפְנִי ‘and our heart’ (8:20.1 r.2).

Although, in Tiberian BH the final syllable would be closed, illustrated by the *mappiq* in the *he* in the MT, it is unclear whether at the time of the letters the *he* would be treated as consonantal. However, it is to be found in the inflected suffix conjugation, e.g., יִבְרָהֹמ ‘and we were surprised’ (20:100 r.14), suggesting that its full consonantal value was retained. Therefore, it is likely that this is another—rare—example of Tiberian *sere* marked by *yod* in a stressed, closed syllable.

56Although, this is not always the case when ‘Avraham ben Hagg’a’on acts as his father’s scribe: יָפְנִי יִשְׁמַר ‘may he bless him and help him attain...’ (Box Misc. 26.22 r.1) shows both spellings together (possibly as a deliberate device). Also, ‘Avraham’s own letters are inconsistent in this regard, יָפַנְתִי ‘may he reward him’ (10:10.9 r.13) but יָפַנְתוּ ‘and redeem him’ (18:4.17 r.8).

57Jošon §6d n. 2.

58The extensive use of *yod* after the -ֶו of feminine nouns in the letters’ orthography may be influenced by the feminine plural form, which takes *yod* before the suffix in BH: יִרְכָּר ‘our letters’ (13:9.2 r.17). A fourth or fifth-century papyrus letter from Palestine, Oxford MS Heb. c. 57a, described by Mishor (1991) attests exactly the same spelling that we find in many *geniza* letters, יִרְכָּר ‘our prayer’ (r.6).

59But he writes יָפְנִי ‘our heart’ (13:31.1 r.4; Gil (1983) no. 184= Bodl MS Heb d.66.69 line 3) in other letters. This shows that there is a lack of consistency even in a biblicising writer like Naţan ben ‘Avraham, probably caused
The opposite trend, not spelling the ē vowel with *mater lectionis yod* before even plural suffixes, is attested much more rarely. One letter in particular, from the community of Asqelon, presents a number of defective plural forms: יָדָה ‘to you’ (13:19.15 r.13, r.18); יָדוֹ ‘our lords’ (r.13); עלָלָם ‘upon us’ (r.17); יָדוֹ ‘our elders’ (r.19); יָדוֹ ‘in their days’ (v.3). Such spellings are attested in the text of the MT, e.g., יָדָה ‘on them’ Leviticus 3:4, and their use in this letter indicates that it was deliberately written in a very biblicising style.

In summary, the letters exhibit the *plene* spelling with *yod* of ē in an open syllable; this is particularly evident in the pronominal suffixes affixed to nouns and verbs and can lead to ambiguity regarding singular and plural forms of the noun. The marking of ē in a closed syllable by *yod* though attested is unusual in the corpus.

*He*

**The ē and ē vowels**

*Mater lectionis he* marks the Tiberian long vowels ē and ē in word-final position as in BH: יָדָה ‘the hard’ (12.336 r.12); יָדָה ‘he will do’ (13:21.19 r.16); יָדָה ‘Creator of Heaven and Earth’ (13:16.18 r.17).

**The 5 vowel**

*He* marks the Tiberian long *qames* (5) termination of the regular feminine noun, pronominal suffixes and suffix conjugation verb, and in the 2 masculine singular pronoun: יָדָה יָדָה ‘and request’ (13:23.12 r.21); יָדָה יָדָה ‘in [them]’ (18:14.17 r.15); יָדָה יָדָה ‘and it said’ (18:14.17 r.31); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you’ (10:9.25 r.12).

The common spelling of the 2 masculine singular suffix conjugation termination is defective, as is the dominant form in BH: יָדָה יָדָה ‘you hinted’ (13:13.14 r.33); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you have done’ (20.181 r.39); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you said’ (13:34.2 r.10). A large number of *plene* forms are employed, though; Nehemya Hakkohen Ga'on attests several, יָדָה יָדָה ‘you returned’ (16.6 r.21) and יָדָה יָדָה ‘you weakened’ (16.6 r.21); from other writers we find יָדָה יָדָה ‘you have done’ (12.212 r.18): יָדָה יָדָה ‘you were’ (2:20.1 r.3); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you have [not] tried’ (13:23.19 r.14); יָדָה יָדָה ‘and you were drawn’ (13:26.23 r.19). Although the spellings יָדָה יָדָה יָדָה and יָדָה יָדָה have biblical precedent in the MT (1 Samuel 14:43, Judges 11:6 and Genesis 3:12, respectively) many others that are employed in the letters do not and therefore the form they take in the Hebrew Bible may not be the overwhelming reason for their spellings here. One eleventh-century letter shows a number of *plene* spellings of the 2 masculine singular suffix conjugation in use alongside defective forms: יָדָה יָדָה ‘you ordered’ (10:14.19 r.14); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you called’ (r.3); יָדָה יָדָה ‘you returned’ (r.4); but יָדָה יָדָה ‘you returned’ (r.21) and יָדָה יָדָה ‘that you donated’ (r.20). Thus, the writer may vary the orthography of 5 within a single letter, perhaps deliberately to show variety or perhaps simply because of the inconsistency already shown in BH orthography. 61

by the influence of the widespread, popular orthography.

60Andersen and Forbes pp.179–180. Overall, the 2 masculine singular suffix conjugation is not as well attested as might be expected, because of the wide use of the 3rd person address in the letters.

61The sixth-century papyrus Oxford MS Heb. d. 69, described by Mishor (1989), attests the similar phenomenon of *plene* and defective spellings of the 2 masculine singular suffix conjugation, e.g., יָדָה יָדָה ‘that you went’ (r.14)
Occasionally, the *plene* spelling is employed to make explicit a rhyme scheme. Šalom ben Yahuda makes the assonance clear in one phrase by using the *mater lectionis*: “and the burden which you bore and the toil which you suffered” (13:14.8 r.17).

### The o vowel

The archaic spelling of Tiberian *o* with *he* is retained in a number of BH words: הַכ 'here' (16.3 r.19); הֶכ 'this way' (16.275 r.23).

### 'Alef

'**Ale**f is employed to mark long *o* vowels in proper names of Arabic origin, following Arabic (and Judeo-Arabic) orthographic practice: مَرْاز ‘al-Qādir’ (13:14.5 r.8); كٍرٍ 'Qayrwān' (8.3 v.2); دِمْيَاث ‘Damietta’ [Dumyat]’ (13:26.16 r.5). It is also the *mater lectionis* for 5 in proper nouns drawn from Aramaic, e.g. in Alexandria’ (10:9.14 r.7), and in the Aramaic suffixes and emphatic endings preserved in some Jewish titles and epithets: מֶרֶם ‘our lord’ (10:25.4 r.1); וְרֵבָּה ‘and our rav’ (13:18.1 r.13); וְרֵעֶה ‘the Merciful One’ (18:4.4 r.1).

Beyond its use in words from Arabic or Aramaic *alef* is rarely employed as a *mater lectionis*.62 The noun בוּר 'and for his neck' (10:30.3 r.5) in the letters, reflects BH orthography of *alef* for Tiberian *o*. This probably influences the same spelling found in the post-biblical noun פֶּה 'intention' in a letter of Hayya Ga’on, כֶּפֶר 'his intention' (20:100 r.21), since both form and spelling are from middle-*waw* roots.63 *Alef* is also used in *'alef* 'he betrayed me' (13:13.21 r.16), from a letter of 'Eli Hammum ben 'Avraham, is attested in BH without the *'alef*, בַּשָּׁר 2 Samuel 19:27. The spelling with *'alef* represents the reappearance of the weak-consonant of a final-weak root, examples of which are plentiful in RH.64

There are only two examples of *mater lectionis* *'alef* in the corpus that are not drawn from RH, BH, Arabic or Aramaic. הָבּלוֹתָא 'let them be borne' (18:4.2 v.1) is part of a widely used address formula in the letters that derives from a biblical phrase in Psalms 45:16. There, the usual spelling of the feminine plural suffix with ה- is found in the MT. Aramaic influence may be responsible for the orthography in the letter, but possibly it is the result of confusion with the BH desiderative/imperative particle ◦ which often occurs in jussive expressions. The other example of *mater lectionis* *'alef* is כָּכָה 'some' (13:18.28 r.17). This occurs in a letter which shows many non-standard orthographic features; the spelling of the feminine ending נ- as נ- probably reflects Arabic rather than Aramaic influence.65

but וַאֲלֵהַ 'that you came' (r.7). No significance attaches to the variation in spelling and the Bible’s own inconsistency in this regard is probably the main influence.

62 Of course, some BH words such as the demonstrative נַא attest *mater lectionis* *'alef*, retaining an archaic biblical orthographic practice.

63 Other letters attest only the spelling without *'alef*: בְּעֶהוּ 'my intention' (10:13.2 r.24) in a letter of David ben Moše.

64 Segal §205. A similar phenomenon occurs in Šalom ben Yahuda's use of רָאָּפֶּר ‘uplifted’ (13:9.2 r.53) which is drawn from Zechariah 14:10. Here *'alef* should be regarded as a consonant rather than a *mater lectionis*, as if from an alternative root בֹּעַ.

65 Judaeo-Arabic on occasion reflects the opposite influence of Hebrew orthography on Arabic in the spelling of
Consonantal waw

The geminated v

Geminated v is often written with two waws in the letters, as can be the practice of RH orthography: 'to assemble' (20.141 r.17); 'they will gather' (13J18.1 r.5); ‘my intention’ (10J13.2 r.24); ‘waiting for’ (Gil (1983) no. 418=ENA 2804.7 r.9). Equally often, though, only a single waw is used: ‘as soon’ (10J24.3 r.17); ‘and I longed’ (16.275 r.24); ‘you ordered’ (10J14.19 r.14); ‘and waiting for’ (10G5.8 v.12); ‘his intention’ (20.100 r.21). Both spellings of -w- may be found alongside one another, for example, in a letter of 'Efraim ben Shmarya, 'desiring to confess' (NS 321.29 v.5).

More so than other spellings, the writing of geminate v appears to be dependent on the personal style of the letter writer; single waw is preferred by those who show a generally more conservative, biblical, orthographic style, such as the scholarly Naṭan ben 'Avraham, whereas doubled waw is affected by those who tend towards the phonetic in their spelling, such as Yošiyahu Ga'on. Naṭan ben 'Avraham always writes geminate v with a single waw: 'we longed' (8J22.1 r.4); 'that we ordered' (8J20.1 r.11); whereas Yošiyahu Ga'on attests two: 'our intention' (10J32.9 r.4). The essentially conservative Šalom ben Yoḥuda is another who, in letters from his own hand, attests only single waw, as expected: 'your order' (13J13.14 r.23); 'the desiring' (13J14.8 r.32); 'who hope' (12.217 r.17).

The ungeminated v

Excepting the combinations of v and an o or u vowel, single v can be written with one waw: 'my statement' (12.273 r.14); 'and an epistle' (13J26.13 r.9); 'who are joined' (32.8 r.47); 'a table' (16.68 r.5); or it can be written with two waws, although this is less widespread: 'those around you' (Box Misc. 28.231 r.19); 'your way' (6J3.1 r.7); 'epistle' (24.43 r.45); 'those around him' (13J31.1 r.6), and Yošiyahu Ga'on, 'his pride' (13J14.10 r.21) and 'and bring relief' (13J26.16 r.17), employ only single waw for v alone. Šalom ben Yoḥuda's style is similar, even with rabbinic vocabulary such as the desiderative 'O that...' (13J23.11 r.5), which we might expect to show the fuller orthography of RH texts. However, Naṭan ben 'Avraham, 'his heart's desire' (20.181 r.5), a biblical phrase from Psalms 21:3, unusually for this writer, has two waws.67

As נ is, see Blau (1999) p. 135. Aramaic influence is responsible for spellings of נ as נ- in earlier traditions of Hebrew, e.g., in the Dead Sea Scrolls, 'the Torah' (1QSa 1:11); see Abegg p. 327.


67 The orthography in this case could point to a plural form, -wot, as in another of the ga'on's letters, 'their desires' (10J14.8 v.11) (the singular suffix with the feminine plural ending not being at all unusual in the letters), but it is probable that the biblical phrase is intended. Letters from the ga'on which are in his son's hand also show doubled waw for consonantal v, 'and my desire' (13J17.17 r.11); but 'Avraham ben Hagga' on overall evidences a far less conservative orthographic style.
The writing of two *wa*ws is the norm with the various combinations of *v* and an *o* or *u* vowel: [**vó**] 'his desires' (20.141 r.24); [**vó**] 'to tell', 'to prostrate oneself' (13J20.18 r.10); [**vó**] 'and ordered' (28.24 r.80). This is the case even with Na'an ben 'Avraham and Yo'siyahu Ga'on: [**vó**] 'made beautiful' (13J31.1 r.9); [**vó**] 'their sin' (10J32.8 r.8).  "Iam"mo ben Yo'shuda also writes two *wa*ws for most combinations, e.g., [**vó**] 'waw for spread' (10J11.29 r.12) and [**vó**] 'to order' (13J23.1 r.3), but the influence of the MT's orthography on some common BH words causes there to be some latitude in their spelling: [**vó**] 'from sin' (13J31.8 r.17) but 'the sin' (13J4.8 r.13) and the commandments' (13J33.12 r.12) and the mouth (13J33.12 r.5). 68

**The orthography of word-final *v***

The 3 masculine singular pronounal suffix on plural nouns, [-5y], is spelled [**vó**] in the letters, as in the MT: his sons' (6)J3.14 r.7; in his eyes' (10J11.30 r.14); and his ears' (Misc. 35.14 r.4).

A draft of a letter from 'Efraim ben 5'harya preserves the unique spelling of 'his wonders' (12.273 v.10) for an expected expected [**vó**]; the orthography of 'Efraim's draft letters shows a large number of such oddities. Unfortunately we do not know whether they ended up in the final versions of the letters since these were sent away from Ramle and didn't come to be preserved in the *geniza*.

The spelling of the rabbinic adverb [**vó**] also shows the [**vó**] ending, which is its common form in RH texts: [**vó**] 'and now' (24.6 r.16). However, on a number of occasions in letters of Babylonian origin, we find the spelling without quiescent *yod*, e.g., 'in his' (10G5.8 v.5, v.12; 13J25.5 r.32) in letters of Hayya Ga'on and his father, 5'hira Ga'on. 69

Conversely, the *plene* spelling [**vó**] can be found representing [**vó**] where it is not found in BH, in beka in line' (10J24.8 v.18). A similar spelling in a letter from 'Eliyyahu Hakkohen, the poor' (13J23.12 r.12), is found in the MT in the *q̀r* of Numbers 12:3.

**Consonantal yod**

**The geminated y**

The geminated *y* of middle-weak verbs is usually written with two *yod*: [**y0**] 'to be caught' (13J11.2 r.17); [**y0**] 'to establish' (13J33.12 r.12); [**y0**] 'we persuaded him' (16.68 r.19); [**y0**] 'that you aid them' (12.146 r.12); [**y0**] 'certain' (13J23.12 r.8). This includes adjectival forms from such roots: [**y0**] 'by invaders' (Gil (1983) no. 50 = ENA 4020.32 r.17); only occasional spellings with a single *yod* are found: 'bound' (12.273 r.6). 70 The widely-used adjectival form [**y0**] is usually written with two *yod*: [**y0**] 'must' (13J23.11 r.16); although, a letter of Yisra'el

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68 The two spellings of *wa*ws occur in the same letter, showing again how the orthography often varies within a single body of text. In Saudi Arabia, the usual spelling in the MT, cf. *Jonah* §7c, and is the only spelling in Karaites marriage documents, Olszowy-Schlanger p. 99.

69 According to Yeivin, p. 1143, some manuscripts with Babylonian supralinear vocalization demonstrate a pronunciation equivalent to Tiberian [**vó**], i.e., that the *wa*ws is not a consonant but is marking a final *v* vowel, although it is impossible to say whether the same is true in these Babylonian letters. The sixth-century papyrus Oxford MS Heb. d. 69, described by Misho (1989), attests the reading [**vó**] 'now' (r.10), but other Palestinian spellings in the letter, such as the double [**vó**] in “without limit” (r.2), would probably indicate a Palestinian pronunciation of consonantal *v*, i.e., [**vó**].

70 Judeo-Arabic texts often attest double *yod* for geminate *y*, under the influence of Hebrew; see Blau (1999) p. 135.
Hakkohen, the Babylonian ga'on, attests various different spellings of the same word, with single and double yod: חֵי (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.1); והב (leaf 2 v.10); והב (leaf 6 r.7); והב (leaf 6 r.15).

The orthography of geminated y in nouns varies, with two yods: י"ה 'their deed' (NS J92 r.12); י"ה 'collection' (13)26.13 r.10); and with a single yod: י"ה 'and a compress' (8.3 r.11); י"ה 'as a making' (13)9.2 r.21). The spelling of the plural of nouns ending in i similarly varies: י"ה 'the poor' (NS 321.2 r.2) and י"ה 'for the poor' (Misc. 35.14 r.11) both occur in letters of *S*omo ben Y*hu*da; י"ה 'the Muslims' (18)4.26 r.36) and י"ה 'Non-Jews [Muslims]' (12.212 r.15).

The ungeminated y

Ungeminated y in the letters is normally represented by a single yod: י"ה 'foundation' (13)15.4 r.7); י"ה 'let it be' (8)21.6 r.12); י"ה 'and the building' (12.239 r.25); י"ה 'deception' (13)14.8 r.19); י"ה 'according to the passage' (8)20.1 r.8). Less common is the use of two yods: י"ה 'and to straighten' (10)12.17 r.23); י"ה 'plenty' (NS 324.104 r.15); י"ה 'and according to the passage' (13)16.16 r.16); although it is the accepted spelling in the letters for the post-vocalic y in the RH plurals 'with parchments' (13)14.10 r.22), and י"ה 'in towns' (20.141 r.27).

Certain combinations of the ungeminated consonant y and a vowel, however, are always written with two yods in our corpus. The syllable Yi- is always written so: י"ה 'our expectation' (12.99 r.9); י"ה 'their populations' (16.6 r.8); י"ה 'and may he turn' (18)4.4 r.2); in one letter of the Palestinian academy the practice extends even to the biblical name Yişai, י"ה (10)30.5 r.11). The syllable י- is usually written plene: י"ה 'may he improve' (8)18.15 r.6); this principally involves the nifal conjugation of first-guttural verbs: י"ה 'it will be done' (NS 321.2 r.14); י"ה 'will be considered' (13)13.14 r.2); י"ה 'they will be helped' (10)10.22 r.11). Only י"ה ['before' he was gathered in [=died'] (12.99 v.12) in a letter of Š*mu* el ben Ḥofnī is spelled with a single yod. The combination of yi- plus a geminated consonant, found in the preformative of the strong nifal is also written with two yods, barring a very few exceptions: י"ה 'he will be left' (12.336 r.15); י"ה 'will be saved' (10)12.17 r.2); י"ה 'they will be found' (10)14.8 r.5); a rare exception is י"ה 'will he be buried' (13)33.2 r.16).

The orthography of ay

The syllable ay is spelled mostly with a single yod in names, nouns and suffixes of BH origin: י"ה 'may he improve' (8)18.15 r.6); י"ה 'my ways' (16)27.7 r.2); י"ה 'my letters' (13)13.28 r.2). It also commonly occurs in the dual ending: י"ה 'two lines' (10)9.14 r.6); י"ה 'two rows' (20.106 r.1). Vocalisation may be used instead for the same effect, particularly by those writers who display a conservative orthography: י"ה 'my affairs' (J2.74

73The influence of RH orthography is also probably responsible for the occasional writing of י"ה, which despite being a noun found in the Hebrew Bible is generally employed in the letters in an expression drawn from rabbinic literature, י"ה 'according to the [biblical] passage,' and is used to introduce quotations from the Hebrew Bible.
'two laws' (Gil (1997) no. 73=JTS MS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.27).

Words of RH origin often tend to follow post-biblical orthographic practice by writing two yods for internal ay: Ḩayyéhu 'still' (Gil (1983) no. 281=Mosseri II 181 r.7); לְקַלְקֵלְוֹ 'to establish him' (16.68 r.13). Yoḥyahu Ga’on’s spelling לְקַלְקֵלְוֹ ‘to establish him’ (AS 149.60 r.8) is very unusual.72

The orthography of final syllable ay in examples such as ‘and [we] should’ (13J9.2 r.10) and לְתָי ‘condition’ (13J18.1 r.24) reflects the spelling found in the Palestinian tradition of RH, where the extant manuscripts show a preference for ו.73 The Babylonian tradition of RH prefers the spelling ו, examples of which are less common, but may be found in the corpus, e.g., ‘my face’ (13J9.9 r.17). From Babylon, Hayya Ga’on attests ו יד ‘certainly’ (10G5.8 v.16) and the ga’on Natronai’s name appears in a letter from Sura, ו יד (AS 148.147 r.1). However, examples are not limited to letters from Babylonian writers; Ṣ[lomo ben Ḩ]huda attests ו יד two rabbinic words spelled this way, ו יד ‘O that!’ (13J23.11 r.31) and ו יד ‘and the condition’ (12.217 r.10). This probably reflects the influence of the Babylonian branch of RH, which extended far beyond Iraq with the spread of the text of the Babylonian Talmud. However, the spelling ו is also to be found in a Palestinian tradition of RH, in use alongside ו, i.e., in the Eastern branch of Palestinian RH.74

The spelling ו יד ‘condition’ (13J25.10 r.27), instead of ו יד and ו יד, is attested only here and is unusual enough that it can only be an error.

Summary

Despite the lack of complete conformity across the whole corpus, comprising as it does a disparate group of writers, a number of general observations can be made concerning the orthography in the letters. The corpus prefers plene to defective forms, particularly in the case of o and u vowels, long and short, and in the long i vowel. To a lesser extent full orthography occurs with regard to i, e and ɛ vowels. There is some evidence of short qames being pronounced as, or similar to, an o vowel, perhaps indicating a Palestinian background pronunciation for some writers, such as Ṣ[lomo ben Ḩ]huda, but the retention of BH orthography for qames in most cases obscures the issue. There is also, through the wider use of yod as a vowel letter, some evidence of the merging of e and ɛ, again predominantly a Palestinian feature. However, both the Palestinian and Babylonian branches of RH are attested in the spellings of non-Babylonian writers, attesting to the influence of the Babylonian orthography, via the Babylonian Talmud, in the Ge’onim period.75 There are very few spellings found

72And not repeated in his other letters, e.g., לְקַלְקֵלְו (Gil (1983) no. 46=Bodl MS Heb b. 11.28 r.18).
74This is the only example of the 1 singular suffix on plural nouns spelled in this way in the corpus, even among the Babylonian ge’onim. Even were it not for the widespread use of the plural of majesty, which makes first person singular forms less frequent in the letters, it is unlikely that we would find many more examples since, by this stage, the influence of BH outweighed that of RH as a literary language, causing many of its more distinctive features to be lost, cf. Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 171–172.
75Bar-Asher p. 26 n. 139. In contemporary Palestinian marriage documents word final -ay (in the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the texts) is usually spelled ו ‘, though the spelling ו also occurs; Friedman (1980) vol. 2, p. 56.
76The mixing of Babylonian and Palestinian forms in single texts can be found in much earlier manuscripts; for
in the letters that do not have a precedent in either BH or RH, little innovation occurs. Arabic influence, such as the spelling of ą with 'alef' is minimal: 'alef' is mostly attested as a vowel letter only in words showing archaic BH orthography.

Personal style, though a factor in the letters' orthography, is principally evident only in particular areas of spelling. The two writers Na'†an ben 'Avraham, pretender to the ga'onate, and Yošiyahu, the Palestinian ga'on, are of a similar geographical origin and their orthography is similarly similar in many areas: they will customarily spell o, u and long i vowels with vowel letters, as will most writers in the corpus, particularly where it helps to distinguish verb stems such as the ni'†al prefix conjugation or the pi'el or pu'al stem. However, in other areas they are at opposite poles of the orthographic spectrum. They differ considerably over the short i, long e and consonantal v. Na'†an shows the influence of the MT's orthography: he is less likely to mark long e in an open syllable, never in a closed syllable, and retains the distinction between singular and plural in the pronominal suffixes on the noun. In addition, he rarely marks short i with yod and prefers single waw for consonantal and geminate v. Yošiyahu, on the other hand, leaves behind biblical orthography for a more phonetic approach: he will usually write long e with yod, even in a closed syllable, will habitually spell short i with yod, even under the preformatives of verbs and nouns, and he consistently employs doubled waw for consonantal v. It is somewhere in between these two approaches that the majority of the corpus's letter-writers lie; though anchored to the example set by their principal source, the biblical text, they are nevertheless drawn to a more descriptive orthography to ensure that their writings are intelligible.

instance Oxford MS Heb. d. 69, described by Mishor (1989), shows the characteristic spelling of Palestinian Hebrew -ay as ֵי in וֶאֶל (r.2) as already mentioned, but also uses the Babylonian RH spelling ֹאכ, e.g., ֶככל 'to here' (r.7), instead of Palestinian כ (cf. Bar-Asher p. 26). Thus the mixing of the two branches of RH was occurring some four to five centuries before the majority of the geniza corpus was written.
The pronouns and particles

This section describes the morphology of the pronouns, numerals, relativizer, conjunctions, adverbs and other particles attested in the letters. It covers some categories in more depth than others, depending on the significance that they have in the idiom of the letters, and pays particular attention to the pronouns and conjunctions, both of which show a wide and unusual variety of attested forms.

The personal pronoun

The following personal pronouns are attested in the letters:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 s</td>
<td>אני</td>
<td>'I await the arrival of his letter' (10J10.9 r.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>אני</td>
<td>'I am longing to see' (13J11.4 r.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ms</td>
<td>אתה</td>
<td>'You know' (13J17.4 r.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 fs</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ms</td>
<td>והוא</td>
<td>'that he is a priest' (20.94 r.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 fs</td>
<td>הוא</td>
<td>'it is closed' (10J10.22 r.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 pl</td>
<td>הוא</td>
<td>'and we ask from your honours' (13J19.15 r.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>אתה</td>
<td>'and we are surprised at you' (13J21.10 r.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 mpl</td>
<td>אתה</td>
<td>'and you know more than us' (28.24 r.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 fpl</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 mpl</td>
<td>הם</td>
<td>'and they did not remember me' (12.347 r.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>הם</td>
<td>'for they are twisted' (16.3 r.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 fpl</td>
<td>שניהם</td>
<td>'they dwell' (NS 308.122 v.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>שניהם</td>
<td>'the haggadot are [only]opinions' (Misc. 35.14 r.19)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The principal 1 singular pronoun is אני, which is used throughout the corpus. The archaic biblical pronoun סְאִבָּה is attested in contemporary sources, for instance it can be found in Karaite divorce documents of the period, for example 'I am not her husband' (Gil (1983) no. 303=Misc. 35.10 §5.1 line 10). However, in the letters it occurs mostly in quotations, e.g., the Karaite Toviyah ben Moše quotes Isaiah 66:13, 'so I will comfort you' (12.347 r.8). Its creative use is very rare: the lady Maliha writes from Byzantium, 'and I dearly long to see the radiance of your faces' (13J11.4 r.10); Shlomo ben Yehuda writes 'I greatly wanted' (13J16.14 r.26). Both letters also attest the use of אַתָּה, which is not employed to the exclusion of אני.

Three different 3 masculine plural pronouns are employed in the letters. The rabbinic הם only found sporadically. Beyond its use in an early (mid-ninth century C.E.) letter from Iraq (NS 308.122 v.28) it may only be found again in the letters of Shlomo ben Yehuda, and then only once, in a phrase drawing heavily on rabbinic vocabulary, 'since they are permitted to stipulate' (NS J15 r.8).2

1 Some grammatical categories are lacking, notably the definite article and interrogative pronouns. This is because without vocalisation there is little to note about them other than their existence. Their use, on the other hand, can be interesting but is not within the scope of the present study.

2 Probably in this case the proximity of the two RH constructions, דְּרֵי and וְהָאָרָא, conditions the choice
The archaic biblical pronoun ‘אֲנָחָה is well-attested in the corpus, both as an independent pronoun, e.g., ‘הַמָּם תֵּאָשֵׁים ‘they are the holy community’ (16.251 r.3); and, albeit less frequently, as an element of demonstrative constructions, e.g., ‘דְּרוֹבֵּרים וְהָמָה ‘those dinars’ (16.275 r.8); and, ‘כְּדִי ‘those things’ (10J12.17 r.3).³

Overwhelmingly ‘אֲנָחָה is the principal pronoun of the 3maculine plural in the corpus; ‘אֲנָחָה is employed less frequently (although not as rarely as אֲנָחָה) and its role often appears to be to avoid a repetition of too many ‘אֲנָחָה pronouns in close proximity, as in ‘ם הַמָּם תֵּאָשֵׁים ‘they are the respected communities’ (13J16.24 r.4).⁴ The corresponding archaic 3 feminine plural pronoun, אֲנָא, is not attested.

The biblical 1 plural pronoun, אֲנָא, is employed alongside the rabbinic pronoun ‘אֲנָךְ in the letters.⁵ There is no real pattern to the two pronouns’ deployment; most writers use both forms in their letters: the Babylonian ga’on Nebhunya Hakkohen writes ‘אֲנָחָה מְשִׁיחֻּהוּ ‘that we send’ (12.851 r.13) and ‘אֲנָךְ מְכַסֵּים ‘and we are requesting’ (12.851 r.18); Naṭan Hakkohen writes from Tiberias ‘אֲנָא מֵדִירֵנוּ ‘and we are hereby informing’ (13J23.13 r.10) and ‘אֲנָךְ מְכַסֵּים ‘it is hard for us as well’ (13J2313 r.15); Yeshu’a Hakkohen ben Yosef writes from Alexandria ‘אֲנָא בֵּיתוּ ‘and we are happy’ (12.338 r.9), whereas ‘אֲנָא בֵּיתוּ ‘as we ourselves did’ (12.338 m.8), ‘אֲנָה בֵּיתוּ ‘and we desire’ (12.338 v.4), ‘אֲנָה בֵּיתוּ ‘and we will endeavour’ (12.338 v.13).

In the corpus as a whole, ‘אֲנָה occurs more frequently than ‘אֲנָחָה. Naṭan ben ‘Avraham, for instance, employs ‘אֲנָה more frequently than ‘אֲנָחָה. In his total correspondence of 8 letters, Naṭan uses the 1 plural pronoun 13 times: ‘אֲנָה 9 times and ‘אֲנָחָה 4 times.⁶ For him, ‘אֲנָה is the principal pronoun of body text, e.g., ‘אֲנָחָה לְמָסַר דִּי תּוֹלְעַי ‘בֵּיתוּ מְפָדְתֵּה ‘and we were even afraid to pass judgement on him’ (8J20.1 r.9), whereas ‘אֲנָחָה is only attested in the usual closing formula of the præscriptio that he uses just before the main body of the letter begins: ‘אֲנָה נַחֲצֵהוּ מְדִירֵנוּ ‘and we were happy’ (13J31.1 r.13; 10J9.25 r.2; 10J15.10 r.4; Gil (1983) no. 200=Bodl MS Heb f 39.29v–30r line 3).⁷ Naṭan ben ‘Avraham therefore retains the biblical pronoun for formal and epistolary phrases, where we could expect a higher register of language, of pronoun. Although the actual phrase is not taken from rabbinic sources, similar constructions using ‘אֲנָה are frequent, e.g., ‘אֲנָה לְוַיָּוֶה ‘since they are forbidden’ Y. ‘Orla, II, 62, 3.

³It is characteristic of some of the distinctive BH usages that occur in the letters that they are often not that well-attested in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., the cohortative with the waw-consecutive, see Verbs). The use of ‘אֲנָחָה in demonstrative constructions only occurs a dozen times in total in the Bible; ‘אֲנָה occurs more than three times as often.

⁴Compare ‘אֲנָה ‘they are our masters’ (24.6 r.5), where the repetition is retained. Also, another letter demonstrates how different pronouns are employed together: ‘אֲנָה ‘he is our lord’ (10J9.14 r.2). Here Aramaic 3 masculine singular pronouns are used alongside the Hebrew to underscore more dramatically the name of the letter’s recipient.

⁵Naṭan is of course attested in BH, in the אֲנָה of Jeremiah 42:6, and it is also found in texts from Qumran, Abegg p. 330. However, it is usually associated with RH, where it is the dominant form of the 1 plural pronoun, Fernandez p. 18.

⁶Naṭan ben ‘Avraham’s letters are 8.3, 8J20.1, 8J33.5, 10J9.25r, 13J31.1, Gil (1983) no. 184=Bodl MS Heb d66.69 and Gil (1983) no. 200=Bodl MS Heb f39.29v–30r; all but one (8J33.5) are written in his own hand.

⁷The phrase is found in other letters in various guises; it is based on Psalms 106:1.
and employs וָאֲנַהְיָה everywhere else, perhaps unusually, since he is in many ways quite a conservative, biblicising writer. The letters of Yosef Hakkohen ben Šalom Ga’on also seem to share a similar attitude towards the biblical pronoun. In his own letters (rather than those written on behalf of other individuals, for he often acted as a scribe and his handwriting is found on many letters and documents in the geniza) the author continually employs the rarer biblical pronominal suffixes מֶנֶה and מִתְנֶה, to the exclusion of מִזְמָה and מָיָה, e.g., ‘their wise men’ (1316.24 r.6), ‘and with him’ (1316.24 r.15), ‘from him’ (1316.24 r.17) and ‘his righteousness’ (816.12 r.13). In similar fashion, he only uses מִזְמָה for the 1 plural pronoun, e.g., מִזְמָה יְבִנְיָהוֹר מְצִיבַּב ‘we also did so’ (1316 r.23), and does not attest רֹאִים at all. Other writers who prefer the biblical pronoun are Šamu’el ben Hofni, the Babylonian ga’on, who only employs מִזְמָה, and Sa’adya Ga’on, who, in the extant copies of his letters, attests רֹאִים only occasionally, but much more frequently, even paired with distinctively post-biblical vocabulary. However, it should be remembered that these are only a handful of the many letters represented in the collection and that they do not reflect the style of the majority. In the greater corpus, וָאֲנַהְיָה and מֶנֶה may be regarded as interchangeable.

With the rare biblical pronoun, is only encountered once in the corpus, in a letter of Šalom ben Y’huda: מַה נָבְנָה ‘and as for us, what are we?’ (20.102 r.25); the pronoun and the phrase in which it occurs are taken from Exodus 16:7.

Although מַה, the rabbinic 2 masculine singular pronoun, may be found in poetic texts of the period, it, along with the rabbinic 2 masculine plural pronoun מַהְדָּה, is not attested in the letters.10

The demonstrative pronoun

The demonstrative pronouns attested in the letters are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>fs</th>
<th>pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he</td>
<td>זָה</td>
<td>ואת</td>
<td>אלה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>דָה</td>
<td>‘when they heard this’ (13121.13 r.23)</td>
<td>‘after all this’ (1320.25 r.5)</td>
<td>‘these words of ours’ (28.24 r.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>נו</td>
<td>ז</td>
<td>ז</td>
<td>אלה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘one after another’ (16.275 r.21)11</td>
<td>‘from us’ (16.18 r.11)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>נו</td>
<td>אלה</td>
<td>אלה</td>
<td>אלה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘in these days’ (16.18 r.11)</td>
<td>‘from us’ (16.18 r.11)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The rarer BH feminine pronoun מַה could possibly be attested in examples containing the feminine noun מַה and the demonstrative, such as מַה מַה ‘at this time’ (12.775 r.9) and מַה מַה ‘at

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8Yosef Hakkohen ben Šalom Ga’on’s own letters are 816.12, 1316.24, Gil (1983) no. 407=Mosseri IV 10, and Gil (1983) no. 408=ULC Add 3347. However, his own style often shines through when writing letters on behalf of others, suggesting that he had the freedom to phrase the letters as he saw fit.

9Saadya’s letters, or copies of them, are edited in Gil (1997).

10מַה is a form widespread in RH but it may also be found in LBH and at Qumran, Fernandez p.18. Dunaš ben Labrat (a tenth-century Spanish writer of poetry and prose) uses מַה rather than מָיָה when it suits the metre, Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 236.

11The demonstrative is attested with vocalisation in Gil (1997) no. 13=Bodl MS Heb f34.40 v.20: מַה מַה מַה מַה מַה ‘from this yeshiva’.
this time’ (6J3.31 r.8). However, since the examples only concern the noun וָאֵל, it is more probable that the וָאֵל stands for the masculine pronoun and that וָאֵל is being treated as a masculine noun (perhaps under the influence of Arabic, see Nouns).

The biblical plural demonstrative וָאֵל occurs more frequently than the rabinic וָאֵל in the letters: וָאֵל, used nearly sixty times in the corpus is attested over three times as often as וָאֵל, with approximately fifteen occurrences. Writers rarely mix וָאֵל and וָאֵל, even in separate letters. Only one clear example, a letter from Alexandria, shows the use of both demonstratives: וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘these lines’ (13J34.3 r.11) and in the next line וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘in these days’ (13J34.3 r.12), using biblical word-order for the BH demonstrative and rabinic word-order for the RH one. However, in general, the two do not meet. A preference may be shown: שְׁמֹלְמוֹ ben יִשְׁרֵיהַ, along with Babylonian writers, prefers biblical וָאֵל, while Naṭan Hakkohen from Asqelon is one of the few to employ only וָאֵל in their letters.

The feminine demonstratives וָאֵל and וָאֵל also show a disparity in numbers similar to that of the masculine demonstratives. וָאֵל is attested one third the number of times that וָאֵל is attested. However, perhaps since they are in origin both biblical pronouns, there appears to be more willingness to mix the different forms within the same corpus and even within the same letter. שְׁמֹלְמוֹ ben יִשְׁרֵיהַ attests וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘one after another’ (16.275 r.21) in one letter and וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘before this’ (10J11.29 r.10) in another, whereas a letter from Aleppo gives us examples of both in the same text: וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘in this way’ (12.17 r.17) and וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘after all this’ (12.17 r.21). וָאֵל is often employed as the independent neuter pronoun, e.g., וָאֵל וָאֵל ‘and this is known’ (28.24 r.7), a role that וָאֵל appears only rarely to take on in the letters, occurring mostly as a demonstrative adjective.

In addition, the following intensive demonstratives are attested: וָאֵל יאָלָה ‘this letter of ours’ (12.44 v.6) וָאֵל יאָלָה ‘this letter’ (13J11.4 v.1)

וָאֵל is only found once in the letters and is used as a feminine demonstrative adjective. 2 Kings

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12There are a number of letters in the Taylor-Schechter collection which show the וָאֵל demonstrative with וָאֵל: Box Misc. 28.231 r.15; 6J3.23 r.10; 10J24. leaf 1 r.4; 13J19.15 r.15. The feminine וָאֵל is a rare form only found about a dozen times in the MT, the majority of which are in the LBH of Qohelet, e.g., 'מִנַּהְיָה רָאָנְיָא, even that, I saw' 2:24.

13Although word-order is unfortunately outside the scope of the present study, it should be noted that the order of demonstrative before noun is very frequent, e.g., 'in this town' (13J26.13 r.21); וָאֵל וָאֵל 'this letter' (18J4.20 r.37). This reflects a syntax that is found in RH, cf. Fernandez p. 23, but may also result from influence of the Arabic vernacular.

14Naṭan Hakkohen ben Mavora’s letters: Gil (1983) no. 581=Bodl MS Heb d66.37; 18J4.4; Gil (1983) no. 589=ENA 2806.8. He only uses the plural demonstrative in 18J4.4 though. Overall, no larger collection of letters from a single author attests the use of וָאֵל; it is generally only found sporadically in isolated letters. The conservative Karaites, however, do show both forms of the pronoun in their marriage contracts, although do not interchange them in the same document; cf. Olszowy-Schlanger p. 103.

15They are also known as reinforced demonstratives, cf. Jośoôn §36 b.
this Shunnamite woman', attests to its use for the feminine in BH.\textsuperscript{16} The longer feminine form לְאָדָה, found in both BH and RH, is not employed at all in the letters.\textsuperscript{17}

Only two letters use לְאָדָה: the example quoted above, which occurs in a letter by the Palestinian ga'on Dani’el ben ‘Azarya (12.44 v.6) and an identical phrase in a letter of the Palestinian Academy (in Yosef Hakkohen ben Solomon Ga’on’s handwriting), Misc. 36.140 r.28. In all three examples of the intensive לְאָדָה it is used as a particularly strong near demonstrative which refers to the letter itself in which the words appear. Therefore it occurs only in formulaic phrases and is not used as a general demonstrative particle.

The following rabbinic composite demonstrative is attested:\textsuperscript{18}

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{pl.} \\
לְאָדָה \quad \text{לְאָדָה} \\
\text{these lines' (13J11.24.11)}
\end{array}
\]

In all, eight letters attest this RH demonstrative. It can be found in letters of Babylonian as well as Palestinian origin, e.g., a letter from the academy of Pumba’dita, dating from around 850 C.E., לְאָדָה ‘these words’ (NS 308.122 r.15). It too is mainly employed as an intensive demonstrative, with most of the texts using it to refer to the letter in which it appears, e.g., לְאָדָה ‘these two lines’ (13J11.2 r.14) or לְאָדָה ‘this pair of lines’ (10J24.1 leaf 2 r.26). Thus its use is also mainly formulaic.

The marker of the direct object is also widely used as a demonstrative adjective in the letters, e.g., לְאָדָה ‘at that time’ (16.3 r.21); לְאָדָה ‘that day’ (12.217 r.11).

The personal pronouns may also be used in the role of demonstrative adjectives, e.g., לְאָדָה ‘this man’ (10J11.30 r.12); לְאָדָה ‘that man’ (12.732 r.12).

The **possessive לְאָדָה**

The RH independent possessive pronoun לְאָדָה attests the following suffixes:

\[
\begin{array}{c|l}
\text{Number} & \text{Possessive}
\hline
1s & לְאָדָה \quad \text{‘my total sum’ (12.338 v.10)}
2ms & לְאָדָה \quad \text{‘your holy community’ (10J12.22 r.27)}
2fs & \quad \text{(unattested)}
3ms. & לְאָדָה \quad \text{‘a letter that isn’t his’ (10J9.25 r.4)}
3fs & לְאָדָה \quad \text{‘it’s copy’ (NS 169.11 r.15)}\textsuperscript{19}
1pl & לְאָדָה \quad \text{‘from our water’ (13J26.13 r.5)}
2mpl & \quad \text{(unattested)}
2fpl & \quad \text{(unattested)}
\end{array}
\]

\textsuperscript{16}Some Mi\={s}na manuscripts read יָדָה for לְאָדָה, cf. Segal p. 41 §74.

\textsuperscript{17}Extremely rare in BH, לְאָדָה is only attested in Ezekiel 36:35; it is only slightly more common in RH, Fernandez p. 22.

\textsuperscript{18}Composite, since it is formed from RH לְאָדָה plus לְאָדָה, Fernandez p. 22. The uniquely rabbinic form לְאָדָה is not attested in the letters.

\textsuperscript{19}A feminine singular form of לְאָדָה, לְאָדָה, \textit{is} attested in 13J20.9 r.19. Such a form is not found elsewhere and is probably simply an error for לְאָדָה; although perhaps the additional \textit{ה} is connected to the pronunciation of the \textit{he} with \textit{mappiq}, לְאָדָה. If so, it is the only such example.
The particle is used by many different writers, but it is not found in any great amount or concentration. It principally occurs with names or titles, and in expressions drawn from rabbinic texts, e.g., the mother-in-law of Moše (10:12.25 r.6); to Alexandria, Egypt (12.114 r.17); Av Beţ Din of all Israel (Gil (1983) no. 214–Bodl MS Heb c 28.59 r.16); because a man’s messenger is like himself (13:23.11 r.35).

As in BH and RH vocalisation, the particle is attested with segol in a letter penned by the inveterate vocaliser Naţan ben ‘Avraham, son of holy men’ (13:31.1 r.16).

