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

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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 *piyyuṭ*.

Examination of the morphology of the verb shows the influence of Rabbinic Hebrew in the weak verbs, particularly the final-weak and geminates, as well as in the use of the rabbinic *nitpa'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.

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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 thithaways end to end and turning, turning
and end to end hithaways writing and with lines of litters
slittering up and louds of latters slettering down, the old
semetomyplace and jupetbackagain from tham Let Rise till Hum Lit.

James Joyce, Finnegans Wake

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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 Fustāt, 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 Pumb^adiṭa 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 *g^o'onim*, the heads of the academies in Jerusalem, Pumb^adiṭa 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 *rešut*, 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, *y^ašivat hašš^avi*, 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 *g^o'onim*, however, but also from *dayyanim*, *haverim* (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.



sofrim, 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 Šolomo ben Yehuda, the eleventh-century Palestinian *ga'on* and prodigious letter-writer, writes to his son, he does so in Judaeo-Arabic (Gil (1983) no. 80=13J36.5)—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.

⁸Blau (1999) p. 232–233, in response to R. Drory’s theories on the literary/communicative split between the use of Hebrew and Arabic in the medieval Jewish writings.

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 Šolomo ben Yehuda replies to Efraim ben Šmarya, opening his letter with *החבר הגע מכתב ההביר* ‘the Haver’s letter arrived’ (NS 321.2 r.1).

¹⁰For instance Drory pp. 58–59 quotes a letter of Sahl ben Mašliaḥ replying to Ya‘aqov ben Šamu‘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 *בני מקרא*’.

¹¹It 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.¹² 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 Hebrew 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.¹³ 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.

¹²Goitein, vol. 2, p. 175

¹³It 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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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=JTS 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

¹⁴As well as the Taylor-Schechter collecton, 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.

¹⁵I 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, *Yerušalmi*

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

Quotations from rabbinic texts are from the standard Vilna editions. Quotations from the Hebrew Bible are from *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 4th edition, Stuttgart 1990. Biblical translations are my own or adapted from the New Revised Standard Version, Oxford 1989.

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' (13J14.10 r.11). Usually the whole word is not vocalised but just one or two vowels are written, e.g., עַמָּם 'their people' (13J14.10 r.17), וַיִּסַּף 'may he add' (18J4.17 r.25) and שְׁלִישִׁים 'leaders' (13J31.1 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, עָשָׂה 'he did' (10G5.8 v.11) and עוֹמֵד 'standing' (20.100 r.32).¹ The different systems can even be used on the same word, e.g., in a letter of Naṭan ben 'Avraham, מְגִדְלוֹת 'towers' (13J31.1 r.4), שְׁלִקְדוּשִׁים 'of holy men' (13J31.1 r.16) and כָּרוּתָהּ 'cut' (13J31.1 r.18), or in a copy of a letter by Šʿrira and Hayya, מֵאֶפֶל וּמֵחֹשֶׁךְ 'from gloom and from darkness' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.3).

Apart from the vowels signs proper, other diacritics such as *dageš* and *ga'ya* are equally rare. When they do occur they often appear unnecessary: Šʿmu'el ben 'Eli is probably just doodling when he writes the *dageš* in כִּי 'because' (NS 309.20 r.4). The *rafe* is infrequently attested: מִבֵּת 'from the daughter of' (13J14.10 r.28). The the diacritic dots on the שׁ and שׂ are employed more often, perhaps indicating that there was some uncertainty over the correct pronunciation of שׁ and שׂ, e.g., הַשְּׂרִים 'the princes' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.10) and שְׁכִינָתוֹ 'his presence' (13J14.10 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., הַיִּשְׁבִּיבָה 'the academy' (13J31.1 r.5), אָז 'then' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 4 v.17) or וַיִּדְנוּ 'and they judged' (8J20.1 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., זוּאִי 'Zoë' (13J11.4 r.6); בֶּנְהֵא 'in Bēnhē' (10J9.14 r.7); לְצִקִּילִיאָה 'to Sicily' (12.114 r.15).³

Vocalisation can be used to elucidate a complicated or obscure biblical form, e.g., וּבְזַכְרֵנוּ 'and when we remember' (8J20.1 r.3), especially pausal forms, e.g., וְגוֹ 'and go' (13J20.25 r.9) and יֵאבְדוּ '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/šin*, i.e., as שׁ and שׂ, 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 verlarised pronunciation of the *s*; the Arabic name for 'Sicily' usually shows an *i* vowel, i.e., is *šiqilliya*.

will perish' 32.8 r.44).

It is used once to mark a feminine suffix: עינך 'your eye' (13J20.9 r.8).

It can be used to distinguish an unusual form from its more common, consonantly identical counterpart, e.g., דברנו 'our helmsman [=leader]' (20.114 r.8) as opposed to דברנו 'our word'; ימים 'seas' (8J20.1 r.5) rather than ימים 'days'.

Very rarely vowels distinguish definite and indefinite nouns: לנער 'to the boy' (13J20.3 r.9); בשמחות 'in rejoicing' (13J11.1 r.11).

Vocalisation can be used to distinguish a construct from an absolute noun, e.g., לשכר 'for the reward' (10J11.29 r.17); מבת 'from the daughter of' (13J14.10 r.28).

Vocalisation sometimes serves as an alternative to full orthography, e.g., שלחתי 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8), מלהכנס 'from entering' (13J20.18 r.13), יבאו 'they will come' (13J11.1 r.9), התמים 'the Tummim' (13J20.9 r.8) and ויאבדו 'and may they perish' (13J14.10 r.14). This use of vowel signs is found particularly in Naṭan ben 'Avraham's letters since he shows a preference for defective orthography in the manner of BH, e.g., יערך '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., להיאמד 'to be judged' (Gil (1983) no. 408=ULC Add 3347 r.6).⁴

Also in Naṭan ben 'Avraham's letters and occasionally elsewhere we find that vowels can be used to draw attention to a rhyme scheme, e.g., ליקירנו חשובנו גדולנו אצילנו משוש לבנו 'to our friend, our considered, our valiant, our great, our noble Masos of our heart' (13J31.1 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.⁵ 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.

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: גיזר גיזר (NS 157.29 v.14).

⁵Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 77–78.

All the graphemes of the Tiberian vowel system are attested with the exception of two *ḥatefs*, *ḥatef-segol* and *ḥatef-qameṣ*; *ḥatef-pataḥ* is also very rare. The most frequently attested signs are those for *šere* and *qameṣ*.

Tiberian *qameṣ*

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

Long *qameṣ*: דָּלְתוֹ וּגְלוֹתוֹ 'his poverty and his exile' (NS 309.20 v.9); שְׁלִישִׁים 'officers' (13J31.1 r.16). The vowel sign marks the long *qameṣ* 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 *qameṣ* which under the influence of the regular noun might have been prone to elision, since in דָּבָר, for example, the first syllable is reduced to *šewa* with the addition of an affix, דְּבָרִים. The vocalisation is used primarily, therefore, to indicate the correct pronunciation of these words.

Short *qameṣ*: שָׁמְעוּ 'his report' (13J11.2 r.7); בָּהֲנִי 'my thumb' (20.114 r.25); וּבִזְכָּרְנוּ 'and when we remember' (8J20.1 r.3); עָרְלָה 'פרסקיה' (13J14.10 r.28). The texts attest no incidence of the vowel *qameṣ* 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 *qameṣ*, e.g., לְמוֹכְרֵנוּ 'to sell us' (10J27.8 r.13).⁶ There is little evidence to indicate how *qameṣ* was pronounced by the letter-writers. The correct writing of short *qameṣ* 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 *qameṣ* as *o* may be the influence of the other reading traditions associated with the liturgy and rabbinic literature.⁷

An interchange of *qameṣ* and *pataḥ* is attested in the corpus. Moše the scribe writes the suffix conjugation verb וְשָׁבַתְתִּי 'and I spent the Sabbath' (13J20.9 r.25) with a *pataḥ* rather than *qameṣ* 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.⁸ 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.⁹

⁶For further examples see *Orthography*.

⁷Cf. 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 B^gad-k^qfat 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 *dageš*, when the Mišna is being read.

⁸Morag (1971) p. 1125; Dotan p. 1464.