In the earlier manuscripts of RH the possessive particle is normally written attached to the following noun; the writing of is and its governed noun as two separate words in later manuscripts of the Mišna may well be a medieval invention, though perhaps one that has roots in different traditions of RH, as evidenced in the Bar Koşa letters. In the geniza letters is normally written attached to the following noun: in the y’siva of Pumbədiţa (NS 308.122 v.4); of the dispersion (16.6 r.1); ‘the Lord’s will’ (28.24 r.55); this is particularly the case in letters from Babylonian g’ɔnim, Šərira Ga’on’s letter ‘from the people of the West’ (16.3 r.10) is a rare exception. Elsewhere, more variation is shown regarding the positioning of: the Qazar letter writes the separately: the community of Kiev (12.122 r.8); ‘of iron’ (12.122 r.13); but a letter from Fustâ prefects it: the judgement of gentiles (16.304 r.35). Šəlomo ben Yoḥuda generally treats is as a separate particle, but occasionally writes ‘with the signature of the letter writer’ (12.328 r.15) and ‘father to orphans’ (20.178 r.15), but occasionally writes the two together. In Jeremiah’s generation (20.102 r.20). In any case, because of the difficulties of poor handwriting and word-spacing which afflict many geniza letters it can be difficult to determine whether the noun and particle run together or not.

The direct object marker

The direct object marker is frequently attested in the corpus, both as an independent particle, e.g., why do you forget all this? (28.24 r.9) and the proper name ‘Jeremiah’ accepts the prefix.
and Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya‘qov received this *get* (13)16.24 r.21, and with suffixes, e.g., *yet he is forsaking us* (10)27.2 r.14) and *would I take it?* (13)15.1 r.19).

The direct object marker takes the usual BH suffixes: ‘that he will provide for me’ (13)16.14 v.18; ‘and we ordained him’ (10)9.25 r.4); ‘I am informing you’ (13)13.21 r.14).

In the 3 masculine plural both the common *אוהב, אוהב* (Box Misc. 35.14 r.11), and the rare BH *אוהב, אוהב* (16.95 r.10), are attested, though only the biblicising Hebrew of סעירה Ga’on attests the use of the latter.

### The negative particle א

The negative *א is attested both as an independent particle, e.g., ‘I already have no strength left in me’ (13)13.28 r.18) and ‘no one helps’ (10)27.8 m.1), and with suffixes, e.g., *you do not keep to the covenant of the ga’on* (16.13); *and we do not know* (12.851 r.13) and *none of them are able* (13)25.5 r.29).

Like RH, the particle generally takes the suffixes without epenthetic nun. The 3 masculine singular form is the rabbinic *א*, e.g., *‘and whoever can’t’* (Misc. 35.4 leaf 6 r.6) and *‘a letter that doesn’t belong to him’* (10)9.25 r.4), rather than BH *אני* usually attested without epenthetic nun, i.e., *אני*, which is the usual form in RH. The biblical form with nun, *א*, is attested only rarely; סעירה ben יָהְוָדָא uses it occasionally, e.g., *and though I am not with you* (10)27.2 r.10–11) and *I do not worry* (12.217 r.25), but also employs *אני* (13)14.8 r.15). For [א] only א is written, e.g., *‘I do not think that...’* (13)14.8 r.15). The reading א in the letter of the lady Malilha from Byzantium (13)11.4 r.8) is probably an error for א, though, is used later in the same text *אא因为我 do not allow myself* (13)11.14 r.17).

For the 3 masculine plural, א is most commonly used. א, which exhibits the rabbinic masculine plural ending ְּ, is found only rarely. In a letter written by Byzantine Jews א is used alongside א in the form ‘they cannot take us’ (10)27.8 r.12) and *and they are unable even to support us* (10)27.8 r.14). Such mixing of rabbinic and biblical forms in the same letter is not unusual, particularly where pronouns and pronominal suffixes are concerned and where otherwise identical words or phrases would

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25 For the suffixes of the object marker see Gesenius §103b. As mentioned in *Orthography*, forms with a long vowel in the first syllable are often written defectively, e.g., ‘to give it’ (NS 308.122 v.25).

26 סעירה is very rare in the Hebrew Bible, only attested 5 times, e.g., *‘and he blessed them’ Genesis 31:55.

27 Fernandez p. 19. In general in the letters there is a decline in the use of suffix forms showing epenthetic nun (‘nunated’ forms). It occurs in very few examples of the pronominal suffixes of the prefix conjugation, for example; see *Verbs.*
appear within a few lines of each other.

The numerals

The cardinal numbers 1–9 used in the letters are the same as in BH, occurring in both genders and in the absolute and construct states, e.g.: masculine absolute: ‘from three brothers’ (20.178 r.11); masculine construct: ‘seven heavens’ (13J14.10 r.4); feminine absolute: ‘with a single coin’ (16.18 r.14); feminine construct: ‘the two denominations’ (24.43 r.6).

The numbers 10–19 are formed as in BH: בָּאתָה trabah חֵם ‘ten dinars’ (13J23.19 r.32); בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘with eleven blessings’ (NS 309.20 r.9); בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘with twelve dinars’ (12.338 v.9). So too are the units 20, 30 etc.: בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘fifty dinars’ (12.338 v.4).

The intermediate numbers 21–99 are formed in two ways in the letters; either the unit precedes the tens with both in the absolute (which is slightly more common in the letters): בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘on the twenty-sixth of the month’ (10G5.7 r.5); this is also the standard construction in BH (and in Arabic).29 Or the unit may follow the tens, again with both in the absolute, as is customary in LBH: בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘on the twenty-second of the month’ (13J16.24 r.13).29 There are few enough examples in the letters to draw a firm conclusion as to what may lie behind the decision to use one rather than the other. The fact is that both seem to be interchangeable, as Yešu‘a Hakkohen’s letter from Alexandria demonstrates: he begins with tens before units, אֲרָבִיעֵים וְדָבָשִׁים חָוָבָת ‘forty-four and a half dinars’ (12.338 v.7), and, in the very next line, reverses the order, בָּאתָה trabah וְלֹא ‘with thirty-two dinars’ (12.338 v.8), with something of a chiastic effect. A similar interchange is found in the Hebrew of the Karaite k'tubbob, with the form of the numerals differing from text to text, though, unlike our letters, not within the same document.30

The hundreds are formed as in BH, using בָּאתָה trabah for one hundred, אַלֵפים אַלֵפים חָוָבָת ‘and a hundred zuz’ (13J20.13 r.8), using the dual מִמְּאתָה for two hundred, מִמְּאתָה מִמְּאתָה חָוָבָת ‘two hundred and fifty dinars’ (13J26.13 r.27), and using the masculine construct numeral before מִמְּאתָה for further multiples, מִמְּאתָה מִמְּאתָה חָוָבָת ‘from nine hundred dinars’ (13J15.1 r.9) and מִמְּאתָה מִמְּאתָה חָוָבָת ‘eight hundred zuz’.

As in BH, one thousand uses the noun בָּאתָה trabah הָיוֹשָׁב אלֵפים אַלֵפים אַלֵפים ‘with a thousand blessings’ (12.114 r.13), the multiples 3000–9000 use the masculine construct before the plural מִמְּאתָה ‘eight thousand’ (13J31.3 r.13), and multiples greater than ten thousand use the masculine number plus the singular noun שְׁנֵמִים ‘eighty thousand’ (13J23.11 r.16).31

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29Joüon §100]. This is also the form of the intermediate numerals in the Dead Sea texts, Abegg p. 355.

30Gibson §47c.

31Olszowy-Schlanger p. 106 states that the order units before tens is clearly influenced by Arabic. While this may be the case, it is also the usual order in standard BH, which must be regarded as the most powerful influence our letter-writers.

31Joüon §100l-n deal with the thousands in BH. However, throughout the section it refers to forms such as
difference lies in the treatment of two thousand, though, since the usual BH expression, the dual אֲלֵפָיָם אֲלֵפָיָהו, e.g., ‘two-thousand men’ Judges 20:45, is not used for two thousand; instead the only example of two thousand is אֲלֵפָיָהו (10J12.25 r.5) where שְׂמֹעֵל ben מְשֻׁא of Tyre unusually uses the feminine construct before אֲלֵפָיָא, contrary to biblical use.  

The ordinal numbers attested in the letters take the same forms as in BH; masculine: בְּדוֹרֵי, e.g., ‘in the first generation’ (NS 308.122 v.6); בְּנֵי ‘son of the Third’ (16.261 r.27); feminines: אֵלֶּה ‘our master the Fourth’ (13J14.1 r.13), etc.; feminine: אֵלֶּה אֶת הָעָרָתִי ‘your first letter’ (12.328 r.17); אֵלֶּה אֶת הָעָרָתִי ‘your second letter’ (13J36.23 r.13). יִשְׂרָאֵל is also attested at NS 169.11r.9, 20.100 r.7 and 20.181 r.35; the ordinal יִשְׂרָאֵל, ‘second’, which is the usual feminine form in RH is not found in the letters.  

The relativizer

The relativizer is the particle that marks a relative clause. BH attests two relativizers, אֲשֶׁר and אֲשֶׁר, and, to a lesser extent, -ה. In RH and Talmudic Hebrew the principal relativizer is אֲשֶׁר. אֲשֶׁר did not entirely die out in RH, though, and it may still be found in the Miṣna, though only when referring back to biblical sources and in the blessing formulae. Both אֲשֶׁר and -ה are attested in the role of relativizer in the geniza letters: אֲשֶׁר אָבִּיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָבִּיךָ ‘to the place in which they pray’ (13J20.13 r.11); עליךָ אֶל הָעָרָתִי: אֲשֶׁר אָבִּיךָ ‘to the place in which it was revealed’ (Misc. 35.44 v.4).

The pointing of אֲשֶׁר can differ in rabbinic sources, depending on the tradition of RH being reflected in any particular manuscript. Whereas the Western tradition of Palestinian RH follows (the majority) BH practice by vocalising אֲשֶׁר under all conditions and geminating the following consonant (unless it is a guttural, in which case no gemination takes place), the Eastern tradition writes the relativizer אֲשֶׁר before the third person pronouns, the first singular pronoun, אֶל and the conditional conjunctions אֶל and אֶלָּא. Now, there is little vocalised material in the letters, however, the evidence obtainable is that the pointing follows Western Palestinian, and, unsurprisingly, biblical, practice by writing segol under אֲשֶׁר, even before a guttural: אֲשֶׁר ‘that happened to us’ (Misc. 35.49 r.22); אֲשֶׁר וְאֶל ‘from the thorns among the people’ (13J23.1 r.20); אֲשֶׁר יִכְרְעוּ ‘the straits that I am in’ (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.16). In the examples there is no evidence of gemination following the particle, but dages is very rarely written anyway in the corpus (see Orthography) and it would be wrong to draw a firm conclusion from its absence in these few cases.

The relativizer אֲשֶׁר may be prefixed with various prepositions as in BH: אֲשֶׁר בֵּיתךְ ‘in which’ (NS J92

as feminine constructs, since they are being explained from a diachronic perspective. Here, however, in common with other grammars (e.g., the recent Van der Merwe p. 24), I prefer to treat them synchronically, and refer to them as masculine.  

The letters show few examples of the dual overall. It mainly occurs in the regular feminine noun (those that take the pluralו) where its form is unambiguous; see Nouns.

For its use in RH see Fernandez p. 86. It is attested in contemporary literary texts though, occurring in the Scroll of ‘Evyatar, הַר תִּשָּׁבְעָה תִּשָּׁבְעָה ‘in the second year’ (10K7.1 leaf 1 v.22).

Azar p. 214.

rarely

Additionally, as

never

whoever

against whomsoever

whoever

as for me, and

what has been determined for me

and whoever has understanding

a request that he asked me

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the Scroll of 'Evyatar (T-S K7.1), a historical work

were regarded as interchangeable. This is paralleled

the Qazarian document (Misc. 35.38, the 'Schechter Text') attests both:

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the Qazarian text.

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tend to use both interchangeably.\textsuperscript{37} Even Karaite marriage documents attest both, sometimes in the same document.\textsuperscript{38} The use of interchangeable relativizers is paralleled by other examples of the use of both BH and RH morphology in the corpus, such as the coexistence of the complementizers \( \text{ך} \) and \( \text{ש} \).

Another particle that can function as a marker of relative clauses is the definite article. The use of the definite article on participles to form pseudo-relatives is, of course, well-attested in the letters as in any strain of Hebrew, e.g., [אֶמֶּהָלָה] תֵּדָהוֹת ‘our faithful servant who was appointed by our [=my] own mouth’ (10)9.25 m.10; הַשִּׁלָּשׁ הָעָקָרְיָא וֹדְרָדְרָא ‘the ruler who is called Haidara’ (13)26.13 r.7.\textsuperscript{39} However, in addition to this common usage the definite article is also employed as a relativizer on the finite verb.\textsuperscript{40} The definite article occurs in this role in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., [אַלְכַּר] אֶתִּי תֶּרְפִּית ‘and all that S\textsuperscript{39}mu’el had dedicated’ 1 Chronicles 26:28; though it is very rare, it is attested sufficiently for it to be a precedent for its later use in MH, e.g., in the language of Sa’adya Ga’on.\textsuperscript{41} Examples of its use in the corpus are the unambiguous [אֵל] אֹתְרָה ‘the size’ of the grief and strength of the blow that struck us’ (12)8.11–12 and [אֱלֶה] אֱלֹהִים הַרְבָּהוּ ‘the evil report which arrived’ (13)31.8 r.6–7), from letters of Š\textsuperscript{19}lomo ben Y\textsuperscript{5}huda, and [אֱלֹהִים] אֱלֹהִים ‘and the inheritance that he left behind’ (8.13 r.16), from a letter sent by the community of Palermo. Unfortunately in the two following examples the context is damaged so what appears to be the definite article could prove to be the interrogative \( \text{ן} \) instead: [אִי]וּ הָיָה ‘that he bore’ (13)16.17 r.1; וִיהוּדָה ‘which was prepared’ (16)304 r.23.\textsuperscript{42} However, there is ample evidence of the use of relative \( \text{ה} \) on the verb \( \text{ה} \), which appears to be its principal role in the corpus: יִשְׂמַע בְּרֶשֶׁת תַּכְּלִית הָדוֹחֵל [Najan Hakkohen, elder of the congregations, who was humble] (18)4.11 r.19); [אָנָּו] אֱלֹהִים וּגוֹדָר פּוּרֶצֶת ‘the two righteous men who were “repairers of breaches”’ (13)31.8 r.8); [אֲנָו] אֲנָו [the city of our God, place of his praise that was once house of our life’ (10)24.1 r.2–3); [אֲנָו] אֲנָו בִּזְכָּר אֵשָׁשֶׁת הָיוֹת [We have informed our friend of what has happened] (10)9.25 m.20); [אֲנָו] אֲנָו ‘all that happened in the same week that we voyaged’ (13)20.3 r.3).

It can be seen from the examples that the construction \( \text{ה} \) plus the verb \( \text{ה} \) is employed particularly in phrases meaning ‘what has happened/occurred’. There are a number of cases where the same meaning is obtained through the use of the nif\textsuperscript{al} of \( \text{ה} \), in which cases the

\textsuperscript{37}Saruq’s language is outlined in Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 235.

\textsuperscript{38}Olzowy-Schlanger p. 108. Toviyya ben Moše, the Karaite, attests a similar style in his letters, e.g., Gil (1983) no. 294=Gottheil-Worrell 31 r.22, אֲנָו, and Gil (1983) no. 294=Gottheil-Worrell 32 r.23, אֲנָו.

\textsuperscript{39}Technically, of course, the definite article is not fuctioning as a relativizer since the participle may form a relative clause without its use, hence ‘pseudo-relative’. See Waltke §19.7.

\textsuperscript{40}In this case the definite article is acting as a relative marker, and, syntactically, is identical to אַשׁ, cf. Waltke §19.7c.

\textsuperscript{41}For its use in Sa’adic language see Saenz-Badillos p. 216.

\textsuperscript{42}Due to the rarity of the relative definite article it is perhaps better to assume that these are the more straightforward constructions involving the interrogative, similar to Š\textsuperscript{19}lomo ben Y\textsuperscript{5}huda’s תַּכְּלִית [אָנָו] ‘has such a thing happened in your days?’ (13)13.28 r.26 which is a quotation from Joel 1:2.
actual parsing of the construction is problematic, since the participle and suffix conjugation are consonantally identical, e.g., 'and it isn’t hidden from [our] friend all that there was’ (13:17.4 r.13–14); however, due to the otherwise identical syntax of 'I have made known in it all that has occurred’ (13:17.4 r.4) and 'we have informed our friend of what has happened’ (10:9.25 m.20) it is clear that these should be read as suffix conjugation verbs with the relative. The same is probably true of Dani’el ben ‘Azarya’s phrase ‘and when he heard of the peace that had happened/been renewed’ (12.44 v.4) which would otherwise be a unique example of the nītpa’al participle in the corpus (see Verbs).

The use of the demonstrative pronouns as relative pronouns proper, a less-common feature of BH, is not attested in the corpus.43

The conjunctions

The complementizer

Complementizers are subordinating conjunctions that mark an embedded complement. Although prepositions may function as complementizers, marking infinitival complement clauses in Hebrew, the language also possesses a number of dedicated conjunctions to introduce finite complement clauses. BH attests יִרְאוּי in, e.g., Psalms 78:35 ‘they remembered that’, less commonly, אֵשֶׁר, e.g., Exodus 11:7 ‘so that you may know that’ and, in LBH, עוֹד, e.g., Qohelet 2:13 ‘and I saw that’.44 RH employs הוּא both for the complementizer and relativizer, e.g., Miṣna Bora raḵot 5:5 ‘I know that it is accepted’; it doesn’t continue the use of either י or הוּא in the role of complementizer.45

The letters adopt a position between that of RI and BH in their choice of complementizer. אֵשֶׁר, although retained alongside הוּא as a relativizer, is never found marking a complement clause (and, as described later, it occurs less often in composite conjunctions, being replaced by י or הוּא in such constructions); instead, the letters employ both biblical י and the LBH and rabbinic הוּא as complementizers. It is quite usual to find both employed in the same letter: an early letter from Pumbadaṭa attests הוּא, and it is clear to everyone’s eyes that the יגו of Pumbadaṭa is overflowing with ‘allufim’ (NS 308.122 r.v.3); however, יגו, which was also used by the writers of later letters (e.g., 16.68 r.17; cf. 308.122 v.19). A letter of ‘mu’el Haššliši written over a century and a half later also employs both complementizers: ‘I am to inform our master that in recent days we have heard a report that ‘Avraham ben Ş’al’ul has died’ (16.68 r.17; ‘and we are seeking form our master that he keep an eye on him’ (16.68 r.21).

Admittedly some letters show only הוּא. The late (fifteenth-century) letter of a wife to her

43 For use of the demonstratives הו and הו as relative pronouns see Waltke §19.5.
44 Gibson §90 states that the complementizer הו is mainly a feature of the later books of the Bible.
45 Fernandez p. 51–52; Segal §423.
husband attests just -ש, e.g., Mišna 67:4, that the command ‘to entreat you greatly not to put a distance between us’ (1382.10 r.14); we have heard that it is your intention to go to Turkey’ (1382.10 r.16). The Palestinian ga’on, Dani’el ben ‘Azarya also seems to prefer -ש to -כ, but attests both, whereas S’lomo ben Y’huda, his predecessor as ga’on, very rarely uses -ש.

To a certain extent the choice of complementizer, -כ over -ש, appears to be lexically driven. Expressions which are drawn from RH and Talmudic Hebrew where they attest the complementizer -ש are likely to bring with them the same components into the letters: -ש ‘it is impossible that’ (28.24 r.32) is a pure RH construction, e.g., Mišna Sevi’ot 7:8, and consequently attests the rabbinic complementizer, as does -ש ‘it is our will that’ (NS 169.11 r.10), found at Mišna Z’boqim 1:4. It should be no surprise that we find -ש and -כ ‘and I had thought that’ (13816.17 r.31) and -כ and -ש ‘and it appears to me that’ (12.114 r.31) also using -ש, when we consider their rabbinic origins; this helps to explain why Yošiyahu Ga’on, who usually prefers the biblical complementizer, e.g., ‘and know, our brothers that...’ (12.16.16 r.10), should write -ש when using the RH obligatory formula, -כ, i.e., ‘and it appears to me that’ (1032.8 r.1). On the other hand, certain letters using rabbinic constructions bicilise them in the manner that we are accustomed to from Karaite texts. S’lomo ben Y’huda, who, as stated, rarely uses -ש to mark the complement clause, is one of the few, outside Karaite works (which are predominantly literary), to employ the biblical complementizer with characteristically rabbinic expressions, such as -כ and -ש ‘and one such as he should’ (1032.8 r.1). On the other hand, certain letters using rabbinic constructions bicilise them in the manner that we are accustomed to from Karaite texts.

There is another side to the question of -ש versus -כ in the letters. Arabic attests three major complementizers, ‘anna, ‘inna and ‘an. The first two are employed when the complement clause can be described as factive, the last when the clause is non-factive. Can a similar situation be responsible for the alternation between -כ and -ש in some of the letters? Verbs denoting knowing and understanding, such as -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, are generally, but not universally, taken the complementizer -כ, as do the similar ‘knowledge’ constructions -כ and -כ. Non-factive complements, in particular following verbs with a volitive or directive aspect, tend to prefer the complementizer -ש, e.g., -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ, -כ. Again, this distinction is not necessarily made in many letters, e.g., S’lomo ben Y’huda attests -כ and I hoped that’ (16.275 r.24); ‘he ordered that’ (12.14 r.17); although, even in his letters we can find -כ and -כ, and I ask you to give the letters, those that I sent to the community, to the Masos’ (1323.1 r.27), thus suggesting that the general use of volitives with -כ influences even the more conservative of correspondents.

In summary, it is best to describe the situation regarding the two complementizers as a complex one, resulting from three main influences: the individual preference of the writer for -כ over -ש or vice versa, the provenance of phrases and constructions employed in the letters and,
at some level and possibly under the influence of Arabic, an aspectual distinction being made.

**The other conjunctions**

The following conjunctions, organised by type and, within each entry, in approximate order of frequency, represent those found in the main corpus. Where the conjunction is attested within the corpus but the text is damaged or garbled so that an intelligible example isn’t available one or two have been included from outside the corpus.

**The causal conjunction**

The causal conjunctions mark adverbial clauses that describe the reason for or cause of the main clause. The causal conjunctions attested in the letters are listed below.

**BH origin:**

- כ ב מ ארץ ישראל, לָעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל (131.14 v.2): ‘because I sent letters to him’
- כ לְעַל הַמִּסְדָּרִים לָעַל יִשְׂרָאֵל (1316.15): ‘for the people of Israel are in great straits’
- כ ב מ ה`ירא הקדשה אליהם (161.15): ‘because the ’Alluf promised’ (10G5.8 v.15). This is the most common causal conjunction used in the letters.

**RH origin:**

- לַפְּעֵד יִתְרוֹ הָאָדָם פָּרַשׁ (8120.1.3): ‘because you were like a restorer of the soul to us’
- לַפְּעֵד יִתְרוֹ הָאָדָם פָּרַשׁ (3514 r.14): ‘because he toiled’
- לַפְּעֵד יִתְרוֹ הָאָדָם פָּרַשׁ (3312.21): Possibly כ יִתְרוֹ הָאָדָם פָּרַשׁ was preferred as an element of the construction due to its strong connection with the notion of causality, not so apparent with כ יִתְרוֹ הָאָדָם פָּרַשׁ.
- לע כ ב מ ה`ירא הקדשה אליהם (2510.22): ‘because the Tora of the Lord is inside him’
- לע כ ב מ ה`ירא הקדשה אליהם (35.4 leaf 5 v.9): ‘because a wise man has been taken from among them’

For these constructions in BH see Gibson §125.

Gibson §125 Rem.1.

The full list of RH causal conjunctions is in Fernandez, p. 222.
common in the letters.

- ש' because the dead only die and are buried once' (13J33.2 r.15); ש' because he couldn't leave his house because he was ill' (24.6 r.34).- ש alone occurs less often as a causal conjunction in the letters than the composite causal constructions which employ -ש as an element.

שכם 'because al-Lâdhîqi wants to be appointed over them' (13J16.17 r.26). Only attested here in the letters, it is similarly quite rare in RH.51

اورיאל-ר' because no scholars have been dwelling among them' (10J9.14 r.13); שכם because his intention was to name' (10J12.17 r.6). It is mainly used by Shalom ben Yâhuda.

بشכם-ש' because he didn't see a letter from me' (Gil (1983) no. 425= Bodl MS Heb d65.4 r.11).

Others:

כפי-ש because it isn't clearly stated' (10J24.1 leaf 2 v.17). Very rarely attested, this conjunction is employed as an alternative to לְשׁ and is similar to BH אשה.

כפי-ש/ Başkanlığı because his father [...] was an elder of our generation' (12.146 r.13). כפי-ש because he is the son of good people' (12.146 v.2). כפי-ש is not used asyndetically in the letters, as it may be in BH (although it is used as a preposition with the infinitive construct), and instead we find various forms with כפי-ש and כפי-ש is not attested as a conjunction alone in the MT, and only occurs in Ezekiel 13:10; 36:3 כפי-ש, which is translated in the NRSV as 'because in truth', a reinforced causal conjunction. There may be an asseverative nuance in its use in the letters, but it isn't often enough attested to be sure.

מפורק-ש because it is impossible for us to write' (12.851 r.14). It is only attested in a letter of Naḥemya Ga'on. The conjunction may be found in the Babylonian Talmud, B.Š'votq 32b because he cannot make an oath'.

opotכ-כ because I am ill' (13J20.18 v.3). Adapted from RH כפי-ש, the construction can be found in Karaite writings, where the biblicalisation of rabbinic and talmudic constructions through the substitution of כפי-ש or כפי-ש for כפי-ש is frequent.52 The letters of the corpus always use כפי-ש as the substitute in composite causal conjunctions due to its transparent connection with causality.

51Azar p. 125. It is found in Karaite writings, Maman p. 240.

52Maman p. 255. Although it could be described as a hypercorrect form, since BH already attests a causal conjunction כפי-ש, e.g., Exodus 19:18, which is presumably the antecedent of RH כפי-ש.
and it was because our lord, our Nasi, Dani’el was *ga’on* (8:2.3 r.1). The conjunction is another used by Karaites, as well as being found in the letters of Şolomo ben Yōhuda.\(^{53}\) It is associated with causality by association with the BH causal conjunction *למָּצֵן* and *לָמֵּץ* alone can be found denoting cause in Spanish Hebrew poetry.\(^{54}\)

because each man [' (8:20.3 r.2); because the heart is sure' (10:11.30 r.2). Unfortunately, due to damage to the context in both these letters it is difficult to be sure that these are causal and not some other conjunctions. However, elsewhere in MH we find that Binyamin al-Nahāwendi, the Karaite, attests a causal conjunction.\(^{55}\)

The comparative conjunction

BH origin:

'as your forefathers used to do’ (16.6 v.12); ‘as it was at the first’ (8:2.4 r.10). It is employed far less frequently as a comparative than as a temporal conjunction in the corpus.

The arch-bibliciser Şarīra Ga’on uses it.

RH origin:

‘as we did with them’ (12.338 m.8); ‘as they taught us’ (13:25.10 r.21). A straightforward RH conjunction that is quite common in the corpus.\(^{56}\)

Only attested in Şolomo ben Yōhuda’s writings, other letters use.

‘as he was when you named him Haver’ (13:26.23 r.17).

And we are requesting from him that he forward the letter as we ordered him to’ (8:20.1 r.11). It is only used as a general conjunction of comparison in this example from a letter by Naṭan ben ’Avraham; usually its main role in the letters is to introduce biblical quotations.

‘as is written in the Bible...’ (18:4.4 r.31). It is used to indicate quotations from the Hebrew Bible.

and it is if he is before our eyes’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.8).

Others:

\(^{53}\)Maman pp. 256–257.


\(^{55}\)Maman p. 256; it is attested in Nahāwendi’s *Laws*, §30, 75b.

\(^{56}\)The list of RH comparative conjunctions is in Fernandez, pp. 198–199.
to inform that as from today (?) (13J16.24 r.13). It is difficult to sort out the syntax of this sentence. כומס כים is attested in contemporary Karaite writings as a comparative conjunction, and so it is included here."

he has left us as he created us' (13J9.2 r.41). It is only used by Solomon ben Yohuda and again reflects a biblicising tendency in his writings. Unsurprisingly, given its biblical components, it is also attested in the literary productions of the Karaites, e.g., in the N'im of Toviyya ben Moše."

The concessive conjunction

The concessive conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

אום - Both forms of the conjunction are attested in the letters, written as one word, אום, and as several, אום - אום 'and although he promised' (8.3 r.14), and as several, אום 'and although you need no admonition from me' (13J20.9 r.7). Both Yoḥiyahu Ga’on (13J26.16 r.11) and Naṭan ben ’Avraham (8.3 r.14) write it as one word; most others, including Shira Ga’on, ’Elhanan ben Shmarya and Yisra’el Hakkohen Ga’on write it as separate words.

אפור - לולא 'and the community didn’t go to any trouble on their behalf: not even as far as a single loaf of bread' (13J14.20 r.8).

Others:

אפור - לולא 'and despite the fact that trouble surrounded us [...] his mercies didn’t forsake us' (12.146 r.4). An unusual variant of אפור that is only attested in this letter of an unknown Babylonian ga’on, although it possibly also occurs in אפור (Misc. 35.49 r.13) where unfortunately the text is damaged."

57Maman p. 257, where it is explained as equivalent in meaning to כומס כים.

58Maman p. 258.


60Rashi uses this concessive conjunction in his commentary on Song of Songs 1:13.
The adversative conjunction

The adversative conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

יכו ‘he only had eyes and heart for what could feed him and give him drink’ (13J9.2 r.32). As in BH, כ may be adversative after a negative. It is rare in the letters and is found mainly in Šalom ben Yūshua and Širīa Ga’on, two of the more biblicising authors in the corpus.

אבל

אבל מווהבי לתוך בני העולמות ...

כ א ‘God will not abandon those who fear him, on the contrary he will support them in his mercy’ (12.347 r.28). כ is common as an exceptive adverb in the letters but may also be found, as here, introducing an adversative clause.

RH origin:

אלא וה ‘don’t delay me any longer but act for the honour of heaven’ (10J9.13 r.16). Like אא כ it is more usual as an adverb.

אלא- ש ‘and, moreover, we are requesting’ (12.44 v.3). It is only found in this phrase, אלא- ש, which is also attested in a letter from Palermo, 24.6 r.50.

Others:

ואל ‘and not to do him any evil but instead to treat him honourably and do as he wills’ (20.114 r.43). It occurs frequently in this letter where it is used, in the manner of BH כ, as an adversative after a negative main clause.

The conditional conjunction

The conditional conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

ואם רצה ‘if you want to force us, force us!’ (10J9.25 m.2); ואם תרזה ‘if the one who returns it desires, let a deed of compensation be drawn up for him’ (10J12.25 r.11); ... ואם חכים ‘and if I look for something from the Bible...I find it’ (13J11.2 r.12). The BH reals conditional conjunction is widespread in the letters.

ולו ‘and were it not for the mercies of the Almighty, that men came [...] I would have died’ (12.347 r.20). The other BH
spelling, is also attested, for instance in a letter of Naḥemya Gaʿon (16.6 r.7), in Saphira Gaʿon (Gil (1997) no. 28=AIU VII E23 §4 line 10) and in an early letter of Šalom ben Yohuda (12.14 r.11); later letters by him use ליל, as do writers from North Africa and Palestine. It seems that only the Babylonians regularly employ the spelling with ‘alef.

and if I could, I would have flown’ (13J16.14 v.4); and were I to have told of the great longing I had to see him’ (12.338 r.10). Only a letter attributed to ’Ovadya the Proselyte attests the rare BH spelling אל, attested as a vocalised form, אלו (12.732 r.8).

RH origin:

יאהל ‘and everyone asked me’ (13J16.17 r.34). It is not widely used when compared with אלל.

יאהל ש ‘and if you hadn’t mentioned to me’ (Gil (1983) no. 330=Bodl MS Heb d 65.4 r.11). Again, the conjunction is not widely used.

Others:

יאהל ‘and were it not that it would double [the length of the letter, I would tell [you]’ (13J20.13 r.12). It is a composite conjunction formed from elements of RH יאהל ש and BH ליל; it is also attested in a letter of Yoḥyahu Gaʿon, 10J32.8 r.3.

לול ש ‘and were I not ill I would have different writing’ (13J20.18 v.5). This construction is not widely attested in the corpus, but is found in the letters of two Karaites, as might be expected from its use of the biblical element ב, the Karaite Mōnaḥem, מ תורה: לול ש and if the matter were not urgent’ (13J9.9 r.14) and also Toviyya ben Moše (12.347 r.23).

The final and consecutive conjunction

The final conjunctions mark adverbial clauses and denote purpose. Consecutive conjunctions mark result clauses. The two often share the same conjunctions and constructions in Hebrew and can be indistinguishable in both form and meaning. Those attested are:

This spelling attested in the ketiv of 2 Samuel, 18:12.

It is attested in Ibn ’Ezra’s commentary on Genesis 2:17, in the form יאהל ש.

Ibn ’Ezra also attests this conjunction in his commentary on Joel 1:19.
BH origin:

למען 'so that he may walk in the path of the good' (10[24.8 v.20); 'so that we may write' (12.336 r.6); 'that we may inform him of our mind' (NS 169.11 r.4). It is frequently used in the letters, particularly by the g*onim סֵפִּירָה, נָשֵׁםָיה and סֵפִּימוּ הַנָּוָה, as an alternative to the rabbinic -ש. The biblical לַמְּשַׁר, though attested in other areas of MH, is not found in the corpus.64

למען לא 'so that they will not harm those who come to it' (13[11.5 r.13); 'so that they be not forgotten' (10[24.8 v.20). It is simply the negative of לַמְּשַׁר.

פ' 'lest they roll onwards from there to this land' (NS 321.2 r.4).

לָבָלַת 'so that she doesn’t let him hop about in the courtyard' (13[20.3 r.14). As a conjunction it is rare in BH, only attested in Exodus 20:20 and 2 Samuel 14:14 with the prefix conjugation. Similarly, in the letters it only occurs here as a conjunction marking a finite clause, usually it functions to introduce an infinitival clause.

לְבָזָבָר 'so that you may be a mouthpiece for me before the community' (Gil (1983) no. 212=ENA 4020.48 r.31). Very rare in both BH, e.g., Exodus 20:16; 2 Samuel 14:20 and 17:14 only, and in the corpus.

RH origin:

והיה הנחהÔ obscured the naked throne of the shrine so that the Lord would not hear it unto my soul (13[25.10 r.27). Neither this common RH composite construction nor the following one occur widely in the letters; preference is given to the more concise conjunctions כִּי and לְמָשְׁר.

על חניי 'on condition that if the money weren’t handed over at such-and-such a time then they would return us into their charge' (10[27.8 r.10).

כי ם 'so that we may meet tomorrow at the synagogue' (8[22.7 r.10); 'so that I can write to them' (13[25.5 r.22). It is a very common conjunction in the corpus, though less well-used by the biblicising

64For instance, Rambam employs לַמְּשַׁר, in his commentary on Genesis 6:9. Whereas the connection of לַמְּשַׁר with the relative construction is so dominant in the letters that it causes לַמְּשַׁר to lose almost completely any connection with other meanings, such as causality or purpose, that it once had in BH. Consequently, we rarely find לַמְּשַׁר functioning in composite conjunctions, having been replaced with -ש and, slightly more surprisingly, biblical כִּי.

65This is written with the unusual spelling חַנִי in this example.
so that the Mišna isn’t forgotten’ (13)25.5 r.23); ‘so that love does not depart from among us’ (16.6 r.9).

-ש ‘that our ga’on should be angry at me’ (13)20.18 m.1). The simple construction with -ש is not frequently attested in the letters perhaps because of the fact that -ש can be a relativizer, a causal and a consecutive conjunction, and therefore it can be ambiguous at times.

so that there wasn’t time to study your questions’ (16.62 r.16).

feared lest his hold over the public lessens’ (Gil (1983) no. 368=ENA 3765.6 r.10).

This occurs in letters by Šarira and his son Hayya only.

The temporal conjunction

The temporal conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

‘and when the elders of Ramle saw’ (16.261 r.25).

‘until he came to Damascus’ (10)10.9 r.3).

‘after he mentioned’ (10)1 leaf 2 v.9). This occurs in letters by Šarira and his son Hayya only.

°° is found elsewhere in MH, Ibn ‘Ezra attests the conjunction in his commentary on Leviticus 26:9 and it occurs in the late Midraš, Midraš Tehillim 119.
This is the only example of the conjunction before a finite verb.

Also attested at 13J26.13 r.27. Neither רשם before or בשם is common in the letters.

This archaic form only occurs here.

It is a construction used three times by Šolomo ben Yohuda.

This is a rare biblical construction, Genesis 49:10.

Originally a LBH construction, it is often found in the letters; Šolomo ben Yohuda, however, is exceptional in not employing it, preferring the more characteristically biblical דע אמור.

It is only attested here.

It is rarely attested.

It is a rare expression in BH. This is only employed before the indicative in Daniel 12:11; it is used three times in the letters: by the conservatives Naṭan ben 'Avraham and Šolomo ben Yohuda, as well as Hillel the lepers' representative from Tiberias.

It is only used twice in the letters.

Although in general it is a common conjunction, it is extremely rare in the letters of Šolomo ben Yohuda who prefers the biblical temporal conjunctions.

This rabbinic construction is only found here, in a letter of the Babylonian ga'on Šprira, and in 10J14.8 v.15.

This is a rare biblical construction.
'after we've done what was suitable' (13J16.17 r.18). It is attested only three times in the letters.

'when rav Yafeq comes' (13J16.17 r.8).

'after he gave them to me' (10J14.19 r.13). Used twice in this letter, it is also attested in 13J14.20 r.6.

'and while no one did' (28.24 r.56). Only used twice in the letters.

'and all the time that I am occupied with public duties' (20.141 r.40).

'and when they heard' (13J23.19 r.8). It is used only here, by Shalom ben Yehuda; it is a biblicised form of -ת ש, which is attested in RH, e.g., M. 'Orla 1:2.

'at the time that he succeeded' (13J23.19 r.19). This construction is only used by Shalom ben Yehuda.

'when he succeeded' (10J14.8 v.23). It is only attested here, in a letter of Shalom ben Yehuda.

'and when we wrote' (18J4.5 m.2). The MH of Moše ibn Ezra attests the same use of הת ש with the sense of 'when'. The use of all the temporal conjunctions attesting ש as an element may owe something to the fact that the most common Arabic temporal conjunction is the similar 'יד 'when'.

'and when he moves' (20.94 r.17). It is only attested here, in a letter from Tiberias.

'when I set out from Egypt' (13J20.13 r.8). It occurs several times in the letters, although not used by Shalom ben Yehuda who attests many other permutations of ש.

'when I shall go to hide myself' (13J16.18 r.16). It occurs twice in the letters.

'until the time that he promised' (13J9.2 r.42). This is the only example, from a letter of Shlomo ben Yehuda.

'do not come or write' (12.239 r.11).

'and after no reply came' (10J32.8 r.4). It is only attested here.

'me and Shemuel' (8J21.6 r.8)

The range of temporal conjunctions is impressive, particularly the number of medieval constructions attested. Șalom ben Yəhuda provides a significant proportion from his letters, especially of conjunctions involving הוה, as can be seen from the examples.

The copulative and disjunctive conjunction

BH origin:

1. אַשְׁרָאָיִיתוּר אַרֹחַ הַמִּשְׂרָה מְסַלְּמָה אַשְׁרָא יָרְדֹּן וְהַגָּשִּׁו הַיָּמִים וְהַיָּמִים מְסַלְּמָה (13)9.2 r.8). This is, of course, universally attested, as are the following conjunctions.

2. רָאָה לִשְׁמַע מִמֶּךָּ וְיָדָע בְּיָדָיו (10)1.29 r.17).

3. וַיִּתְנַח אַלּוֹ וַיִּרְא אַלּוֹ (13)16.14 r.23).

4. אַָּלָּ אַחֲוֲאָה בֵּית הִינֵי קְשִׁים (13)13.28 r.20).

5. אָלָּ אַלּוֹ (13)16.14 r.14).

Nearly all common BH conjunctions are attested in the letters, though we also find many uncommon ones. Most RH conjunctions are represented in the corpus as well, although in differing numbers. There are a few surprising omissions, most notably of the common compound biblical conjunctions employing RH as an element, i.e., לָאָמָר שֶׁאָמְרָה (א). In addition, וַיִּשָּׁמֶר features less often in the coinages and MH conjunctions; we do not find וַיִּשָּׁמֶר for instance but we find - and the fact that both of them served as complementizer and causal conjunction (among other roles), seems to have led to their often having been welded with other elements to create conjunctive compounds, such as - וַיִּשָּׁמֶר. The particular association of with the notion of causality led to its preponderance in causal compounds. Though וַיִּשָּׁמֶר in Biblical Hebrew, can also function as a complementizer as well as a causal conjunction, it is secondary to its principal role as relativizer, a fact that is recognized by the lack of a conjunctive role for the independent form of וַיִּשָּׁמֶר in post-biblical Hebrew, and therefore to its relative scarcity in conjunctive compounds.\footnote{Maman pp. 255-258 shows the large number of conjunctions in use by the Karaites that employ וַיִּשָּׁמֶר as an element, they outnumber those which use וַיִּשָּׁמֶר by a considerable margin.}

Certain writers in the geniza may be singled out for their own particular preferences in the field of conjunctions. סִימוֹלומוּנ יָהוּדָה shares with the Babylonian ga'on סִימוֹלוּר a taste for the BH conjunction וַיִּשָּׁמֶר over the RH - וַיִּשָּׁמֶר and they both continue to employ the biblical adversative וָכִי. However, the eclecticism of the geniza letters' language is also shown by the fact that a great variety of medieval temporal conjunctions turn up in סִימוֹלומוּנ יָהוּדָה's writings and that סִימוֹלוּר is one of only a few writers to use the RH conjunction - וַיִּשָּׁמֶר. Though some may seem to avoid RH or MH in their letters, there are none who subsist entirely on the limited set of BH conjunctions. The average letter-writer shows a fair proportion of rabbinic conjunctions, particularly those denoting condition or purpose, or of medieval conjunctions, which mainly denote temporality or causality. If we look at other, less significant, writers from the geniza, we can see this mixture. סִימוֹלוּר is represented by four letters in the geniza, and is a good example of the averagely literate letter-writer.\footnote{These letters are 13j26.13, 13j18.1 and 10j12.25 (these two fragments comprising a single letter), 13j22.25, and Mosseri II 181 (=L.183). For conjunctions, he of course attests וָכִי for coordination, וָאָבָל for inclusion and וָאָבָל for the realis conditional; these BH conjunctions have no post-biblical replacements. The other biblical conjunctions attested are וָכִי for the causal, וָאָבָל for the temporal, וָאָבָל for the adversative, וָאָבָל for the irreals conditional and וָאָבָל for the concessive. The rabbinic conjunctions are - וָאָבָל and - וָאָבָל final, - וָאָבָל and - וָאָבָל temporal, וָאָבָל and - וָאָבָל causal. In this, סִימוֹלוּר's language is by no means unique, it is characteristic of much MH in employing biblical and rabbinic constructions side by side, even where the roles overlap, as in וָאָבָל and - וָאָבָל, which two are the commonest causal conjunctions.
in the letters. Additionally, we can see that no Medieval Hebrew coinages are present in the letters of Š-mu’el ben Moše. As the above lists show, many medieval conjunctions are attested in the *geniza* letters, but often in isolated instances and never more than in small numbers. The Babylonian *g'onom* in particular employ very few medieval conjunctions, a fact that is also true of Sa'adya’s writings. The writers of the Palestinian *y'siva* employ more, as can be seen in Na'aman ben Avraham’s letters or those of Š-lomo ben Y’huda, but do not match the prose writers of Spain, such as Ibn ‘Ezra, for the greatest variety of medieval conjunctions.