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

Tiberian *paṭaḥ*

There is some small evidence for the furtive *paṭaḥ*: גרוע 'diminished' (13J14.10 r.19), which occurs in a letter of the Palestinian *ga'on*, Yošiyahu.¹⁰

Yošiyahu Ga'on attests *paṭaḥ* for *segol* in a number of possessive suffixes, e.g., שושקהם 'their plunderers' (13J14.10 r.14); נִיטָהֶם 'their miraculous deeds (?)' (13J14.10 r.14). The *paytan* Šim'u'el Haššliši shows the opposite interchange in a construct noun, תהלת 'praise [of]' (16.68 r.16). The interchange of *paṭaḥ* and *segol* can be explained as the influence of the Babylonian tradition of BH, which originally used only one sign for Tiberian *paṭaḥ* 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 *ḥatef-paṭaḥ*

Ḥatef-paṭaḥ is only attested rarely in the corpus, e.g., מֵאֲנַחַת 'causes to sigh' (10J10.5 r.13). Instead, we often find the full *paṭaḥ* sign being written: הַמְעַרְבִים 'the westerners' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.8); וַיִּשְׂמַחְךָ 'and may he cause you rejoicing' (Gil (1997) no. 73=JTS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.26); כֵּאֲשֶׁר 'when' (Gil (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 *qibbuš*

The Tiberian sign *qibbuš*, ֻ, is sometimes unusually attested in conjunction with a vowel-letter *waw*, although this does not represent a phonetic change: בָּנוּ 'they have built' (Gil (1983) no. 284=ENA 4010.47 vm.1); וַיַּעֲבִיבוּם 'and they humbled them' (Gil (1997) no. 52=ENA 4050 v.9).

Tiberian *šere*

The most common use of the Tiberian *šere* sign, ֶ, is to mark the internal *šere* of feminine nouns and adjectives: צִמְחָה 'springing up' (13J11.7 r.5); שְׁלֵמָה 'full' (13J13.28 r.4); לְכַנְסָתוֹ 'to his synagogue' (NS 321.22 r.12); צוֹלְעָה 'the lame one' (13J14.10 r.15), from Micah 4:6.

Two examples of interchange of *šere* with other vowels are attested. הָעָשׂוּי 'what was done' (8J20.3

¹⁰Many *geniza* Hebrew Bible manuscripts of this period which display non-Standard Tiberian vocalisation show no evidence of furtive *paṭaḥ*, 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 *paṭaḥ/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. Wright, *vol. i*, p. 10.

¹³There are frequent examples in Davis, e.g., T-S AS 3.56 Numbers 11:12 הָאֲדָמָה for the MT's הָאֲדָמָה.

r.8) is found in a copy of a letter by the Babylonian *ga'on* Nəḥemya Hakkohen. Standard Tiberian Hebrew attests וְעָשָׂה , e.g., Exodus 3:16. The interchange of Tiberian *šere* 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.¹⁴ The problem with most texts of the Babylonian *g^a'onim* in the corpus is that they are not autographs but copies produced by local scribes and dignitaries in Fuṣṭāṭ 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 Šərirra and Hayya, is also a copy and attests a different vowel interchange, *šere* for *šewa*, בְּמַעֲשָׂיו 'in his deeds' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.11). This is an unusual exchange of vowels, effectively \bar{e} for *a*, but not unknown in *geniza* texts.¹⁵ 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 *ε* 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.¹⁶ Šadoq Hallevi of Ramle (Misc. 35.15), 'Avraham of Minyaṭ Zifta (32.8) and Yosef Hakkohen ben Šəlomo 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 Ašqelon (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.¹⁷ 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*, יָרִיקָה 'Yariqa' (NS 321.112 r.4), as does a copy of a letter from the same writer, עָשָׂה 'he did'

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

¹⁵Cf. Morag (1988), text 3 (T-S F1(1).19), pp. 2–3, which reads שָׁלְקִינָה for an expected שָׁלְקִינָה ; this text attests many deviations from Standard Tiberian vocalisation with a complete lack of consistency.

¹⁶See Gil (1992) §870–871 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.

¹⁷See Mann's notes on the text, Mann (1922) vol. 1, pp. 92–93.