The prepositions

The following BH prepositions are attested in the letters:

- **אלה** ‘after a certain elder’ (13J26.13 r.19)
- **אל** ‘to our brothers, the community of Dumya’ (13J26.16 v.1)
- **אל** ‘the purpose of my letter to the Haver’ (13J18.1 r.12). This form with the archaic yod ending is employed very occasionally in our texts, in each case it stands before the name of the letter’s recipient: ‘for my letter to reach your honour’ (10J9.14 r.19); ‘my letters to [my] friend’ (13J13.28 r.2). Rather like this, its use was probably regarded as more formal and polite than alone.
- **את** ‘and they sat all day with us’ (8)20.1 v.1
- **את** ‘to get along with policemen’ (10J12.17 r.18). The use of **את** to mean ‘with’, a BH preposition, is rare though **את** is well-attested as the direct object marker.
- **ב** ‘the people of Israel are in great straits’ (13J26.16 r.15)
- **ב** ‘without a letter’ (13J13.14 r.12)
- **ב** ‘on account of his son’ (13J16.20 r.20)
- **ב** ‘between my two kidneys’ (6J3.21 r.9)
- **ב** ‘without sin’ (12.17 r.4)
- **ב** ‘without distress’ (8.3 r.1)
- **ב** ‘and there is no rock apart from him’ (10J11.29 r.10)
- **בלית** ‘without purity’ (10J24.3 r.4)
- **בלית** ‘on your behalf and on behalf of all Israel’ (24.43 r.8).

Although it can have various meanings in BH, such as ‘through’ or ‘behind’, in the letters it always means ‘on behalf of’.

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71 Avraham bar Hiyya of Barcelona is a good example of this style of Medieval Hebrew attested outside *geniza* documents; Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 251–253. He employs both -ש and -ך as well as א and נא. Despite the calls for ‘purity’ in language (which, anyway, for the most part were directed at poetic language) MH often appears to have been a successful hybrid of biblical and post-biblical constructions and vocabulary.

72 For instance מעון י is one of the better attested MH conjunctions in the letters, but is only found four times in our corpus, mostly in Š-lomo ben Y’huda’s correspondence; מפי is only found once.

73 Rabin p. 136.
'and on account of your brother’s generous donation' (16.18 r.9)

'in the middle of the festival' (24.43 r.10)

'in somewhere different from the city of Hašor' (13]16.18 r.17).
Both forms 'aril and 'alil are attested in letters of Shlomo ben Yehuda: 'apart from someone' (13]31.7 r.22) and 'apart from this' (10]27.2 r.10).

'apart from this last one' (13]15.1 r.20)

'the dear' [ ... ] mp'

'Misraim' the Egyptians 'Egypt is outside the land' (8]2.2 v.14)

'and before his death' (10]27.7 r.10)

'without limit' (12.14 r.4)

'for the sake of his name' (12.775 r.11)

'before them' (12.17 r.14)

'because of the confusion of the roads' (10]12.22 r.4)

'and to pray before our God' (10]32.8 v.2).

’to the dear […] teacher Šeµu’el’ (10]9.14 r.1). It is a common biblical construction that is surprisingly rare in the letters.

and after I finished’ (12.273 v.17)

'the honourable old man' (10]25.8 r.22)

‘without inhabitant’ (16.18 r.14)

from the honoured elder’ (13]26.3 r.14)

'and his reward will be from the Lord' (13]16.18 r.17)

‘there was taken from among them’ (NS 92.33 r.5)

‘and without doubt’ (8.3 r.13)

‘time to time’ (10]1 leaf 2 v.7).

‘facing the temple of the Lord’ (13]11.5 r.17)

‘and we accepted it from our elder’ (13]13.17 r.8)

‘from before the Lord of Lords’ (13]16.18 r.2)
our separation from you’ (8J20.1 r.3)

Quite rare, מני is only used to denote the sender of a letter. מני ‘from the community of Şahrajt’ (10J22.7 m.1); מני ‘from the name companion’ ‘from Elhanan ben Șémarya’ (Bodl MS Heb a 3.21 r.10); מני ‘from my friend’ (ENA 4009.4 r.6); this can be compared to the similar use of an archaic form in הַלַי which is always employed to denote the addressee.74

‘around the place’ (32.8 r.32)

‘from upon them’ (13J16.17 r.32)

‘and his full reward will be from the Lord’ (13J33.12 r.17)

‘on account of the money-order’ (13J15.1 r.19)

‘provided for by the kingdom’ (13J26.16 r.14). It is only attested in this letter.

‘out of something’ (16.267 r.14)

‘under the hands of the “suspect”’ (13J9.2 r.19)

‘in front of his porch’ (18J4.17 r.10)

‘before our face’ (13J25.5 r.7). This rare BH preposition is only found in the letters of Șirin Ga’on. Elsewhere, commoner forms such as והז are preferred.

‘he collected men around him’ (16.261 r.19)

‘and until his end’ (10J14.10 r.23)

‘until (up to?) the Haver’ (10J22.7 r.22)

‘until there is not enough’ (12.16 v.9). It is also found in דע בְּלִי זו ‘until the moon is no more’ (8J36.10 r.12). Both expressions are drawn directly from the Bible, Malachi 3:10 and Psalms 72:7 respectively. דע בְּלִי does not occur in any other context.

‘they have reached the limit’ (13J9.2 r.31)

‘after seventeen generations’ (10J14.10 r.27)

‘and bring us relief’ (13J26.16 r.17)

‘and I wrote by means of master and teacher ‘Aharon’ (13J34.2 r.11)75

‘concerning you’ (13J9.2 r.60)

‘on account of the evil report’ (13J31.8 r.6). This is the only example.

‘with Muslims’ (10J27.2 r.15)

‘instead of Haver’ (13J15.1 r.10)

74Theoretically, in 13J11.4 or the Bodleian example, יָד could be the rare variant form of the preposition with the 1 singular suffix, attested in BH as יָד or יָד (see GK 103i), with the name in apposition, i.e., ‘from me, ‘Elhanan’. However, since it is used before the name of a community and since letter writers often use the third-person to speak of themselves, as in the ENA example, it is more likely that all occurrences are examples of the poetic יָד with ‘yad compaginis’ that we find in use with other prepositions in the letters.

75It is a pregnant expression: ‘I wrote and sent it by ‘Aharon’.
The following post-biblical prepositions are attested:

- **אחורית** 'he says it behind my back' (10J24.8 v.7)
- **בל季后** [' без возвращения'] without leaving' (NS 257.75 r.2), which is a biblicising preposition formed from בָּלַק by analogy with BH בָּלַכ, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:42.
- **בשביל** ' and I won’t send them for you' (13J20.25 r.16)
- **כמך** 'like a bound man' (8J21.6 r.9). This use is rare since the usual form without suffixes in the letters is כ- or כ- 'like fire' (10J14.8 v.7) or כ- 'like the rich' (NS 321.2 r.3).
- **לأخر** 'after cries and distress' (13J26.13 r.17)
- **לאפל** 'and the emissary who came to your place' (13J16.17 r.8)
- **ליד** 'beside declarations' (13)15.1 r.19)
- **מקדסו** 'before the heavy tax [was imposed] on our brothers' (13J26.16 r.13). It is only attested in this letter; לְפִי and לְפִי with temporal value are employed elsewhere: לְפִי מִיתָת 'before his death' (NS 308.122 r.28); וְרָם הוֹם 'and before this day' (16.3 r.8).
- **משחו** 'because of the peaceful nature of the road' (13J16.17 r.4). The use of this RH causal preposition is surprisingly rare; most other letters attest לְפִי.
- **เศם** 'on behalf of their bearer' (13J17.4 r.19). Also attested in 12.336 v.2 and 16.251 r.14, this medieval variant of בְּעָבְרֵה is not used as often as בְּעָבְרֵה or נַעֲבְרִיה in our texts. It may be found in Spanish Hebrew, e.g., in the poetry of Dunaš ben Labrat.76
- **על גב** 'beside the questions' (NS 308.122 v.21)
- **עם** 'before his arrival' (13J16.20 r.8). The RH preposition is also employed in a letter from Qayrwān, מַמְעַת 'before the festival' (16.62 r.21) and in one of Sūrīya’s מַמְעַת 'before his departure' (10J25.8 v.23); as with-with, מַמְעַת and מַמְעַת, elsewhere we find that while we prefer the same temporal meaning.

The majority of the post-biblical prepositions are derived from RH and feature quite infrequently in the letters. BH provides by far the greater part of the prepositional inventory, allowing little room for either rabbinic or medieval prepositions to intrude. The post-biblical forms that are employed occur only sporadically and are used alongside their biblical equivalents, rather than replacing any particular BH preposition. Occasionally we find variants on BH forms such as בָּלַק or בָּלַכ but they are not used widely. Common BH prepositions such as מַמְעַת and מַמְעַת are found rarely if at all in the letters. At the same time, we find that very few of the rarer BH prepositions occur in any number in the letters, examples such as בָּלַק, מַמְעַת, מַמְעַת, מַמְעַת, and מַמְעַת are all only attested by individual writers and even then are used on just a few occasions.

The variant poetic forms of BH prepositions taking an additional final yod, e.g., בָּלַכ, מַמְעַת, are an exception, being found across many different letters. In the case of מַמְעַת and מַמְעַת, their function is epistolary, i.e., to introduce the sender and to address the recipient of a letter, and their forms are an inalienable part of the phrase in which they appear (like the similar epistolary

76 Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 229. It is used instead of בָּלַכ to fulfil metrical requirements.
expressions involving the rarer demonstrative pronouns). Even if or are not attested outside the context of these epistolary idioms.

**Suffixes of the preposition**

The prepositions and take the singular suffixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ב (13J16.18 r.16)</td>
<td>.Properties (10J32.8 r.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב (12.851 r.6)</td>
<td>(Misc. 36.140 r.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—</td>
<td>(NS 308.122 v.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב (13J9.9 r.10)</td>
<td>(Misc. 35.11 r.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב (AS 145.61 r.10)</td>
<td>(12.256 r.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב (Misc. 35.40 r.5)</td>
<td>(16.275 r.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ב (13J16.24 r.16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 2 masculine singular is vocalised as in BH, ל, (Gil (1997) no. 673=Bodl MS Heb c 13.20 v.22).

Despite the fact that the pronoun ה is employed in the letters, the preposition with the suffixes of the 3 plural ה and ה- is only attested in a paraphrase of 2 Samuel 12:8: יִלָּהוּ (13J11.5 r.3). The other poetic suffix found in BH, מ- is attested quite frequently in the letters, most commonly it occurs on מ- i.e., מ- but we also find מ- (13J14.10 r.6) and מ- (13J13.21 r.8). In BH מ- is employed commonly as an alternative of מ- but may also represent the 3 masculine singular as a pausal form. In the letters, it is extremely rare for the singular, only מ- 'and it was given to him' (Misc. 35.40 r.5), and is usually the plural, מ- 'to remember for them their fathers’ covenant' (12.256 r.13).

The two forms of the 3 masculine singular suffix are the common מ- and the less common מ-. The suffix מ- is not found in BH as a prepositional affix, but is a variant suffix to be found on final-weak nouns, although the addition of מ- to bilateral prepositions is attested in the 3 masculine plural in the BH preposition, e.g., Deuteronomy 29:16. With this precedent and with the wider use of the מ- suffix on nouns, the letters occasionally employ the longer suffix. In particular it is the preferred suffix in the letters of Yosef Hakkohen ben סימא Ga’on, מ- 'and with him' (13J16.24 r.15), (Gil (1993) no. 408=ULC Add 3347 r.18) and מ- 'from him' (13J16.24 r.17), where it is also the main 3 masculine singular suffix used on nouns, e.g., מ- 'his righteousness' (8J16.12 r.13). It is used less frequently by other writers, but may still be found occasionally, e.g., in a letter from Tyre, מ- 'on his behalf' (13J26.3 r.9), and its use is extended even to prepositions from triliteral roots, מ- 'for him' (Gil (1993) no. 376=ULC Or 1080 J4 r.7).

The preposition ל is attested with the suffix of the singular noun, ל- 'apart from him' (AS 145.350 r.10), although the evidence of BH suggests that it should take the plural suffixes,

77) Jotin §103f.
The preposition -ל, with the exception of כהה and כהה, mentioned above, takes the form כהה or, from RH, כהה before suffixes. The singular suffixes are added to either כהה or כהה 'like you' (16.18 r.14) and כהה 'that is like you' (20.173 r.4.5); כהה 'like him' (NS 169.11 v.11) and כהה 'like him' (12.775 r.11); כהה 'like her' (12.80 r.17) and כהה 'like her' (18J4.20 r.34); the 1 plural suffix is added to כהה 'like us' (28.24 r.69); the other plural suffixes are attested only with כהה 'like them' (10J12.22 r.18).

The preposition Memphis is attested as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(NS 321.2 r.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m</td>
<td>(8J20.1 r.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m</td>
<td>(8J20.1 r.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f</td>
<td>(8J16.12 r.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f</td>
<td>(10J27.7 r.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note the only 3 feminine singular form attested is Memphis rather than BH Memphis. The 3 masculine singular Memphis is found in BH, as a poetic variant form, Psalms 68:24; it is only used in the letters by Yosef hakkohen, who, as discussed above, frequently uses the Memphis suffix. The RH 2 masculine plural Memphis is only attested once; the RH prepositions Memphis and Memphis do not occur in the corpus.

The prepositions מ, מ, מ, מ and מ, מ, מ, מ are attested with the following suffixes of the plural noun:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(13J16.18 r.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2m</td>
<td>(12.90 r.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2f</td>
<td>(Gil 1997 no. 673= Bodl MS Heb c 13.20 m.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m</td>
<td>(18J4.4 r.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f</td>
<td>(10J22.7 r.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f</td>
<td>(13J22.25 r.18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1 singular is sometimes written *plene* with two *yods*, מ (10J9.14 r.23); מ (10J24.8 r.17).

As with the suffixes of the singular we find a 3 masculine singular suffix in מ, also not attested in BH. It is only used on the preposition מ (10J22.7 r.9; 13J26.3 r.8); but the biblical suffix מ may be found in use with this preposition too, מ (12.44 v.6; 13J25.10 r.24).

The preposition מ is attested with the form מ before the 1s suffix, מ (20.173 r.47), and once before the 3 masculine singular suffix, מ (13J20.25 r.7). The form מ which is attested in BH in the *qere* of Joshua 3:4 and 8:11 (and which Joion describes as corrupt) is also found in a letter

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78 Perhaps the orthography is defective, מ, although this is not usually the case with Solomo ben Yshuda whose writing this is.
of Šamu‘el ben Hofni, הָוִּיתָיָה (12.99 v.13). In the plural the letters attest both the forms בְּיֵין and בְּיֵנוֹת before suffixes: בְּיֵין (13/20.25 r.7); however, is only found before the suffixes of the 1 plural and the 3 masculine plural poetic suffix,־הָוִּיתָיָה (13/16.24 r.2); whereas is used for all the remaining plural suffixes:־הָוִּיתָיָה (8/2.4 r.6). It is also found before the 3 masculine plural poetic suffix as well,־הָוִּיתָיָה (NS 92.33 r.5).

In summary, there are three points that may be made about the morphology of the preposition with suffixes. Firstly, the employment of the poetic biblical suffixes in מִי and ~ is quite extensive in the letters, although as an alternative to and not to the exclusion of the more usual forms. Secondly, the 3 masculine singular מִי-features as a suffix of the preposition, showing a levelling between the forms of the suffixes of the verb, noun and prepositions to a more general, single, paradigm of the pronominal suffix. Lastly, the influence of RH morphology is only felt in certain restricted areas, with the form of single lexical items such as מָהוּ or with very rare exceptions such as the 2 masculine plural suffix מָהוּ, rather than all-pervasive: the morphology of the preposition in the letters remains essentially biblical.

**The adverbs**

The definition of an adverb can be quite broad and encompass a large number of different semantic fields. Since the purpose of this study is to analyse the content of the letters rather than to debate the different morphological categories of Hebrew, it will be assumed for the moment that the adverb is any particle that is neither a preposition or a conjunction. Since this obviously covers a great deal of words in a corpus of three-hundred texts, it is not the intention to enumerate and describe every adverb but instead to draw out the principal adverbs of the letters, to indicate their provenance and add any notes on their use.

Adverbs may be divided into three main categories of manner, time and direction.

**Adverbs of manner**

A sub-group of this category is the negative particles. The principal negatives attested in the corpus are:

~א, ‘and you do not send them’ (NS 308.122 v.17). This rare biblical adverb, only attested in Job 22:30, occurs just once outside the common rabbinic construction, א, e.g., ‘and it is impossible to reject’ (13/9.2 r.57).

79Jošion §103n.

80Comparing the situation in the letters with that in BH, we can see that it is almost identical: BH attests בְּניִים or בְּנִיִים, e.g., Joshua 24:7, and בְּניִים, e.g., Job 41:8, but doesn’t attest בְּניִים or בְּנִיִים; BH does however employ בְּניִים, e.g., Joshua 22:34, which is used in the letters, alongside בְּניִים, e.g., Joshua 22:27. The only differences lie in the BH preposition בְּניִים, e.g., Genesis 42:23, which is not found in the letters, and the letters’ use of the suffix מִי which, although a poetic biblical form, is not employed on this particular preposition in the Hebrew Bible.

81Payne p. 69.

82This is essentially the stand taken by Jošion (Jošion §102), among others.
do not hide them from me’ (20.114 r.27)

without saturating (?)’ (AS 145.61 r.11). It is also used before a finite verb, ‘do not destroy’ (13]16.14 v.14).

we shall not be able to do the thing’ (13]20.25 r.9)

‘if not’ (13]16.17 r.23). לא is only found in the RH construction.

‘not to take’ (20.102 r.46). does not take prefixes in BH, and is a medieval composite by analogy with לא.

‘not to go’ (13]25.5 r.27)

‘to no benefit’ (13]16.17 r.35). Though rare in BH, לא can be used to negate a finite verb, e.g., ‘without seeking me’ Isaiah 65:1

‘so as not to harm him’ (13]14.5 r.11). Only Solomon ben Yahuda attests the use of ‘not to take’ (20.102 r.46).

The letters always use BH rather than LBH.

is found in a number of different adverbial phrases, such as (13]16.17 r.9); (8]20.1 m.4); (13]21.10 r.15); (13]9.2 r.16).

The RH phrase is one of several rabbinic formulae which occur in the letters, e.g., ‘equally’ (20.141 r.39) and ‘how much the more’ (13]9.2 r.48). In general, much of the legalistic language of the rabbinic sources is not attested in the letters because the subject matter is less to do with questions of abstract law, which we encounter in responsa, than the more pressing practical considerations of the communities.

An RH adverb, we also find with the preposition for the same meaning, ‘in total’ (13]33.2 r.20). 83

83Fernandez p. 172.

Adverbs of time
These are some of the more common temporal adverbs found in the corpus.

'afterwards' (13J14.20 r.15) The BH adverb (e.g., 1 Samuel 10:5), is attested more often than the equivalent RH form, לְתַחְדָּשׁ (10J27.8 r.7). Other similar composite adverbs with the same sense are לפני כָּל צַאֵר (12.17 r.21); לפני כָּל צַאֵר (13J8.14 r.15); לפני כָּל צַאֵר (13J14.20 r.1).

'always' (13J8.14 r.28) The BH adverb, e.g., Proverbs 28:14, is always used for this sense and RH tensor is not attested.

'now' (13J16.17 R.4) While הָאֵצְרָה is frequently attested in the letters, adverbial phrases involving prepositions invariably use BH פְּרָק, e.g., פְּרָק כָּךְ עַד תָּם (10J32.8 r.8); פְּרָק 'forever' (18J4.4 r.21). In addition, we find the form פְּרָק 'now' (13J15.1 r.21) used exclusively by סֹלֹם בֶּן יִשְׁעָה. It is not attested in BH, but shows the *lamed* which occurs in a number of similar temporal adverbs, particularly in RH, e.g., לפני כָּל צַאֵר, לְתַחְדָּשׁ, לפני כָּל צַאֵר, etc.

'at once' (10J25.5 r.4) לפני כָּל צַאֵר is a form characteristic of the Babylonian tradition of RH. This example occurs in a letter of Dani‘el ben ‘Azarya, who originally hailed from Iraq, but we also find it in Na‘tan ben ‘Avraham’s letters, 10J9.25 r.5), which demonstrates the spread of the Babylonian tradition, as we have already noted. Only סֹלֹם בֶּן יִשְׁעָה attests the genuine Palestinian RH form of the adverb, לפני כָּל צַאֵר (13J16.14 r.26).

'previously' (12.217 r.9) סֹלֹם בֶּן יִשְׁעָה attests a number of adverbs formed from לפני כָּל צַאֵר, 'before this' (20.181 r.25) and לפני כָּל צַאֵר 'before this' (10J11.29 r.10). Other writers in the corpus do not use these expressions.

'all the time' (13J26.16 r.3) בֵּהַל לְעַל פַּעַמֵי has attested this adverb, along with בֵּהַל לְעַל פַּעַמֵי (10J32.8 r.1). All other writers in the corpus employ expressions with before, e.g., בֵּהַל לְעַל פַּעַמֵי (16.18 r.8) and before, 'every time' (12.273 r.8), despite the fact that the influence of the Arabic cognate, zaman, tends to make פַּעַמֵי a more commonly used term elsewhere in the MH of Arabic-speakers.

'then' (10J27.17) is very widely used in the corpus, but we also find the

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*Fernandez p. 173.*

*Bar-Asher p. 28. The form is influenced by Babylonian Aramaic.*

adverb with the - affix, e.g., רע (13|1.8 r.9), showing once again the writers' willingness to employ archaic forms from BH.

**Adverbs of place**

These are some of the more common adverbs of manner found in the letters:

שָׁם 'there' (13|16.18 r.11) שָׁם, of course, continues to be used in the corpus. In addition we find the forms with 'directive he', e.g., יָשָׁה (13|25.10 r.27), and various prepositional prefixes. יְשָׁה 'to there' (20.94 r.10) is an RH adverbial, used instead of יָשָׁה, while both יָשָׁה 'to there' (13|27.3 r.16) and יָשָׁה 'from there' (10|10.9 r.2) are hybrid forms not attested in BH.

כאることが ‘here’ (16.95 r.16) הכָּא, the Babylonian RH form, is the usual form taken of this adverb in the corpus. The Palestinian form, בָּא, is not attested in the corpus but may be found in a letter by a pilgrim to Egypt (of unknown origin, unfortunately), לַאֶזְאַר ‘to get out of here’ (Gil (1983) no. 403=PER H 17 13 r.11). סְלֹמוֹ ben Yִשְׁחָדַה prefers BH יָשָׁה, 'to cause ruination here and there' (13|23.19 r.5).

הנה ‘here’ (13|20.3 r.17) The BH adverb occurs frequently and is also used with the preposition יָשָׁה ‘from Mahalla to here’ (10|9.14 r.18).

לְהָרָע ‘where?’ (10|13.2 r.18) This is a RH adverb. סְלֹמוֹ ben Yִשְׁחָדַה also occurs, but only in the context of a phrase drawn from the Hebrew Bible, רָע יָשָׁה אָרְא אֶזְאַר יָשָׁה, ‘where is the one who counted the towers?’, Isaiah 33:18.

Although this is only a very small proportion of the adverbs employed in the corpus, it shows, more than many other grammatical categories, the influence of RH. Only in the various negative particles is the influence of RH less apparent. The letters attest all possible BH negatives and employ in addition a number from MH. סְלֹמוֹ ben Yִשְׁחָדַה, as with his use of conjunctions, again attests a large number of different temporal expressions.

**Summary**

A mix of sources lie behind the morphology of the pronouns and particles. There is a solid biblical base in the personal and demonstrative pronouns, conjunctions, complementizer,

87 The different forms of the adverb are discussed in Bar-Asher p. 26.

88 Though we do find it within the corpus in the expression יָשָׁה ‘after that’ (NS 308.122 v.28), which occurs in an early letter from Pumbedita! It is an early RH expression, found in Sifre Bamidbar 134.5, so perhaps its spelling comes from the text in which it originally occurred.

89 Fernandez p. 172.
relativizer and prepositions but we also find the pervasive influence of RH and significant contributions from MH. יא is commonplace; RH provides a third of all demonstratives in the letters. The biblical particle יא is often attested but יא is inflected mainly in its rabbinic guise. We find י and י and י in interchange; י and י exchange. Some archaic forms are employed, prepositions in י and the pronoun י, for instance, but there is virtually no evidence of the use of obscure forms from the darker regions of BH. MH provides a significant number of conjunctions and the language of poetry influences the frequent use of י as a relative or י as a temporal conjunction. There is a great consistency across the corpus, in the employment of pronouns, the complementizer and the relativizer, for instance, but personal style shows in the types of conjunctions used or the suffixes of prepositions.
The Noun

This section examines the morphology of the noun in the letters. Hebrew inflects the noun in various ways, between masculine and feminine, singular and plural and between absolute and construct; it can affix adverbial endings such as ה or י, as well as a range of pronominal suffixes to denote possession. BH and RH share important differences in the inflection of the noun which can be plainly seen, for instance between the masculine plural terminations of biblical ה and rabbinic ן, but other features are less obvious, particularly those which may result from Arabic influence. Additionally, a survey of the noun patterns encountered in a selection of letters from the corpus is presented: each layer of Hebrew, Biblical, Rabbinic, Talmudic, Paytanic and Arabic-influenced Medieval Hebrew has its favourite or distinctive nominal patterns and the survey demonstrates how these various strata have left their mark on the noun inventory of the letters and the lexicon of the letter-writers.

Reference here to the noun is also intended to refer to the Hebrew adjective which, morphologically, shares most features of the noun.

The adverbial endings of the noun

The singular noun in BH can take certain adverbial suffixes, including the paragogic י and the ה suffix, both of which are attested in the letters.

The י suffix is found in certain lexicalised adverbials drawn from BH such as יהלוך 'far be it' and יראמה 'anything' as well as in Biblical personal names. However, the paragogic he suffix, known as the he locale, is also found in the letters in its specific role ‘to indicate the goal of a movement’. It is attested on the common nouns י and as and י, on the adverbs י and י, and on the proper nouns י.ארז and י.ארז מציון:ירושלם מציון 'to the land of Egypt' (12.80 r.14); י.אחYW 'heavenwards' (Gil 1997 no. 13= B0d1 MS Heb f 34.40 r.17); י.chez 'there' (10)24.1 leaf 1 v.10); י.חור 'outside' (8)2.4 v.1); י.תרומת 'to Egypt' (12.80 r.8); י.תרומת י.ירושלים 'to Jerusalem' (13)14.10 r.4). All these particular forms are attested in the text of the Hebrew Bible; the only form with the suffix which is not found in BH is י.שמימה 'heavens' (1314 r.5). I.e., without the definite article, which occurs in the opening of a letter by Yośiyahu Ga'on: the writer utilises the poet's freedom to adapt forms to fit a metrical scheme.

The adverbial ה suffix is only found, as is mostly the case in BH, on occasional, frozen forms: י.שמימה 'father' and י.שמימה י.chez 'empty, emptily' (13)23.11 r.25).

Other BH suffixes, such as the paragogic י or hieq compaginis, are extremely rare and their occasional use is limited to forms actually attested in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., the construct forms of י.איב 'father' and י.איב י.היר 'brother': י.איב י.היר י.ויהו 'father of the orphan' (Gil 1983) no. 158= ULC Or 1080 J106

1Jotin §93h.
2Van der Merwe p. 227.
3Additionally, in this letter, the he locale is used without any nuance of direction or motion, but merely to provide a poetic, rhyming suffix: י.חאף י.ורשיא י.ויהו י.שינש 'a vision of Jerusalem, and upon it seven heavens' (13)14.10 r.4).
The gender of the noun

The gender that nouns show in BH is generally followed in the letters. Nouns that end in מ are usually feminine, e.g., the words 'my desire was to hurry' (13J14.23 r.8), as are nouns in מ and מ\'and your merit stands' (NS 169.11 v.11); מ\'that a covenant was made' (18J31.1 r.18); מ\'the remnant which remains' (12.247 r.22).5

The regular feminine nouns take the ending מ which are frequent (12.16 v.10); מ\'thoughts' (12.247 r.22). As for nouns that do not have the מ, מ or מ endings but which are also feminine in BH, these continue to be treated as feminine in the letters. Accordingly, parts of the body that occur in pairs are feminine: מ\'the hand would weary' (18J3.9 r.6); מ\'their eyes are beautiful' (24.6 r.56); מ\'and knees totter' (12.99 v.9). The insubstantial nouns מ and מ\'my spirit fell' (6J4.10 r.4). As in BH, the words for 'land' and 'city', מ and מ, also always take feminine concord: מ\'the land was quiet' (13J23.1 r.25); מ\'in another city' (20.173 r.49); מ\'in another city' (13J23.11 r.9).

Feminine nouns such as מ and מ which derive from RH and which lack the explicit feminine endings מ, מ or מ continue to follow RH practice and take feminine concord in the letters: מ\'in the Great Sanhedrin' (10J30.3 r.13); מ\'the other sect' (13J23.1 r.24); מ\'like his good way' (12.44 v.11); מ\'this money-order' (13J13.17 r.12).7

Some BH nouns, such as מ, מ usually are attested with both masculine and feminine gender in the Hebrew Bible. מ, however, is always feminine in the letters, as in Modern Hebrew, and perhaps under the influence of Arabic: מ\'this sun' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.7); מ\'the

4The construction 'brother of...' used to denote a quality is an infrequent arabism in the letters; cf. Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 234 for its use by other Arabic-speaking medieval authors.

5Contrary to some forms of Arabic influenced Hebrew, where nouns ending in מ and, especially, in מ may take masculine concord due to the masculine gender of similar forms in Arabic, Goldenberg pp. 1628–9.

6 can often take masculine concord in MH due to the influence of the Arabic vernacular, Goldenberg p. 1629, although there is no evidence for this effect in our letters.

7Note though that מ, מ, usually a feminine noun in the letters, is given masculine concord by יahuw ben יahuw in one of his letters, מ\'two money-orders' (13J34.2 r.5); however, in his other letters it is always feminine, מ\'the money-order arrived' (13J13.17 r.7). Irregularities in concord seem to occur more often with numerals, particularly מ, מ and מ, and מ, מ, מ, than with adjectives or verbal forms.
sun set' (NS 321.2 r.9). In Arabic, al-Sams 'the sun' is a feminine noun, Wright I §291 b.

8Biblical expressions such as ‘the time has come’, Ezekiel 7:7 and 7:12, probably also lie behind similar phrases in the letters, such as "m't'e.

9Biblical influence may cut both ways here, because we can find both masculine and feminine in the letters. However, not all feminine in the Bible is feminine in the letters. Biblical influence is not entirely decisive though, since another example quoted above, from a letter written in Ruqqa, reads: 'the dear counsellors' (18J4.20 r.24), despite the masculine version of the phrase occurring in the Bible, at 1 Kings 13:10.

10The phenomenon of the attributives of masculine plural nouns in Hebrew - also taking the -n ending is encountered in other strains of MH, under the influence of Arabic, cf. Goldenberg p. 1629.

11Whereas nouns that are unambiguous in BH as regards gender are not affected by their Arabic equivalents, e.g., אָם, as described above, is feminine in the letters despite its Arabic equivalent, ʿalm, being a masculine noun. In other strains of MH this may be found with masculine concord as a result, cf. Goldenberg p. 1629.
treatment of nouns in י- as masculine nouns, which may be found in other idioms of MH where Arabic influence is more deeply felt. Knowledge of BH—and later sources—was sufficiently thorough that the vernacular intrudes only to a minimal extent.

**The construct**

The inflection of the construct noun matches that found in the Hebrew Bible, as far as can be determined from the few vocalised examples and occasional *plene* orthography in the letters; vowel reduction takes place in the masculine noun according to the rules of Tiberian Hebrew: לְשׁוֹנָה אֲרֻם for the reward of the land of the living’ (10:11.29 r.17); קַיְסָר ‘a hurtful word’ (24.6 r.35); the place of his ancestors’ (Gil (1983) no. 283=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.9). However, most examples of the masculine singular construct are unpointed and therefore indistinguishable from the absolute:حمل ‘clerk of the merchants’ (24.43 r.13); ‘according to the custom of the g’omim’ (13:26.16 r.16); the punishment of the ‘prince of princes’ (13:15.4 r.2).

The feminine singular construct of nouns ending in י- takes the ending י- in the city of Qarywān’; י- in the reading of the letter’ (13:15.11 r.19); the punishment of our brothers’ (13:26.16 r.13).

The masculine plural noun takes the ending י- in the construct: י- the surging of thoughts’ (13:14.10 r.16); י- all the elders of the community’ (13:15.11 r.26); י- and the keepers of his law’ (8:33.5 r.7).

The feminine plural construct form of the noun is unmarked from the plural absolute in purely consonantal texts: י- the communities of Egypt’ (12.338 v.5); י- the measures of praise’ (10:12.17 r.20).

BH irregular nouns used in the letters mostly retain the same form in which they are commonly found in the Hebrew Bible: י- men of the Byzantine communities’ (13:11.4 r.15); י- members of his sect’ (12.775 r.10); י- daughters of Yehuda’ (13:27.3 r.12); י- ‘father of the orphan’ (Gil (1983) no. 158=ULC Or 1080 J106 r.30); י- the names of the signatories’ (13:18.1 r.24).

Certain other irregular nouns show more than one form of the construct in BH: י- year’ attests both י and ה (Genesis 23:1) and י (Deuteronomy 32:7). However, only the form י is attested in the letters: י- and years of life’ (12.775 r.3; 10:24.1 r.11; NS 309.10 v.4), cf. Proverbs 6:10; י- and years of existence’ (13:23.12 r.7). The plural construct of י is attested as י (Genesis 3:14) and, more rarely, י (Psalms 90:15) in BH; most letters have only the commoner BH form י- in the days of the deceased’ (16.6 r.12); י- from the days of Moše’ (16.3 r.28); י- all the days of my existence’ (6:32.21 r.10); although י is found in several letters: י- from the age of praise’ (13:20.28 r.19); י- and from the days that the academy was...’ (20.106 r.42); י- from days of old’ (6:1.11 r.3). BH י attests two forms, י (Genesis 7:7) and י (Exodus 7:19), for the construct, both of which are found in the letters, each occurring

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13The last phrase is based on Deuteronomy 32:7. Fernandez p. 65 explains how RH makes a distinction in meaning between י and י ‘days [of]’ and י and י ‘age/epoch [of]’. Possibly this is behind the use of י in the other examples, but without further information it is difficult to say whether the MH of the letters employed this distinction generally.
just once: 'like water of the rains' (13)31.3 r.5) and ‘the city’s water’ (10)13.2 r.5). ‘like water (Leviticus 21:8) in BH, while RH attests the construct ליל. For the singular construct the letters show the usual singular ליל שבת, ליל ‘on Sabbath night’ (13)20.9 r.25), and the rabbinc plural form ליל שבת, ליל ‘on Sabbath night’ (18)3.9 r.24), which can also act as a singular noun in RH.14

The treatment of the construct noun is, as far as can be ascertained, that of BH practice. Rare and irregular BH constructs are retained and there is some borrowing from RH vocabulary in a few specialised cases.

The dual

The dual is a BH nominal ending which is mainly found on nouns that commonly occur in pairs; in the later Hebrew of the rabbinc sources its use is widespread. The dual ending ב- is indistinguishable from the masculine plural suffix in unvocalised texts, except when the ay diphthong is written with two yods, i.e., -ע-ו-. Thus, the extent of the dual in our letters is impossible to determine with any certainty; we can assume that those nouns of parts of the body which take the dual suffix in BH retain them in MH and were pronounced as such, e.g., עין, עיני, עיני, עיניו, עיניים, עיניים; 'two hands' (12.99 v.7) and 'two knees' (12.99 v.9); the dual is also employed on certain numerals: ‘two-hundred and fifty’ (13)20.25 r.2); השתי, השתי; 'two' (NS 115 r.14); השתי, השתי; 'two' (16.275 r.25). In most cases, though, only when the text gives us plene orthography, or it is the dual of a noun with the feminine ending ה- or a pointed form can we state definitely that the dual is to be read. All clear cases of the dual occur in feminine nouns: הרוחות ‘two laws’ (Gil 1997 no. 73=JTS MS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.27); הרוחות ‘these two lines here’ (20.102 r.1); הרוחות ‘two lines’ (10)9.14 r.6); הרוחות ‘these [two] lines’ (10)24.3 r.3); none of these forms is actually attested in BH. With the exception of הרוחות, all these examples of the dual occur in stock phrases which have an epistolary function, referring to the letter being written. Archaisms and elaborate turn of phrase are more likely to feature in the purely epistolary components of the texts.

We often find that the dual is not used where it could be expected in BH or RH, being replaced by the number ‘two’ and the plural noun, e.g., שתי עפעים, שתי אפעים ‘two times’ (13)15.1 r.19), שתי עפעים ‘two thousand’ (10)12.25 r.5) and שתי עפעים ‘in two lines’ (13)11.2 r.3). The BH duals במסים ‘twice’ (Genesis 27:36), twice ‘two days’ (Exodus 21:21), twice ‘two thousand’ (Numbers 4:36) and, probably, twice ‘two weeks’ (Leviticus 12:5) are not found in the letters.16

Overall, the dual is not widely employed in the noun. It occurs in some lexicalised forms and, more interestingly, it is used in a few, well-defined, epistolary expressions common to several letters (as a deliberately literate or archaising component?). However, compared with its broad employment in RH, it is not a productive form in the letters, mirroring the situation in the contemporary vernacular.

14Jastrow p. 707.
15Joïon 591; Fernandez p. 65.
16The letter of the teacher Yôbi’el ben ‘Elyaqim attests the phrase שבעים עשרים, שבעים עשרים, which is frequently attested in the LBH contained in the book of Daniel (e.g., Daniel 10:2, 3).
Judaeo-Arabic, where the use of the dual has diminished substantially.  

The plural noun

The plural ending of the regular masculine noun in BH is ש"נ, although occasionally the ending ת"נ can be found in the Hebrew Bible. In RH the ending ת"נ is more frequent, under the influence of Aramaic. In the letters, both the biblical and rabbinic endings are found, with the biblical ש"נ by far the more common. ש"נ is the standard ending of BH regular masculine nouns and adjectives found in the letters: 'and the elders' (12.17 r.12); 'the princes' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.10); 'the righteous' (12.16 v.17); 'the insignificant' (13r.19.19 r.4). Most of the vocabulary emanating from post-biblical sources also shares the ש"נ plural termination: 'and to merchants' (13r.20.13 r.24); 'the Rabbanites' (13r.11.5 r.23); 'administrators' (AS 148.147 r.3); 'bandits' (10r.9.9 r.4).

The alternative plural ending, the RH termination ת"נ, is attested on nouns and adjectives across different letters, but sporadically, rarely occurring in great concentration. However, it is employed more frequently in letters of Babylonian provenance than any other group. While its use overall may owe something to the influence of the Judaeo-Arabic generalised oblique ת"נ ending, the fact that it is found principally in conjunction with rabbinic and talmudic terminology suggests that RH and its associated literature is the main influence at work. To find it on biblical vocabulary is much rarer: the Babylonian ג"ון Kimberlina and Hayya stand out in our corpus through their employment of the rabbinic ת"נ termination with BH nouns and adjectives: 'in other places' (10r.11 leaf 1 r.14) and 'many times' (Gil (1997) no.27=ENA 4009.15 r.3); among writers from Palestine or North Africa the ending is only attested on such vocabulary once in our corpus, in a letter by 'Eli the Mumhe ben 'Avraham (grandson of סמו el Haššśli), נ' 'miracles' (8r.22.7 r.14). For the most part the RH ending is found on post-biblical vocabulary, e.g., from the letters of the Palestinian ga'on סלomo ben Yshuda: 'pamphlets' (10r.27.2 r.13); 'titles' (13r.31.18 r.1); 'in genealogies' (NS 324.104 r.22); 'commentaries' (Misc. 35.14 r.24); 'bound' (13r.23.11 r.16); from Babylonian letters: 'customary' (10r.1 leaf 1 r.14); 'required' (10G5.8 v.4); 'obligated' (28.24 r.50); 'permitted' (28.24 r.61); 'and teachers' (NS 308.122 v.4); a Karaite letter also attests the use of the RH termination on a rabbinic noun: 'two leaves' (Gil (1983) no. 208=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.15). The RH noun appears with the ת"נ-ending in the works of both סלomo ben Yshuda, נ' 'torments' (Gil (1983) no. 122=Heb c13.23 r.20) and סלomo Hakkohen Ga'on, נ' 'the tortures' (Gil (1983) no. 49=ENA 2804.8 r.17).

18Joison §90b.
19Fernandez p. 63.
20We could include also 'Eliyyahu Hakkohen ben סלomo Ga'on's use of the plural ending ת"נ on יסנ on the end of days' (12.775 r.11), but this is a quote from Daniel 12.13, one of the examples of the ת"נ plural in LBH.
21But in a letter of סלomo ben Yshuda, NS J15 r.9.
22Although Karaite letter-writers may have possessed a similar epistolary style to Rabbanites, it seems that they avoided the RH termination in their legal documents, unlike the Rabbanites; Olszowy-Schlanger p. 102.
The widely-used RH adjectival forms and usually take the ending, although they may occasionally be found in *him, 'obligated' (12.146 r.4), and both forms may occur in the same letter: ‘we must thank him’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.1) and ‘we must know him’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.10), from a letter of Yisra’el Hakkohen, the Babylonian ga’on.  The post-biblical word * Karaite often has the form in the plural, ‘the Karaites’ (Misc. 35.43 r.10; 13J13.28 r.22); the plural noun ends in even in combination with other post-biblical vocabulary showing the ending: ‘the Rabbanites and the Karaites’ (Gil (1997) no. 73=JTS Schechter (Genizah) 4 v.3).

The plural ending of the regular feminine noun is תֹּשְׁרִים: in communities’ (Misc. 35.15 m.29); תֹּשְׁרִים: and the dwellings’ (18J3.9 r.2). Those BH feminine nouns which lack but affix the plural תֹּשְׁרִים: also continue to be found with this ending in the letters: תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘in the streets’ (18J3.9 r.30); תֹּשְׁרִים: the spirits’ (NS 324.104 r.35); תֹּשְׁרִים: our letters’ (13J9.2 r.17); תֹּשְׁרִים: pairs’ (13J23.11 r.16) and תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘the purpose of these lines’ (13J34.3 r.11), instead of the more usual תֹּשְׁרִים:.

Certain irregular masculine nouns are attested with the plural in BH, which is retained in the letters: תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘fathers’ (10J11.30 r.22); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘from their palaces’ (18J3.9 r.9); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘her fruits’ (NS 324.104 r.28); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘weeks’ (10J27.2 r.18); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘the hearts’ (13J13.14 r.2); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘in places’ (NS 169.11 v.10); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘from sins’ (18J4.4 r.22); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘names’ (13J26.3 r.25); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘and paths’ (Misc. 35.43 v.6); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘the armies’ (13J9.2 r.7; 10J12.22 r.5). Others which retain the תֹּשְׁרִים: suffix in the letters are post-biblical Hebrew; they mostly consist of nouns of the pattern תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘grief’ (24.6 r.23); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘deposits’ (10J12.25 r.14); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘her sustenance’ (10J24.1 leaf 1 v.23); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘your interpretations’ (Misc. 35.11 r.10). The use of the תֹּשְׁרִים: suffix with the noun pattern תֹּשְׁרִים: is extended to cover even certain nouns that are attested with ב in BH, such as תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘his estate’ (16.68 r.18), attested in the plural as תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘your wares’ at Ezekiel 27:33. The letters also prefer to follow RH by writing ב for the plural of לילים, despite שָׁלומִים being attested in BH (Jeremiah 13:19): תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘his peace’ (13J23.1 r.2); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘peace branching out’ (13J26.3 r.1); תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘frequent peace’ (Gil (1983) no.

23Solomo ben Yshuda appears to mark a semantic distinction with the RH and BH terminations, between the adjective ‘obligated’, תֹּשְׁרִים: (13J23.11 r.16), and the noun ‘debtors’, which he writes תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘to debtors’ (Misc. 35.43 r.26).

24Although, the plural of תֹּשְׁרִים: always takes masculine concord in the letters.

25Possibly this is a deliberate variation on the usual formula or perhaps the writer was confusing תֹּשְׁרִים: and תֹּשְׁרִים: , which are more or less interchangeable in meaning, compare the similar epistolary formula תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘two lines to the elder’ (NS J15 r.14) in a letter of Solomo ben Yshuda.

26Although יָשָׁר is also attested both as a feminine noun, e.g., Psalms 27:3, and with the ב ending in BH, e.g., Numbers 13:49, the letters only attest תֹּשְׁרִים: and give it masculine concord as is usual in post-biblical Hebrew: תֹּשְׁרִים: ‘the armies that are gathering’ (13J9.2 r.7).
Similarly, Deuteronomy 4:5. On the other hand, though, the י- plural is also used on some RH nouns which show the ס- plural in rabbinic sources: 'and the customs' (Misc. 35.11 r.11) and 'mosaics' (13)34.2 r.26.

The nouns י- can take several different plural endings in BH and post-biblical Hebrew. In the letters we find predominantly a plural ending inי- 'in exiles' (NS J92 r.14); י- 'merits' (NS J172 v.4); י- 'their stalls' (13)13.28 r.24); י- 'the kingdoms' (NS J92 r.14); י- and testimonies' (13)9.2 r.25), despite BH י- 'your testimonies', Psalms 119:14. The plural י- is also attested in an early letter from Pumbeditta, תומכרות י- 'with punishments' (NS 308.122 r.23), but other Babylonian letters apparently employ the plural י- 'in relaxing, at least with the noun י- 'authorities' (13)6.3 r.1) and י- 'in our authorities' (Gil (1997) no. 13=Bodl MS Heb f 34.42 r.8). It is difficult to draw any firm conclusions since the orthography in many cases may be defective, following the example of the MT, תומכרות י- Daniel 8:22 and תומכרות י- Jeremiah 37:16, and we don't find any examples of the plural of י- in non-Babylonian letters to compare. However, on the basis of the evidence we have, we could argue that there is an apparent divergence falling along geographic lines and that the North African and Palestinian letters which show the י- plural are in accord with the Palestinian tradition of RH (whether Eastern or Western can only be garnered from vocalised forms unfortunately) whereas the Babylonian letters with י- represent the morphology found in the Babylonian RH tradition, as might be expected.

The rabbinic plural termination י- is not a productive form in the letters. We find it mainly on the plural of the noun י- 'money-order', e.g., י- (13)34.2 r.5), but it also occurs in י- 'the events' (12.114 r.12).

Only two examples of the broken plural are found in the corpus, the BH י- 'markets' (18)4.20 r.26), attested in Song of Songs 3:2, and the Babylonian Aramaic-derived plural of י- 'and our masters' (24.6 v.1), used in a letter from Palermo.

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27 The noun also varies in gender in these examples. לשוליים (8.31 r.2) is attested in a letter of Ye'sha Hakohen ben 'Avraham, but such an unambiguous example is rare: י- 'our peace' (10)30.5 r.16) and other similar forms probably represent singular nouns spelled plene.

28 נ- may perhaps show the feminine ending since it is sometimes treated as feminine in MH under the influence of its equivalent in Arabic, 'ada, a feminine noun, cf. Goldenberg p. 1629.

29 On the morphological differences of the י- plurals in the different traditions of RH see Bar-Asher pp. 26–7.

30 The ending is misspelled in a draft letter of Efrem ben Sənmarya, תומכרות י- 'the money-orders' (13)16.20 r.26), but the orthographic quality of his draft letters is so generally poor that it isn't wise to draw any firm conclusions. י- 'the events' connects the noun with the root י- 'to happen' rather than יר-ו 'to read', whence we obtain the identical form 'the Miqrāq'.
Although the gentilic ending is properly קי- in BH it is often contracted to קי-.\(^{31}\) The letters follow this ambiguous example and show both uncontracted and contracted forms in equal measure: דוגים 'the Muslims' (18J4.26 r.36) and נוניר 'Muslims' (12.212 r.15) and הקראים 'the Karaites' (13J19.15 r.19) and הישפנאים 'the Isma’elites' (Gil (1997) no. 33–Firkovitch v.1) and העברים 'the Arabs' (13J26.13 r.2).

In summary, the morphology of the plural noun is inherently biblical rather than rabbinic, with the masculine plural קי- predominating. However, the influence of post-biblical language is evident in the occasional uses of the ק- ending and the wider use of the ק- plural. Different writers use the biblical and rabbinic plurals to varying extents: סירה Ga’on attests a great many rabbinic plural forms, while נטן בן ‘Avraham rarely uses any. סלומון בן יוהuda occupies the middle-ground, attesting a fair number of rabbinic plural suffixes on post-biblical vocabulary, particularly the RH adjectives רבי and יתיב, but not on BH nouns and adjectives. Such different approaches are common in MH: among Spanish writers, for instance, מנהם בן סארוע frequently employs the rabbinic ק- while דניאש בן לבראת’s more biblicising prose avoids it entirely.\(^{32}\)

The noun with pronominal suffixes

The form of the noun with suffixes is as in BH, with the regular masculine singular noun appending the suffix onto the base consonantal form, קי יתנש ‘their shadow and their shield’ (13J14.10 r.9), and the feminine noun taking קי- before the suffix. קיראות ‘their call’ (13J14.10 r.13). The masculine plural noun, with a few exceptions noted below, shows קי- before the suffix, קי יתנש ‘his deeds’ (10J15.10 r.5), and the feminine plural is קי- or קי- (both found in BH, see below), קי יתנש ‘in their donations’ (13J33.6 r.17) and קי יתנש ‘their charities’ (13J14.8 r.26). Where vocalisation is used the reduction of vowels, or lack of reduction, follows Tiberian practice, i.e., no reduction of קי לֶחֶר ‘his poverty’, nor of פָּדָה in דָּבָר ‘our leader’ (20.114 r.20), but reduction of בָּהֵל to קי לֶחֶר ‘my thumb’ (20.114 r.25).

Some nouns take irregular plural forms before the suffix in BH, examples of which are attested in the letters: קי יתנש ‘their names’ (12.733 r.10); קי יתנש ‘their hearts’ (13J23.11 r.27). The plural of the noun קי, ‘day’, with suffixes is attested as קי יתנש in BH, e.g., קי יתי ‘his days’, Genesis 6:3. This form is attested twice in the corpus, 13J22.25 r.5 and 13J16.18 r.18, but alongside it we also find the post-biblical form קי יתי in use, i.e., קי יתי ‘his days’ (10J13.2 r.3) and קי יתי ‘their days’ (12.256 r.6). The noun קי יתי, ‘year’, also attests two different forms of the plural with the suffix, קי יתנש ‘his years’ (10J13.2 r.3), which is common in the letters, and קי יתי ‘and his years’ (Misc. 35.14 r.5) which is only used by סלומון ben יוהuda. BH attests both קי יתנש, קי יתי in Psalms 78:33, with suffixes.

The pronominal suffixes of the noun

The following pronominal suffixes are attested with the singular noun:

1 sing. קי דַּרְדָּר ‘my way’ (10J11.29 r.16)
2 masc. sing. קי קַהֲלָה ‘your community’ (13J9.2 r.61)
2 fem. sing. קי נַעֲרָה ‘your eye’ (13J20.9 r.8)

\(^{31}\)Joüon §90b.

The bracketed forms represent frequently attested orthographic variants.

The vocalisation of the 2 masculine singular suffix where attested reflects BH ְ rather than RH ְ , e.g., in the supralinear vocalization used by Na'atan ben 'Avraham: מָרְבַּה 'your candle' (10:15.10 r.2), מָרְבַּה 'your light' (10:15.10 r.2) and מָרְבַּה 'for your Creator' (10:15.10 r.9), and in an Karaite letter showing extensive Standard Tiberian vocalisation, מָרְבַּה 'your letter' (Gil 1983 no. 288=ULC Or 1080 146 r.14).

The 3 masculine singular suffix מָרְבַּה- is employed on biradical nouns such as מִסְפְּרָה, and מִסְפְּרָה as well as nouns from final-weak roots, such as מִסְפְּרָה 'his mouth' (13:13.14 r.27); מִסְפְּרָה 'his brother' (10:27.2 r.5); מִסְפְּרָה 'his friend' (13:33.2 r.12); מִסְפְּרָה 'his father' (12.328 r.12); מִסְפְּרָה 'to his field' (NS 324.104 r.34). However, as in piyyut and other literary texts of the period, e.g., Sa'adya's 'Evron, 'his holiness' (Allony, §1 line 2), the מָרְבַּה- suffix may also be employed on triliteral nouns, e.g., מַעְלָה 'his community' (13:16.14 r.9); מַעְלָה 'his reward' (8:18.15 r.2); מַעְלָה the Haver writes both מַעְלָה and מַעְלָה, 'his peace', within a few lines of each other in the same letter (AS 145.107 r.23, v.1). The suffix is particularly favoured by Yosef Hakkohen ben סָלוֹמָה Ga'on: מַעְלָה 'and his memory' (Misc. 36.140 r.34); מַעְלָה 'his will' (8:16.12 r.8); מַעְלָה 'his righteousness' (8:16.12 r.13), a stylistic feature that he shares with his father who presents a very large number of these suffixes at the end of a letter to Fustat... מַעְלָה 'and his father...his epistle...his Creator...before him...his masses...his rejoicing...his grace' (24.43 r.45–47). The example shows how the general use of the מָרְבַּה- suffix on all types of noun allows the writers greater freedom to rhyme singular nouns with plural nouns or prepositions, and even with verbs, as in this letter of סָלוֹמָה ben Y'huda to 'Efraim ben סָלוֹמָה: מַעְלָה 'and may he cause him to find grace and kindness and in all that he does may he allow him to succeed, Son of the scholar סָלוֹמָה, whose rest is 'Eden' (20.102 r.7).

By far the commonest use of the מָרְבַּה- suffix is on the nouns מִסְפְּרָה and מִסְפְּרָה. The common BH 3 masculine singular suffixed forms of these two nouns, מִסְפְּרָה and מִסְפְּרָה, are rarely attested in the letters, instead we find predominantly מִסְפְּרָה 'his father' (13:31.8 r.4) and, particularly, מִסְפְּרָה 'his brother' (10:27.2 r.5). The use even intrudes into quotations from the Hebrew Bible, Jeremiah 31:34 'As a father treats his son so shall I treat you, O house of Israel' and Ezekiel 34:14 'I will no longer leave you in your first love, but I will deal kindly and mercifully with you' (20.102 r.7).
“Know the Lord”, etc.’ (13J33.12 r.22), where, despite its explicit marking as a quotation (i.e., with supralinear dots and [תהלים] at the end) the phrase shows the replacement of the Hebrew Bible’s אַחַיָּהּ with אָדָם. This follows the greater pattern in the letters, where אַחַיָּהּ is generally reserved for the plural noun; the use of אָדָם for the singular gives less ambiguity in unpointed texts.

A pronounced characteristic of a great many geniza letters is the plene orthography of ēre. This is particularly evident in the 1 plural pronominal suffix, where, in BH, the orthography of ēre provides a semantic distinction, differentiating the singular noun from the plural.\(^{30}\) In most geniza letters, this distinction is no longer made, since the 1 plural suffix is often found written with yod, whether the possessed noun is singular or plural: ‘our intention’ (10J32.9 r.4); ‘our congregation...our treasure...our community’ (Misc. 36.140 r.29); sometimes both spellings occur together: ‘to our friend and our beloved’ (13J15.1 r.4). Only a few writers, such as Naṭan ben ‘Avraham, retain the BH distinction between singular and plural in their orthography, e.g., ‘our entreaties and our prayer’ (10J9.25 m.8).

The 3 masculine plural suffix ה- is used on the singular biradical פס as is usual in BH (e.g., Deuteronomy 21:5): פס ‘their mouth’ (Misc. 35.43 r.5).

The rabbinic 3 masculine plural suffix ג- is rarely found in the corpus, surviving in only occasional use alongside BH ב-. It is attested twice in a letter of Naṭan ben ‘Avraham, ‘they hear themselves reviled’ (8.3 r.18) and ‘that the way of scholars’ (8.3 r.17), and these examples can be explained by both cases occurring in quotations from the Babylonian Talmud.\(^{34}\) It is also found in various isolated instances in other letters, e.g., in a letter of _SUPPORTED RAVA, their work’ (28.24 r.55) or in a letter from Alexandria ‘in their affair’ (13J34.3 r.15), but it does not supplant the biblical suffix to any substantial degree.

The poetic suffix ר- is only occasionally found with the singular noun; other rare BH suffixes such as 3 masculine singular י- , 2 masculine singular ה- and 2 feminine singular כ- are not attested in the corpus.\(^{35}\)

The following pronominal suffixes are attested on the plural noun:

1 sing. ד- ‘my words’ (13J9.2 r.30)

2 masc. sing. מ- ‘my letters’ (13J13.28 r.2)

2 fem. sing. מ- ‘your gifts’ (13J9.2 r.17)

2 fem. sing. מ- ‘your precious things’ (13J20.9 r.9)

3 masc. sing. מ- ‘and his years’ (13J22.25 r.5)

3 fem. sing. מ- ‘and its young men’ (13J33.6 r.10)

1 plural מ- ‘our knees’ (13J9.2 r.10)

2 masc. plural מ- ‘your prophecies’ (13J9.2 r.36)

2 fem. plural מ- ‘in your lives’ (8J14.27 r.7)

3 masc. plural מ- ‘their words’ (13J9.2 r.36)

(33)Joion §6d n. 2.

(34)BT Yoma 23a and BT Sabbath 88b, respectively.

(35)The full list of rare BH suffixes is found in Joion §94h.
In addition, the orthographic variant ב- is attested for the 3 masculine singular pronominal suffix in a draft of a letter by ‘Efraim ben Šimmarya, י”ע ‘his wonders’ (12.273 v.10), for which no alternative, י”ע, is probably a scribal error.

The 3 masculine singular suffix י”ע is pointed with games as in Standard Tiberian Hebrew, י”ע ‘his parents’ (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.9).

Plural nouns with the ending י”ע often take the 3 masculine plural suffix of the singular noun, ב-, a biblical phenomenon.36 Suffixed forms such as אביהם ‘their fathers’ (12.256 r.5), בשם ‘their years’ (13J14.10 r.15), שמות ‘their names’ (10J10.5 r.10), הלבבות ‘their hearts’ (13J23.11 r.27) and ארוהים ‘their paths’ (NS 324.104 r.19) are more common than those with the suffix י”ע in the letters, only ממותה ‘their fathers’ (NS 324.104 r.10) and שמות ‘that their years’ (20.141 r.38) are attested; this is also the case in BH.37 For the purposes of the letter-writers the use of the ב- suffix on plural nouns facilitates the rhyming of singular and plural: Šalom ben Yehuda writes ... שמות ... שמות ...иш solução ... י”ע ‘their goodness...their purpose...their questions...their answers’ (13J14.8 r.9); Yošiyahu Ga’on rhymes ... י”ע ‘in your days’ (13J19.15 v.3) in a letter from Ašqelon and י”ע ‘their lords’ (10J30.5 r.2) in a letter of the Palestinian academy, both of which are also plural nouns.38

The defective writing of the plural noun with the 3 masculine plural suffix is attested in various letters, although it is not particularly common. Yošiyahu Ga’on attests three examples in one of his letters, י”ע ‘their deeds’ (13J14 r.13), י”ע ‘their wonders’ (r.14) and י”ע ‘their adversaries’ (r.14), where, although the Tiberian vocalisation does not represent a background Standard Tiberian pronunciation, the nouns appear to have been read as plural. Additionally, we have י”ע ‘in your days’ (13J19.15 v.3) in a letter from Ašqelon and י”ע ‘their lords’ (10J30.5 r.2) in a letter of the Palestinian academy, both of which are also plural nouns.38

In summary, BH provides the model for the pronominal suffixes of the noun, and the form of the noun with suffixes. Occasional rare BH poetic suffixes such as י”ע are attested (particularly by a small number of writers in the corpus) but are not overused. The morphology of RH such as the masculine singular in י”ע or the masculine plural suffix י”ע are, as far as can be ascertained, virtually non-existent. Where vocalised forms are attested they reflect Tiberian morphology and, predominantly, Tiberian pronunciation. However, there are a number of features that, whilst having their roots in BH, are far more developed in the corpus and sufficiently widespread to be regarded as distinctive of the letters: the wider use of the י”ע suffix, even on triliteral nouns; the plene spelling of י”ע on singular nouns.

36Ibid., §94g. We do not find the construction using the RH suffix י”ע.

37BH attests only י”ע לוהים and י”ע ארוהים, Numbers 13:4, Isaiah 44:18 and Joshua 2:7 respectively; י”ע only gives way to י”ע in LBH, ibid., §94g.

38The last example is apparently just an error, since all other cases in the letter are spelled with י”ע. The letter from Ašqelon, however, attests many defective spellings of the suffixes on plural nouns and on the prepositions which take plural terminations; probably this is an example of hypercorrection, brought about by the consistently plene spelling elsewhere of such suffixes as י”ע and י”ע for the singular noun.
(with rare exceptions); the use of מָה- rather than מְהִים- on feminine plural nouns. Is there any trace of Arabic influence in any of these features? It is certainly possible that the Arabic 3 masculine singular suffix—always -hu—led to the preponderance of מ- in the Hebrew, but since the suffix was already productive in paytannic Hebrew it would be presumptuous to blame the influence entirely on the vernacular. It probably represents a general merging of pronominal suffixes for nouns and verbs, evidenced on the verbal side, for instance, by the almost complete disappearance of the nunated suffixes, thus drawing the morphology of the verbal suffixes closer to those of the noun.

Noun patterns

Biblical vocabulary

To examine the nouns and adjectives employed in the average geniza letter, it is helpful to begin by taking one fairly typical example. T-S 8J22.7 is a short, unremarkable note from 'Eli the Mumbe ben 'Avraham to 'Avraham Hakkohen ben Ḥaggai arranging a meeting at the synagogue on the following day. It was written in the middle of the eleventh century in Egypt by, as his title מְשֻׁמָּרִים indicates, a well-educated member of the Jewish community. It is not an overly formal letter, lacking excessively florid phraseology or reckless invention; the introductory praises and blessings of the praecriptio reflect the minimum required for politeness and the biblical allusion and quotation it contains is due to the language in which it is written rather than a deliberate literary effect. As a result its idiom is neither excessively stilted and archaic nor riven with poetic neologism: it is a good example of a letter whose function is chiefly communicative and therefore a useful guide to the style of Hebrew found in most letters of the corpus.

The text opens with nearly 4 full lines of praises, the praecriptio, before launching into the business of the letter with the common introductory elementoire 'and know' (8J22.7 r.4). In total there are 16 lines of text (including 2 in the margin), which contain 54 different nouns and adjectives (some of which appear in abbreviated form only, e.g., נֵבֶה בְּנִי = נֵבֶה; his rest be in the Garden of 'Eden' (r.4)). Of these 54 nouns, 5—אַבְרָהָמָה (r.1); מֵה (r.4); אֶדֶן (r.6); יִשְׂרָאֵל (m.1)—are proper names. Of the remaining 49 nouns and adjectives, 38 appear in the Hebrew Bible. These are mostly common nouns and adjectives from BH such as: נֶפֶשׁ 'peace, wellbeing' (r.1); מְשֻׁרָת 'from the lord' (r.1); לְבָנָה 'and understanding' (r.2); עֵינֵי 'my dear one' (r.4); אַבְרָהָם 'and your love' (r.9); בְּרָכָה 'a blessing' (r.13). The post-biblical nouns, for the most part, are to be found originally in RH, e.g., מְשֻׁרָת 'lines' (r.10) and מַעֲקָט 'in the synagogue' (r.11), as well as a smaller number from Talmudic Hebrew, e.g., מַעֲקָט 'your piety' (8J22.7 r.9); only the occasional MH usage is attested, e.g., the commonly occurring substantival use of the passive participle, e.g., מְשֻׁרָת 'and his son' (m.2); no nouns that could be described as paytannic (such as arbitrarily shortened nouns) are employed.

Biblical vocabulary accounts for 38 out of 54 nouns and adjectives in the letter, i.e., exactly 76 percent. This proportion is repeated in most Hebrew letters from the geniza. A few, however, do attest a greater proportion of vocabulary drawn from the Hebrew Bible. The letter written by the ga'on Yoḥyyahu which is addressed to the Jerusalemite community in Fustat (13J14.10) is a good example: it evidences a large number of biblical nouns and phrases from the Hebrew Bible, some
quite obscure, and is mainly composed in rhymed prose. Such a letter was intended as a formal document and was meant to be read aloud to community members, probably in the synagogue after the service; therefore it demanded the higher register that the biblical language afforded. Other letters reflect a similar literary style, for instance the letter of introduction written by the paytan and official of the Palestinian academy Şmu'el Haššiši on behalf of the young (but soon to be infamous) Našan ben 'Avraham (16.68), but show a wider use of sources as well as different influences, such as the language of the piyyut. A letter such as this was probably not intended to be read aloud, but it would certainly have passed among the various dignitaries of its destination and its style would have reflected upon the reputations of both the writer—who had a position in the academy and therefore a reputation to maintain—and the one on whose behalf it was written. Communications showing so much concern for style, formality, literary content and inventiveness form a small proportion of the corpus, and were certainly not the production of the average letter-writer, but they do demonstrate the basic trends that are found throughout most of the letters, the regard in which the biblical language was held along with the parallel desire for variation and, occasionally, invention.

Since the dominant function of the letters was communicative, biblical language too obscure and difficult—though it demonstrated erudition—would have been counterproductive. Rare and unusual nouns drawn from the deepest depths of the Bible are only employed, if at all, in the initial section of the letter, the praises of the præscriptio, where they serve to ornament but do not intrude on the main business. For this reason obscure BH nouns are few in the corpus; unlike Sa'adya or the other late paytananim, the letter writers didn't delight in employing hapax legomena. Only a few examples of hapax legomena, except when they occur in biblical quotations, are found, e.g., מלחמה 'from war' (13J6.17 r.7) reflects a noun מלחמ, found only in Judges 5:8; לְבָדָּד 'our bands' (13J4.10 r.11) is the plural of the noun לָבָד, a construct attested only at 1 Samuel 19:20; rare, but non-hapax, nouns are similarly infrequent, e.g., מַכָּא 'our wound(s)?' (13J3.32 r.10) and מַהְרֵר 'in love' (10J11.30 r.22) are attested only twice each in the Hebrew Bible. The language of the letters thus drew upon BH nouns that were well represented in the Hebrew Bible and which mainly continued in use through RH and into MH. The resurrection of 'lost' BH nouns, and the resuscitation and reuse of ancient noun patterns as a means of creating new words, whilst both occurring in other strains of MH, feature little in the predominantly communicative idiom of the letters.

**Post-biblical vocabulary**

As the letter, T-S 8227 above, shows, though more than seventy percent of the nouns and adjectives of a letter may be found to have originated in BH, that still leaves a substantial proportion of post-biblical vocabulary. The letters demonstrate to us that their authors did not limit themselves

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39 Some examples of rare BH nouns found in the letter are: מְסָפָר 'from straits' (13J4.10 r.12); מְשָׁר 'their cry for help' (r.13); מְשָׁר 'their comfort' (r.18); whole phrases, such as לְפֵדַת רְמָתָה 'the changing of his laws' (r.25), also find their way into the text; an example of rhymed prose is יִטְרַש חַכָּה מְאֹד חָכָה 'may they see thrones and fitting offerings come to the House of David' (r.6), where the word-order has been altered to maintain the rhyme-scheme.

40 Some examples of a wide use of sources are the nouns: אַסְכֵּר 'expert scribe' (16.68 r.1), Latin exceptor, medieval דָּוְאָג 'table' (r.5) and the paysannic forms מְשָׁל 'his request' (r.16) and בקָשָׁה 'perfume' (r.2).

41 Sa'adya shows a 'marked preference for grammatical and lexicographical hapax legomena', according to Rabin p. 128.
to employing only ‘pure’ biblical vocabulary or perhaps did not even make a distinction between the language of the Bible and that of later sources: up to a quarter of most letters consists of rabbinic, talmudic and medieval nouns and adjectives. To a certain extent this is unavoidable: references to post-biblical religious practice, for example, had to contain language drawn from post-biblical sources and thus words such as אֲרָבָה, נָשָׁה, בִּלְתַנִּים, and others like them form a large proportion of the non-biblical nouns attested in the corpus. Similarly, the discussion of trade and taxation, and of finance and law, required overall the vocabulary of the Mišna and Talmud. Occasionally too, though, concepts or terms were required for which there was no Hebrew word. In such cases, either a new noun could be created or an existing noun used with a new meaning. However, the prosaic requirements of the topic under discussion were not the only driving force behind the use of post-biblical vocabulary. As noted earlier, alongside the communicative function of the letters there is also the ornamental, the literary, which often demands a wider field of vocabulary. To avoid repeating the same words again and again nouns could be substituted with their less common synonyms, or such synonyms could be created when nothing suitable already existed. Variant forms drawn from the language of piyyut are used to fit rhyme or metrical schemes. Parallelism also demands variants and synonyms. Though, as noted earlier, the literary requirement was in most cases secondary to the communicative, it is an important feature of the language and one that had a greater effect upon the noun inventory than perhaps other parts of speech.

The following list is based upon a random sample of 30 letters (approximately 10 percent of the corpus) and records all the post-biblical nouns and adjectives attested therein. Additional nouns of relevance from the wider corpus are detailed in the summaries. Occasional BH vocabulary is also included where the meaning or use has undergone a significant change in the letters.

Qāl: וְזֵדַת ‘silver coins, dirhāms’ (13[20.13 r.14); שִׁמְךָ ‘market’ (13[26.13 r.10)

Qōl: וַאֲדוֹדָה ‘and the causes’ (13[16.24 r.12)

Although הַעֲדֵי אֲדוֹדָה is a BH composite preposition with the meaning ‘concerning’ (e.g., Genesis 26:32) the occasional use of הַעֲדֵי אֲדוֹדָה without הַעֲדֵי in the letters appears to reflect a construct noun proper rather than an abbreviated version of the BH prepositional phrase. BDB (p. 15b) asserts that the singular of הַעֲדֵי אֲדוֹדָה should be הַעֲדִי אֲדוֹדָה but, probably by analogy with the plural of nouns such as יָדָה ‘bottle’ and זַעֲלָה ‘voice’ in BH, the letters attest a form זַעֲלָה אֲדוֹדָה for the singular, e.g., זַעֲלָה אֲדוֹדָה ‘concern or request’ (Gil (1983) no. 405=Dropsie 392 r.22); זַעֲלָה אֲדוֹדָה ‘concern or anxiety’ (10[11.30 r.24).

Qāl: כֶּה ‘sect, party, denomination’ (13[11.5 r.23); כָּפֵּי ‘the poll-tax’ (13[11.5 r.18)

The plural of כָּפֵּי ‘sects’ (32.8 r.28), demonstrating the i vowel, is also attested. Gemination of the ה in the singular suffixed form is showed by the full orthography of כָּפֵּי ‘his sect’ (12.775 r.10).

The noun כָּפֵּי appears frequently in the Hebrew Bible where it has the meaning ‘labourers’ or ‘forced service’ but develops the more specific sense of ‘tax’ in RH and
Talmudic Hebrew. In the letters, it becomes yet more specific, denoting in particular the Arabic jizya, the ‘poll-tax’ enforced on the dimmis by their Muslim rulers.

Qil: 42

is the widely used phrase for ‘signature’ in the letters. Talmudic, e.g., denotes in particular the Arabic jizya, the ‘poll-tax’ enforced on their Muslim rulers.

Qil5: and the haste’ (16.275 r.6); ‘and my signature’ (13]18.1 r.28)

Derived from middle-weak roots, nouns of the form qil5 are of different types, e.g., agent (טיב) and place (דד), but a major use is as an action noun (nomen actionis), particularly in the form of the noun הבוא ‘arrival’. This noun may be found in a concrete sense in BH, but in post-biblical language it is primarily an action noun. In the letters it most frequently occurs in phrases concerning the Messiah, e.g., הבוא ‘and the arrival of his Messiah’ (12.247 r.21), but it is also employed in preference to (or sometimes alongside) the infinitive construct הבוא with regard to more mundane events, e.g., אני מתכוון לבהוא חובה ‘I am awaiting the arrival of his letter’ (10]10.9 r.15) and אני מתכוון וברוא החכמה ‘and we are longing for the reply’s arrival’ (Gil (1983) no. 373—ENA 4101.5 v.4). Other post-biblical uses of this pattern are הבוא למקדשה ‘circumcision’ (13]20.18 r.22) and הבוא ‘in death’ (13]31.8 r.9).

Qitti: and our esteem’ (16.3 r.33); הבוא ‘the two lines’ (18]4.4 r.28); הבוא ‘and worship’ (10]30.3 r.5)

The spelling הבוא occurs only in this example, other letters attest הבוא, e.g., הבוא ‘two lines’ (20.106 r.1), as in RH. The apparent spelling with s rather than š is probably due to the influence of the Arabic equivalent saṭr, ‘line, row’.

Arabic influence may lie behind the frequent use of the noun הבוא in the letters since its cognate hubb is the main Arabic term for ‘love’. However, its use in such phrases as the parallel expression הבוא והמנהס ‘their desire and love’ (6]3.21 r.11) probably owes more to the well-known liturgical phraseology, e.g., הבוא והمنح from the ‘Emet v’Yassir blessing of the Šem, as it does to the influence of the vernacular.

Qotel: הבוא ‘subject’ (10]27.7 r.8)

42For the origin and later use of the phrase see Friedman (1991), pp. 162–189.

43It is used only in Ezekiel 8:5 where it has the concrete meaning ‘entrance’.

44Although the letters do not employ הבוא ‘death’ as often as the euphemisms מיתו, lit. ‘departure’, and, particularly, מיתה, lit. ‘gathering up’.

45Interestingly, it is the use of the noun הבוא ‘worship’ or ‘prayer’, lit. ‘bowing down’, in the epistles of Ya’aquov ben Šemuel that incensed the Karaita Sahl ben Masliah, as he wrote: ‘You wrote הבוא with a yod, and this is incorrect’ (quoted in Drory p. 59). Thus the unnamed Kohen who wrote the geniza letter perpetuates this appalling error.
is used in the introductory phrase to the main body of Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya’aqov’s letter: ‘the purpose of the subject of this letter [...] is that...’ (10J27.7 r.8). Other letter-writers use ‘and just that’ or just ‘purpose’.

Qōṣēl: ‘as is fitting’ (16.3 r.30); ‘to his cemetary’ (10J12.22 r.8)

Qōṣēl: ‘is found in BH, but the compound expression ‘is taken from RH (e.g., Wayyiqra Rabba 19.1).

Qōṣēl: ‘the Exeter’ (13J11.5 r.6); ‘the proper’ (13J20.9 r.2)

Drawn from Talmudic Hebrew where it denotes a ‘learned man, a scholar’, ‘and is a title which was bestowed on members of the Palestinian academy.

Qōṣēl: ‘and the zealous’ (13J17.4 r.5); ‘my dear one’ (13J20.9 r.5); ‘emissary, agent’ (10J12.22 r.6); ‘frequent’ (10J30.3 r.2)

This is the main Hebrew adjective form; other examples are ‘the observant’ (13J34.2 r.3) and ‘usual’ (NS 169.11 v.8). Although, surprisingly, RH is rarely used compared to the medieval qōṣēl form derived from it, e.g., ‘frequent’ (10J32.8 r.2).

Qōṣēl: ‘the young men’ (13J26.13 r.20); ‘gold coins, dinars’ (13J26.13 r.16); ‘his sons’ (13J20.13 r.22); ‘and in the rhymes’ (12.146 r.8); ‘our emissary’ (13J26.13 r.8)

Qōṣēl: ‘is delighted in; precious’ usually refers to a son in the letters, e.g., Sa’lomo ben Y’huda refers to his own son ‘Avraham as ‘my son’ (13J15.11 r.9); a letter to the ga’on mentions ‘Yahya, your son’ (12.247 r.18).

Qōṣēl: ‘according to his way’ (18J4.4 r.23); ‘his ability’ (18J4.4 r.23); ‘in speech’ (10J30.3 r.6); ‘in exultation’ (12.146 r.2); ‘business’ (10J27.7 r.8); ‘prayer’ (Box Misc. 26.22 r.4); ‘emissary’ (10J30.3 r.24)

Qōṣēl: ‘the common word for ‘way’ or ‘manner’ in the letters; a rabbinic noun, it occurs more often than biblical ‘and’ when referring to ‘way of behaving’. ‘Avraham ben Hagga’ on is the only writer to attest the form תַּשֵּׁש, ש presumedly denoting ש, which is etymologically more original than that with ש i.e., ‘his way’ (10J10.9 r.8).

46See Gil (1992) §742 on this and other titles of the Palestinian academy.


46See Jastrow p. 374. יֵאָנָנָנָn is also used in piyyut, occurring in Yannai’s poetry; Zulay (1945) p. 219.
Talmudic Hebrew is the source for some nouns of this pattern, e.g., רֶינָה 'boards' (13J34.2 r.26) and רָאָה 'the principal sum' (12.338 v.10), but many are drawn from Paytannic Hebrew which produced a great number of nouns of this pattern either through the exploitation of verbal forms, e.g., דַּעַל 'speech' from Talmudic הלַע 'to speak', or through the shortening of existing nouns, e.g., בָּא 'end' from biblical בָּא is a paytannic-style segolate noun which is used by different writers in the letters (Natan Hakkohen in 18J4.4 r.23 and 'Efraim ben Smyary in 12.273 r.7) but is not attested elsewhere, thus this pattern also provides a model for coinages in the corpus.

Qēṭal: בֶּדְדִית 'under pressure' (13J26.16 r.14)

Qēṭal: הָכִית 'yearning' (20.141 r.17)

Another example is בָּרַכְת 'in addition' (13J26.3 r.6) which is a segolate created by shortening RH הָבִית 'addition' (e.g., M. תְּרוּמָה 5.6).

Qātal: נַחֵית 'response' (10J30.3 r.4); בֶּנֶיחָה 'in need' (13J20.13 r.17); חָתָן 'favour' (Box Misc. 26.22 r.4)

Like the qēṭal nouns, these paytannic segolate forms are well-attested in the letters. In particular, shortened forms such as מְפֻסַכִּית from מַפְסָכָה are popular, e.g., מְפָסָכָה 'in alarm' (13J15.1 r.2) from BH מְפָסָכָה, מַקְסִית 'longing' (13J15.1 r.3) from rare BH מַקֵּסָה and מֶכָּס 'anxiety' (13J13.21 r.2) from BH מֶכָּס.

Qēṭal: נָבְדֵית 'his praise' (13J11.5 r.8)

Qēṭal: נֶדֲדָה 'the pressure' (8.3 r.14); בֶּנֶדוּת 'in general' (13J20.13 r.25); נְדוּית 'the letter' (13J20.13 r.13); בֵּית 'in particular' (12.17 r.13); אֶשֶּר 'the document' (13J18.1 r.13)

This Aramaic pattern provides the model for a number of post-biblical nouns found in the letters. Others attested in the wider corpus are מְשַׁשֶּה 'anxiety' (16.261 r.32) and מְשַׁשְׁה 'and the suspicion' (10J11.29 r.15). מְשַׁשֶּה, a borrowing from Babylonian Aramaic מְשַׁש/מְשַׁש 'anxiety', occurs on several occasions in phrases where it is parallel with, e.g., מְשַׁש הַיְּהוּדָה וַחֲסֵד 'and if you have any need or worry let us know' (16.261 r.32). A similar noun מְשַׁש is probably also a qēṭal from the same root; it occurs in letters by Shlomo ben Yoḥuda and Šmu’el ben Moše, אֶזְרִיחָה 'concern or anxiety' (10J11.30 r.24; 13J18.1 m.3), used in the same context as מְשַׁש.

The Aramaic form הָבְדָה is employed more frequently than BH מְבָדְה for the sense of 'letter'; this is undoubtedly due to the influence of the Arabic equivalent noun, kitāb.


50It is a frequently used noun in the corpus, evidently a reflection on the difficult times faced by the Jewish communities.
is commonly employed as an alternative to כֶּלֶל 'and all the blessings' (13:11.4 r.4).

Qəṯā:  sum total' (13:16.20 r.26)

is an example of a numerical/financial term drawn from RH (e.g., 5moq Rabba 1.12).

Qîtîs:  'in the breach' (13:17.4 r.4); 'limit' (10:30.3 r.24); 'prostration' (10:30.3 r.5); 'understanding' (13:11.5 r.4)

shedā, used by Šǐlōmo ben Yīhūda, is a paytannic form derived from the BH segolate noun שדאל 'insight'. שדאל is a coinage from the biblical verb 'to prostrate oneself'.

Qṣāḥ:  'and my grief' (12:74 r.7); 'width' (13:18.1 r.11); of quadrilateral: שפִּכְסָה 'in providing for them' (12.99 r.5)

This pattern shaping the abstract noun is most commonly found in the corpus in the form הָרֹאֵשׁ 'glory' which is a BH noun, found in Proverbs 14:28 הָרֹאֵשׁ 'the glory of a king', but is employed in the letters as an honorific address. Examples of הָרֹאֵשׁ are very frequent, e.g.: הָרֹאֵשׁ 'to inform our glorious lord [lit. the glory of our lord]' (10:9.14 r.6); הָרֹאֵשׁ 'to the glorious, dear, diadem, our master and teacher' (32.8 r.16); הָרֹאֵשׁ 'to the dear, glorious two communities' (13:19.15 v.1). It is probably a calque on the Arabic honorific hadra 'presence', also found in letters and documents as a term of address, e.g., הָרֹאֵשׁ מְרֵדי 'glorious Mordskai' (Misc. 28.61 r.7). הָרֹאֵשׁ 'preciousness' is formed on analogy of הָרֹאֵשׁ from the adjective הָרֹאֵשׁ and is also used, as can be seen in the examples already quoted, as a prefaced honorific.

Qṣḥîs:  'death' (10:27.7 r.9); 'examinings' (13:26.13 r.18); 'and a girding' (NS 92 r.4); 'and a whisper' (10:30.3 r.6); 'and with sweet things' (12.146 r.9); 'and rejoicing' (16.3 r.5); 'for the punishment fine' (13:26.16 r.13); 'your petition' (12.247 r.7); 'and strike' (18:4.4 r.6); 'and death' (lit. departure) (12.146 r.5); 'and the allocations' (10:12.22 r.11); 'his separation' (12.74 r.7); 'purification' (13:26.13 r.18); 'and movement' (10:30.3 r.6); 'from reading it' (13:17.4 r.18); 'in keeping him' (13:20.9 r.9); 'in silence' (10:24.8 v.1); 'and seeking' (16.275 r.6)

51 הביא is attested several times in the corpus as is the verb. The root is from RH, being a secondary formation from BH הביא 'to inquire', but its relative popularity in the letters is almost certainly due to the influence of the homophonous Arabic verb tabi'a 'to follow; trail, track, pursue'.
Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo is an extremely common pattern in the letters, evidencing a large number of nouns drawn from post-biblical Hebrew as well as many coinages. The pattern is actually quite rare in BH, so most Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo nouns used in the letters are drawn from the post-biblical traditions of Hebrew. From RH we find examples such as סבלנה, ספירה, ובירה, and many others from the list above as well as a great many others from the wider corpus, e.g., הבירה ‘and the visitation’ (12.213 r.2); הבירה ‘and examination’ (12.336 r.4); הבירה ‘in creation’ (13]26.3 r.7); הבירה ‘on his departure’ (13]17.17 r.18); הבירה ‘in the carrying up’ (10]11.30 r.11); הבירה ‘and finding’ (13]15.1 r.2). Talmudic and Medieval Hebrew provide an equally large number, such as ספלנה, ספירה, ובירה, and many others from the list above as well as a great many others from the wider corpus. Various coinages from this pattern are: הבירה ‘from his yearning’ (18]4.20 r.33), an alternative to כלך which is found in use by many different letter-writers; הבירה ‘and a girding’ (NS]92 r.4) is a coinage by Yośiyahu Ga’on from BH הבירה ‘and in rejoicing’ (13]23.12 r.3) is attested in several letters, as an alternative form of BH הבירה ‘and in the regularity’ (10]10.5 r.11) is a secondary formation from the BH noun הבירה, itself originally from a root הבירה; many more can be found in the wider corpus.

Although a few nouns of this pattern are derived from adjectives, e.g., הבירה ‘bitter things’ (13]14.10 r.22) and הבירה ‘and with sweet things’ (12.146 r.9), most examples are action nouns formed from the verb which, in the letters, are often employed in place of the BH infinitive construct. Very few concrete nouns of this pattern are attested. הבירה ‘the allocations’ (10]12.22 r.11), a borrowing from Aramaic, is an exception.52 The pattern is not used in the creation of other previously unattested nouns with a concrete sense.

Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo: דליה ‘its fire’ (8.3 r.10)

Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo: ‘fire’ is taken from RH, e.g., M. Sabbath 16.1.

Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo: a p\textsuperscript{a}ru\textsuperscript{a}ta (16.3 r.23); הבירה ‘repentance’ (13]14.5 r.12)

This is a noun meaning ‘return’ or ‘answer’ in BH, but in this example the narrower RH meaning of ‘repentance’ is implied, i.e., הבירה ‘because he has already made repentance’ (13]14.5 r.12).

Q\textsuperscript{a}tilo: תשלב ‘greatness’ (13]26.16 r.5); קד ‘holiness’ (13]26.16 r.5)

These abstract nouns are the standard honorific terms of address used in the letters. They are usually found only in an abbreviated form, as in the example; the writing of the nouns in full is rare: הבירה ‘to our dear.

52 ‘ספירה’ in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, ספירה in Babylonian, means ‘charitable donation’.
honourable, great and holy master and teacher, 'Eli the Haver' (13]23.13 r.2). Like the other honorific address יخدمة, והודר, הדרת,庫 shalt קדושה is attested as an epistolary formula in the Yerusalmi, where a letter sent from Palestine opens with לקדושה בנייה 'to the holy Hananya', Y. Sanhedrin I, 19a.53

Other nouns are attested, used in the same contexts on the model of庫 shalt קדושה 'treasure' (20.181 r.1), from Talmudic Hebrew, and the elsewhere unattested庫 shalt קדושה 'encircled [crowned?]’ (8]3 v.17).

Qattal: יתירה 'collection [of tax]' (13]26.13 r.10); והיהים 'and their action' (NS J92 r.12); והיהים 'and a compress' (8.3 r.11)

Although it is not a widely employed form, with the possible exception of库 shalt קדושה, יתירה, is attested fairly frequently in the letters, always in the construct: יתירה 'the veracity of the truth' (12.17 r.13); יתירה 'in the truth of our authority' (16.6 r.14); יתירה 'the truth of our words' (12.146 r.20); ] יתירה 'the truth of [‘8]20.3 r.12).

Goldenberg explains the frequency of יתירה in other medieval Hebrew literature stemming from Arabic lands as due to the influence of the similarly patterned Arabic noun haqqa 'truth, reality'.54 Perhaps this is so in the letters, but the effect is not total since for the meaning 'truth' in the absolute we find only קדושה and never יתירה; it is only in the construct that we always find קדושה and never יתירה.

Qattal: יתירה 'and to merchants' (13]20.13 r.24)

Qattal: יתירה 'merchant' is a RH agentive noun, e.g., M. Bava Meši’a 4.4.

Qattal: יתירה ‘teaching' (16.3 r.14)

Qattal: יתירה 'majesty' (10]27.7 r.6); יתירה 'delay' (J2.74 r.8); יתירה 'and confirmation' (13]11.5 r.8); יתירה 'and its greatness' (10]27.7 r.7); יתירה 'in your effort' (AS 148.147 r.5); יתירה 'and change' (10]12.22.4); יתירה 'in strength' (20.141 r.20); יתירה 'with a prayer' (10]30.3 r.4); יתירה 'with longing' (8.3 m.2); יתירה 'in standing' (10]30.3 r.5); יתירה 'and its lying' (10]27.7 r.4); יתירה 'and his titles' (13]14.5.9); יתירה 'your speech' (10]12.22 r.23); יתירה 'your smallness' (13]26.16 r.9); יתירה 'with urgency' (18]4.4 r.28); יתירה 'luxury' (13]18.1 r.3); יתירה 'and prayer' (10]30.3 r.4); יתירה 'their

53Mann (1922) vol. 2, p. 383.