(10G5.8 v.11). 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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 Naṭan 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 Naṭan’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 *paṭah* being used for Tiberian *segol*, which could be regarded as a Babylonian feature.²¹ In חֹק וְחֹק ‘and he decreed a law’ (13J26.13 r.22) we find a Babylonian *qameṣ* for an expected *paṭah*: 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 וַיִּחַן ‘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 *qameṣ*, e.g., מַחֲמֵם ‘show them [no] mercy’ Deuteronomy 7:2. The retention of historical short *o* for Tiberian *qameṣ* is a feature of the Babylonian pronunciation tradition, although it is usually realised as an *u* vowel.²³ In the case of חֹן, according to the manuscript evidence assembled by Yeivin, it is usually vocalised with *šureq*, 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 *qameṣ-ḥaṭuf* as *o*.

¹⁸See 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.

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

²⁰Ibid., p. 120.

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

²²Yeivin (1985) p. 614.

²³Ibid., pp. 419ff.

²⁴Ibid., 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 *dageš* or for *sin/šīn* 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 Naṭan 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 Naṭan ben 'Avraham; he also attests Tiberian vowels.

The following signs are attested:

Lined <i>šere</i>	ב̄	לִבֵּנו 'our heart' (13J31.1 r.3)
Lined <i>pataḥ</i>	פ̄	יִעֲזֹרֵהוּ 'may he help him' (13J31.1 r.7)
Lined <i>qameṣ</i>	ש̄	שְׁלוֹם 'peace' (10J15.10 r.4)
Lined <i>hireq</i>	ד̄	מִודִים 'thanking' (10J15.10 r.4)
Simple <i>holem</i>	ו̄	וְעִנְיָתוֹ 'and his humility' (10J15.10 r.6)

As examples such as לִבֵּנו 'our heart' (13J31.1 r.3) and נִכְסֵפֶת '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 *dageš*. In these examples, either the vowel is actually a long vowel in an open syllable, -ב̄- and -ש̄-, or the syllable is technically closed by *šewa*, פֶּת-.

The equivalence of Naṭan's lined *šere* and Tiberian *šere* is shown when he vocalises the same word with the two different signs, מְבִרְכַת אֱלֹהִים 'from a blessing of God' (8.3 r.5) and בְּרִצּוֹן אֱלֹהִים 'by the will of God' (8J20.1 v.2).

Naṭan'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 *pataḥ* for Tiberian *segol*, e.g., נִזָּר 'diadem' (13J31.1 r.12) and נִכְסֵפֶת 'it longs' (13J31.1 r.15), however, in similar segolates showing Tiberian vowels he uses *segol*, עֲזָרָה '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 *pataḥ*. The noun וָרִי 'and cries' (13J31.1 r.11) is conclusive evidence of Naṭan's

²⁵Young Babylonian manuscripts are dated from about 900–1450 C.E. and often display a totally Tiberian or heavily Tiberian-influenced pronunciation; cf. Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp.99–100.

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 *piyyuṭ* of Šamu'el Haššliši, Bodl. Heb. d. 50.1. Most examples, though, occur in the few letters of Naṭan 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 *dageš*.

²⁷For the vocalisation of segolates in the Babylonian tradition see Yeivin (1985) pp. 817ff, esp. p. 829.