54Goldenberg p. 1629.
This pattern, along with q\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}l\textsuperscript{3} and haq\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}l\textsuperscript{3}, is one of the most widely attested in the corpus. It is used principally for the generation of action nouns from the pi'el verb. Most examples found in the letters are already attested in rabbinic literature, e.g., רתינ\textsuperscript{3}ם פִּילִלָה, שֵׁם, חָנָן, חָוָלָם, אֲנָוָר, חָוָלָם, חָוָלָם, חָוָלָם, מַרְסָל בַּנְיָמִין and from among those listed above as well as a very large number from the wider corpus among which are: בֵּן חוּלָם 'appointment' (12.336 r.6); בֵּן 'as regards the preservation' (10J32.9 r.7); בֵּן חוּלָם 'the dispersion' (8J22.7 r.8); בֵּן חוּלָם 'in the distribution' (13J20.3 r.19); בֵּן חוּלָם 'and distraction' (10J10.22 r.13); בֵּן חוּלָם 'hindrance' (16.6 r.26); בֵּן חוּלָם 'and with his apology' (28.24 r.24). A small number of nouns of this pattern are already found in BH, but are employed with their different, post-biblical, meanings in the corpus: occurs at 2 Kings 10:8 as 'heap', but the RH meaning 'community', e.g., M. B\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}r\textsuperscript{3}k\textsuperscript{3}t 5:5, is instead required by ספ\textsuperscript{3}ל\textsuperscript{3}ו\textsuperscript{3}ו\textsuperscript{3}ב, יַחַד 'affairs of the community' (10J12.17 r.15); similarly, בֵּן חוּלָם is also 'heap' in Isaiah 57:13 but in the letters is used as an action rather than a concrete noun by, among others, Yosef Hakkohen the Ḥaver, who renders 'over the gathering together of his inheritance' (10J227.7 r.12), as in Talmudic Hebrew (e.g., B. K\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}b\textsuperscript{3}b\textsuperscript{3}b \textsuperscript{3}b 8a). This same phenomenon can be found with regard to RH nouns, which exhibit particular meanings in the sources, but more generalized meanings are adopted in the letters: רַבִּיהַ 'and its greatness' (10J27.7 r.7) the writer takes the noun to denote the abstract quality rather than its specialised rabbinic and talmudic meaning of 'rearing (children)' (e.g., B. Sanhedrin 19b).

Perhaps surprisingly, considering the wide use made of this pattern in RH and Talmudic Hebrew, examples of q\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}l\textsuperscript{3} forms from later Hebrew are fewer, although a number of previously unattested nouns of the pattern are found, most of which derive from verbs of the qal conjugation: לְחַזֵּק 'and the praying' (8J2.2 r.6) from BH בֵּן חוּלָם 'to pray'; בֵּן חוּלָם 'prominence' (16.68 r.20) from BH בֵּן חוּלָם 'to look'; בֵּן חוּלָם 'with urgency' (18J4.4 r.28) is formed from the BH root מֵחֹל which is only attested as a qal passive participle, מַהֲרִי 'urgent', at 1 Samuel 21:9; מַהֲרִי 'receiving', which is from a pi'el verb, Talmudic מַהֲרִי 'to teach/spread [the Tora]'.

Q\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}l\textsuperscript{3}:

This form 'in idleness' (12.17 r.19); הכנה 'intention' (12.17 r.11)

The former, from RH, is only attested in this letter from Aleppo; the latter, a Talmudic Hebrew noun, is extremely common throughout all the letters, where it is spelled a variety of different ways: הכנה 'his intention' (20.100 r.21); הכנה 'my intention' (10J13.2 r.24). Only a few other q\textsuperscript{3}t\textsuperscript{3}l\textsuperscript{3} forms are used in the letters, and these mostly
reflect a concrete meaning, e.g., 'according to the ordinance' (13J33.12 r.7), 'in their request' (12.256 r.7) and 'his order' (NS 323.21 r.17), since the favoured pattern for action nouns formed from the pi'el verb is, as we have seen, qittul. As a result, we find more examples of RH 'with acceptance' (13J14.10 r.9), for the קֶלֶל derived action noun, than RH 'for their reception' (13J23.13 r.24). 55

Qattal: 'the Rabbanites' (13J11.5 r.23)

A RH word, lit. 'teachers', that is used to refer to the followers of mainstream Jewish tradition, as distinct from sectarians such as the Karaites.

Qilqul: 'in their upkeep' (12.99 r.5); י竫מות; 'the debate' (12.17 r.5); 'and the reduction' (12.17 r.19)

A post-biblical pattern, the qilqul is the qittul pattern for action nouns derived from geminate verbs and, like qittul, is widely attested in the letters: 'and because of the conflict' (13J26.1 r.15).

Occasionally in RH it also serves as a pattern for agentives, although 'the broker' (18J4.20 v.12) is the only example to be found in the corpus.

Siqlul: 'and completion' (12.247 r.20)

Qattal (adj): 'the Babylonian' (13J18.1 r.26); 'the spreaders of slander' (12.17 r.8)

Qoli: 'the Aleppite' (10J12.22 r.7)

Summary of patterns with affirmative:'

The -t suffix occurs frequently in the letters but mainly in the form of the Hebrew gentilic adjectival ending: 'the Damscene' (12.336 r.20); 'the Jerusalemites' (13J8.14 r.21); 'the Arabs'; (10J24.1 leaf 2 v.18). 56 We find the -t suffix in use in the ordinal numerals, of course, and also occasionally as an agentive ending, e.g., in the RH 'the money-changer' (AS 145.107 m.3), or a general adjectival ending, e.g., RH 'secret' (10J9.14 r.5). It is clear, though, that there is no extensive employment of the suffix such as may be found in Hebrew that betray heavy Arabic influence, where it occurs through analogy with the Arabic nisba adjective. 57 Indeed, only one Arabic-derived form with this suffix may be found in the corpus, 'arili 'slanderer', noted above, which relies on the Arabic root sa'ā, not only 'to walk' but also 'to slander', for its meaning.

55According to Fernandez, p. 57, the reason for the productive nature of the pattern qattal in RH is the influence of Aramaic. The lack of Aramaic influence on the idiom of the geniza letters adds to the pattern's scarcity in the corpus.

56Arabic is a BH gentilic, from Psalms 83.7, where it refers to a certain tribe of Aramaean or Arabic origin. In the letters it is used, along with other adjectives such as 'רָאוּמִי (13J26.13 r.2) and 'סְפִיטָל מִלּוֹ (Gil (1997) no. 33=unclassified Firkovich v.1) to refer to the Arabs; both 'Evyatar Hakkohen and Sjølomo ben Yehuda write 'in Arabic' (10J24.1 leaf 2 v.18; 20.181 r.16).

Heqṭel: 'the loss' (12.17 r.18)

We also find 'and diligence' (10)32.9 v.4), derived from RH 'and wisdom' (10)22.7 r.4), 'its entrance' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.5) and 'the loss' (12.17 r.18).

Haqt5l5: 'like the divine promise' (AS 153.82 r.7); 'in mention of us' (12.247 r.15); 'with the consent' (10)24.8 v.4); 'in our annulment' (13)26.13 r.23); 'and successes' (13)17.4 r.2); 'in humiliation' (AS 153.82 r.11); 'and crossing of seas' (8)20.1.5); 'crossing the great sea'; 'bringing about peace' (13)14.8 r.5) and 'in the pursuit of peace and bringing it about' (20.181 r.39), compare M. Pe'a 1:1; 'bringing about peace'. Other examples of this pattern are medieval in origin, such as 'my declaration' (12.273 r.14); 'because of our wrongs' (16.6 r.22).

In addition to the haqt5l5 we find a variant form of this pattern, the haqt5lat, in a letter of Samo ben Yihuda: 'and wisdom in every deed, and success' (13)15.1 r.2) and 'and desire and promise' (13)15.1 r.3). In this letter the construct form is used in place of the absolute in order to follow a rhyme scheme composed of segolates, and nouns and participles with segolated

Note that N8l)emya Hakkohen, the Babylonian ga'on, uses, as would be expected, the Babylonian RH spelling rather than western.

The preference for adjectives and nouns formed from the root, as in its secondary form, for the meaning 'regular' is almost certainly due to the fact that the cognate root in Arabic dur, in the form of the adjective dawrt, is the main term for 'periodic, regular'.

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59The preference for adjectives and nouns formed from the root, as in its secondary form, for the meaning 'regular' is almost certainly due to the fact that the cognate root in Arabic dur, in the form of the adjective dawrt, is the main term for 'periodic, regular'.
In RH the spelling of haqtil nouns from final-‘alef and final-weak roots differs between the traditions of Palestinian and Babylonian RH; Palestinian RH attests the spelling נו, Babylonian ח. 60 Although the letters do not show many examples of these patterns, it is apparent that the latter practice is dominant. This demonstrates the influence of the Babylonian tradition through the medium of the Babylonian Talmud and its associated mišnayot. 61 Examples of the Babylonian spelling are found, as would be expected, in letters from the Babylonian g’onim, e.g., נְָּּחַמְּיָה Ga’on, who, among others, ‘to our benefit’ (8b20.3 r.11) and ‘with a declaration’ (r.12), but are also the rule in letters of Palestinian origin, e.g., סָלַמוּ ben יְהוֹדָה, who, in the latter practice ‘legal warning’ (20.178 r.3), or of North African origin, e.g., from Alexandria, who, in the latter practice ‘for their benefit’ (13b11.2 r.17). The only clear example of the Palestinian spelling in the corpus is found in a letter written by סָלַמוּ ben יְהוֹדָה, who, in all other cases spells this noun—which occurs frequently—with ‘alef; יְהוֹדָה יְהוֹדָה ‘for worldly benefit’ (10b27.2 r.11), יְהוֹדָה יְהוֹדָה ‘the benefit’ (20b102.38), etc. We therefore have examples of both traditions within the same body of work, however, as we have seen, such inconsistency of form, be it morphological or orthographic, is not unusual in the geniza letters.

Miqṭl: מְמַּכְלָה ‘like the conduct’ (13b26.16 r.16); מְמַּאֵל ‘request’ (13b14.5 r.6)

מְמַּאֵל is a noun found in BH, 2 Kings 9:20, where it means ‘charioteering’ but the later, post-biblical, sense of ‘conduct’ is required by the context in the letters.

מְמַּאֵל is a paṭannic-style shortening of the common BH word מְמַּאֵל ‘request’. Although this technique is not at all common in the language of the letters, a small number of individual forms are well-established and widely employed. Others have been mentioned already in the description of the variant segolate forms, but the noun מְמַּאֵל occurs far more frequently than its base form and is attested in writings by the g’onim סָלַמוּ ben יְהוֹדָה (NS 321.2 r.4 and very frequently) and Dani’el ben ‘Azarya (Gil (1983) no. 376=ULC Or 1080 J4 r.7), the lepers’ friend Hillel the Haver of Tiberias (Gil (1983) no. 236=DK 123 d.r.2), son of the ga’on ‘Avraham (13b21.19 r.1), נַתְּן Hakkohen ben מַוְרָא (18b4.4 r.19) and many more. It is noticeably absent from the writings of the Babylonian g’onim, who, through the lack of an established paṭannic background, employ far fewer examples of the poetic techniques of word creation and adaptation than are found in western, particularly Palestinian, texts.

Mqall: מְמֶנָה ‘aim’ (13b14.5 r.5)


61 The mišnayot found in copies of the Babylonian Talmud reflect the Babylonian tradition of RH, thus with the hegemony of the Babylonian Talmud in the West the Babylonian RH tradition became dominant and eclipsed the native reading traditions. Ibid., pp. 2–4, 6–10.
is a hapax legomenon in the Hebrew Bible, occurring only in Habakkuk 1:9, where it perhaps had the meaning ‘assemblage’ but is often translated as ‘direction’. In MH it possesses the meaning ‘aim’ or ‘direction’, and is used as a synonym of הנחיה, ‘intention’ by סְלוֹモֹן ben יֵשׁוּהוּ, who generally avoids that post-biblical noun, e.g., מְמַמְּתָה והוה מִמֶּית לְכֶם ‘since his aim was to name’ (10J12.17 r.6) and מְמַמְּתָה ‘their intention’ (13J14.8 r.9). A few other writers also attest the noun, but as a specific epistolary element which marks the transition to the main body of the letter following the praescriptio: Yosef Hakkohen ben סְלוֹמָה uses it following a very lengthy and formal praescriptio to present the purpose of writing. Similarly, סְמוּאֵל ben מֹשֶׁה writes ‘the purpose of my letter to the havar... is to tell’ (13J18.1 r.12); a letter from Alexandria also employs it, מְמַמְּתָה שֹׁאִירֵי אֲלַל:הדִּיוּר ‘the purpose of these lines... is to inform’ (13J34.3 r.11); as does a message from אֱסֶקֶלון, מְמַמְּתָה מְמַמְּתָה מְמַמְּתָה מְמַמְּתָה ‘the purpose of this letter to you... is to increase your wellbeing... and inform you’ (13J19.15 r.12). In each case the phrase in which מְמַמְּתָה occurs presents the main body of the letter.

Mָגִילָה: מְמַמְּתָה ‘the city’ (13J26.13 r.3)

The noun מְמַמְּתָה always refers to a ‘city’ in the texts, despite its use in the Hebrew Bible for ‘district’ or ‘province’: מְמַמְּתָה מָדִי ‘the city of חָסְר’ (13J16.18 r.17); מְלַמְּתָה חֶבֶל ‘to the town of סְיָף’ (13J21.21 r.12). RH and Talmudic Hebrew already occasionally use the noun to denote a large or capital city (Jastrow p. 734) but it is the influence of the Arabic madina, ‘town’ or ‘city’ only, that is probably decisive.

Muָדָלְתּ: מְמַמְּתָה ‘the specialist’ (13J20.13 v.1)

Mְמַמְּתָה is found in RH where it means ‘skilled, practical one’ (e.g., בּוּרְשִׁי Rabba 30). Like מְמַמְּתָה it was bestowed as a title on worthies of the community in the geniza period.

Other patterns with preformative-ז:

A medieval noun with the preformative-ז is מְמַמְּתָה / מְמַמְּתָה ‘maternal uncle’. In the corpus it is found only in the letters of סְלוֹמָה ben יֵשׁוּהוּ: מְמַמְּתָה ‘your uncle’ (13J13.28 r.33); מְמַמְּתָה ‘his uncle’ (13J23.1 r.10); מְמַמְּתָה ‘his uncle’ (12.261 r.15). The single spelling with ש—presumably ש—comes from a letter in which ‘Avraham ben Haggai’ was acting as his father’s scribe. As with his unique spelling of מְמַמְּתָה as מְמַמְּתָה ‘his way’ (10J10.9 r.8), mentioned above, ‘Avraham is presumably attempting to write an etymologically more original spelling.

Taqתּ: מְמַמְּתָה ‘and restorations’ (13J18.1 r.3)

Unattested outside this letter, מְמַמְּתָה ‘restoration’ is apparently a coinage from the BH root the pol’el of which is used in Psalm 146:9 תּוֹדֵד ‘he restores’. The coinage of nouns from verbs, particularly rare verbs, found in the Hebrew Bible is a paytannic
technique found in the letters. Although, we come across it only rarely and always in the poetic opening praises, not the body text.

Taqto: ‘and complaint’ (16.275 r.6)

Among letter writers only Sholomo ben Yehuda attests this common RH noun (e.g., M. Bava Meša’a 6.1). Another taqto pattern that appears in his letters is the elsewhere unattested form ‘remainder’, from root רד, which he employs in preference to the common BH noun רד, ‘remainder, rest’ (e.g., 1 Chronicles 19:11), perhaps by analogy with a form like RH רד, ‘addition’.

Taqt: ‘and rivalry’ (12.17 r.6)

‘rivalry, contention, strife’ derives from RH (e.g., Vayyiqra Rabba 9).

Qatit: ‘length/continuance’ (10[27.7 r.6];�ל annunci ‘for doing’ (AS 148.147 r.5);�ל anunci ‘the office of Nagid’ (6J3.23 r.13)

is the aramaizing form of BH באר, ‘long life’ (13J23.13 r.7) and באר, ‘length of days’ (12.775 r.3), RH באר is by far the more commonly used. This is not due to contemporary Aramaic influence, which in this period was minimal, but attests more to the continued influence of rabbinic phraseology.

Qatit: ‘uprightness’ (NS J92 r.10);�ל anunci ‘and worthiness’ (NS J92 r.10);�ל anunci ‘the Government’ (13J26.16 r.12)

Though ‘dominion; kingdom’, is a common biblical word it features in the list since it has taken on the particular meaning in the letters of referring to the temporal rulers of Egypt and Palestine, i.e., the Fatimid government, e.g., "and we were provided for by the government’ (13J26.16 r.12).

Qatit: ריחות ‘sickness [of my heart]’ (2J2.74 r.7);�ל anunci ‘benefit’ (13J26.16 r.11);ריחות ‘our authority’ (16.3 r.33)

Qatit: ‘guarantee’ (13J18.1 r.22)

Summary of patterns with affirmative -

- is extensively used to form abstract nouns from other nouns and adjectives. Some forms attested in the letters are found already in RH, e.g., "surety’ (13J18.1 r.22);דילג ‘diligence’ (13J24.11 r.21);קנונכת ‘your youth’ (13J11.4 r.20);‘with speed’ (13J20.14 r.22); ‘your skill’ (28.24 r.49). A similar proportion are drawn from Talmudic Hebrew: "in their poverty"

Goldenberg p. 1611.
The connection of the נ- affirmative with nouns denoting the abstract is so strong that we find many nouns employing נ- even where there is a well-attested form of a different pattern available, e.g., MH 'in rejoicing' (16.24 r.14) rather than BH 'rejoicing'; Aramaic-derived 'in insolvency' (10.32.9 r.14) rather than BH 'insolvency'; 'and in your trade' (28.24 r.49) rather than BH 'trade, merchandise'; RH 'and his humility' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.10) is found along with BH 'insolence', e.g., 'and and humility' (10.11.30 r.22); 'our authority' (16.6 r.14) is used alongside 'authority' (NS 323.21 v.6); even the previously unattested 'in our aid' (16.95 leaf 1 r.5) occurs once, despite the wide use of the BH noun 'help' in the letters.

The affirmative is also frequently found in nouns derived from agentives or titles, being equivalent to English nouns ending in -ship, e.g., 'the Nagid-ship, the office of Nagid' (6J3.23 r.13); 'the cantorship' (13J24.11 r.21); 'attorneyship' (10J12.22 r.11).

The productivity of the affirmative is such that it is demonstrated by many previously unattested forms encountered in the letters, e.g.: 'turbidness' (13J19.15 r.3); 'sickness' (J2.74 r.7); 'and in the glory' (12.273 v.14); 'trade' (10J25.8 v.4).

Qilqil: 'vitality' (13J25.10 r.28)

The noun is a rare RH word (e.g., B'rešīt Rabba 48), also found at 13J15.11 r.24.

Qibil: 'in interest' (13J11.5 r.19)

Talmudic Hebrew is used in preference to BH נבאת and נביאית, neither of which is attested in the corpus; post-biblical Hebrew is the source for most financial and business-related terms in the letters even where existing BH nouns are available.

Qatal: 'the cantor' (13J26.16 r.6) is actually a qatal agentive pattern

Although not generally employed in the letters beyond a few well-attested nouns, נבכ "like a writer" (28.24 r.52) and נביאית "interpreter" (13J11.9 r.7), the affirmative does provide Solomon ben Yehuda with the opportunity to form a lengthy sequence of rhyming epithets in one letter: יושב הגרוב והטורף יושב יושב and the scholar, the inquisitive, the strong man' (13J16.14 r.8). It is notable that all these agentive nouns appear to take the form of the Eastern Palestinian tradition of RH pronunciation, i.e., preferring ק"ש to the Western Palestinian ק"ש. The Eastern branch is found in the oral traditions of North African Jewry; Solomon ben Yehuda was...

For this dialect distinction see Saenz-Badillos (1993) p.179 and Bar-Asher pp. 19-20 (Fernandez p. 14 gives the reverse order, but this must be an error). Of course, we cannot be sure as to the vocalisation of these nouns in an unpointed text, but given the general predilection for the plene spelling of o vowels it is more likely that these nouns represent the pattern qatal.
a native of North Africa, probably hailing from Fās.64

The repetition of a single nominal pattern for the purposes of rhyme is a technique of the letter writers; other examples involve sequences of nouns taking the affirmative-א, below.

Qittilôn (?): יברשת... "and in the acquisition [of knowledge]" (12.146 r.7)

is not attested elsewhere and appears to be a coinage of the unknown Babylonian ga'on who wrote this letter. It is derived from Aramaic 'to acquire', attested as a noun in Babylonian Aramaic 'אגרניא my accumulation', B. Yºvamot 117a.

Summary of patterns with affirmative א=

The א- affirmative is a popular method of creating synonyms from existing nouns in the letters, much as it is in the language of piyyut.65 The Babylonian ga'on Šºrira coins a number of nouns with the affirmative for a rhyming sequence contained in the opening of a letter:

א הבאまる...הלכון... котором...שברון 'in courage... oppression... deliverance... suspicion' (AS 148.49 r.5). Moše Hassofer also presents two new abstract nouns, ופתען 'and rejoining' (13)16.16 r.13) and שברון 'and desire' (13)16.16 r.15), from a similarly rhymed phrase: ופתען 'and wishing' 'and so let it be, with rejoicing and exultation and fulfilment of desire' (13)16.16 r.15). Šºlomo ben Yºhuda uses the patahānc noun בלשמן 'perfume/perfumer' to make a rhyme: בלשמן 'who is named the Father of Many', who is seated in the academy, and is filled like a pomegranate with all the spices of a merchant and perfume[?].66 (13)16.14 r.5). A productive affirmative, א- occurs in a great many coinages in the letters but most of which are found only in the rhymed openings of letters. We find mainly existing examples, drawn from RH, with this affirmative when they occur within the body text itself: רבו... 'permission' (13)16.18 r.11); רבו... 'lord' (20.94 r.7); רבו... 'in my humiliation' (20.181 r.20); only the occasional noun of medieval origin surfaces: מים... 'permission' (16.267 r.11).

A noun frequently used in the letters is ga'on, head of the academy' (13)26.16 r.1), which, although it is a concrete noun, derives from an original BH abstract, 'exaltation'. The use of this title is taken from the biblical phrase א'הבר...הבר... 'the pride of Ya'aqov', Psalms 47:5 etc.67 The phrase refers to the Palestinian academy in Šºlomo ben Yºhuda's letters, e.g., שלבוה התו איש ישיבת ננא尼 ישב ברבר 'Šºlomo ben Yºhuda the Younger, Head of the Academy of the Pride of Ya'aqov', Son of a Scholar' (13)9.2 r.62), but historically was used of both the Palestinian and Babylonian yºšivot.68

64See Gil (1992) §860. Naţan ben 'Avraham refers to the ga'on as 'al-Fāsi'.

65Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 212. Mºnåhem ben Saruq also created nouns with the א- affirmative for his writings; idem p. 235.

66The paytan Šºmu'el Haššiliši also employs בלשמן in the opening of a letter of recommendation, rhyming it with עשון 'cinnamon' (16.68 r.2).

67Brody p.49.

68Gil (1992) §728 and notes. Although, in the letters of the Babylonian yºšim the Babylonian title is usually Rôš hanyºšivºš selgölš, 'Head of the Academy of the Dispersion', e.g., שריירית תftime הרש והישבה שלגולה (16.6 r.1).
The question of the spelling of nouns ending in final -ay has already been discussed above. As with the Hebrew and Aramaic distinction, both Babylonian and Palestinian spellings are found in the letters.

Contractions: ‘son of the scholar’ (13)26.16 r.1

also found as 'son of a learned man,' and is probably in origin a contraction of Aramaic 'Ye'hošu' the Haver son of the scholar 'Eli the Haver' (13)16.18 r.22. Certain writers such as Šalom ben Yhuda and Šmu'el Haššiši sometimes use it in a slightly different way, omitting the father's name, but retaining birabbi as a mark of their status: שלמה ה' עשויה יוחסיןנא format 'Šalom the Younger, Head of the Academy, son of a scholar' (13)23.1 m.10; 'Šmu'el the Third in the Academy, son of a scholar' (16.68 r.27).

Loanwords:

Some loanwords are already found in BH, such as the Persian 'epistle', Ezra 4:7, but most are drawn from the Greek and Latin vocabulary of RH and Talmudic Hebrew, and cover the fields of finance—most units of coinage are loanwords, e.g., 'dinars' (18)4.20 r.38), 'sorim' (13)26.3 r.13—jurisprudence, e.g., 'heritage' (13)33.2 r.23), and bureaucracy, e.g., 'confiscated property' (12)338 r.16) and 'and in documents' (13)14.10 r.30). Terms not belonging to these fields are found, of course, e.g., 'very', 'custom' and 'commoner', mentioned above, as well as others like 'the reed pen' (13)16.24 r.16), ' COPY', 'bandits' (10)10.9 r.4) and 'our helmsman [=leader]' (20.114 r.21) but they are fewer in number. What is clear is that all of these loanwords are drawn from the rabbinic sources: none are absorbed from the Arabic vernacular of the letter-writers. Perhaps the only clear case of an Arabic loanword in the corpus is the noun 'copy', e.g., 'their copy' (NS 169.11 r.5) and 'from the copies' (13)16.17 r.22), taken from Arabic musa. The most

69See Orthography.
70Friedman (1981) vol. 2, pp. 411–415 examines the origins and attestations of the word in detail.
probable reason for this state of affairs is that whenever possible the letter-writers would prefer to write an existing word, one drawn from Jewish sources, rather than have to fall back on the insertion of an Arabic term into the middle of an otherwise Hebrew-language letter. Instead of Arabic vocabulary the letters show Hebrew nouns which either directly translate Arabic nouns or which are similar, either homophonous or cognate, and use them with the sense of the Arabic noun instead of employing the Arabic itself. For instance, Arabic suftaja ‘money-order’, occurs frequently in the Judaeo-Arabic letters of the Jewish communities but is not found in their Hebrew letters. Instead, Shalom ben Yehuda and others only employ the rabbinic noun דירה ‘the money-order’ (13.8.14 r.10). Similarly, to translate Arabic bard’a ‘poll-tax receipt’ a Hebrew compound נוירוןстал lit. ‘notes of the tax’ (13.11.5 r.20) is used; דירה, lit. ‘fine; indemnity’, e.g., מקרוס מסעה ‘prior to the punishing tax on our brothers’ (13.26.16 r.13) refers to a special tax (i.e., as distinct from the jizya ‘poll-tax’ and קדרדי’land-tax’), translating Arabic גארמה, also literally ‘fine; damages’; גארמה translates Arabic sjill ‘official letter, letter of appointment’. Homophony explains the preference for the noun קדש הב over קדש for ‘letter’, due to the similar pattern of the Arabic cognate קדש, ‘letter’.

Summary

The most popular noun patterns in the letters are qeqel and the other segolates, q*til5, qittul, haqt5l5 and nouns with the -iit affix. Not only does the corpus attest a large number of post-biblical nouns from these patterns but it also produces many previously unattested nouns, particularly from the segolates and from the action noun patterns q*til5 and qittul. These latter patterns are particularly prominent in the inventory due to the partial replacement of BH infinitival constructions with noun phrases employing action nouns for the same meaning. Sa’adya is another medieval writer who makes great use of q*til5 for the action noun.

How does this compare with the different traditions of Hebrew? RH also favours the patterns q*til5, qittul and haqt5l5 for its word creation, but the other common rabbinic patterns qatt5l5 and heqtel feature far less prominently in our corpus. In the letters a certain amount of levelling has gone on, a few patterns have become dominant and both the qatt5l5 and heqtel have been supplanted by the related qittul, for the pi*el-derived noun, and haqt5l5, for the hif*il-derived. Other features of the RH noun such as the occurrence of ת for ת for מ and similar examples of ה, are not attested at all in the corpus.

Perhaps a greater similarity to the idiom of the corpus is shown by the language of the paytannim: piyyut favours nouns from the patterns qeqel, qittul, q*til5 and qittlon in particular. Though the

71In so doing, the letter-writers are continuing a tradition of linguistic nationalism begun by the early Palestinian paytannim. They would always attempt to use a Hebrew word in preference to foreign, usually Greek terms. This extended to the use of homophonous Hebrew words in place of the Greek, altering the meaning of the Hebrew words where necessary to match the word replaced. See Yahalom pp. 41–43.

72Rabin p. 131.

73Fernandez pp. 57–58 lists the commoner RH noun patterns.

letters do not demonstrate a wide use of nouns of the pattern qittôn, aside from isolated groupings in rhymed phrases, they do employ a large number of segolates, many attested already in the language of piyyut and others unattested but produced by the same techniques of paytannic word creation. Often these nouns occur in the rhymed openings and ornamental poetic passages of the letters. The later language of the Spanish poets such as Ibn Gabirol shows a similar preference for the qêpel, qittül and qû7ûl.75

Arabic has little influence on both the form taken by the Hebrew nouns in the letters and on the lexicon. It is mainly discernible in the way that the letters favour particular Hebrew words that can be equated with either cognate or homophonous Arabic words, e.g., חֵדָב or nouns from the root חֵד. Still, even this effect is minor (and open to exaggeration: though Arabic may attest a similar noun to one that is used in the letters this is not necessarily the reason for its use). Goldenberg identifies as arabisms the increased use of the nisba adjective form or, to give a particular example, of the Hebrew word חֵדָב for the meaning ‘event’, however, in our letters the 앞- adjectival form is no more common than in earlier traditions of Hebrew and for ‘event’ we find only the undoubted hebraism חֵד.76 Actual Arabic loans are non-existent. The principal source of vocabulary for the corpus, after the Hebrew Bible, is from the rabbinic and talmudic sources. Much of the lexicon concerning finance, law and religious practice is appropriated from rabbinic literature: such were the terms regularly used in other writings produced by the geniza communities, in court reports, commentaries and responsa, and as an established part of the contemporany idiom they remained in use in the letters. Although finance was not the principal subject of the Hebrew letters—nearly all merchants’ letters are written in Judaeo-Arabic—frequent references to charitable funds and donations, inheritances, tithes and, above all, taxes, ensure that much of the corpus’s lexicon of post-biblical language is composed of monetary and related terms, e.g., דינר ‘money-order’, ‘tax collection’, ‘loan’, ‘dinar’, ‘capital’, ‘banker’, ‘sum’ and ‘expenditure’.

75Ibid., p. 224.
76Goldenberg p. 1627. ‘Event’ is always Hebrew חֵד in the corpus, e.g., חֵד ‘what happened to me’, lit. ‘my event’ (28.24 r21); חֵד ‘event’ (24.6 r28).
The Verb
The strong verb
The qal

Although it is intended to describe the basic form of the verb in the corpus through a survey of the qal of the strong verb, it has also been necessary to take examples from other stems and from weak verbs where no suitable example from the strong qal exists.

The suffix conjugation

The qal suffix conjugation is inflected as follows:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>לְהַבְדִּי</td>
<td>'I wrote' (10J10.22 r.5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>מְאַסְתֵּנָה</td>
<td>'you rejected' (16.3 r.24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(חֲרֵזְהָ</td>
<td>'you returned' (10J14.19 r.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'he remembered' (12.336 r.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'and it grew strong' (13J26.13 r.2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'we wrote' (16.6 r.25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mpl</td>
<td>פְּקָדוּתֵה</td>
<td>'you [haven't] paid attention' (13J25.5 r.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fpl</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'they wrote' (20.181 r.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bracketed suffix represents a frequently attested orthographic variant.

The inflection of the verb, where attested, is identical to that of standard BH. The 2 masculine singular suffix is sometimes written plene, מְרַזִּית 'you toiled' (13J14.8 r.18), as it is occasionally in BH and often in RH.¹

¹Jotion §42f; Fernandez p. 105; the plene orthography is common in the Dead Sea texts, cf. Abegg p. 335
The prefix conjugation

The qal prefix conjugation is inflected as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>אני אכתוב 'I will write'</td>
<td>(13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>אתה תכתוב 'and you will write'</td>
<td>(12.347 m.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>אתה ישמיע '[do not] listen'</td>
<td>(Gil (1997) no. 673= Bodl MS Heb c 13.20 m.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>יומלו 'he will spare'</td>
<td>(NS J92 r.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ויתרוסך 'and it will be quiet'</td>
<td>(24.43 r.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>אנחנו напишем 'we will write'</td>
<td>(16.3 r.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mpl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>אנחנו תפתו 'and you will open'</td>
<td>(12.16 v.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fpl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>לא נייר 'you will say'</td>
<td>(10J1 leaf 1 v.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3mpl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>הם יאומרים 'they are lacking'</td>
<td>(13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fpl</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>הם יר pesos 'they forsake'</td>
<td>(10J1 leaf 2 v.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The letters show that the feminine plural of the prefix conjugation had not disappeared from the language—at least in the 3rd person—despite Rabbinic Hebrew's merging of the 2 feminine plural and 3 feminine plural forms with those of the masculine.\(^2\)

The prefix conjugation with paragogic nun

The use of the paragogic nun on the prefix conjugation is a BH feature that is retained in the letters. As in BH it may be found on the 2 masculine plural and 3 masculine plural of the prefix conjugation; the, already rare in BH, י- ending of the feminine plural prefix conjugation is not attested.\(^3\)

Of the two types attested, the 2 masculine plural in י- is barely used; it is found only twice in our corpus, occurring once in a letter of $\text{Sarira Ga'on}$ אומרים, 'you will say' (10J1 leaf 1 v.3) and once in a letter of 'Elhanan ben $\text{Sarira}$, 'you will do' (18|4.5 vm.5). Neither is a creative use of the 2 masculine plural paragogic inflection, since both these particular morphological forms are attested in BH, אומרים, 2 Kings 19:6 and י- תקשת Exodus 20:20.

The 3 masculine plural paragogic inflection is employed more frequently in the corpus, however, it is mainly two writers, the Babylonian ga'on $\text{Sarira}$, again, and that other bibliciser, $\text{Silo}$, י-uda, who account for the great majority of occurrences.\(^4\)

Although $\text{Sarira}$ employs the form in the body of his letters, $\text{Silo}$ ben י-uda's use is more characteristic of the situation in the letters as a whole. It may occur in the praescriptio, where the י-ending is a useful rhyming element, י- ‘may they join...be confirmed...be given...[not] be restrained’ (16.275 r.1), or, more frequently, it is employed in the postscriptio for the final blessings, י-רו 'may they increase and grow' (Box Misc. 28.231 r.20); י-רו י-ים י-אנתיו.

\(^2\)Fernandez p. 106.

\(^3\)For its rarity in BH see Joüon §44e.

\(^4\)$\text{Sarira Ga'on}'s letter 10J1 accounts for most of the paragogic forms in the corpus.
'may they increase, grow and arrive' (Box Misc. 26.22 r.8); "וְיִרְבּוּ נְאוֹת" 'may they increase forever' (1311.9 r.17). Unlike the examples of the 2 masculine plural, the paragogic nun can be found suffixed not only on verbs on which it does not occur in BH but also to post-biblical vocabulary, such as as 'may they join' (16.275 r.1); nevertheless, many of the forms used are found in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Deuteronomy 8:13 and Isaiah 41:5. Interestingly, the suffix is more frequently employed on lamed-he verbs—often also displaying the original final yod for the ending -ן—than any other stem: it occurs frequently on the lamed-hes in the Bible, e.g., Deuteronomy 9:5; Isaiah 1:4; 9:3. Nevertheless, many of the forms are attested in the Judaeo-Arabic writings, often where syntactically it is not required by the rules of Classical Arabic (e.g., on the subjunctive and jussive) and where it had been lost by other vernacular Arabic dialects, where the form without nun supplanted it in all parts of the prefix conjugation. 

The Babylonian ga'on 5ôrira uses paragogic nun frequently, e.g., "אַמשְׁנִיתַנְיִלְּתַנְיִלְיָהָם שֶׁנִּאֲשֵׁרָם לְרַעְּבִּים וַלְּבָרָאָם 'and if the people are lazy what will their wise men do? Will they go hungry or thirsty?' (1325.5 r.31). This wider use of the paragogic nun of the prefix conjugation can, I think, be explained by more than just the obvious conservatism of his Hebrew. 5ôrira, along with other speakers of the Iraqi dialect of Arabic, such as Hayya and 5ûmu'el ben Hofni, consistently employ a Classical Arabic form of the prefix conjugation terminating in nun in their Judaeo-Arabic writings, often where syntactically it is not required by the rules of Classical Arabic (e.g., on the subjunctive and jussive) and where it had been lost by other vernacular Arabic dialects, where the form without nun supplanted it in all parts of the prefix conjugation. It is quite probable that the form taken by the prefix conjugation in the Judaeo-Arabic letters influenced the form shown by the Hebrew equivalents in 5ôrira’s Hebrew letters.

The cohortative

The cohortative is attested as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Conjugation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>אֶשְׁאֵל</td>
<td>'I ask' (8)22.7 r.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>נְכֵשׁב</td>
<td>'let us [not] pay heed' (20.102 r.24), strong qal not attested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>יְשַׁחְּטַכּ</td>
<td>'may he remove [them]' (1314.10 r.12), strong qal not attested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The BH cohortative is attested throughout the letters, in both the singular and plural of the first person as well as the third masculine singular. Only the 1 singular cohortative is common; the 3 masculine singular is very rare.

Most of the cohortatives found in the corpus are already attested in BH, e.g., אֶשְׁאֵל 'I ask' (8)22.7 r.6) at Judges 8:24, אָבְקִשֶּׁב 'I will seek' (12.146 r.15) at Psalms 122:9, אִדְּרֵהוֹ נָה 'I will speak' (16.6 r.8) at 2 Samuel 14:15 and אַבְרָמֶה 'and I said' (Misc. 35.11 r.13) at Judges 6:10, and many occur in the form of phrases drawn whole from the Hebrew Bible: אִשְׁרֶה מַשְׁפַּת 'I sat appalled' (10)10.22 r.4) is taken from Ezra 9:3, אָשִׁרֶה אנָא 'I will sing and praise' (16.6 r.7) is from Psalms 27:6. This last doublet is popular among the letter-writers and causes the two cohortatives אַשְׁרֶה and אִשְׁרֶה to supplant the normal prefix conjugation form for the 1 singular of these verbs, neither אָשִׁרֶה nor אֶשְׁרֶה אָשִׁרֶה אָשִׁרֶה

The postscriptio examples are drawn from the ga’on’s letters written by his son, ’Avraham; thus it was more a feature of ’Avraham’s style than his father’s. The same construction is not found in the postscriptio of letters in the Ga’on’s own hand.

See Blau (1999)pp. 62–64. Sa’adya is another speaker of an Iraqi dialect who shows final nun in his Judaeo–Arabic text, according to Blau; a copy of a Sa’adic letter in the Oxford geniza collection shows a similar use of paragogic nun on Hebrew verbs, Gil (1997) no. 6=Bodl MS Hev. f 56.82–83.
being attested.

Since the cohortative is a BH construction, it is unusual to find examples of its use which are not attested in BH. Two only exist in the corpus: 'I will gird' (1314.10 r.2), from Yośiyahu Ga' on, where the cohortative partakes of a rhyme scheme in ה, and 'and I will join up with' (1311.4 r.12), from the lady Maliha's letter.

Salomo ben Yehuda often attests the 1 singular cohortative in waw-consecutive constructions, e.g., 'and I went' (16.261 r.22) and 'and I asked' (16.275 r.23). When using the verb 'may be' he only attests the 1 singular cohortative in the waw-consecutive, never the indicative, e.g., 'and I said' (Misc.35.11 r.13, 18; 16.275 r.12, etc.). Though 'may be' is attested in BH, e.g., Judges 6:10, the indicative is considerably more common for the waw-consecutive. Overall, while the cohortative with waw-consecutive construction may be found in BH, particularly in certain late texts, it is rare; however, it is very common (almost the rule) with the waw-consecutive in texts from Qumran, where it is probably an archaising feature, much as it is in Salomo's letters.

Another medieval writer, Sa'adya Ga'on also employs the same construction in his literary prose, e.g., 'and I gave', 'Egron (Allony) §1 line 70.

The 3 masculine singular cohortative 'may he remove [them]' (1314.10 r.12) is not attested in the Hebrew Bible (only the indicative 'is removed' Job 14:18) although similar examples of the 3 cohortative are used. Yośiyahu Ga' on uses the cohortative solely to achieve a rhyme in one of his more ornate letters, e.g., 'may he save them from straits and from hard rule, and remove them from all pain and distress' (1314.10 r.12); it is doubtful whether there was any intended nuance of meaning. The few examples of the 3rd person cohortative in the Hebrew Bible allow writers such as Yośiyahu the opportunity to employ this rare inflection for their own poetic, rhythmic, purposes.

The jussive

The jussive as a morphological category is unmarked in the qal of the strong verb; it is only found in the hif'il stem and in verbs from middle- and final-weak roots where it is an apocopated form of the prefix conjugation.

Due to the full orthography employed by many letter-writers and their scribes in our corpus it can often be impossible to determine whether a given form denotes the indicative or the jussive. For instance, Yośiyahu Ga' on's usual tendency to mark serē in closed syllables leads to spellings such as 'may he place' (1314.10 r.6) and 'may he give attention' (1314.10 r.13). In a more defective orthography we would be justified in reading these as examples of the prefix conjugation,

7The 1 singular cohortative of לָבָנָה occurs 18 times with the waw-consecutive as opposed to 94 times for the indicative in the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, although the cohortatives לָבָנָה and לָבָנָה are both attested in BH, Judges 8:24 and Genesis 45:28 respectively, the waw-consecutive attested show only the 1 singular indicative, e.g., Genesis 24:47 and Judges 19:18 respectively.

8Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 142; Jofon §47d.


10Ibid., §46a–b.
showing long i stem vowels, albeit used as optatives. However, since Yošiyahu often uses yod to mark sere in such circumstances, e.g., יִשְׁיָעִים, "may he save them" (13:14.10 r.5), these could well represent morphological jussives, i.e., יִשְׁיָעִים, as attested in Job 9:33 and יִשְׁיָעִים at Malachi 3:16.11

Accepting the difficulties associated with certain forms, we are able to discern that the morphological jussive is attested in two syntactic roles in the letters, as the 3rd person volitive, i.e., 'may he do', and in the biblical waw-consecutive construction referring to the past tense, e.g., וַיִּשְׁיָעִים 'and his name be blessed forever' (12.16 v.22); מְשַׁלָּחֵנוּוּ יִשְׁיָעִים 'your reward be full' (12.146 m.3); יִשְׁיָעִים 'now let your advice to him be good' (12.80 r.15). In addition to the BH forms יִשְׁיָעִים, though, one can find, through their use in RH, the aramaizing forms יִשְׁיָעִים, יִשְׁיָעִים and יִשְׁיָעִים. In RH, they are morphologically indicative—the 1st person has a similar form יִשְׁיָעִים (not attested in the corpus)—but the letters often use them as a substitute for the morphological jussive to their resemblance (perhaps they were also pronounced similarly at this time). When the Fustat community wishes their ga'on, סַלְמּוֹנָב יִשְׁיָעִים, well, they use the RH form of the verb as a jussive, יִשְׁיָעִים, 'peace may he have from all his servants' (16.304 r.5). Similarly, a certain Yišaĥ writes יִשְׁיָעִים 'may his name be blessed' (8:21.6 r.12), substituting יִשְׁיָעִים, which is found in the version of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible, יִשְׁיָעִים 1:21. Other writers do use the BH jussive form in similar constructions, e.g., יִשְׁיָעִים 'may he be blessed forever' (Misc. 36.203 leaf 1 v.13).

סַלְמּוֹנָב יִשְׁיָעִים, who often employs BH יִשְׁיָעִים, also attests the RH aramaizing forms, but, unlike most other writers in the corpus, he does not employ them as jussives: יִשְׁיָעִים, אָסְמָרוּ, יָדְנוּ שָלוֹם, I am afraid 'and they said...what will become of them?' (20.178 r.14), אֲמַר הִנֵּה אוֹיֵב יִשְׁיָעִים 'saying, "I am afraid that there is no more hope for us"' (10:22.22 r.2). Interestingly, סַלְמּוֹנָב יִשְׁיָעִים is probably also showing the influence of RH when he writes יִשְׁיָעִים 'somewhere that I won't know what will happen to me' (10:11.30 r.18); although יִשְׁיָעִים resembles the BH jussive it is, in this case, an alternative spelling of the aramaizing indicative form, already attested in RH.13 That he is not using the jussive in this example can be seen from a similar phrase in another of his letters, שָׁלוֹם יִשְׁיָעִים until I know what God will do to me' (10:11.30 r.9), where the indicative

11This is certainly possible as these actual jussive forms are attested in the Hebrew Bible, as we have seen with other BH constructions, this is often a prerequisite for their use in the corpus’s language.

12Fernandez p. 123. A problem arises that, in RH orthography, these forms could be written either אָסְמָרוּ or אָסְמָרוּ, identically to the BH jussive, וַיִּשְׁיָעִים. In the absence of further evidence (vocalised forms, the use in quotes from RH) we can only assume that יִשְׁיָעִים is referring to the BH jussive form, in both pronunciation and usage.

13Ibid., p. 123.
Another writer who attests both in his letters to Naʻtan ben ‘Avraham: ‘may he be like the dew and like the rain’ (Gil (1983) no. 184=Bodl MS Heb. d. 66.69 r.13); ‘may he be for him a refuge’ (Gil (1983) no. 188= Mosseri V 341.1 r.7); ‘may your prayer be pleasing’ (Gil (1983) no. 200=Bodl MS Heb. f.39.29v-30r line 10). The first two examples, using the BH jussive, occur in letters written in Naʻtan’s own hand, the last in a letter of his scribe. Judging by Naʻtan’s biblicising style, it seems unlikely that he himself would employ הָנָתַן for the jussive; instead it is probably the product of his scribe.

Other jussives attested in the corpus are the following from middle-weak roots, all of which are attested in the jussive in the Hebrew Bible: יִלָּכֶב ‘may their heart rejoice’ (13J14.10 r.3), Psalms 13:6; יָקָר יְהוָה יִדְרֵךְ ‘and he dwelt’ (10J11.30 r.10), Genesis 20:1; יִנָּשׁ יָדָיו ‘and he returned’ (10J11.30 r.13), Genesis 22:19; יָרָד וַיוֹדֵד ‘and it was uplifted’ (18J4.20 r.7), Hosea 13:6; יֵרַח ‘and may it rejoice’ (32.8 r.2), as above. The following from final-weak roots and from the hif’il stem are similarly all attested in BH: יָפְרֶנְק ‘may he act’ (13J17.17 r.18), 2 Samuel 2:6; יָדוֹ יִנָּשׁ יִדְרֵךְ ‘and I became angered’ (16.275 r.22), Genesis 4:5; יָיֵשׁ ‘may he live’ (13J31.1 r.12), Deuteronomy 33:6; יִנָּשֵׁף ‘may it increase’ (8J20.1 v.3), Job 34:37; יֵרַח ‘may he add’ (13J26.16 r.9). 2 Samuel 24:3. While often these forms are taken verbatim from the biblical text in which they appear, the jussive as a part of a whole phrase, e.g., יִשָּׁתֶךְ ‘may he extend kindness’ (13J31.8 r.24) from Genesis 39:21, others show the extraction of a jussive form from another construction, e.g., in the case of יִרְסְיָס ‘may he turn’ (18J4.4 r.30) the jussive is only attested in BHin the waw-consecutive, יַרְסְיָס Judges 6:14 ‘and he turned’.

The jussive features often in the corpus, not just occurring in the obvious optative phrases used to wish wellbeing, health and help on the letters’ recipients, although this is often where we find it, e.g., יַלְדוֹ יִלָּכֶב ‘live forever’ (6J9.2 v.4), יִרְשָׁלָם ‘and peace...increase’ (8.3 m.2) and יָרְשָׁלָם ‘let their Rock be at their aid’ (8.13 r.6), but it is also used outside such stereotypical formulae, e.g., in a polite request יַעֲשֶׂה דַבֶּר הָמִיתוֹ בוּרִיָּליִי and may you carry out this by mentioning us in your prayers’ (12.247 r.15). Compared to its use in RH, where it is attested in only a few hif’il stems and occasionally in the verb ידה, it is a very productive form in the letters. However, it does not appear to be used truly creatively, the verbs used are all attested in either the jussive proper or the shortened waw-consecutive in BH.

The waw-consecutive

The biblical construction of the waw-consecutive of the prefix conjugation (and jussive) is often attested in the corpus, e.g., יֵתְתֵם עֲלֵיהֶם מַכָּא הָוָא and they shut off our access to water’ (13J26.13

14Perhaps this could be evidence of a merging of the pronunciations of יִנָּשׁ and RH יִנָּשׁ/ יִנ, if the content of the letter was dictated to the scribe?

15One possible exception is the hif’il verb in the phrase לְכָל אֲרוֹבֵי יִזְעַק בִּמְמוֹר ‘may he bring down all his enemies with blows’ (13J15.14 r.16), which occurs in an epistle of eulogy. This is identified by Mann (Mann (1922), vol. 2, p. 84 n. 4) as a jussive of a hif’il verb יִנָּשֵׁף ‘to bring down’ from BH middle-weak יִנָּשֵׂף ‘to burst forth’ through יִנָּשְׁף ‘to burst forth’, יִנָּשֵׁף ‘to cause to fall on the belly’. However, it could equally be a pr’el. It is perhaps better connected with יָרָד ‘to bend’, e.g., יָרָד בְּנֵיהָנִים ‘in grief’ from בְּרֵסִית Rabba 20, i.e., ‘may he cause them to bend beneath his blows’, in which case a hif’il would be a possibility.
and the people’s strife increased greatly on the mount’ (Misc. 35.11 r.16). In unvocalised text it is not always apparent, e.g., אֶּלֶּה ‘and he set out’ (18J4.4 r.20) is composed of either the waw-consecutive plus the prefix conjugation, e.g., יָכַּה Genesis 8:7, or weak waw plus the suffix conjugation, e.g., יָכַּה Habakkuk 3:5. However, occasional vocalised examples do exist, e.g., קִבֵּל ‘and we divided up’ (Gil (1983) no. 31=ENA 2804.1 r.12) and קִבֵּל ‘and it appeared’ (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.2). These show the expected paqad under the waw.

The commonest waw-consecutive attested in the corpus is the waw plus the jussive of the verb 현, and it is used to introduce a subordinate temporal clause, a very common BH construction: יִזָּה and when he asked them’ (12.80 r.13); יִזָּה and when he went down’ (16.261 r.13); יִזָּה and when I saw’ (Misc. 35.11 r.12); יִזָּה and he gave’ (16.261 r.19).

Another common example is ‘and he said’ (13J26.13 r.21), a very distinctive BH construction which occurs throughout the corpus even in letters which show no other evidence of using the waw-consecutive.

The waw-consecutive in BH is formed by waw plus the prefix conjugation verb, e.g., יִזָּה יִתְנַה and he gave… and they wrote’ (13J16.24 r.20), or, where applicable, a jussive, e.g., שְּלוֹמ֥וֹנִי ben Yִהוּדָא attests the jussives of two middle-weak verbs יִזָּה יִתְנַה ‘and he dwelt… and he returned’ (10J11.30 r.10–13). The middle-weak jussive is usually found in the waw-consecutive construction in the letters, e.g., יִזָּה and it was uplifted’ (18J4.20 r.7) and יִזָּה and it rejoiced’ (18J4.20 r.7). Although, it is surprising that שִׁירָא Ga’on, a clearly biblicising writer, shows יִזָּה יִתְנַה ‘and he fasted’ (13J25.5 r.26), despite being attested in the MT at 2 Samuel 21:16. However, the most probable explanation is that, rather than being an error, this is the pausal form, also attested in the MT, at 1 Kings 21:27.

The form of the final-weak verbs with the waw-consecutive shows some divergence from BH. יִזָּה יִתְנַה ‘and he ordered’ (13J25.5 r.28) is attested several times in the corpus and the verb always shows an apocopated form. Of course this is the form in which it occurs dozens of times in the MT, e.g., יִזָּה Genesis 2:16, etc., and so it would have been well-known to the letter-writers. יִזָּה is similarly very well attested in BH, e.g., יִזָּה Genesis 4:5, etc. Other final-weak verbs in the letters, however, rarely show apocopation when occurring in the waw-consecutive, e.g., יִזָּה and she appointed’ (13J16.24 r.16); יִזָּה and it ended’ (16.6 r.12); יִזָּה and it appeared’ (12.114 r.10); יִזָּה and something happened’ (13J16.14 r.23); יִזָּה and I repeated’ (16.275 r.23). Some are ambiguous, do they represent waw-consecutives or not? יִזָּה يִתְנַה ‘and the matter was [became?] hard for me and I burned with deadly anger’ (16.275 r.22) could be a durative use of the prefix conjugation or an inceptive use of the waw-consecutive.

The main reason for the lack of apocopation shown by many final-weak verbs in the corpus would appear to be that the necessary form is not attested (or not well-enough attested) in the MT.

Naḥemya Hakkohen Ga’on writes יִזָּה יִתְנַה ‘and summer came to an end’ (16.6 r.12), because

Another explanation could be that this represents the influence of the Babylonian pronunciation tradition, in showing an o vowel for Tiberian short qames (cf. Yeivin (1985) p. 419ff), however there is no other evidence of this in the letters of Shira Ga’on.

Or even it could be the rare BH construction of the unapocopated waw-consecutive representing a durative or iterative past tense; cf. Jojton $79m. However, in view of its rarity in BH it is less likely to be used in the letter.
the *waw*-consecutive of the 3 masculine singular of כָּלָה is not attested in BH. Instead the Hebrew Bible has the jussive, ‘יִכְכָּר ‘wastes away’ Job 33:21, and the *waw*-consecutive of the 3 feminine singular, אֶתְכָּר ‘it was finished’ Exodus 39:32. For  אֶתְכָּר ‘I asked and I asked again’ (16.275 r.12) BH attests only the 1 singular prefix conjugator, אֶתְכָּר אֶתְכָּר ‘I will [not strike] twice’ 1 Samuel 26:8.

Moreover, the 1 person rarely takes an apocopated form with the *waw*-consecutive in BH. Instead ‘and it appeared’ (12.114 r.10) is modelled on the prefix conjugation with weak *waw*, אֶתְכָּר ‘and let it appear’ Genesis 1:9, although the vocalisation might reflect the apocopated form, only attested in BH for the 3 masculine singular, אֶתְכָּר ‘and he appeared’ Genesis 12:7. Moreover, אֶתְכָּר ‘and it happened’ (13)16.14 r.23) is used in the letters despite the required apocopated *waw*-consecutive form being attested in BH, אֶתְכָּר ‘as it happened’ Ruth 2:3. However, this is the only time the form occurs and it is not, therefore, as familiar an idiom as רָאָה רָאָה, רוּחַ אָמָר. In the case of רָאָה ‘and she appointed’ (13)16.24 r.16) there are two influences on the form. Firstly, רָאָה ‘muster’ 1 Kings 20:25, the unapocopated prefix conjugation in the 2 masculine singular, is the closest form attested in the MT. Secondly, the phrase used in the letter, ‘she did it and appointed for herself a mandatory’ (13)16.24 r.16) is actually derived from the Palestinian Talmud, Y. Sanhedrin II, 19d רָאָה רָאָה אָמָר ‘and let him appoint a mandatory’, where the prefix conjugation is, unsurprisingly, used with weak *waw*. However, it is interesting to see that a talmudic phrase is rewritten with biblical syntax in the letter, another example of the mixing of RH and BH that goes on at all levels of the language. Finally, it should be remarked that the MT has numerous examples of the unapocopated *waw*-consecutive. Jotion writes: ‘Non-apocopated forms of the inverted future and the jussive. The phenomenon is so frequent [...] that it can hardly be considered erroneous’.19

Perhaps it is surprising, though, given סֵלֵם ben יְהוֹדָה’s frequent use of the cohortative with the *waw*-consecutive (far more frequently than it actually occurs in BH), that, writing forms such as רָאָה and אָמָר, he doesn’t show the same enthusiasm for the similar, very distinctive, biblical construction of the apocopated *waw*-consecutive.

The use of *waw* plus the suffix conjugation for the the modal future tense (i.e., including imperative, jussive and so on) is extremely rare in the letters. Only a very few definite examples of it exist in the corpus. One, used by נַעֲנָן ben ‘אַרְבָּא is taken verbatim from the Hebrew Bible, רָאָה רָאָה אָמָר ‘and you will be rejoicing’ (10)16.10 r.2), which is found at Deuteronomy 16:15. רָאָה רָאָה ‘and remember’, in a letter from Babylon, רָאָה רָאָה ... שֶׁעָלָה ... הַסְּכָלָה ... and remember’ (12)247 r.4–5) and, also in a letter of נַעֲנָן ben ‘אַרְבָּא, רָאָה רָאָה ... תִּסְכָּלָה ... write to them...and remember’ (8.3 r.16), probably both rely on רָאָה ‘but remember me’ from Genesis 40:14 and are used as imperatives. רָאָה רָאָה אָמָר ‘and speak to him’ (13)20.3 r.24) is also similarly used as an imperative; the construction occurs several times in BH, e.g., Exodus 4:15.

No further examples of the *waw*-consecutive of the suffix conjugation are attested. Whereas the letters frequently use the *waw*-consecutive of the prefix conjugation, albeit alongside the suffix conjugation, they are more in step with other traditions of post-biblical Hebrew in not employing the *waw*-consecutive of the suffix conjugation. Certainly it is not attested as often as the prefix conjugation *waw*-consecutive in the Hebrew Bible, and, lacking a particular morphology of its own comparable to -, a unique form for the *waw*-consecutive of the past tense, it is less recognisable and

19 Jotion §79m.
18 Idem.
distinctive. The more practical tense system for the future found in LBH and RH has supplanted it in the corpus.

The imperative

The qal imperative is attested as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>fs</th>
<th>mpl</th>
<th>fpl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'and write' (16.6 r.7)</td>
<td>'and do' (13)r.9 r.8)</td>
<td>'write' (13)r.16.17 m.8)</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>'give' (20.178 r.19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, the imperative is rarely attested in letters, giving way instead to the prefix conjugation and impersonal expressions. The forms attested follow BH precedent.

No feminine plural imperative is attested in the corpus so it is not possible to say whether the feminine plural and masculine plural forms have merged or not. However, since its use in BH is rare enough, and generally in RH and MH it has been supplanted by the masculine plural form terminating in -n- it is unlikely to have been used. Other contemporary geniza documents do not employ the form in -n- when the opportunity arises, e.g., a court record which addresses speech to two women uses the morphologically masculine plural imperative, נשים קדושות, 'hear us, our sisters' (12.232 r.18).

The paragogic he is attested as a suffix of the masculine singular imperative three times in the corpus: והם 'and have pity' (16.6 r.22); והם 'give' (20.178 r.19 and 13)r.16.17 r.6). Two of these three examples are by the biblicising writers, the ג'ון שירא and ג'לום בן יהודה. It is not clear whether the suffix in these examples is intended to carry any special emphasis; it is just as probable that the occurrence of these specific morphological forms in the Hebrew Bible caused its use: והם is only attested in the imperative with the n- suffix in BH, Joel 2:17 and Nehemiah 13:22; והם is attested more frequently than the base form י in BH.

Pausal forms of the verb

Pausal forms of the prefix conjugation and imperative are occasionally attested, in so far as they are identifiable through the vowel letters used to mark long stem vowels. In most cases, they are employed in a paraphrase of a biblical construction and the specific morphological form itself is attested in the Hebrew Bible: יִהְיֶהוּ 'and him they will not rule' (Misc. 35.40 r.18) is a straightforward adaptation of a phrase from Deuteronomy 15:6; יִהְיֶהוּ 'they will not rule you'; יִהְיֶהוּ 'day after day they seek [him] and delight in his teaching' (10)14.1 r.1) is drawn from Isaiah 58:2 (so probably the verb יִהְיֶהוּ was also intended to be read as a pausal form, but that the vocalisation is defective as in the MT); יִהְיֶהוּ 'take your brethren and go'


21n- is attested eighteen times while הַלַּבָּה occurs twenty-four times in the Hebrew Bible. The question of the semantics of the paragogic form is already a tricky one as regards its use in BH, Joion has the opinion that: '[it] is emphatic in origin, but in practice does not soften seem to add any particular nuance' (Joion §48d). This adequately describes the situation in the letters.
(13)20.25 r.9) reproduces the sequence of verbs קָחָה...לֹּא...וַיַּכְפֹּר found in Exodus 12:32. An exceptional example is 'Efraim ben $marya's `may it be brought' (13)8.14 r.23), which is not attested in BH. However, a pausal form with long games is attested, וַיַּפְלָה `and are borne away' Job 21:30. Therefore, the form could represent a spelling with waw as a mater lectionis for long games, though this would be without precedent in the letters' orthography, or, more likely, was an erroneous attempt to write the pausal form of this verb. Errors and strange orthographic quirks are, as we have already noted, a frequent occurrence in the letters of 'Efraim ben $marya.

It is clear that in the majority of cases the use of pausal forms of the prefix conjugation and imperative do not represent a differing pronunciation tradition, as, for instance, is the case in Qumran Hebrew, but that they mainly occur in the context of phraseology borrowed directly from the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible.

The active participle

The qal active participle is attested as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ms</td>
<td>‘who offers up’ (13)31.1 r.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fs</td>
<td>‘ceases’ (13)31.1 r.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mpl</td>
<td>‘has written’ (16.95 r.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fpl</td>
<td>‘has failed’ (16.24 r.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The feminine singular participle usually terminates in יָוִית, e.g., יָוִית which burned’ (12.74 r.15); יַיֶה ‘saying’ (13)9.2 r.12); יַיֶה ‘and hews’ (20.102 r.4). Exceptions are the apparent verbal adjective יַיֶה ‘springing up’ (13)11.7 r.5) and the substantive יַיֶה ‘traitress’ (10)11.30 r.17). The first example is not attested in this form in BH but is inflected like the verbal adjective, as can be seen from stem vowel ēre (cf. Gesenius §50d), and features in a rhymed sequence. יַיֶה ‘and love, a sign of a long blessing and happiness springing up and of cries of joy and rejoicing’ (13)11.7 r.5). The second example is a substantival use of the participle, ‘traitress’, which is also the only form attested in BH, יַיֶה Jeremiah 3:8.

The masculine plural form of the participle is attested with both the biblical יִמּ and the rabbinic יִמּ ending. Whereas the preferred ending of the regular masculine plural noun is יַיֶה, with יִמּ occurring mainly on post-biblical vocabulary and in the letters of a few individuals, the participle attests both RH and BH endings in almost equal measure, without any preference of the one ending for biblical, e.g., יַיֶה ‘hearing’ (13)16.17 r.14), or the other for post-biblical vocabulary, e.g., יַיֶה ‘provided

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22 The spelling of games in an open syllable with waw is found in texts displaying a pronunciation different to that of Standard Tiberian, e.g., in a geniza text of Al-Fasi Ros Haššana, תקבה in T-S F4.115, noted in Morag (1988) no. 127, reflecting perhaps a Palestinian or Sefardi pronunciation.

23 Qumran Hebrew attests a great many so-called 'pausal forms in context'. However, they represent a differing phonology from the Tiberian, reflecting phonetic features found in the simple verbal stem that are only retained by the MT in some pausal forms. Cf. Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 142–143.

24 This is similar to the situation in RH and BH, though BH also attests participles in יִמּ, but they occur less frequently, see Jotion §50g and Fernandez p. 130.
The ending ש- is perhaps more popular in letters from Babylon. Sgorira Ga'on seems to prefer the RH ending (see his letters 10J1, 28.24 and 13J25.5 in particular but another Babylonian, Na'hemya Hakkohen, reflects the opposite tendency), but it can also be found across the whole extent of the corpus, e.g., שلومו ben יוחה 'seeking' (20.102 r.20) and 'dead' (20.178 r.32), Dani'el ben 'Azarya 'dwell' (NS 92.33 r.4) and from Aleppo 'who walk' (12.17 r.8). Verbs often alternate between the different endings in the same letter, e.g., 'writing' (10G5.8 v.10) and 'and longing' (10G5.8 v.12). Identical verbs can take the different endings in the same letter, e.g., a ninth-century letter from Pumbadi'at attests רוח שולomo ben יוחע 'dwell' (NS 308.122 r.1) and רוח הרדרי (v.13); this is more common when similar forms would appear within a few lines of each other: שلومו ben יוחה, יזרוב מחלולו...וה פפרוסא ג' חכמים המחלולו 'and the majority desecrate [the Sabbaths]...but they say that it is us who desecrate [them]' (13J33.12 r.6); Na'fan Hakkohen, 'giving him a reward' (18J4.4 r.25) and 'giving him a reward' (18J4.4 r.26).

The passive participle

The qal passive participle is attested as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ms</th>
<th>who is imbued with</th>
<th>(8.3 r.9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fs</td>
<td>cut</td>
<td>(13J31.1 r.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mpl</td>
<td>who are named</td>
<td>(13J19.15 r.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fpl</td>
<td>'inscribed'</td>
<td>(13J14.10 r.20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The feminine singular of the passive participle always ends in ל, e.g., 'which is called' (13J16.13 r.15) and 'sent' (18J4.20 r.34).

As with the active participle, both the endings ש- and ש- are attested in similar proportion, e.g., 'extinguished' (13J23.12 r.3) and 'wrapped' (20.181 r.34).

The infinitive absolute

The qal infinitive absolute is attested in the following form:

Inf. abs.: hear (13J23.12 r.11)

As far as can be seen from the consonantal text of the letters, since no vocalised examples are attested, the qal infinitive absolute of the regular verb is formed according to the BH model, qayšol. However, it is found only rarely in the corpus reflecting the tendency in post-biblical Hebrew to dispense with it altogether. It appears in the letters principally in the role of the preposed internal object of a finite form of the verb, a biblical construction, e.g., 'I have indeed heard' (13J23.12 r.11); 'and I have cried' (13J23.12 r.11); 'I surely know' (20.173 r.41). Though we also encounter the biblical construction of the participle of נאמר followed by the infinitive absolute for the sense of continuity, but it occurs exclusively in the biblicising letters of Sgorira Ga'on:

Although, on occasion certain particularly characteristic RH constructions do take, perhaps deliberately, the rabbinic ש- ending, e.g., שلومו ben יוחה's use of the impersonal plural participle in a jussive sense, ש- 'one may neither remove nor displace' (10J11.29 r.8).
is continually diminishing' (10:1 leaf 1 r.18); 'is continually perishing' (13:25.5 r.18). Most of the infinitives absolute in the letters are actually attested in the Hebrew Bible: e.g., 'and weep' (13:23.12 r.11), at Jeremiah 13:17; 'say' (10:1 leaf 1 v.3), at Exodus 21:5; 'ask' (13:21.19 r.4) and God 'know' (20.17 r.41), both at Genesis 43:7. Only a few RH verbs attest to the use of post-biblical vocabulary in the infinitive absolute, e.g., Šeira Ga’on’s use of מנה ‘speak’ (18:3.18 r.4). In addition the infinitive absolute is overwhelmingly used in the qal, with examples from the derived stems few and far between.27

The infinitive construct

The qal infinitive construct is attested in the following form:

Inf.cstr.: מלך ‘to write’ (20.114 r.44)

In addition, though not in the qal, the corpus demonstrates frequent examples of the hif’il infinitive taking an affix י-, presumably י-ו-, in order to facilitate the rhymes of the praescriptio. For this, see the section on the hif’il, below.

Although the infinitive construct is attested most commonly with the prefixed preposition -ל, this is by no means the only form in which we find the infinitive: the influence of the biblical language is extremely strong in the letters’ treatment of infinitive constructions and we often find BH usages which have died out in other traditions of post-biblical Hebrew. For instance, the infinitive construct may be found without prefix or suffix: יתמר ‘telling’ (13:18.1 r.12); יאכתי ‘eating’ (18:4.26 r.27); ישות ‘doing’ (13:24.11 r.1); ית ‘giving’ (16.62 r.14), and very frequently elsewhere. Or it may be used with only a pronominal suffix, e.g.: יתמר ‘his doing’ (18:4.26 r.27); יתבר ‘my passing’ (12.114 r.10); יתמר ‘my going’ (13:25.10 r.26). It also takes the prefixed inseparable prepositions -ל and -ל, e.g.: יתמר ‘when we were’ (8:2.1 v.10); יתחדש ‘when he establishes’ (8:8.1 v.11); יתחדש ‘and as soon as he heard’ (18:4.26 r.17); יתחדש ‘and when he saw’ (12.114 r.28).

Although the RH construction of prefixing the infinitive with -ל is found in the letters, e.g., יתקדש ‘from writing’ (12:851 r.6); יתקדש ‘from giving’ (AS 148.147 r.4); יתקדש ‘from doing evil’ (10:32.8 v.1); יתקדש ‘from being’ (13:27.3 r.10), the BH construction of prefixing -ל onto the base form of the construct is also well-attested: יתקדש ‘from seeing’ (12:273 r.24); יתקדש ‘from going’ (13:20.18 m.1); יתקדש ‘from going’ (8:8.1 v.3); יתקדש ‘from being’ (10:24.8 r.18); יתקדש ‘from finding’ (Misc. 35.15 r.20). However, in almost every case these forms are used because they are attested in BH; the only exception, making it the only creative use of the construction, is יתקדש ‘far be it for you to err’. 29 Šalom Yohuda attests only the RH construction in his letters, e.g., יתקדש ‘from giving’ (13:34.2 v.7).

26 For this construction in BH see Jotion §123s.

27 A paucity of non-qal infinitives is to be expected since the infinitive absolute in the role of preposed object may take the simplest stem, the qal, regardless of the stem of the cognate finite verb in the construction, e.g., יתקדש ‘it has been asked’ (13:21.19 r.4); ibid., §123p.

28 Fernandez p. 144.

29 Genesis 27:1, 18:25; Numbers 22:16; Exodus 9:28; Isaiah 58:13, respectively.
The infinitive construct takes the following pronominal suffixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>י- 'do you mean to kill me?'(Exodus 2:14)</td>
<td>י- 'do you mean to kill me?'(Exodus 2:14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>ז- 'my going'</td>
<td>ז- 'and when you were'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>י- 'and to honour him' (NS 309.20 v.10)</td>
<td>י- 'and to honour him' (NS 309.20 v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>מ- 'to destroy it' (13J13.14 r.28)</td>
<td>מ- 'to destroy it' (13J13.14 r.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>ז- 'when we were' (8J2.1 v.10)</td>
<td>ז- 'when we were' (8J2.1 v.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mpl</td>
<td>ר- 'your leaving' (16.6 r.17)</td>
<td>ר- 'your leaving' (16.6 r.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fpl</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3mpl</td>
<td>ז- 'to sell them' (16.275 r.15)</td>
<td>ז- 'to sell them' (16.275 r.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fpl</td>
<td>י- 'to see them' (10G5.8 v.15)</td>
<td>י- 'to see them' (10G5.8 v.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 1 singular suffix י- is always objective. It is only attested rarely in the corpus, though: י- 'to kill me' (12.273 r.20). The usual suffix י- which is subjective only, e.g., י- 'and after I finish this letter' (12.273 v.17).

The י- suffix is the most frequently used for the 3 masculine singular. It may be objective, e.g., י- 'to inform him' (13J14.23 r.5) and י- 'to inform him' (13J15.1 r.11), or subjective, e.g., י- 'his setting off' (20.102 r.8). The usual objective suffix י- י- 'informing him' (12.338 r.14) and י- י- 'to cause him to hear' (AS 151.20 r.5), but it too may be used as a subjective suffix, e.g., י- י- 'his arrival' (13J23.1 r.11), but only on weak-verbs.

### The suffix conjugation with pronominal suffixes

The suffix conjugation takes the following pronominal suffixes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1s</td>
<td>י- 'he warned me'</td>
<td>י- 'he warned me'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2ms</td>
<td>ז- 'we have informed you'</td>
<td>ז- 'we have informed you'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fs</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3ms</td>
<td>י- 'may he save him'</td>
<td>י- 'may he save him'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>מ- 'and I asked him'</td>
<td>מ- 'and I asked him'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>ז- 'we have made them frequent'</td>
<td>ז- 'we have made them frequent'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2mpl</td>
<td>ר- 'they held us back'</td>
<td>ר- 'they held us back'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2fpl</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
<td>(unattested)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3mpl</td>
<td>ז- 'I gave them'</td>
<td>ז- 'I gave them'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3fpl</td>
<td>י- 'we have made them frequent'</td>
<td>י- 'we have made them frequent'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suffixes attested are identical to those of the BH suffix conjugation. We find only the BH 3 masculine plural suffix, e.g., י- 'who I appointed' (13J16.17 r.29), and not the RH suffix in י-, despite its use in the corpus as an occasional suffix on the noun.

30See the list in Gesenius §58a.
The 3 masculine singular ending יי, e.g., יי and I have informed him' (13J16.17 r.11), is marginally more common than י or י in the corpus, possibly because of the influence of the homophonous Arabic pronominal suffix. Note that the similar suffix on nouns יז is also more widely attested in the corpus than in BH.

The 2 masculine plural suffix conjugation verb takes the affix י twice rather than י before suffixes, as in BH: יי you have forsaken us' (16.6 r.12); יי and you have forgotten us' (16.6 r.12); יי and you have cast us aside' (16.6 r.13).31

The prefix conjugation with pronominal suffixes

The prefix conjugation takes the following pronominal suffixes:

1s יי 'and hold me back' (13J16.18 r.13)
2ms יי 'may he keep you' (8J22.7 r.5)
2fs יי (unattested)
3ms יי 'may he keep him' (13J20.28 r.6)
3fs יי 'and may he keep him' (18J15.22)
1pl יי 'he will distribute it' (13J26.3 r.18)
2pl יי (unattested)
3mpl יי 'may he keep them' (10J11.28 r.5)
3pl יי 'they will hear' (24.43 r.7)

Although the principal 3 masculine singular suffix is the biblical יי, e.g., יי 'he will send it' (NS J15 r.15), a suffix in י is also widely attested. This is the suffix י which is found on nouns, the infinitive construct and the suffix conjugation in BH; evidence of this is common in the various rhymes of the letters, e.g., יי 'his Rock keep him' (18J4.20 m.3), compare the similarly rhymed biblical suffixes, יי 'keep him and preserve him' (18J4.20 m.6). A major use of this suffix as a rhyming element is found in a letter of סלומו ben יִהוּדָא, יי our master and teacher Nissin, [God] keep him and give him strength' (16.6 r.2).

The employment of the י suffix with the prefix conjugation is part of the levelling of verbal and nominal suffixes that is going on in the corpus, although it is by no means complete. There is also biblical precedent for the use of this suffix on the prefix conjugation in the MT: יי 'he will pursue him' Hosea 8:3 and יי 'he will call him' Jeremiah 23:6.

The י suffix is not as common on final-weak verbs, which tend to take the longer יי, e.g., יי 'and I shall thank him' (NS 321.2 r.25), and on middle-weak, e.g., יי 'he will kill him' (13J31.8

31Ibid., §59a. Although the letter-writer, נֵהַemonya Hakkohen Ga'on, does well to use such an obscure morphological form since it is only attested 3 times in the whole Hebrew Bible.
and 'may he set him' (NS 321.2 r.22), however, as always in the letters, there are exceptions, 'may God kill him' (13)23.1 r.18) is סֹלוֹמּוּ ben יְהוּדָה's earnest wish against his rival.

The following nunated forms of the pronominal suffix are attested:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3ms</th>
<th>נֵנְךָ</th>
<th>'it should befall him' (13)20.3 r.14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3fs</td>
<td>נֵנְךָ</td>
<td>'and I shall bring it' (16.275 r.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only a very small number of nunated suffixes are used in the corpus. In addition to those listed above, we find דִּחְשָׁה (תִּתְנָה (13)26.1 r.8), סֹלוֹמּוּ 'who will see?' (Misc. 35.43 v.11), סֹלוֹמּוּ 'one may [not] compare him' (8.3 r.2) and may he give him rest' (12.217 r.5). In nearly every case, the MT attests the particular form used: סֹלוֹמּוּ 'it should befall him' (13)20.3 r.14) is taken from דִּחְשָׁה 'llest it befall him' Genesis 42:4; סֹלוֹמּוּ 'and I shall bring it' (16.275 r.14) is derived from בֵּין עַל 'I will bring it' Isaiah 46:11; סֹלוֹמּוּ 'the spirit of the Lord gave him rest' (13)26.1 r.8) is found in Isaiah 63:14, סֹלוֹמּוּ 'he shall set it in order', but draws inspiration from the similarly nunated verb סֹלוֹמּוּ 'they cannot equal it' Job 28:17. Only סֹלוֹמּוּ ben יְהוּדָה's 'may he give him rest' (12.217 r.5) is not actually attested in this form in the Hebrew Bible. It probably derives inspiration from the similar verb סֹלוֹמּוּ of Isaiah 63:14, above. Nevertheless, with the exception of this last example, all other nunated forms represent attested biblicisms and not creative uses of the suffix form.

The stative verb

Stative verbs, i.e., those which originally described state rather than action, conform to one of two broad forms in BH, q6al and q6el, represented by the verbs פָּעַל 'to be heavy' and פָּסַל 'to be small'.

The suffix conjugation of the stative verb is formed as in BH, e.g., the פֶּלֶל type, 'and it grew' (10)32.8 r.8), and the פֶּלֶל type, 'I could' (20.178 r.23); פָּסַל 'they could [not]' (24.6 r.27).

The prefix conjugation of the stative verb in BH shows stem vowel d for both types. With the exception of פָּסַל, which is irregular, the corpus only attests examples from the prefix conjugation of the type, e.g., פָּסַל 'it [wouldn’t] be right' (13)23.1 r.22); פָּסַל 'and may it grow' (8.15 r.6). is a mixed verb which forms its prefix conjugation either from a qal passive or from a hifal form. Examples from the corpus are: פָּסַל 'they will be [not] able' (6)3.21 r.8); פָּסַל 'one [cannot]' (Misc. 35.14 r.19).

A number of verbs in BH share the vowels of the stative in the suffix conjugation but attest a stem vowel o in the prefix conjugation, for instance פָּסַל 'to desire' which has the suffix conjugation פָּסַל, e.g., Genesis 34:19, but the prefix conjugation פָּסַל, e.g., Kohelet 8:3. In the corpus the prefix conjugation of פָּסַל is attested once with a vowel letter waw indicating the stem vowel o, פָּסַל 'I want'.

32Jotson §41b.
33See the discussion, ibid., §75i.
34Ibid., §41b.
The stative verb possesses a verbal adjective form rather than a participle proper: הווה ‘full’ (13:11.2 r.9); הוהיל ‘ceasing’ (Misc. 36.140 r.32).

**The verbal stems**

**The nif'al**

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct: (unattested)

The commonly occurring form of the nif'al infinitive construct is that with preformative ה, as in BH; only two infinitives of the strong verb show the elision of the preformative, ה ‘and to be opened’ (18:4.20 m.11), despite ה being attested in BH, at Isaiah 51:14, and ה ‘to enter’ (10:9.14 r.21), BH attests only the qal infinitive construct of ה, at Nehemiah 12:44. Both examples occur in letters from outside Palestine and North Africa: the first is from Ruqqa, the second from the Yemen. Therefore, they do not represent mainstream practice in the geniza letters.

Imperative: (unattested)

The imperative is written plene in a letter of Nathan Hakkohen Ga’on, showing the short i vowel under the preformative, ה ‘and beware’ (8:20.3 r.10).

Cohortative: (unattested)

Jussive: (unattested)

Suffix conjugation: (unattested)

Prefix conjugation:

35Ibid., §41c.

36Both examples occur in letters from outside Palestine and North Africa: the first is from Ruqqa, the second from the Yemen. Therefore, they do not represent mainstream practice in the geniza letters.

37Fernandez pp. 96, 146. Only a few examples of the loss of the preformative ה occur in BH; it is slightly more common with the weak verbs.
The two vocalised examples of Na'tan ben 'Avraham show qamesḥ under the first root letter: יֵרְכָּב 'he will be killed' (10J9.25 r.11); נְכַפַּה 'we [shan’t] enter' (10J9.25 m.1).

As noted earlier, the nifal is often written plene to distinguish it from the qal, e.g., יִרְכָּב 'it will enter' (12.336 r.15).

Participle:

הַנֵּכָּב 'it longs' (13J31.1 r.15); הנָבָбан 'honoured' (18J4.20 r.10); הנֵּכָּב 'vowing' (24.43 r.14)

A vocalised example shows the retention of the stem vowel qamesḥ in the plural: הנְכַפַּים 'who are ordained/supported' (13J31.1 r.13).

The feminine singular termination of the participle is overwhelmingly in ה-, which is also more common in BH and RH: הנָבֶּב 'mentioned' (13J8.14 r.7); הנָבְּבָה 'which was sent' (12.733 r.1); הנָבֶּבֶת 'which is conducted' (6J3.1 r.6).

Two examples only of the feminine singular participle in ה- are attested: הנָבֶּבֶת 'left behind' (12.247 r.22) and הנָבֶּבֶת 'the fitting' (10J30.3 r.21). The first is taken directly from BH and therefore shows BH morphology; it occurs in a phrase רָדָה עִלָּה והנָבֶּבֶת 'and may he have mercy on the remnant left behind' (12.247 r.22), the principal element הנָבֶּבֶת coming from Isaiah 37:4. The second, which we have already seen when examining the pu'al above, uses the less common ending for rhyming purposes: הנָבֶּבֶת 'with his straightforward counsel and his approved word and his fitting speech' (10J30.3 r.21).

The pi'el

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct: (לְכוּק 'to seek' (13J26.13 r.8); לְחָזֶק 'to cancel' (24.43 r.14); לְמָרָה 'to encourage' (10J9.25 r.9)

Imperative: (דָּבֶּר 'speak' (13J34.2 r.28); קֶבָּל 'receive' (13J21.10 r.2); מָרָה 'and be hurry' (16.6 r.26)

Cohortative: אֲבוּבָּשֵׁה 'I will seek' (12.146 r.15); אֲבֵרָבָה 'I will speak' (16.6 r.8); אֲבֵרָבָה 'I will praise' (10J13.22 r.7); אֲבֵרָבָה 'and I will bless' (13J25.10 r.13); אֲבֵרָבָה 'and let us declare' (Misc.35.4 leaf 1 v.16)

Suffix conjugation: (וְיֹבְרֻכְתָּה 'we told' (10J15.10 r.9); אַרְבָּשֵׁה 'he betrothed' (10J27.7 r.10); אַרְבָּשֵׁה 'and I blessed him' (13J16.17 r.25)

38Joison §50; Fernandez p. 131. Although BH attests the feminine in ה- it is actually not as common as that in ↓.
Prefix conjugation:
- 'you will receive' (8:14.20 r.6);
- 'and I shall praise' (12:146 r.5);
- 'may he gather in' (13:19.15 r.11)

Participle:
- 'and testifying' (13:11.5 r.9);
- 'and who seek' (13:19.19 r.3);
- 'honouring' (13:199.15 r.20)

The pi'el stem in the corpus conforms with the standard BH pi'el.

The pu'al

Infinitive absolute: (unattested for the strong verb)
Infinitive construct: (unattested)
Imperative: (unattested)
Cohortative: (unattested)
Jussive: (unattested)

Suffix conjugation:
- 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8);
- 'they were sent' (16.3 r.20)

The suffix conjugation is rare, but since both the suffix and prefix conjugations are attested the situation in the letters is healthier than is the case in RH where only the pu'al participle is retained. 39

Prefix conjugation:
- 'may it be established' (10:24.1 leaf 1 v.18);
- 'may it be received' (13:19.15 r.1);
- 'may he be blessed' (18:4.20 m.4)

Participle:
- 'praiseworthy' (16.3 r.7);
- 'who are adorned' (Misc. 35.49 r.8);
- 'pregnant' (13:21.10 r.19);
- 'explained' (12.222 r.13)

A vocalised example shows the stem vowel qames in the participle as in Standard Tiberian Hebrew: 'cut up' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.4).

In BH the feminine singular participle usually has the termination נ- although the נ- ending may occur, particularly where the participle is employed as an adjective or substantive. 40 Usually in the letters, the feminine singular participle terminates in נ-, as it does in the qal stem: 'made level/straight' (NS J92 r.5);
- 'sent' (10:11.29 r.12);
- 'spread about' (10:11.29 r.12);
- 'overflowing' (13:35.1 r.7). However, in a number of cases the participle shows the ending נ- 'and secure' (NS J92 r.5);
- 'which is blessed' (10:30.3 r.21). These are taking the rarer ending in order to fit the rhyme scheme, i.e., 'a good end, a hand high and secure' (NS J92 r.5) and 'which is blessed' (10:30.3 r.21).

39 Fernandez p. 96.
40 Jotion §50g.
'with his straightforward counsel and his approved word and his fitting speech' (10J30.3 r.21), but since they are also being used adjectivally, rather than verbally, they could be found written with the n- ending in BH. There are no examples of the feminine singular participle in n- being used in non-rhymed prose. However, since there is little evidence overall, it is difficult to say whether BH practice underlies the inflection of the pu'al participle or not, but it is safe to say that BH provided the writers with examples of different forms of the feminine participle which could be exploited as the literary need required.

The hif'il

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct: 'to despatch' (820.3 r.1); 'to cause you to blossom' (13J33.2 r.26); 'to announce' (10J12.22 r.12)

A marked aspect of the hif'il infinitive construct in the letters is the ease with which it takes an additional n- suffix—which is not a pronominal suffix and adds nothing to the meaning—in order to fit a rhyme scheme, e.g., in a letter of Šalom ben Yehuda to Sahlah ben 'Avraham: שלום שלום הנביה ברוך להברתفسע משען התהילה ו돈יוו זריך מלחה וכסא שימוש לאושעש עפר בבר אדונך ופעלי התהילה כל אלה ומכה ומכו ופעלי התהילה ליוד מתאוה פ' ד י ו מ פ מ ר ח שלואא 'Magnification of peace, increase of blessings from the heavens above, and ringing praise and favourable prayer, and the finding of grace and kindness to prosper in the eyes of God and man, the gathering of all this and the doubling of as much more for the dear glory, the honourable, great and holy master and teacher Sahlah' (13J11.5 r.1–3); another similar example occurs in the opening lines of a letter by Šemu'el ben Mose: לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמליל לוחמ... 'to crown...to double...to bring together...to give...to exalt...to illuminate...to bring...to esteem...to spread...sela' (13J18.1 r.1–4); There are frequent other examples in the praescriptios of letters, though none quite as extreme. The infinitive in n- is perhaps formed by analogy with the alternate BH infinitives like הָרָא and הָמְס, or, more likely since it only affects the hif'il, by analogy with the Aramaic haf'el infinitive, found in Biblical and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, e.g., הָגַנְפַּח הָמֵש 'to bring up' Daniel 6:24.

Imperative:

'hurry yourself' (1022.7 r.13); 'pronounce the ban' (Misc. 35.11 r.17); 'be constant' (821.6 r.10)

The examples attested in the corpus present problems for establishing the form of the hif'il imperative; only הדַּרַה 'devote/destroy'. We know
that yod may often be used to spell ֑ in the corpus, although it is not
common in a closed syllable: המרהס occurs in a letter of ggjomo ben YYhuda
who, as demonstrated earlier, is far less likely than others in the corpus to
spell ֑ with yod. However, though this letter is from him, its handwriting is
that of a scribe. 41 Therefore, we cannot rule out an exceptionally full
orthography. However, perhaps the spelling represents a stem vowel ֑, such
as is found in the feminine and plural, and the imperative with pronominal
suffixes or the ‘emphatic’ he. Moreover, the Hebrew Bible gives us a number
of examples of the hifil imperative showing the unusual spelling ֑ or the
stem vowel ֑ in the masculine singular without the presence of affixes, e.g., 2
Kings 2:6: ֑ ‘restore’ and Psalms 94:1 ֑ ‘shine forth’. 42 So, with these
precedents from BH we cannot state with certainty how the hifil imperative
would have been vocalised, either with stem vowel ֑ or ֑.