Tiberian pronunciation. He writes a short *ḥ* vowel, in imitation of Tiberian *qames-ḥaṭuf*. This is not a Babylonian vowel, since Tiberian short *ḥ* in Babylonian is realised as *o* or *u*.²⁸ In this case, the attested genuine Babylonian form is with *holem*, רִנִּי.²⁹ 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 *šere* and *sego*) or a horizontal line like *rafe*. Introducing the quotation may be an abbreviated phrase such as אֹמֵר (אומר) 'it says' (10J13.22 r.1), וכתב בתורה (וכתוב בתורה) 'and it is written in the Tora' (Misc. 35.49 r.12) or just ככתוב (ככתוב) 'as it is written' (13J14.10 r.32), and it is often ended by וְגוֹמֵר (וגומר) 'etc.' (13J14.10 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: נַעַם (נחוה עדין or נחוה עדין) 'his rest be in 'Eden' (6J4.17 r.3), תְּהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוּרֵי הַחַיִּים תִּנְצַבֶּה (תהי נפשו צרורה בצרורי החיים) 'may his spirit be enwrapped in the bundle of life' (32.8 r.30), זָלַב (זכרונו לברכה) 'his memory be for a blessing' (24.43 r.15), נְטֵרֵיהּ רַחֲמָנָא נְטֵרֵהּ (נטריה רחמנא) 'protect him O Merciful One' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.16) or שְׁמֵרֵהּ שְׁצֵר (שמרו שצו) or combinations thereof 'his Rock keep him' (10J25.5 r.3). Other commonly occurring abbreviations are the various names of God, e.g., אֵיִם (אלהים) 'God' (NS 321.2 r.14), הַמָּקֶם (המקום) 'the Place' (Misc. 35.43 r.2) and הַקְּבֵהּ הוּא (הקדוש ברוך הוא) 'the Holy One, blessed be He' (Misc. 35.49 r.5), and certain well-known people, places and concepts from Jewish tradition, e.g., חֲכָמִים (חכמים) 'the sages' (8.3 r.17); גְּדוֹלָה (בסנהדרין גדולה) בסנהדרין גדולה, בסנהדרי גדולה, בסנהדרא... (and so on) 'in the Great Sanhedrin' (13J23.1 r.2); יֵשׁ (בית ישראל) בית יש 'the House of Israel' (13J11.5 r.20); וּבִירוּשָׁלַם (ובירושלים) 'and in Jerusalem' (AS 151.20 r.18). The phrases peculiar to letters are often abbreviated, as well as the numerous titles accorded to individuals, e.g., מֵרֵב סַהְלָאן (מורנו or כבוד גדולת קדושת מרנא ורבנא) כַּגֵּק מֵרֵב סַהְלָאן 'the honourable, great and holy master and teacher Sahlān' (18J4.15 r.15), מַאֲדָּ גַא (מאדוננו) 'from our lord the *ga'on*' (13J16.17 r.36); בִּירֵבִי (בירבי) 'son of a scholar' (12.44 v.1).

As with the use of vowel signs, occasionally the reason for abbreviation is not clear, e.g., יְקִירָנֵנוּ abbreviates יְקִירֵנוּ '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

²⁸Ibid., p. 375.

²⁹Ibid., p. 805.

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^ggad-k^gfat* allophones and in the velarised consonants.

This section deals with the gutturals, the sibilants and the *b^ggad-k^gfat* consonants. In respect of the emphatics such as ט or ק no evidence is available from the letters other than that they remain distinct from their non-velarised counterparts, ה and כ. 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, א, ה, ח and ע, show no interchange and only a little evidence of elision, affecting only the weaker gutturals א and ה. There is no evidence of ע interchanging with א or of ה and ח swapping places, indicating that the pronunciations of each were distinct, as in modern Oriental traditions of Hebrew.³⁰ Quiescent 'alef is occasionally elided, principally under the influence of RH morphological forms, e.g., קרינו 'we have read' (10J9.25 r.8) and הקרוי 'called' (20.94 r.21), but the BH spelling is as often carefully retained, e.g., לגמרא 'to swallow' (20.100 r.18). Intervocalic ה is elided in the following *nif'al* infinitive constructs only: ליכנס 'to enter' (10J9.14 r.21) and וליפתח 'and to be opened' (18J4.20 m.11); as with 'alef the BH spelling is more often retained, e.g., להכלל '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 ה-, e.g., ישמרו 'may he keep him' (16.68 v.3), could also be symptomatic of a general weakening of intervocalic *he*, i.e., ישמרו > ישמרהו, *-ēhu* > *-ō*.

The sibilants

Sin and *samek* 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 interchange that do occur are probably mostly a result of the influence of RH orthography, e.g., יפרוש כפיו 'spreading out his hands' (20.94 r.17) for BH פרש, e.g., ויפרש כפיו 'and he spread out his hands' Exodus 9:33, which is always פרס in rabbinic texts. However, there are exceptions. *Sin* is used for *samek* in the unusual spelling סר 'prince, leader' (13J15.14 r. 5, r.19, r.24), instead of BH שר, e.g., 2 Samuel 3:38. שושקהם 'their plunderers' (13J14.10 r.14) shows Yošiyahu 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 שוסיקהם, but there is understandable confusion, since one letter has been written over with another, *sin* over *samek*, indicating that the writer wasn't sure if it was a ס or a ש but ended up with the hypercorrect ששה for the actual biblical root שסה, e.g., שסיים 'plunderers' Judges 2:14. Elsewhere in the same letter, Yošiyahu constantly puts the diacritics on *šin* and *sin*, e.g., ששים 'rejoicing' (13J14.10 r.8); ישמח 'may he delight' (13J14.10 r.10); שכינתו 'his presence' (31J14.10 r.10). Because of the correspondence between Arabic *s* and Hebrew *š* in cognate roots, e.g., Arabic *sa'ala* equals Hebrew *ša'al*, there could have been some uncertainty over the pronunciation of *sin* and *šin* in

³⁰Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 282; Dotan p. 1131.