Cohortative: 'I will move' (Misc. 35.44 r.3); 'I will gird' (13J14.10 r.2)
Jussive: Possibly 'may he bring down' (13J15.14 r.16)
Suffix conjugation: 'it silenced' (8.3 r.10); 'they have crowned him' (10J15.10 r.6);
'and bring relief' (13J26.16 r.17); 'and he threw them away'
(13J26.13 r.15); 'that he angers [himself]' (13J16.17 r.13)
Prefix conjugation: 'the slanderers' (12.17 r.6); 'feeding' (16.18 r.5)

Participle: (unattested for the strong verb)

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct:

Imparative:

Cohortative:

Jussive:

Suffix conjugation:

The huf'al

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct:

Imperative:

Cohortative:

Jussive:

Suffix conjugation:

The usual vowel under the -י in BH is short gimes, e.g., יִּּּוּּּ. Daniel 9:1, but
as the plene orthography shows, backed up by the occasional vocalised
example, e.g., יִּּּוּּּ. 'and he had to' (13J30.3 r.4), the texts present huf'al

41 Another possible plene example may be found in a letter of ggjomo ben YYhuda, this time in the handwriting
of his son, who regularly acted as his scribe: יִּּּוּּּ, 'be aware and warn' (16.261 r.30)

42 Jotion §54 c.
forms such as are found in RH.\textsuperscript{43}

Prefix conjugation:  

\begin{itemize}
  \item 'it [cannot] be compared' (8.3 r.4);
  \item 'may it be kept' (12.222 r.12);
  \item 'and be doubled' (8][16.12 r.11);
  \item 'may it be brought' (13][8.14 r.23).
\end{itemize}

Again, the orthography and vocalisation reflect a short \(\text{u}\) vowel like the RH huf\(\text{al}\), however, an \(\text{u}\) vowel is also often encountered in the prefix conjugation in Tiberian BH, e.g., \(\text{שֵׁנֶּה} \text{Isaiah 34:3.}\)

Participle:  

\begin{itemize}
  \item 'appointed' (13][13.14 r.15);
  \item 'distinguished' (NS 308.122 v.23);
  \item 'constant' (10][30.3 r.2).
\end{itemize}

Although no vocalised examples of the participle of the strong verb are attested in the corpus, the spelling of short \(\text{u}\) with \textit{uaw} in each example is unlikely given its overall rarity in the letters.\textsuperscript{44} The orthography reflects a prefix vowel \(\text{u}\), as in the other parts of the verb; not only is this the usual form in RH but also very common on the participle in BH.\textsuperscript{45}

One exception to the seemingly universal use of the huf\(\text{al}\) occurs in the doubly-weak verb 

\(\text{הָוהַל} \text{from a letter of the twelfth-century Babylonian ga'on Š} \text{mu'el ben 'Eli: 'beaten, downtrodden' (NS 309.20 r.6) reflects a hof\(\text{al}\) form \(\text{כִּפְסִים} \text{Jeremiah 5:16. Both the Babylonian tradition of BH and the Eastern tradition of RH also prefer \(\text{u}\) before geminated consonants in the hof\(\text{al}/\text{huf\(\text{al}\)}, attesting this very form in the MT as \(\text{כִּפְסִים} \text{Exodus 5:16. Both the Babylonian tradition of BH and the Eastern tradition of RH also prefer \(\text{u}, but it is generalised in the huf\(\text{al}, not just before geminated consonants. The pointing with \(\text{qames}, reflecting \text{qames-qa'tan, seems to be characteristic of the Western tradition of RH, unusual perhaps for a Babylonian letter.}\textsuperscript{46}

The feminine singular participle of the huf\(\text{al}\) always terminates in \(\text{נ-}\), e.g.: 

\begin{itemize}
  \item 'and fortified' (13][16.18 r.12);
  \item 'wrapped up' (13][26.3 r.1);
  \item 'doubled' (16.68 r.12).
\end{itemize}

The h\(\text{itpa'el/nitpa'el\textsuperscript{47}}\)  

Two stems are included in this category: the BH h\(\text{itpa'el}\) and the RH \textit{nitpa'el}. The \textit{nitpa'el} is only distinguished from its biblical counterpart in the suffix conjugation of our letters, where both stems

\textsuperscript{43}Fernandez p. 97. Although BH does attest a number of examples with \textit{u}, e.g., \(\text{שָׁפָר} \text{Jeremiah 22:28; cf. Joiion §57a.}\)

\textsuperscript{44}Also further evidence is provided by the vocalising habits of the writers: as has been noted earlier, short \textit{qames} is one of the few vowels to be vocalised with any kind of regularity in the letters. Therefore, the lack of a single vocalised example of a hof\(\text{al}, i.e., showing \textit{qames}, such as \(\text{כִּפְסִים}, is an additional argument, albeit from silence.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{45}Joiion §57a.

\textsuperscript{46}See Bar-Asher pp.15–17 for the whole question of the hof\(\text{al/huf\(\text{al}\) in the different traditions of Hebrew.\textsuperscript{47}}\)
are attested. In all other parts of the verb (including the participle) the stem follows, consonantally at least, the BH hitpa'el stem.

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct: וֹלֵקַחַ טבַּר 'and to make donations' (10J9.25 r.16); יַבֵּתַ הַבָּחֳרָה 'because of his consorting with' (13J26.23 r.18)

Imperative: יַחֹתְנִי 'and distance yourself' (16.6 r.26); יַעֲשֶׂהוּ 'make an effort' (10J27.8 r.15); יַעֲשֶׂהוּ 'and be strong' (13J15.1 r.24)

Cohortative: יַחֹתְנִי 'and let us show strength' (20.181 r.12); יַחֹתְנִי 'and I will join up with' (13J11.4 r.12)

The first cohortative occurs in a phrase drawn from 1 Chronicles 19:13, יַחֹתְנִי, יַחֹתְנִי 'be strong and let us show strength' (20.181 r.12). The second is, unusually for a cohortative in the letters, not a form that is found in the Hebrew Bible but is an inflection of a post-biblical verb. It occurs in the elegant Hebrew letter of the obviously well-educated lady, Maliḥa.

Jussive: (unattested)

Suffix conjugation: לאָם 'that they were arranged' (NS 169.11 v.6); לַגְּשֹׁרֵי 'and they were forced to' (Misc. 35.49 r.27); לָשׁוֹרֵי 'they have come together' (10J9.25 r.17); לָשׁוֹרֵי 'they ascended [=died]' (10J1.1 r.1); לָשׁוֹרֵי 'he has roamed' (13J9.2 r.22)

Two distinct forms of the suffix conjugation are attested, one taking the form of the BH hitpa'el stem, the other the post-biblical nitpa'al/nitpa'el. Although in the best and earliest texts of the Miṣna and other RH sources the form of the verb is properly nitpa'al, in later texts this often becomes nitpa'el by attraction to the vowels of the BH hitpa'el. Unfortunately, there is no clue in the letters' vocalisation or orthography to enable us to determine whether the writers are employing the RH nitpa'al or MH nitpa'el.

Examples of the nitpa'al/nitpa'el suffix conjugation greatly outweigh those of the hitpa'el, which is attested less than a dozen times in the corpus. Sərira Ga' on uses a hitpa'el in the opening line of one of his letters, יַחֹתְנִי 'and it has diminished' (13J25.5 r.20) and יַחֹתְנִי 'and when it was at ease' (28.24 r.27).

Sometimes the reason for the occurrence of a hitpa'el rather than a nitpa'el is clear: Hayya Ga' on attests a hitpa'el in אָו אַלְדָּלֶמָה הַפָּתָלָב נב 'Noah walked with God' (10G5.8 v.9), which, though not marked as a quote, is a phrase

Fernandez pp. 96–97.
drawn unchanged from Genesis 6:9. Usually however it isn't discernible exactly why one morphology has been preferred to the other. Salomo ben Yehuda attests only one suffix conjugation *hitpa'el* in his letters in the corpus, also the התחשך 'he has roamed' (13J9.2 r.22). This is a well-attested BH verb and occurs several times in this particular form, for instance at 1 Samuel 30:31 in addition to Genesis 6:9, mentioned above; perhaps therefore it was familiar enough to use unchanged. We do not find an example of this verb used in the *nitpa'el* in the corpus; similarly we find only BH התחשך, e.g., התחשך 'we prostrated ourselves' (Misc, 36.207 leaf 1 v,11). However, many other verbs which are attested in the *hitpa'el* in BH become *nitpa'als* in the letters, e.g., התחשך 'nothing has changed' (NS 321.2 r.19); התחשך 'it was revealed' (20.94 r.30); התחשך 'and he girded himself' (13J14.10 r.30). Another factor that may be at work is the fact that the *nitpa'el* developed this form because of the association of-ו with the passive. In the case of התחשך there is little passive nuance about the verb: the *hitpa'el* in this case probably originally expressed a durative-iterative aspect and therefore perhaps it is not inflected with the passive prefix by our writers.46 Another BH verb that is only attested in the *hitpa'el* in the corpus, e.g., התחשך התחשך 'and the donation that the elders of Babylon donated, has arrived' (12.146 r.18), perhaps it too is remains a *hitpa'el* because there is no passive aspect to it. Of course this doesn't explain why two different writers should use BH and RH forms of the same verb, e.g. *תڞו* Ga’on's התחשך התחשך 'they ascended' (10J1.1 r.1) and Salomo ben Yehuda's התחשך התחשך 'who ascended' (NS 324.103 r.21). The existence of two similar stems allows scope for personal preference and style.

Prefix conjugation:

- י*ותל* 'I walk about' (12.217 r.21); י*תאשך* 'don't weaken' (8J21.6 r.11);
- י*תאשך* 'they wouldn't be late' (18J4.17 r.13)

Participle:

- י*ותנהרגך* 'and behave' (16.6 r.15); י*תבריל* 'who prays' (32.8 r.31);
- י*תבריל* 'and grows' (13J16.14 r.32)

The feminine participle, although not frequently attested, always takes the termination י*תבריל* 'eager for' (12.146 r.8); י*תבריל* 'is spoken' (18J4.26 r.10).

No unequivocal example of the *nitpa'el* participle, which is attested in RH and among the Karaites, is attested in the corpus.47 It is not always possible to distinguish an intended participle from a suffix conjugation form in the

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46Waltke §26.1.2b.

47Fernandez p. 132; Haneman pp. 216–217; Maman pp. 247–248; on the use of a *nitpa'el* participle among the Byzantine Karaites see Hopkins p. 94 n. 10, where he gives an example of a *nitpa'el* and *hitpa'el* participle of the same verb functioning side by side. It was medieval scribes who edited out the *nitpa'el* participle from manuscripts of the Miṣna, under the influence of BH and the Babylonian tradition of RH, so it is perhaps not surprising that we find contemporary letters similarly lack the form.
nitpa'el, since the two appear identical. The use of the definite article on the verb might suggest that it was indeed a participle, however, since we also find the definite article on the suffix conjugation in the corpus, this cannot be regarded as firm evidence. An example of this is the ga'on Dani'el ben Azarya’s use of הבש.appנים חלונות התawahש in and when we heard of the peace that had come about (12.44 v.4). At first sight it looks like a nifpa'el participle prefixed with the definite article, but the syntax better fits a finite verb. Compare his use of the same verb in another letter, לא תתרש יבר, ‘nothing happened’ (NS 92.33 r.21), or the construction of a finite verb plus the definite article occurring in a similar context in a letter of Na'atan ben 'Avraham, והدولות קירוביםמדה, ‘we have informed you, our friend, of what has happened’ (10J9.25 m.19). Without any definite examples of a nifpa'el participle, we must accept then that the attested participle form of both the stems nitpa'al and hitpa'el was mitpa'el in the corpus.

Verbs whose first root letter is a sibilant are inflected according to the dictates of BH morphology, with the metathesis of the ה of the stem and the sibilant: יותاخرיפס ‘sharing’ (16.95 r.10); יותاخرיפס ‘were arranged’ (NS 169.11 v.6). In addition, if the root letter is ה then the ה of the stem is replaced by יותاخرיפס ‘and grieving’ (12.328 r.20); יותاخرיפס ‘he needed’ (18J4.4 r.21). This occurs without exception in the corpus.

**Verbs with guttural root letters**

**The initial-guttural verb**

Without vocalisation it is difficult to determine exactly the letters treatment of verbs from roots containing a guttural consonant, however as far as can be seen there is no divergence from BH as regards the initial-gutturals: in a purely consonantal text they resemble the strong verb in most stems.

- **Qal infinitive construct:** לابة ‘to grasp’ (8J2.2 r.13)
- **Qal suffix conjugation:** נושאתב ‘that took hold of us’ (18J4.5 r.18)
- **Qal prefix conjugation:** נושאתב ‘they will gather’ (10J30.5 r.15)
- **Qal active participle:** ערב ‘he passes’ (18J4.17 v.13)

The prefix conjugation of the nif'al stem of the first-guttural verb is usually spelled with double yod

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50Na'atan ben 'Avraham writes a similar phrase in a different letter showing the use of the relative construction rather than -ל plus the finite verb, יומתב רכש עליי.דו המה שיתחפשה מאנה, 'and let him write at every opportunity, informing us of what is going on in the community. Similarly, a certain Yishqay writes to 'Efraim ben סゥmarya, 'לענא והדי אדס יי המ מהותש ובכרו, 'and no one has told me what happened because of me' (8J21.6 r.8).

51Jotion §17b.

52The reading לקוספלו, from a letter of סוםomo ben יhuda edited in Gil (1993), no. 155, NS324.103 r.21, is a printing error since the manuscript clearly reads לקוספלו.
in the corpus, presumably indicating a prefix vowel ֐ הָעַשׂ 'it will be done' (NS 321.2 r.14) and הָעַשׂ 'they will be considered' (13J13.14 v.2). However, since this is also often the spelling of the yi-prefix of the nif'al of the strong verb, there is often no orthographic difference between the forms (see Orthography).

The middle-guttural verb

Without vocalisation little detail can be discerned about the inflection of the middle-guttural verb, since, consonantally, it conforms with the inflection of the strong verb. However, some differences between RH and BH inflection of the prefix conjugation are visible in consonantal text.

*Qal* infinitive construct: רֹסַלְתָּה רֹסַלְתָּה 'and to choose' (16.6 r.4)

The infinitive retains the ֜ stem vowel of the strong verb, as in BH, no matter which vowel it prefers in the prefix conjugation.53 However, we often find the infinitive construct of 'ayin-‘alef verbs written defectively, probably occasioned by the ‘alef’s other role as a vowel letter, e.g., לַשׁוֹנְיָה לַשׁוֹנְיָה 'to ask' (10J12.22 r.19); see Orthography. But the vowel is evidenced when a plene spelling is employed, e.g., לַשׁוֹנְיָה לַשׁוֹנְיָה 'and to ask' (18J4.5 r.7) and נַשׁוֹנְיָה נַשׁוֹנְיָה 'to reject' (13J9.2 r.57)

*Qal* suffix conjugation: יִרְאָה יִרְאָה 'I did [not] call him' (13J23.19 r.27)

*Qal* prefix conjugation: יִרְאָה יִרְאָה 'he will [not] hate' (10J11.29 r.8); יִרְאָה יִרְאָה 'and it is in pain' (10J10.22 r.3); יִרְאָה יִרְאָה 'he will forgive' (13J9.9 r.12; NS 308.122 v.26); יִרְאָה יִרְאָה 'let it be supported' (18J4.26 r.19)

In the prefix conjugation a difference exists between BH and RH regarding the choice of stem vowel. In BH, the stem vowel ֚ is usual, like that of the stative verb, whereas in RH the stem vowel ֜ tends to replace it, by analogy with the strong verb.54 Of the examples above, יִרְאָה יִרְאָה and יִרְאָה יִרְאָה show a stem vowel of biblical ֚, like הָעַשׂ הָעַשׂ Leviticus 26:11 and יִרְאָה יִרְאָה יִרְאָה יִרְאָה Proverbs 14:13, whereas יִרְאָה יִרְאָה and יִרְאָה יִרְאָה attest a probable stem vowel ֚. Although יִרְאָה יִרְאָה is a verb attested in BH, the fact that יִרְאָה יִרְאָה is a post-biblical creation may well account for its showing RH morphology in the corpus.

53Jotin §69a.

54Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 191: ‘in the prefix-conjugation, there is a tendency for verbs with second vowel in ֚ to be replaced by forms with ֜’. Some rare examples of middle-guttural BH imperatives and prefix conjugation forms retain the strong verb’s stem vowel of ֚, cf. Gesenius §64c.
letter's opening phrase, "to inform [you] of the deed of the 'Head of P'—the Rock rebuke him that he may sleep and never be roused" (13:23.1 r.4). The use of similar yif'ols in place of BH yif'als is also attested in the poetic language of piyut. The Karaite Toviyya ben Moše also uses the RH morphology in his literary work.

**Qal active participle:** 'crying out' (13:9.9 r.7)

**Other stems:**

With regard to the stems pi'el, pu'al and ḫiṭpa'el/niṭpa'al the 'ayin-guttural verb should show, in most cases, a lack of gemination in the middle radical and consequent secondary lengthening of the previous vowel, e.g., י"עווראך > י"וורך, like יבך, 'it will be blessed' 2 Samuel 7:29. Since vocalised examples are lacking and since, in the case of the pu'al, short u and long o are both usually spelled with the same vowel letter, we can only assume that BH practice is followed and that spellings such as י"וורך reflect a pronunciation with o̞, i.e., ḥo̞vəרך, rather than one closer to the strong verb.

**The final-guttural verb**

As with the other guttural roots there is little discernable difference between the final-guttural and the strong verb when the text is purely consonanal.

**Qal infinitive construct:** לְהַבָּע 'to seek' (18:4.5 r.31)

ולזֵר 'and to diminish' (NS J15 r.11) is probably just written defectively rather than reflecting a different stem vowel, since all other examples show o̞, e.g., לְהַמָּה 'to be astonished' (10:15.8 r.4); לְהַבָּה 'and to choose' (16.6 r.4); לְהַרַּח 'to lack' (10:11 leaf 1 r.18).

Nothing can be said about furtive paṭañ in the infinitive construct due to the absence of any vocalised examples.

**Qal suffix conjugation:** שְׁכַה 'she has forgotten' (13:15.1 r.11)

והָנִיב 'and we were astonished' (20.100 r.14) and שְׁתַם 'that surprised' (NS 308.122 v.2) show the retention of the consonantal he of the root.

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56 Yeivin (1996) pp. 108–109. He gives an example of the same root, י"ע, which in the imperative (which shares the stem vowel of the prefix conjugation) shows the same stem vowel, o̞, י"ע 'rebuke' (from a piyut manuscript, NS 2.112). No comparison between the imperative and prefix conjugation is possible in the corpus because no examples of the qal imperative of the middle-guttural root are attested.

56 Maman p. 245.

57 Jotin §69a. Of course, some verbs (usually with radical ה or ו) do not alter the preceding vowel, cf. Gesenius §64d.
Qal prefix conjugation:

The stem vowel ą replaces ą in the prefix conjugation, ירש 'he will punish' (NS 308.122 v.26), and in the imperative, של 'send' (16.6 r.27), as in BH.58

Qal active participle:

The verb יושב in the qal is inflected both as an active participle, יושב 'astonished' (13J34.3 r.17), and as a verbal adjective form, יושב 'astonished' (13J21.10 r.10).

As already discussed in Orthography, spellings such as יושב 'the victorious' (18J4.26 r.12) and יושב 'to be joined' (AS 145.61 r.3) may indicate a pronunciation with furtive pa'teh under the final guttural letter. A single vocalised example of the qal passive participle from a letter of Yośiyahu Ga'on testifies to its presence in the qal passive participle, יושב 'diminished' (13J14.10 r.19).

The weak verb

The initial-‘alef verb

There are five verbs in BH which are grouped together as the initial-‘alef verbs (as distinct from initial-gutturals) due to their shared features.59 In the corpus, only three of them are attested: יושב, יושב, and יושב.

Qal infinitive construct:

The usual form of the infinitive follows BH by retaining the ‘alef: The infinitive constructs יושב and יושב are always written defectively, which is overwhelmingly the case in the MT.60 On a number of occasions we find, instead of יושב, יושב, RH יושב ‘to say’, e.g., in the

58Jo'ton §70.

59 These verbs are יושב, יושב, יושב, יושב, יושב; cf. ibid., §73a.

60 Although it is unusual for the ą vowel not to be written with waw, other infinitives are occasionally spelled defectively in the letters, e.g., יושב ‘to write’ (13J14.5 r.10); see Orthography. Nevertheless, without vocalisation we cannot be certain that יושב was vocalised יושב, and not, as in RH, יושב, see Fernandez p. 145 on this issue in texts of Palestinian RH. However, I think that we should assume, on the basis of the many other features of the corpus that remain close to BH, that the texts prefer BH morphology to RH unless their is positive evidence to the contrary. Maman, pp. 245–246, notes the use of RH יושב and even יושב in Karaites of the period; in addition, he regards the spelling יושב as also reflecting the rabbinic morphology. However, the defective spelling of the verb is so common in the MT compared to the very few plene examples, e.g., יושב, Habakkuk 1:8, that orthography is not a sound guide in these cases to the actual form taken by the word.
post-biblical idiom ‘that is to say’ (13J16.17 r.10).\textsuperscript{61} RH isn’t attested.\textsuperscript{62} The appearance of ‘to say’ in the corpus isn’t limited to its use as a component of rabbinic idioms since we also find ‘to say that’ (13J16.17 r.25) which shows the RH verb coupled with the BH complementizer, and therefore acting simply as an alternative form of לָמַר. However, ‘to say’ isn’t common in the letters, appearing only in isolated instances without any apparent pattern to its use.

\textbf{Qal suffix conjugation:} 'I said' (10J24.8 v.5)

The pe-\textsuperscript{alef} verb is regular in the suffix conjugation.

\textbf{Qal prefix conjugation:} 'he will say' (13J16.17 r.38); 'and may they perish' (24.43 r.40)

Although BH orthography is always followed and no vowel letter is used, the one vocalised example: 'and they will perish' (13J14.10 r.14), shows 6.

\textbf{Qal active participle:} ‘saying’ (13J19.19 r.7)

\textbf{The initial-nun verb}

This category includes the verbs לָמַה and לָמַה.

\textbf{Qal infinitive construct:} לָמַה ‘to take’ (13J26.13 r.11); לָמַה ‘to take’ (13J26.1 r.15); ‘to bear’ (13J9.2 r.10); לָמַה ‘to carry’ (10J9.25 r.16); לָמַה ‘to give’ (13J25.5 r.30); לָמַה ‘and to give’ (10J9.25 r.16); לָמַה ‘and to give them’ (13J16.17 r.7); לָמַה ‘to plant them’ (12.256 r.17); לָמַה ‘to take up’ (13J31.3 r.16)

Alongside the usual BH form of the infinitive construct, the letters also frequently attest examples of the RH infinitive construct (formed by analogy with the prefix conjugation) of the verbs לָמַה and לָמַה.\textsuperscript{63} Thus we find both לָמַה ‘to give them’ (13J16.14 v.3) as well as לָמַה ‘to give them’ (13J16.17 r.7). Writers frequently demonstrate both forms in their letters: JPlomo ben Yahuda attests both לָמַה ‘to give’ (13J23.19 m.15) and RH לָמַה ‘to give’ (13J23.11 r.19); he also uses לָמַה ‘to take (as his wife)’ (Gil (1983) no. 148=Boedl MS Heb d 76.56 r.10) as well as לָמַה ‘to bear’ (13J9.2 r.10). Nathan ben ‘Avraham employs לָמַה ‘and to give’ (10J9.25 r.16) as well as לָמַה

\textsuperscript{61}Fernandez p. 145.

\textsuperscript{62}Perhaps not surprisingly since it is rare even in rabbinic texts; idem.

\textsuperscript{63}Ibid., pp. 144–146.
'to give' (10J15.10 r.11).

Qal infinitive absolute:

Qal suffix conjugation:

This is the only example of the infinitive absolute of the initial-nun verb attested in the corpus and it is unusual, since, we should expect to believe, attested several times in BH, e.g., Jeremiah 10:5. Instead the form used resembles the anomalous infinitive construct found at Psalms 89:10, שָׁתָה.

With the exception of the verb עָלָה, the suffix conjugation is inflected according to BH practice. In the case of עָלָה, we find many examples of the 3 masculine singular עָלָה, the 3 feminine singular עָלָה and the plural עָלָה used in the qal for the meaning ‘arrived’, i.e., the usual meaning of the hifil innovating in BH. In inflecting עָלָה as a middle-weak verb the letter-writers are following a paytanic practice, which began in the early piyyutim and was continued in contemporary poetry. However, it is clear that the use עָלָה, etc. reflects more the use of a frozen, lexicalised form than a widespread technique in the corpus, since we find no other verb treated in the same way. The principal writer who attests עָלָה is Šalom ben Yoḥuda, who always uses it to refer to the arrival of letters and, in all but one case, employs it as the introductory phrase to the main body of his own letter: עָלָה 'his letter arrived' (Misc. 35.14 r.5; 20.102 r.8); עָלָה 'your letter arrived' (12.328 r.7); עָלָה 'their letters arrived' (13.13.28 r.2). As noted before, the use of a more ‘artistic’, poetic or archaic, language is likely in the set epistolary phrases. Other writers to use the verb are all from the West, e.g.: יָשָׁע עָלָה ‘and when his time came’ (10J27.7 r.10) Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya’aqov of Tyre; יָשָׁע עָלָה ‘the letter arrived’ (NS 321.29 v.4) 'Efraim ben Šeymarya; יָשָׁע עָלָה 'a letter arrived from him' (10J12.22 r.8) Hillel Heḥhaver of Tiberias. The Babylonian writers do not show this technique of the

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64Naṭan ben 'Avraham uses the RH form לָיְלָה, along with לָיְלָה, probably because he is employing a rabbinic idiom, לָיְלָה 'to argue the matter' (10J9.25 r.16), whereas לָיְלָה is simply being used as the verb 'to give'. Maman p. 246 quotes a contemporary Karaita document from Fustat (T-S 16.171) which attests the same idiom and uses the RH form of the infinitive construct, לָיְלָה 'and he knows how to negotiate'. Rabbinic morphology often infiltrates the letters through RH idioms, for instance, לָיְלָה showing the RH ר--ending, and לָיְלָה showing the RH infinitive form, as mentioned earlier.

65Yahalom chapter 7 deals with the piyyut's treatment of verbs, pp. 86–87 deal especially with the use of various different verbal types as middle-weak. Yosef ibn Abitur, a tenth-century Spanish poet, uses the same techniques; Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 222–223.
Palestinian *paytannim.*

Qal prefix conjugation:

וירח 'and he took' (13J26.13 r.12); נשים 'may he raise up' (18J4.4 r.10); וירח 'and may he protect him' (16.6 v.2); וירח 'and let it fall' (16.6 r.22); נשים 'he can forget' (13J25.5 r.5)

The verb נזר is widely attested in the corpus since it features in the most common blessing formulae of letters, e.g., נזר 'keep him, Almighty, and help him and protect him' (10J30.3 v.2); נזר 'keep him, Rock, and protect him and help him' (NS 324.112 v.2); נזר 'keep him, our Holy One, and protect him, our Creator' (13J31.1 v.3). In nearly all cases it retains the initial nun in the qal prefix conjugation: נזר 'and may he protect' (16.68 r.26; 13J16.18 r.4); נזר 'and save him' (AS 149.27 r.2). Certainly the phrase used by Nadan Hakkohen ben Mavorakah is quite exceptional in assimilating the nun, נזר 'the Rock keep him and from straits protect him' (18J4.4 r.13), and there is no other similar example to be found in the corpus. How can we explain the lack of assimilation that takes place so often with this one verb? Perhaps there is a tendency not to geminate the sade, as can be seen in some pe-nuns with second radical sade, tet or zayin in RH. However, it is likely that the lack of consistency in BH proves the greatest influence. In the Hebrew Bible the verb is attested many times with assimilation, e.g., נזר 'you preserve me' Psalms 32:7, but provides the writers with a precedent by showing a number of unassimilated forms, particularly, but not always, in pause, e.g., נזר 'that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws' Psalms 105:45 (note the same juxtaposition of נזר and נזר). I think it is primarily due to particular phrases such as that from Psalms, which would have been well-known to the writers, that the unassimilated form came to be paramount. A similar use of unassimilated pe-nuns can be found in paytannic language.

Qal imperative:

וירח 'and take' (13J20.25 r.9); קפט 'take' (10J14.8 v.19); קפט 'and give' (13J20.3 r.19); קפט 'raise up [your eyes]' (10J27.8 r.11)

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66Segal p. 78.

The imperative of נָשָׁה is attested dozens of times in the corpus in the popular greeting formula נָשָׁה שָׂלֹמּוּ, וּלְעֹזָר, e.g., ‘many greetings’ (13J11.9 r.2); נָשָׁה שָׂלֹמּוּ ‘greetings from us’ (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.8); נָשָׁה שָׂלֹמּוּ ‘many greetings, our friend’ (13J26.1 r.9).

Qal active participle:

ניָטָר ‘preserver’ (13J16.14 v.11)

Hifil:

יָבְשָׁם ‘they said’ (28.24 r.17); יֵשָׁנוּ ‘which arrived’ (13J31.8 r.7); יָבִינוּ ‘[no one] will harm me’ (13J16.18 r.14); יַנִּיחְבוּ ‘may he proclaim him leader’ (Misc. 136.169 v.3); יֵבֶית ‘to cause to touch/strike’ (18J4.26 r.3)

The hifil is usually inflected as in BH, i.e., with assimilation of the nun, e.g., הָעֹזָר ‘to save you’ (10J1 r.20), except when the second radical is a guttural, e.g., יִצְבָּא ‘may he make pleasant’ (NS 309.20 r.1). However, a number of verbs show the retention of nun, e.g., נֶהָטָה, בֵּית, יָבַל and the prefix conjugation יִנְבֵּד above. The language of the-paytannim uses unassimilated forms of pe-nuns in order to distinguish between similar looking verbs: Yeivin quotes an example from a piyut of הרֹזְנִים ‘they were struck’, which uses an unassimilated form to distinguish its immediate source as יָבַּים rather than the common יִבְטַה ‘to reach’. The same technique may explain the occasional lack of assimilation in the letters: יִנְבֵּדוּ ‘may he proclaim him leader’ (Misc. 136.169 v.3) is a denominal from נֶבֶד ‘Nagid, leader’ rather than connected with נהנִיט ‘to tell’, יִנְבֵּדוּ ‘to cause to touch/strike’ (18J4.26 r.3) is, like the example of Yeivin, to be connected with יֵבֶית rather than לַבְטָה ‘to reach, arrive’.

A letter from Palermo uses both assimilated and unassimilated forms of the same verb together: יָבַּל לַקְנָנִים קִבֵּרָדְמָה ‘to cause their light to shine and to illuminate their stars’ (24.6 r.21). The phrase requires that both verbs be translated the same and so the differing morphology allows the writer to repeat the meaning without repeating the form.

Ibid., pp. 115–116. Of course, both verb and noun derive from a common root, but the intention is to link semantically the unassimilated form with ינִיבא rather than ינפא.

Another verb in the same letter also shows an unassimilated nun יִנְבֵּדוּ ‘to separate him’ (18J4.26 r.16). It is probable that the occasional RH preference for not assimilating the nun before יִ and י is to blame in this case.

It is possible, though, that לַקְנָנִים could be a nif'al with אָרָם רֹאֵשׁ as subject rather than object, but since the nif'al of this verb is not attested in BH I am more inclined to see it as an alternative form of לַקְנָנִים.rippa Ga’on attests the hif'il with assimilation, לַקְנָנִים ‘to illuminate their paths’ (28.24 r.5).
the mercy of the Rock, that he saves...' (13:22.25 r.23), shows a long o
vowel under the preformative by analogy with the hif’il of the initial
weak (pe-waw) verb. Perhaps the writer was conflating מָשָּׁא and
מטיל.

Other stems:

The other stems, the nif'al, e.g., יִלָּחוּ 'it will be given' (13:11.5 r.19)
and יִנֹּס 'borne' (13:14.10 r.9), the pi'el, e.g., יָשָּׁבוּ 'to exalt' (18:4.26
r.24), the pu'al, e.g., יָדָּעוּ 'may they be saved' (13:8.14 r.21) and
רשים 'and when it is said' (13:18.1 r.9), the hitpa'el/hitpa'al, e.g.,
שָׁהֲדוּ 'that they offered' (12.146 r.18), follow the model of the BH
pe-nun. The hufal is usually written with waw, reflecting the
Tiberian Hebrew morphology of u before a geminated
consonant in the hof al/huf al, e.g., מָשָּׁא 'he was
saved' (24.6 r.59) and מָשָּׁא 'is laid' (10.9.25 r.12). The exceptional participle form מָשָּׁא 'beaten,
downtrodden' (NS 309.20 r.6), apparently a hofal, is considered
above.

The final-'alef verb

Qal infinitive construct:

"to swallow" (20.100 r.18); מָסַכְת 'from finding' (Misc. 35.15
r.20); מָשֵּׁב 'to hate' (13:23.1 r.21)

In spite of the fact that most lamed-'alef infinitives follow the
common BH morphology, there is a notable influence of RH on the
infinitive construct of מָשָּׁא, where the verb is inflected as if it were
from a final-weak root. This is often attested in the corpus: מָשָּׁא 'to
read' (13:20.3 r.10; 12.273 v.8); מָשָּׁא 'to name' (10:32.9 r.5; 12.217
r.12).

The Hebrew Bible attests two different forms of the infinitive
construct of מָשָּׁא, מָשָּׁא, e.g., 1 Samuel 3:6, which is very common, and
תַּמַּא Judges 8:1, which is attested just once. Both are attested in the
corpus, e.g., מָשָּׁא מִשְׁמַה, acting as מָשָּׁא מִשְׁמַה's
scribe, writes the common form מָשָּׁא 'to read' (AS 120.62 r.9), but in
another text writes מָשָּׁא 'to call' (18:3.9 r.27). The defective
orthography is not unusual with this verb (probably because of the
presence of 'alef): יִשְׂרָא'ל Hakkohen Ga'on spells it the same way,
מָשָּׁא 'to read it' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 3 r.10) and מָשָּׁא 'to read' (Misc.
35.4 leaf 5 r.1), as does a letter of מָשָּׁא 'in reading' (Gil (1997) no. 52=ENA 4050 r.10).

מָשָּׁא מִשְׁמַה himself, when writing his own letters, shows a
certain consistency in mainly using the biblical מָשָּׁא form, usually

71Fernandez p. 146.
spelled in full, e.g., הלָּקַתְמוּס 'and to read them' (10)10.22 r.9; מִיָּהֳרַתְא 'to name' (10)12.17 r.6; מִיָּהֳרַתְא '[not] to read them' (13)14.8 r.24; though, once it is written defectively, בִּרְאָמָא יָהֳרַתְא 'when you named him Haver' (13)26.23 r.17. However, he also employs the RH final-weak infinitive construct, לֶקֶרְתוּ 'naming' (21.217 r.12), and once employs a mixed form, לֶקֶרְתוּ 'to call' (NS 323.21 v.4).

Qal suffix conjugation:

Again we can see the influence of RH in the forms which elide 'alef and are inflected like the final-weak verb. Of the verb לֶקֶרְתוּ only the 1 plural לֶקֶרְתוּ is treated as a final-weak, but we find it attested several times. Other parts of the verb לֶקֶרְתוּ show retention of the א, e.g., לֶקֶרְתוּ 'that befell us' (16.3 r.3).72 The same situation is encountered with the verb לֶקֶרְתוּ, we find that the 1 plural regularly takes the form of a final-weak, לֶקֶרְתוּ, whereas other parts of the verb retain the biblical morphology, e.g., לֶקֶרְתוּ 'I found' (10)9.14 r.16. RH shows a similar pattern.73

Qal prefix conjugation:

The verbs לֶקֶרְתוּ 'it will befall' (10)14.8 v.4) and לֶקֶרְתוּ 'and it happened' (13)16.14 r.23) are derived from a lamed-he root לֶקֶרְתוּ, attested in BH, e.g., לֶקֶרְתוּ 'it befalls' Qohelet 2:14.

Qal active participle:

The active participle is not well attested in the corpus. Solomon ben Yahuda employs לֶקֶרְתוּ 'reading' (NS J172 r.15) which is the RH form instead of BH לֶקֶרְתָּם Psalms 99:6.74

Qal passive participle:

The morphology of the passive participle lacks consistency in the corpus, sometimes the 'alef is retained as is usual in BH, e.g., לֶקֶרְתוּ 'which is called' (13)16.13 r.15); לֶקֶרְתוּ 'married' (20.102 r.49); לֶקֶרְתוּ 'hated' (13)14.10 r.31); more usually, as in RH, the lamed-'alef takes the form of the final-weak, e.g., לֶקֶרְתוּ 'found' (NS 308.122 r.3); לֶקֶרְתוּ 'called' (20.94 r.21; 24.6 r.17).75

72Although the verb לֶקֶרְתוּ with the meaning 'to meet' is often treated as a final-weak in BH; cf. Jotin §78k.

73Segal §199. Another way of viewing the popularity of the inflection of the 1 plural lamed-he verb as a final-weak is to see it as a process of assimilation of the original stem vowel to the final vowel ָא, i.e., ָא becoming ָא since it is pronounced at the same height as ָא, the only difference between the two being that one is a front vowel and one a back vowel.

74For the RH participle, see Fernandez p. 131.

75Segal §199. Although the blending of the lamed-'alef with the final-weak is already visible in the Hebrew Bible,
Šolo mo ben Ḫabuda prefers the biblicising form of the feminine singular, e.g., וַתְּיַדֵּשׁ ‘found’ (13:15.1 r.12), but attests the masculine singular as a final-weak נַעֲשֵׂה ‘and are found’ (13:16.14 r.4). Špira Ga'on similarly attests the two different types, וַתְּיַדֵּשׁ ‘which is found’ (16.3 r.10) and וַתְּיַדֵּשׂ ‘found’ (28.24 r.12).76

Šolo mo ben Ḫabuda, Šolo mo Hakkohen and a letter from Asqelon all attest instances of mixed forms, showing uncertainty over the proper form of the participle: נַעֲשֵׂה ‘who is called’ (13:16.14 v.18); נַעֲשֵׂה ‘which is found’ (8:16.12 r.8); נַעֲשֵׂה ‘called’ (16.251 r.10).

The nifal shows retention of ‘alef in all parts of the verb, e.g.: נַעֲשֵׂה ‘who is named’ (13:11.4 r.6) and נַעֲשֵׂה ‘may they [not] come to an end’ (16.275 r.2), not attested with a paragogic nun in BH.

The feminine singular participle usually ends in ה- . However, while one of Špira Ga'on's letter has the reading נַעֲשֵׂה ‘and it is found’ (13:25.5 r.17), another letter shows the termination ה- , נַעֲשֵׂה ‘who are found’ (Gil (1997) no. 19=DK 184 a v.8), which is the only form attested for this verb in BH, e.g., ולֹכַדַת Isaiah 37:4.

The usual termination of the infinitive construct in the corpus is ה- , e.g., from Šolo mo ben Ḫabuda, הִלְכַדַת ‘to be read’ (20.181 r.22; NS J15 r.10; from Yośiyahu Ga'on, 'and to be called' (10:32.9 v.10); this matches the morphology that we sometimes find in RH, e.g., M. 'Avot הָלְכַדַת ‘to be created’. Although BH does not attest the nifal infinitive construct of קרָא, קרָא ‘and when they arose’ Ezekiel 1:19, which is only found in a letter of Špira and Hayya, קרָא ‘to be read’ (Gil (1997) no. 27=ENA 4009.15 r.3).

BH attests two different versions of the lamed-'alef infinitive construct pi'el in approximately equal number, e.g., לִפְנֵי 1 Kings 2:27 and לִפְנֵי 1 Chronicles 29:5. The infinitive is attested in a number of different forms in the corpus: it is found once showing the elision of quiescent 'alef, לִפְנֵי ‘to fulfil’ (NS 321.29 v.3); more usually we find the ending ה- , e.g., לִפְנֵי ‘to fulfil/fill’ (13:13.14 r.30; 32.8 r.8; 24.6 r.28), which is common in RH.77 This latter termination is usually

E.g., לִפְנֵי Psalms 32:1.

76 Although both T-S 16.3 and 28.24 are copies of letters by Špira Ga'on, thus the orthography cannot be assumed to be original.

77 Fernandez p. 146.
written defectively, e.g., יהלמה ‘to fill’ (10J27.1 r.6). That the orthography represents a pronunciation can be determined, in this case, from the rhyme scheme, i.e., יהלמה…יהלמה…יהלמה…יהלמה ‘prosperous…doubled…to fill’ (10J27.1 r.5–6). However, Na'atan ben 'Avraham perhaps employs a different form, since we find a phrase... 'to fill the whole world with fruit’ (13J31.1 r.6), based on Isaiah 27:6, which vocalises the infinitive with Babylonian  שֵׁר, i.e., indicating a mixed form between BH זה' and שלמה.\(^{78}\)

Other stems:
The other stems are inflected as in BH, e.g., the הָיַף ‘may he cause him to find’ (13J26.21 r.2); the הָעַל ‘may it be found’ (16.304 r.18); the בְּעָל ‘who is filled’ (13J16.14 r.5).

The initial-weak verb

This category can be divided between those verbs from an original initial-yod root and those from an original initial-waw root. The way of the initial-waw verbs appears only in certain stems in BH.\(^{79}\)

The verb וַיִּלָּךְ is included in this category.

Qal infinitive construct:

- וַיְלָךְ ‘his leaving’ (24.6 r.39); לדוּת ‘to know’ (NS 321.29 v.8); לֶדוּת ‘to go’ (13J25.5 r.27); לַדוּת ‘to dwell’ (13J21.19 r.9); לַדָּוָד ‘to go down’ (NS 321.22 r.12); לַדוּת ‘to know’ (10J24.3 r.12); לדוּת ‘to advise him’ (13J21.19 r.18)

It is clear from the above examples that the RH form of the initial-yod infinitive is quite influential, although it does not seem to have had an effect on all the verbs. לֶדוּת (13J16.17 r.29, r.38; 10J24.8 v.13), the RH infinitive construct, supplants BH לֶדוּת almost completely in the corpus.\(^{80}\) Even biblicising writers like Shlomo ben Yahuda show the occasional RH infinitive, e.g., לַדוּת ‘to dwell’ (Gil (1983) no. 130–Mosseri I a 4 r. 16), although he continues to attest the BH form, לֶדוּת ‘not to dwell’ (NS J172 v.2). As for לָדָד, only לָדָד is attested, BH לָדָד not occurring in the corpus. Conversely, RH לָדָד isn’t attested. Both BH לָדָד and RH לָדָד are found; however, only Na'atan ben 'Avraham (unusually for this biblicising writer) attests the RH form, 8J20.1 m.12; elsewhere the infinitive of לָדָד is either לֹדָד, e.g., 'his leaving' (12.80 r.13); לֶדוּת 'going' (13J25.5 r.27), etc., or, once,

\(^{78}\) It is possible that this is not actually an infinitive but the BH noun יָנוּל ‘fulness’ attested only once in BH at Song of Songs 5:12, however, its rarity makes the infinitive the more likely reading.

\(^{79}\) Jobon §74–77.

\(^{80}\) The RH infinitive construct is formed by analogy with the prefix conjugation of pe-yod verbs; Fernandez pp. 144–145. According to Maman, p. 246, contemporary Karaite texts attest RH לֶדוּת, showing that the influence of rabbinic morphology is quite widespread.
the rarer BH form מָלַךְ, הָלַךְ, מָלַבְּךָ, מָלַבְּלְךָ 'from going' (10)14.1 r.10, a construction attested in Numbers 22:16. Overall, though BH morphology remains the standard, the influence of RH, in the form of particular infinitives, is high.

Qal suffix conjugation:

'they advised me' (13)23.19 r.12); 'I went' (13)11.2 r.7)

Qal prefix conjugation:

'and he went' (10)11.30 r.13); 'and I went down' (10)27.2 r.18); 'let it be glad' (12)8.51 r.8); 'I can' (13)23.11 r.23)

Qal imperative:

'and know' (12.16 v.9); 'and go' (10)1 leaf 1 v.9)

Qal participle:

'toiling' (13)23.19 r.2); 'and for the one who goes out' (13)9.2 r.9)

Nif'al:

The nif'al is inflected according to BH practice, e.g., 'to meet' (8)3 r.5); 'and they met together' (20)181 r.12)

Pi'el:

The pi'el is inflected according to the rules of BH, e.g., 'let him punish him' (12)8.51 r.3) and 'longing for' (16.3 r.2). However, 'may he appoint him' (13)18.1 r.5), which, although it looks like a nif'al form is actually a pi'el taking an object suffix ַיָּה, is used instead of an expectedpiel.

Pu'al:

The few pu'al forms attested follow BH practice: 'of distinguished birth' (12.222 r.7); 'the tortured' (8)14.20 r.8).

Hif'il:

The hif'il is inflected according to BH, e.g., 'and thanking' (NS 308.122 r.7); 'from bringing down' (NS 324.104 r.38). The community of Asqelon (13)19.15 r.27) may look unorthodox, resembling a nif'al, but it is in fact an example of their biblical knowledge since it is a hif'il spelled defectively, as attested at Jeremiah 50:44 in the MT.

Huf'al:

The huf'al is inflected as in BH; indeed most examples are already found in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., 'may it be carried' (10)9.14 v.1, etc.), found at Isaiah 18:7; 'it was poured' (6)9.2 r.1), found at Psalms 45:3. The exception is יִבְרְדֵּא 'may it be brought' (13)8.14 r.23), discussed above, which shows waw where the MT vocalises with qames.

Hitpa'el/Nitpa'al:

Quite a few examples occur in the corpus, e.g., לָהְבַּהָדְתָּהוּ 'to give thanks' (NS 321.29 v.5); נַתְּהַשֵּׂשָּהוּ 'I despaired' (12.273 r.24); הִיטַעְרוּ 'let him consult' (20.178 r.37); and which are increasing' (Misc. 36.140 r.32).

81This letter is mentioned in the Orthography because of its many defective spellings, most of which have precedents in the spelling of the MT.
The middle-weak verb

The middle-weak verbs may be divided between roots originally 'ayin-waw and those originally 'ayin-yod. The distinction is reflected in the morphology of different parts of the verb, but of the prefix conjugation in particular.\(^{82}\) The RH treatment of the middle-weak verb is mostly identical to that of BH.\(^{83}\) The exception comes in the intensive stems, and in the use of pi'el in particular, where the weak radical is employed as a strong consonant, a feature of the verb נָפַשׁ in BH (i.e., it becomes נָפַשׁ in the pi'el), which is extended to a great many different middle-weak roots in RH and post-biblical Hebrew in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qal infinitive construct:</th>
<th>'depart' (28.2.4 r.3.4); 'to return' (13.15.1 r.1.4); 'move' (13.15.2 r.1.4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qal suffix conjugation:</td>
<td>'I would have flown' (13.16.14 v.6); 'it became quiet' (10.27.7 r.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal prefix conjugation:</td>
<td>'it will not depart' (16.6 r.10); 'and may he place him' (12.8.6 r.5); 'they will come' (NS 257.75 r.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qal cohortative:</td>
<td>'we will rejoice' (8.2.1 r.13); 'he will bear fruit' (18.4.4 r.10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The unusual use of the cohortative suffix יְלַל on the 3 masculine singular is probably the best explanation for 'he will bear fruit', from a rhymed praise by Na'atan Hakkohen ben Ma'vorakh. יְלַל ובשֵׁה יְנַבֵּה 'and hope, and in a good old age he will be fruitful' (18.4.10 r.10); although perhaps it is used more as a jussive, i.e., 'may he be fruitful'. As we have seen above, the 3rd person cohortative is attested elsewhere in the corpus and, in both cases the affix is used more to fit the rhyme scheme employed than to deliver a particular nuance of meaning.

| Qal jussive:             | 'and he returned' (10.11.30 r.13); 'and it was uplifted' (18.4.20 r.7); 'and it rejoiced' (18.4.20 r.7); 'may it rejoice' (13.14.10 r.3) |

In addition there is the possible pausal jussive 'and he fasted' (13.25.5 r.26), discussed above.

Jussives of the middle-weak are not always clearly discerned in an unvocalised text. יְזָזָם 'may it be exalted' (13.17.17 r.17) occurs in a

\(^{82}\)Joüon §80–81.

\(^{83}\)Segal pp. 80–85.
phrase bestowing blessings on the Nasi, his honour be exalted', and should be translated as a jussive: whether the writer was making this morphological distinction, i.e., between the indicatrive נִפַּל and the jussive נַעֲרֵי, e.g., Numbers 24:7, is impossible to determine due to the lack of vocalisation and the fuller orthography of vowels usual in the corpus.

**Qal imperative:**

- 'and place' (12.99 r.14)

**Qal active participle:**

- 'and those who come' (13.26.13 r.17); 'who dwell' (NS 308.122 r.1)

**Nifal:**

- 'the one to be circumcised' (13.20.18 r.16); 'may he [not] be roused' (13.23.1 r.9); 'to be bathed in light' (2.74 r.9)

These represent all the examples of the nifal stem of the middle-weak that are employed in the corpus. Moreover, each of these morphological forms is attested already in BH, at Genesis 17:26, Zechariah 4:1 and Job 33:30 respectively, thus making it neither a particularly productive stem nor a creative one in the letters.

**Pi'el:**

- 'that you assist him' (12.146 r.12); 'and they persuaded him' (24.6.25); 'to persuade' (13.16.17 n.4); 'to search' (13.16.17 r.12); 'marking' (8.14.20 r.1); 'may he establish him' (10.12.25 r.1); 'to establish' (13.33.12 r.12)

A large number of pi'els are attested for the middle-weak verb in the corpus, the majority of which are forms of כָּפַר (from BH), and כָּפַר (both from RH). A previously unattested pi'el of a middle-weak root is 'may he strengthen him' (10.30.3 r.22)—parallel to אָבַד 'may he support him'—which is a denominial from the BH noun אָב. 'to raise up'.

**Pu'al:**

- Fewer pu'als are attested because it appears that the hitpa'el/nitpa'al was preferred for forming the passive of middle-weak pi'els: 'is bound' (122.273 r.6); 'may it be established' (13.8.14 r.27); 'noted' (18.4.20 r.6).

**Hif'il:**

- The hif'il is widely used in the corpus, and is mostly inflected as in BH, e.g.: 'and to raise up' (13.23.1 v.9); 'and that we allow him' (13.24.11 r.17); 'we changed' (Misc. 36.140 r.22); 'may he remove' (13.13.21 r.2).

The 1 singular suffix conjugation is attested in two different forms, with a separating vowel o before the affix, 'and I understood them' (18.4.20 r.10) and 'I have given back'.
or, as is preferred in RH, without 'and when I discerned' (20.173 r.33).\textsuperscript{84} is attested often in BH, e.g., Numbers 22:8, and this probably decides the choice of הִוָֹד הִיָֹד whereas the 1 singular suffix conjugation hif'il of וּי is not.\textsuperscript{85}

'allow' (13J11.4 r.18) is a feminine singular hif'il participle of נָתַן with a rare segolate ending, i.e., נָתַןְהָה, of the type preferred in the RH hif'il verb.\textsuperscript{85}

appears to be an infinitive absolute though from the context we would expect an infinitive construct. The absolute is possibly used due to the lack of an attested infinitive construct of the hif'il of וה in BH or maybe the writer is influenced by the form of the infinitive construct hif'il for the geminate verb, e.g., וְלַקֵּחַ 2 Samuel 3:12.

**Huf'al:** Very few examples of the middle-weak huf'al exist in the corpus: יָרֵם 'let it (not) change' (13J8.14 r.27); יִשָּׁב 'may it become better' (13J16.14 r.9).\textsuperscript{86} However, it is notable that these forms are not taken from BH, since the huf'al of neither verb is attested in the Hebrew Bible.

**Hitpa'el/Nitpa'el:** A number are attested, mostly RH verbs. The suffix conjugation takes the form nitpa'el (13J11.2 r.17); וְהָפָּל 'to be caught'; וִיתֶקְרֵי 'and it was fulfilled' (10J24.8 v.21); the participle has the prefix-וֹתִּי הָפֹךְ 'it is fulfilled' (Misc. 36.140 r.27). The archaising prefix conjugation וְיִתֶּֽקְרֵי 'may they endure' (AS 148.49 r.9) shows סְירֵרְא גא' on using a paragogic nun on a post-biblical verb form.

**Polel:** Many polels are employed in the corpus and all are already attested in BH: יָשְׁבֶּהוּ 'he restores' (10J30.3 r.18); יוֹרֺדֵב 'and may he restore you' (12.146 r.10); יוֹרִדַּנְהוּ 'and may he drive them out' (10J30.5 r.9); יוֹרֵדֶה 'may he establish it' (12.273 v.15); יוֹרִידֵר 'and to awaken' (J2.74 r.19); יַרְדֶּה 'may he exalt him' (32.8 r.20). The lack of post-biblical verbs may be ascribed to RH's preference for the reduplicated stems over the polel. This stem is never used creatively (i.e., where an example is not found in BH) in the corpus.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84}Ibid., p. 84.

\textsuperscript{85}Fernandez p. 132.

\textsuperscript{86}is a slightly ambiguous form since both the roots יָשַׁב and בְּלַק could lie behind it.

\textsuperscript{87}indeed, note that nearly all of the examples are used in optative and desiderative phrases, 'may it be so', describing blessings upon Jerusalem (וְיִשָּׁרֵד), the recipient of the letter (וְיִשָּׁרֵד לַעֲשֹׂרִי) or curses directed against enemies (וְיִשָּׁרֵד לַעֲשֹׂרִי). The stem hardly features in the prosaic narrative of the letters.
The polal is only attested as 'and extolled' (10J11.29 r.10), a construction found at Nehemiah 9:5.

Many examples are attested in the corpus, all of them found in BH, although they assume the form of the post-biblical nitpolel for the suffix conjugation (but not the participle, as is the case for all -n stems in the corpus): 'and you roused yourselves' (13J33.12 r.26); 'consider' (16.6 r.23); 'those who shelter' (12.273 v.8); 'may he exalted' (13J19.19 r.7).

The use of this verbal stem is limited mainly to the common BH verb 'to support' (12.99 r.9; 12.733 r.15); 'may he support you' (12.733 r.16); 'may he support them' (12.347 r.28); although the rarer forms 'that he will transfer (?)' (20.94 r.17) and 'who stir up' (13J16.17 r.30) are also attested.

'cast (?)' (10J24.3 r.14) is the only example of this stem. For the passive of pilpel stems the corpus prefers the hitpalpel/nitpalpel.

The suffix conjugation has the form nitpalpel, 'and he writhed' (24.6 r.34). The other examples act as the passive of :לכלל 'to be supported' (13J16.14 v.9); 'supported' (13J16.14 v.11).

The final-weak verb

Qal infinitive construct: 'to see' (16.3 r.3); 'as you did' (16.6 r.12)

Qal suffix conjugation: 'it has grown' (10J1.1 v.17); 'they cried' (12.851 r.11); 'she saw' (18J3.9 r.7)

The verb of the final-weak suffix conjugation with pronominal suffixes in the corpus, thus indicating a high degree of RH influence on the form. However, from a letter outside our collection we can see a more biblical morphology, from

Fernandez p. 115; Segal §205.

The same word, spelled without 'alef, is found in 2 Samuel 19:27, רָמַן. R.
the ga'on Dani'el ben 'Azarya, ובש 'he did it’ (Gil (1983) no. 376=ULC Or 1080 J4 r.13, Gil 376). This spelling is attested several times in BH, e.g., Deuteronomy 32:15, whereas the 3 masculine singular with 2 masculine singular suffix is not, perhaps thereby leading to the use by Na'atan Hakkohen of RH morphology.

Qal prefix conjugation:

(Qal 'it will be' (20.178 r.14); קראב 'may they increase' (24.43 r.39);
ויעש 'and he made them’ (13]23.1 r.20); קראב 'may they increase’ (13]11.9 r.17)

A single example of the aramaizing suffix conjugation of the, המ 'that happened' (13]20.3 r.3) is attested in the letter of a teacher. Compare S*lomo ben Y*huda's use of the imperative יִה, below.

With the added exception of the wide use of קרא and וינא (discussed above) the prefix conjugation mostly conforms to the BH pattern. In fact, archaic BH plays a major role in the letters of particular writers through the reappearance of the weak letter yod before the י affix of the plural verb, e.g., the lady Maliha writes יִא 'may they come' (13]11.4 r.4),90 נָּֽהֲמְיָֽה Hakkohen, the Babylonian ga'on, uses יִיש 'may they prosper’ (16.6 r.8). Both actual forms are attested in BH, Job 16:22 and Psalms 122:6 respectively. However, these are the only two examples in the corpus, since all the others that show the yod also take the extra biblicising feature of paragogic nun (see above).

Qal jussive:

יִד 'may he be' (13]9.2 r.31)

The jussive of the final weak verb is only regularly attested for the verb יֵה and is dealt with above.

Qal imperative:

עָשֶׂה 'and do' (16.6 r.23); קָא יְחַי 'and come’ (AS 148.49 r.8); יִד 'be’ (20.102 r.18)

יָא 'come', showing the reappearance of final yod, is attested several times in BH, e.g., Isaiah 21:12. Unsurprisingly, it is found in a letter of S*ira Ga'on, who, as we have seen with his use of the י"-affix, has a preference for these archaic BH verbal forms.

יָא is the RH imperative of יֵה, which forms its imperative as if from

90The unusual spelling with double yod (for consonantal yod) is clear in the manuscript contrary to Mann’s transcription (Mann (1922), vol. 2, pp. 306–307).
a root יַה. This example, used by יִלְוֹמָו בֶּן יָדֹעַ, is the only one in the corpus.

**Qal active participle:**

This example, for instance, is the only one in the corpus.

**Qal passive participle:**

The *nifal* follows BH practice, e.g., יָשָׁמֵהוּ 'may it not be wiped out' (AS 149.60 r.2) and יָדֹעַ יָדֹעַ 'and those joined' (10J9.15 r.13), with the exception of the feminine singular participle which shows the RH termination הָלֶא in most cases, e.g., יָשָׁמֵהוּ 'done' (10J1.29 r.13) and יָדֹעַ יָדֹעַ 'hangs' (13J16.14 r.32).

**Pi'el:**

Although the *pi'el* infinitive construct follows the BH model in most letters, e.g., לְשֹׁמֵהוּ 'to change' (10J24.3 r.4) and לְשֹׁמֵהוּ 'to order' (13J16.18 r.16), it is worth drawing attention to נַצְנַח 'declare' (13J31.1 r.10), לַלָּכֵך 'to order' (13J31.1 r.9) and לַלָּכֵך 'to hope for' (13J31.1 r.9), i.e., like the form of the infinitive absolute in BH, e.g., לְשֹׁמֵהוּ 'look for' Jeremiah 8:15, and despite the fact that the correct forms are attested in BH, e.g., לְשֹׁמֵהוּ 'from declaring' Job 32:6, and in the letters of others in the corpus, e.g., לְשֹׁמֵהוּ 'to tell' (13J26.1 r.18). The reason for נַצְנַח’s choice of infinitives ending in -ַּנָס, like often in the letters, because it fits the chosen rhyme scheme, let us be quiet in the community of faith and declare a good name' (13J31.1 r.9).

**Other stems:**

The other stems are inflected as in BH, e.g.: יֵשָׁכֵר, 'and gives him to drink' (13J9.2 r.32): the *hufal*: יָשָׁשֵר 'and it was hard' (12.851 r.11): the *pu'al*: יָשָׁשֵר 'and it is revealed' (NS 308.122 v.3): the *nitpa'al*: יָשָׁשֵר 'it was revealed' (20.94 r.30). A rare exception is יָשָׁשֵר, 'who is called' (13J15.14 r.24) which takes the form of a final-'alef verb, contrary to the attested BH form יָשָׁשֵר 'he is titled' Isaiah 44:5. This is probably a hypercorrection, occurring in an epistle of eulogy which is written in a literary language in rhymed prose.

**The geminate verb**

In BH the basic inflection of the geminate verb depends on whether the verb is principally transitive or intransitive. On the other hand, RH and later traditions of Hebrew tend to ignore this distinction. For the participle of the final-weak verb in RH, see Fernandez p. 131.

91Fernandez p. 152.

92For the participle of the final-weak verb in RH, see Fernandez p. 131.

93Jotion §82; although, as he explains, this distinction is not always adhered to in the complicated inflection of the geminates in BH.
approach in favour of inflecting certain parts of the verb all as triliterals, e.g., the qal suffix conjugation, and other parts all as biliteral, e.g., the qal prefix conjugation.  

Qal infinitive construct: לְכִיתָה 'to engrave [=to write]' (13/23.19 r.3)

Qal suffix conjugation:

- שְׁפֵמָה 'they are desolate' (13/25.5 r.21);
- אַסְפָּרְנָה 'they have encompassed us' (12.146 r.5);
- רִבְנֵה 'he has favoured you' (10/12.17 r.24);
- רַשְׁפֵּט 'we have been humbled' (13/26.1 r.11);
- רַעֹלְנָה 'and I have inscribed it' (6/3.21 r.9)

Both שְׁפֵמָה and אַסְפָּרְנָה follow the pattern of BH, using a triliteral base to form the suffix conjugation, although itself is attested at Isaiah 52:14 and for a similar form אַסְפָּרְנָה 'they encompassed me’ is found at 2 Samuel 22:5. יַבָּנֶה 'he has favoured you’ (10/12.17 r.24) displays the inflection of the transitive verb plus pronominal suffix that can be seen in מִשְׁפְּטֵה 'he has surrounded me’ Hosea 12:1, despite the fact that the 3 masculine singular of יִבָּנֶה plus a pronominal suffix is attested in BH, albeit showing an apparently intransitive inflection, יִבָּנֶה 'he has dealt graciously with me’ Genesis 33:11. It is possible that יִבָּנֶה represents the same form, i.e., יִבָּנֶה with the doubled nun spelled in full, but it is perhaps more likely that the writer is choosing to inflect the verb as a transitive, i.e., triliteral, in all conjugations, rather than the confusing mix of triliteral and biliteral forms that it has in the Hebrew Bible.

'Avraham ben Hagga'on’s writing of רֶשֶׁת רֶדֶל הַלְַלָּל 'and we have been humbled and brought low' (13/26.1 r.11) is contrary to the usual BH practice, where the 1st and 2nd persons take an ō vowel before the affix. The correct BH inflection of דְלָל הַלְַל 'we are brought low', is actually attested at Psalms 79:8 and thus Avraham’s use of דְלָל הַלְַל is particularly unusual. The morphology of both דְלָל הַלְַל and רֶשֶׁת רֶדֶל is influenced in this case by the inflection of the middle-weak verb which takes a similar biliteral form in the qal suffix conjugation, e.g., כָּנָנִי 'we shall rise' Psalms 20:9.

וַיִּשְׁפְּט 'and I have inscribed it’ (6/3.21 r.9) takes an unexpected form, also lacking ō. Again, the correct BH inflection is attested for

94Segal p. 85ff.

95שְׁפֵמָה is the expected form, despite its stative meaning 'are desolate' since in BH the suffix conjugation of שְׁפֵמָה is based on the triliteral root (whereas normally the stative geminate forms the suffix conjugation from the biliteral base); cf. Jotion §82k.

96It is highly improbable that the spellings are in fact defective and a long ō vowel was to be read since this is extremely rare in the corpus, particularly in this writer’s letters.

97The contamination of geminate verbs by the middle-weak is already noticed in BH, Jotion §820.
this verb, albeit in a slightly different form, i.e., הָקְרָבִּים 'I have inscribed you' Isaiah 49:16. Unlike 'Avraham ben Haggai' on though, the writer of this letter is influenced by the RH and Talmudic Hebrew treatment of geminate verbs, which prefer to inflect them as triliterals whenever possible in the qal suffix conjugation, e.g., יָשֶׁב 'I have enacted a law' B. Yoma 67b.

Qal prefix conjugation:

וְהָיָה 'and he shows favour' (13:9.2 r.9); יָשֶׁב 'it will inscribe' (13:23.13 r.17); יָהִיב 'and may he favour them' (16.251 r.5)

Qal active participle:

וְיָשֶׁב 'and he shows favour' (13:9.2 r.9); יָשֶׁב 'it will inscribe' (13:23.13 r.17); יָהִיב 'and may he favour them' (16.251 r.5) is the usual form of יָשֶׁב in BH, e.g., יָשֶׁב Deuteronomy 28:50. Though not attested in BH, we would expect a similar form for the transitive יָשֶׁב, i.e., יָשֶׁב. Perhaps יָשֶׁב 'it will inscribe' (13:23.13 r.17) represents a rare defective spelling or, probably more likely, it is influenced by the form of the intransitive geminate, much like the case of BH יָבָא, a transitive verb, which is attested as יָבָא 'he will guard' at Isaiah 31:5, etc.

Qal active participle:

וְיָשֶׁב 'and to the one showing pity' (13:15.11 r.15); יָכְבִּים 'and to the one going around' (13:11.15 r.15)

These participle forms are attested in BH, e.g., at Proverbs 28:8 and at 2 Kings 6:15 respectively.

The passive participle is regular: וְרָכְבָה 'the desired' (10:22.7 r.10).

Nifal:

Most examples of the nifal are attested in BH, e.g., יָכְבִּים 'and I have become contemptible' (18:4.20 r.10) is based on the וָאוֹב:

99Cf. Segal p. 86, from where this example is taken.

98This is despite the verbs originally stative meaning, cf. Joion §82k:

100Ibid., §82b.

101See Vocalisation for a discussion of this form.

102However, they are used in a slightly strange context where we could expect the infinitive construct: לא צַרְצִי ... so that they will do no harm to those from all Israel who come to [the city] to adore its stones, and to show pity on its dust and to go around the gates of the temple and to pray' (13:11.15 r.14–15). Although the participle is not syntactically impossible (i.e., 'to be one who shows pity...'), I wonder whether the writer intended to write the infinitive forms of these two verbs here but was influenced by the better attested participles.
consecutive ‘I will make myself contemptible’ attested at 2 Samuel 6:22 and shows the same defective spelling: מארים ‘cursed’ (13:23.11 r.7) is a participle found at Malachi 3:9. An exception is הָלַךְלָא ‘to be gathered’ (13:31.8 r.19), a post-biblical verb, which shows the preferred RH triliteral form.103

**Hif'il:**

Many of the hif'îls in the corpus follow BH practice and are indeed attested in the same form in the Hebrew Bible, e.g.: מִשְׁפָּט ‘repeat’ (13:20.18 v.4) is attested as מָשֵׁפַע at Jeremiah 21:4; יְלַעֲרּוּת ‘I have done [no] evil’ (12.217 r.9) is at Numbers 16:15; הָלַךְ ‘to do evil’ (32.8 r.13) is at Genesis 31:7. However, a quite significant number show a triliteral inflection, despite RH also preferring biliteral forms. The following triliterals are among those attested: הָלַךְרָו ‘and to liberate them’ (Misc. 35.49 r.18); הָלַךְרָו ‘and he liberated them’ (24.6 r.21); הָלַךְלַא ‘and may he crown him’ (12.338 r.9); הָלַךְלַא ‘to surround them’ (10:30.3 r.10). Only the last is taken from a biblical verb, attested with the infinitive construct הָלַךְלַא ‘to bring over’ 2 Samuel 3:12; however, the letter-writer prefers the triliteral, transitive, form of the infinitive.

**Huf'al:**

The post-biblical verbs show the triliteral base form, e.g., הָזַכָּרְיִים ‘I am obligated’ (10:9.14 r.5) and יִשְׁלַחַם ‘may they be joined’ (13:15.1 r.3); this extends to the BH verb חָסְלִים, which despite being attested as חָסָל ‘it has grown dim’ in Lamentations 4:1 is inflected as a triliteral by שִׁלְמוֹ ben יֵחָד, יִשְׁלַחֲמָה ‘may they be dimmed’ (13:23.1 r.18). However, סִירָא Ga’on treats the suffix conjugation as biliteral, הָזְכָרְיִים ‘is darkened’ (13:25.5 r.20), the BH form found at Lamentations 4:1.

**Hitpa'el/Nitpa'el:**

This stem isn't widely attested, but we find both hitpa'els, in the infinitive and participle, and nitpa'als/nitpa'els, in the suffix conjugation, e.g.: מַחָטַבִּים ‘imploring’ (12.256 r.7); מַחָטַבִּים ‘and I implored’ (13:16.17 r.7). שִׁלְמוֹ ben יֵחָד employs two infinitive constructs with a final  ה- affix in order to rhyme them: הָלַךְלַא הָלַךְלַא ‘to be profaned’ (10:14.8 v.20); הָלַךְלַא הָלַךְלַא ‘to be praised’ (13:11.5 r.5).

**Polel:**

The geminate פֶּן is used in the polel and is an idiom attested many times in the corpus, e.g.: יָרְנָבְהוּ ‘and may he protect him’ (10G5.8 v.14); מִלְּבָנָה ‘to protect them’ (10:32.8 v.6); מִלְּבָנָה ‘may he protect them’ (NS:92 r.13), etc. Other verbs, such as מִלְּבָנָה ‘to shelter them’ (24.6 r.9), are not very frequent, the letters preferring the reduplicated pîlîpel stem.

**Hitpolel/Nitpolel:**

A number of hitpolels are employed in the corpus, many of which are

103Segal p. 87.

104For the inflection of the hif'il geminate verb see Segal pp. 88–89.
found in BH, e.g., ‘to stand guard’ (J2.74 r.8), ‘lamenting’ (13)23.11 r.25) and ‘and they were broken’ (12.99 r.12), verbs attested in the hitpolel at Psalms 84:11, Lamentations 3:29 and Proverbs 18:24 respectively. Others are not attested in the hitpolel in BH and are found in both hitpolel and nitpolel form, e.g.: הַרְשָׁעִים הָיוּ ‘they were crushed’ (12.99 r.11); מִשְׁתַּמֵּר ‘from going astray’ (12.733 r.8); מְזַהֲפָּה ‘are bowed down’ (18)3.9 r.16).

Pilpel:

A great number of pilpels are attested in the corpus, some from BH, e.g., יָרָה ‘he stirred up’ (13)15.11 r.23; יָשָׁר ‘and may he exalt’ (16.68 r.26); וַתֶּמַעְנוּ ‘we mocked’ (Misc. 36.140 r.23), but also many form post-biblical Hebrew, e.g., לָקַח ‘to investigate closely’ (13)33.12 r.28); מָסָר ‘searchers’ (16.62 r.2); מָצָא ‘and may he bring about’ (10)25.5 r.9).

Pulpal:

The only pulpal attested is יָסַר ‘subtle’ (Misc. 35.15 m.33). The lack of examples compared with the large number of pilpels shows that pulpal is not used as the passive of the pilpel, instead nitpalpel fills that role in the corpus.

Hitpalpel/Nitpalpel:

Many examples of the reduplicated stem are found in the corpus, but mostly from a single root וַיְלַדֵּל, for which the nit/hitpalpel acts as the passive, e.g.: הָבַד ‘brought about’ (16.95 r.12); נַדַּל ‘it be brought’ (NS 321.2 r.4); נַדַּל ‘it was brought about’ (13)23.19 r.4). We also find the BH verb הָבִיא ‘to take delight in’ (12.146 r.8) and the post-biblical נַדִּיל ‘and they were dispossessed of/impoverished’ (18)4.4 r.20).

The quadriliteral verb

The only regularly attested quadriliteral verb in the corpus is the RH פרָם ‘to provide’. It is attested in the quadriliteral pi‘el for the active meaning, פָּרַה ‘to support’ (Misc. 35.14 r.11), and the quadriliteral hitpa‘el for the passive, מָפְרָה ‘to be provided for’ (13)26.16 r.12), פָּרָה ‘to be provided for’ (13)16.14 v.4) and מָפְרָה ‘and from being provided for’ (13)16.14 v.10).

Summary

The bedrock of verbal morphology remains BH in the corpus. The letters continue to attest frequently BH morphology that has been supplanted or just forgotten in other strains of post-biblical Hebrew. The retention of the BH feminine plural in the prefix conjugation, the use of the cohortative and jussive, the waw-consecutives and the role of the infinitive absolute all show that the language of the Hebrew Bible was particularly influential in the letters. The use of the waw-consecutive, as well as such archaic features as the paragogic nun on verbs, suggest that there was a definite desire to emulate the style of BH, even if the morphology does not always match what we would expect to find in the biblical text. The occasional overuse of BH features, such as the cohortative with the waw-consecutive, is a hypercorrection that can be found in other biblicising traditions of BH, e.g., in
the Dead Sea scrolls.

Despite the base of BH morphology and the addition of arachaic forms from the Hebrew Bible, RH morphology is nevertheless influential but principally at lower level. RH influence can be seen in the occasional loss of he in the nif'al infinitives, in the use of י- for the plural ending of the masculine participle, in the pronunciation of the huf'al, the slight preference for triliteral forms of the geminate verbs, the occasional confusion of final-alef and final-he verbs and the forms of the infinitives יניע, יניע and so on. A major post-biblical element picked up and exploited in the letters, however, is the RH nip'ael stem which is found everywhere in the corpus, but again it is characteristic of these writers that they continue to adhere to the BH hitpa'el at the same time, and use both stems together.

Other characteristics of the corpus that reflect neither specific RH or BH influence are the wide use of the pu'al and huf'al conjugations, perhaps as a result of the influence of the Arabic internal passives, perhaps due to their considerable role in the piyyut. Another feature that the letters share with liturgical poetry is the willingness to adapt the form of the verb, e.g., the hif'il infinitive or the feminine participles, in order to obtain a rhyme. There is not a strict adherence to the morphology of BH or RH when a literary effect is required.

One feature of the corpus, whose origin it is difficult to determine, is the form of the prefix conjugation verbal suffix י- It probably relies upon the few instances that occur in BH and is exploited in the letters because of its potential for rhyme with the pronominal suffixes used on all other parts of speech. It is particularly distinctive and is a form not widely used in any other tradition of Hebrew.
Conclusion

The writers of the letters in this corpus, and in the geniza as a whole, were successful in using what was a non-spoken liturgical language as a language of written communication. The letters are not unique in employing Hebrew beyond the liturgy and outside the synagogue at this time: poetry of course was composed in Hebrew as were literary texts of various kings, from commentaries and legal works to histories such as the Scroll of ‘Evyatar. A more prosaic Hebrew similarly found its way into Karaite documents and the court records of the Rabbanite community in Egypt and elsewhere (before being replaced by Judaeo-Arabic). Seeing that we have a comparatively wide use of the Hebrew language, are we justified in treating the language of the letters as a separate idiom? I think that the evidence from this study allows us to answer positively.

It is not the intention here to reiterate much of what has earlier been summarised in the separate sections of the study, but it would be useful to list here what can be regarded as the central features of the letters’ language.

The background pronunciation of the writers is mostly Tiberian, although there is evidence of other reading traditions, particularly the Palestinian. Orthographically, the letters tend towards full orthography but retain many traditional spellings from the Hebrew Bible. Personal style perhaps plays a greater role in the orthography of the letters than in other areas of the language.

Pronouns are a mix of biblical and rabbinic used side by side, similarly many of the particles. In particular, though, the continued (or renewed) use of ז and ר as, respectively, the complementizer and the relativizer indicates the central role of BH.

In the morphology of the noun we can detect the influence of RH, in the occasional form of the plural and, more evident, in the patterns of the noun, particularly of action nouns. Inconsistency is shown by even the best writers in the gender of the noun, and perhaps there is some slight Arabic influence there, as indeed there must be behind the choice of some words over others in the lexicon. However, the writers show a linguistic “nationalism”, similar to that which drove the early paytannim, in employing only Hebrew words in the letters and excluding Arabic loans entirely.

In the morphology of the verb, the letters show forms central to both BH and RH. From BH they employ the waw-consecutive (and it would probably occur more often if the letters had more narrative content), the cohortative and the jussive. From RH they take the nip̄al and the inflection of the geminate verb. The internal passives are well-attested.

Many of the letter writers were also writers of poetry, though not all as accomplished as Šemuel Haššiši, and there are elements in their language which demonstrate this: the variant forms of nouns and the use of ל, -כ, as a conjunction, and -ג, as a relative.

The writers of the geniza letters drew upon many historical layers of the Hebrew language in the composition of their letters. This resultant idiom shows many of the features that can be identified in Medieval Hebrew as a whole. It shares the adherence to BH morphology that we find in the literary language of the writers of prose and poetry in Spain. It shows many of the constructions, rabbinic and medieval, that crop up in the biblical and talmudic commentators. Much of the vocabulary and verbal stems we find in the court records of North Africa. However, as a whole, the mix of language,
biblical, rabbinic, paytannic and medieval, produces an idiom unlike any one of the others that we group under the broad term Medieval Hebrew. Court records, despite often being composed entirely of narrative, never employ the waw-consecutive. Much Spanish Hebrew prose shows the heavy influence of Arabic, an influence that is hard to discern in much of the letters' language, and was probably positively avoided. Where other medieval writers exploit various noun patterns to make up for the loss of the BH infinitival expressions, the letters' language employs them in concert with the infinitives, just as it uses the plain tenses alongside the waw-consecutive, the poetic suffixes alongside the prosaic and so on.

Can we then talk of the language of the letters as a uniform idiom? Archaic forms such as the paragogic nun set šərira Ga'on apart from many others. Babylonian writers also show a slightly greater influence of RH in certain areas of their language. To a small extent, then, we can make a division between East and West, but we could equally make a similar division between the letters of Šəlomo ben Yəhuda in Ramle and 'Efraim ben Șəmarya in Fusṭāṭ: it is essentially stylistic rather than linguistic. There are so many similarities shared by all the writers of the corpus which show that they were basically, as a group, employing the same register of language, the same idiom in their Hebrew letters. We can point to the more distinctive elements of the corpus: the generalised 17- suffix on nouns, the generalised 1- suffix on verbs, the retention of nun in verbal inflections of certain weak roots, but there are less obvious features such as the lack of a nitpa'al participle or the orthography of the huf'al. Moreover, the most interesting fact of all is that we can find features in letters from the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. that are still being employed in the eleventh, twelfth and even thirteenth centuries C.E. We therefore have a tradition of Hebrew that spans at least three hundred years and probably more. I have pointed out earlier in the study a few similarities that some Hebrew letters on papyrus from the fifth and sixth centuries C.E. show to the geniza letters of five hundred years later.¹ I think it would be surprising if there was no common tradition involved.

¹Mishor (1989) draws attention to some startling similarities in style and language between geniza letters, for instance by Șəlomo ben Yəhuda, and the early papyrus letter Oxford MS Heb. d.69 (p).
Sources

The following is a list of the primary sources that make up the study’s main corpus. Not all the fragments are Hebrew letters, some are the Hebrew openings to Judaeo-Arabic letters for instance. Those marked with an asterisk (*) are part of the smaller corpus of 30 letters used in the section on noun morphology. The abbreviation ms=unpublished manuscript text.

Taylor-Schechter Old Series

T-S 8

8.3*  Gil (1983) no. 178
8.13  Gil (1997) no. 237
8.241 Bareket (1995) no. 40
8.263 Bareket (1995) no. 53

T-S 12

12.14  Gil (1983) no. 151
12.16v  Gil (1983) no. 412
12.17*  Gil (1983) no. 286
12.44v  Gil (1983) no. 374
12.77  Gil (1997) no. 44
12.80  Gil (1983) no. 57
12.99*  Gil (1983) no. 114
12.114  Assaf (1946) pp. 135–137
12.146*  Gil (1997) no. 71
12.212  Gil (1997) no. 230
12.213  Gil (1983) no. 259
12.217  Gil (1983) no. 86
12.222  Gil (1983) no. 251
12.230  Mann (1922) pp. 251–252 & ms
12.238  Mann (1922) p. 317
12.247*  Gil (1983) no. 174
12.336r  Gil (1983) no. 367
12.338  Mann (1922) pp. 240–242
12.341  Mann (1922) p. 252 & ms
12.347  Gil (1983) no. 295
12.370  Gil (1997) no. 22
12.723  Schechter pp. 57–58
12.733  Gil (1997) no. 54
12.775  Gil (1983) no. 419
12.851  Gil (1997) no. 18

T-S 16
16.3* Gil (1997) no. 20
16.6 Gil (1997) no. 16
16.18 Gil (1983) no. 262
16.62 Gil (1997) no. 36
16.68 Gil (1983) no. 18
16.95 Gil (1997) no. 28
16.248 Gil (1983) no. 265
16.251 Mann (1922) pp. 92–93
16.261 Gil (1983) no. 127
16.267 Mann (1922) pp. 336
16.275* Gil (1983) no. 76
16.304 Gil (1983) no. 28

**T-S 20**

20.94r Gil (1983) no. 24
20.100r Gil (1997) no. 37
20.102 Gil (1983) no. 79
20.106 Gil (1983) no. 550
20.114 Mann (1922) pp. 271–273
20.141* Mann (1922) pp. 235–236
20.173 Mann (1922) pp. 366–367
20.178 Gil (1983) no. 125
20.181 Gil (1983) no. 94

**T-S 24, 28, 32**

24.6 Gil (1997) no. 236
24.43 Gil (1983) no. 51
28.24r Gil (1997) no. 24
32.8 Mann (1922) pp. 257–259

**T-S 6J**

6J1.11 ms
6J1.28 Mann (1922) p. 209
6J1.33 ms
6J3.1 Gil (1983) no. 338
6J3.11 ms
6J3.14 Mann (1922) p. 217
6J3.15 ms
6J3.21
6J3.23*
6J3.31

6J4.1
6J4.10
6J4.17
6J4.25
6J4.29

6J9.2

**T-S 8J**

8J2.1–4v

8J3

8J8.15

8J14.7
8J14.11
8J14.20
8J14.21
8J14.24
8J14.27

8J16.12

8J18.15

8J19.33

8J20.1
8J20.3

8J21.6

8J22.5
8J22.7
8J22.12

8J33.4
8J33.5

Gil (1983) no. 431
Gil (1983) no. 431

Gil (1983) no. 260
ms

Mann (1922) p. 305 & ms
Gil (1983) no. 417

Schechter pp. 107–111
Schechter pp. 147–148
Mann (1922) p. 295 & ms
ms

Gil (1983) no. 410
Gil (1983) no. 618
De Lange pp. 17–19
Gil (1983) no. 180
Gil (1997) no. 17
Mann (1922) pp. 109–110 & ms
Gil (1997) no. 79
Gil (1983) no. 240
Gil (1997) no. 84
Mann (1922) pp. 304–305
Gil (1983) no. 194
8J33.6  
8J33.9  
8J36.10  

**T-S 10G**

10G5.7r Gil (1997) no. 9  
10G5.8v Gil (1997) no. 37  

**T-S 10J**

10J1 Gil (1997) no. 23  
10J9.12 ms  
10J9.14 Mann (1922) pp. 288-289  
10J9.15 Gil (1997) no. 49  
10J9.25r Gil (1983) no. 187  
10J10.5 Gil (1983) no. 210  
10J10.9 Gil (1983) no. 123  
10J10.20 Mann (1922) p. 203  
10J10.22 Gil (1983) no. 91  
10J11.29–30 Gil (1983) no. 104  
10J12.17 Gil (1983) no. 95  
10J12.22* Gil (1983) no. 254  
10J12.25 Gil (1983) no. 278  
10J13.2 Assaf (1946) pp. 107–108  
10J13.22 Gil (1983) no. 171  
10J14.1 Mann (1922) p. 304  
10J14.8v Gil (1983) no. 135  
10J14.19 Mann (1922) pp. 254–255  
10J15.10 Gil (1983) no. 188  
10J15.18 ms  
10J15.31 ms  
10J20.15 ms  
10J22.7 Bareket (1995) no. 69
10J24.1  Gil (1983) no. 553
10J24.8*  Mann (1922) pp. 372–373

10J25.4  Mann (1922) p. 368
10J25.5  Gil (1983) no. 375
10J25.8  Gil (1997) no. 28

10J27.1  Mann (1922) p. 368 & ms
10J27.2  Gil (1983) no. 65
10J27.7*  Gil (1983) no. 277
10J27.8  Mann (1922) pp. 364–365
10J27.9  Mann (1922) p. 363 & ms

10J30.3*  Bareket (1995) no. 57
10J30.5  Gil (1983) no. 571

10J32.5  Gil (1983) no. 98
10J32.8–9  Gil (1983) no. 38

**T-S 13J**

13J6.3  Gil (1997) no. 76
13J6.21  Mann (1922) p. 232

13J8.14r  Gil (1983) no. 326
13J8.16  Mann (1922) p. 251

13J9.2  Gil (1983) no. 67
13J9.6  ms
13J9.9  Mann (1922) p. 324
13J9.17  ms

13J11.1  ms
13J11.2  Mann (1922) pp. 239–240
13J11.4  Mann (1922) pp. 306–307
13J11.5*  Gil (1983) no. 105
13J11.7  Mann (1922) pp. 40–41
13J11.9  Gil (1983) no. 93

13J13.14  Gil (1983) no. 53
13J13.17  Gil (1983) no. 112
13J13.21  Gil (1983) no. 239
13J13.28  Gil (1983) no. 90
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13J21.21  Mann (1922) p. 204
13J22.17  Gil (1983) no. 172
13J22.21  Mann (1922) p. 41
13J22.25  Gil (1983) no. 282
13J23.1   Gil (1983) no. 126
13J23.7   Gil (1997) no. 80
13J23.8   *ms
13J23.11  Gil (1983) no. 66
13J23.12*  Gil (1983) no. 414
13J23.13  Gil (1983) no. 263
13J23.19  Gil (1983) no. 136
13J24.11  Mann (1922) p. 91
13J25.5   Gil (1997) no. 25
13J25.10* Assaf (1946) pp. 117–118
13J26.1   Gil (1983) no. 88
13J26.3   Gil (1983) no. 283
13J26.16* Gil (1983) no. 36
13J26.21  Mann (1922) p. 339
13J26.23  Gil (1983) no. 152
13J27.3   Gil (1983) no. 529
13J28.14  Mann (1922) p. 209
13J31.1   Gil (1983) no. 186
13J31.3   Mann (1922) p. 299
13J31.7   Gil (1983) no. 129
13J31.8   Gil (1983) no. 145
13J33.2   Gil (1983) no. 264
13J33.6   Gil (1983) no. 109
13J33.12  Gil (1983) no. 121
13J34.2   Gil (1983) no. 120
13J34.3   Mann (1922) pp. 344–345
13J34.10  Gil (1983) no. 97
13J35.1  Gil (1983) no. 24

T-S 18J

18J3.9  Gil (1983) no. 209
18J3.18  Gil (1997) no. 35

18J4.2  Mann (1922) p. 374 & ms
18J4.4*  Gil (1983) no. 582
18J4.5  Abramson pp. 176–179
18J4.9
18J4.11  Gil (1983) no. 438
18J4.15  Gil (1983) no. 150
18J4.17  Gil (1983) no. 59
18J4.20  Gil (1997) no. 90
18J4.26  Gil (1983) no. 47

T-S Misc. 35
(formerly T-S Loan)

Misc. 35.4  Gil (1997) no. 65
Misc. 35.11  Gil (1983) no. 85
Misc. 35.14  Gil (1983) no. 14
Misc. 35.15  Gil (1983) no. 210
Misc. 35.28  Gil (1983) no. 15
Misc. 35.40  Gil (1997) no. 69
Misc. 35.43  Gil (1983) no. 84
Misc. 35.44  Gil (1983) no. 34
Misc. 35.49  Gil (1997) no. 74

T-S Misc. 36
(formerly T-S Loan 140+)

Misc. 36.140  Gil (1983) no. 411
Misc. 36.169  Gil (1997) no. 56
Misc. 36.203  Gil (1997) no. 31
Misc. 36.207  Gil (1997) no. 30

T-S Additional Series

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NS J92* Gil (1983) no. 40
NS J172 Gil (1983) no. 118

Other T-S

Arabic Box 47.243  Gil (1983) no. 565
Box Misc. 26.22*  Gil (1983) no. 166
Box Misc. 28.231  Gil (1983) no. 111
J2.74*  Mann (1922) p. 323
Misc. 36.L2  Gil (1997) no. 57
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