³¹Dotan p. 1132.

particular words. Perhaps then Yošiyahu Ga'on was making sure in his letter.³² Evidence of actual confusion is difficult to find, however, there is a single example of the interchange of *samek* and *šin* in the corpus: הסיטותים 'the two lines' (18J4.4 r.28). Other letters attest the correct RH form, שיטה, e.g., שיטותיים '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^ogad-K^ofat* consonants

The Tiberian pronunciation tradition preserved the two different pronunciations of all six *B^ogad-K^ofat* consonants, 'hard', with *dageš*, and 'soft', without *dageš*. In the hard pronunciation the consonants are pronounced as stops, in the soft, or spirant, pronunciation they are fricatives.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: ת is pronounced as *t* and *ṭ* in the Yemenite and Iraqi traditions, ט preserves a consistent dual pronunciation of *d* and *ḏ* in the Yemen, but the Iraqi tradition pronounces 'soft' ט, *ḏ*, 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.³⁴

Dageš and *rafe* are rarely written in the corpus. Yošiyahu Ga'on writes a small number of diacritics in one of his letters, e.g., דְּכִי 'surging' (13J14.10 r.16); מְבִיָּה '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 ornamenting it 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, *v*.³⁵ The pronunciation of the spirant ב, i.e. following a vowel, is demonstrated in the rhyme used by Šalom ben Yehuda, יוטב שמו ויטב אביו ויגדל כבודו קהלהו להרביב וינח להם אל מכל מגור מסביב '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 *v* 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 Šmarya, נפלאותהב 'his wonders' (12.273 v.10), for BH נפלאותיו, 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

³²This letter, 13J14.10, was addressed to the Jerusalemmites in Fuṣṭāṭ and was probably intended for public reading in the synagogue.

³³Khan p.13.

³⁴Dotan p. 1126.

³⁵Khan 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 ׀א- or א- would point to the probable influence of the Babylonian Talmud's Hebrew, whereas ׀י- would suggest the Palestinian rabbinic tradition.³⁶

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., *matres 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 *ō* vowel

The Tiberian long *ō* vowel is usually marked by *mater lectionis waw* in the letters: 'who dwells' (10J10.22 r.14); 'who love' (6J3.14 r.8); 'ear' (16.68 r.13); 'to draw water' (10J11.29 r.17); 'it will reach us' (AS 145.61 r.13). A regular exception is the segolate קדש in the commonly occurring BH phrase עיר הקדש '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, עיר הקודש (13J27.3 r.2).³⁷ Very occasionally *similar* defective spellings are employed, e.g., בדרותיו 'in his generations' (10G5.8 v.9) and בברות 'in pits' (Gil (1983) no. 50=ENA 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, המבושרת

³⁶Fernandez p. 14.

³⁷Personal preference plays a major part: the letters written by Šolomo ben Yhuda's son, 'Avraham, always show the defective spelling עיר הקדש, while his father's writings often attest עיר הקודש: 'to be driven out of the Holy City' (10J10.22 r.5); עיר הקודש 'who go up to the Holy City' (13J11.5 r.20).

'sought' (18J4.4 r.8).³⁸ Usually, though, the regular feminine plural ending is spelt with *waw*, e.g., בברכות 'with blessings' (13J11.5 r.7) and ישועות 'salvations' (16.18 r.2).

Common BH words that are historically spelt with *'alef* or *he* do not show *waw* for *ō*: לא 'no' (10J10.22 r.2); ראש 'head' (10J10.22 r.15); זאת 'this' (8.3 r.18); צאנו 'his flock' (13J14.8 r.17); כה 'this way' (16.275 r.23). A unique exception in the corpus occurs in an oddly-written letter addressed to Ṭoviyya ben 'Eli, where the negative particle is spelt לו, so that it resembles the conditional conjunction לוי, as follows, ולו חזר אלי תשובה אות אחת 'and not a single word of reply returned to me' (10J25.4 r.6) and ולו שגרו אלי תשובה 'and they didn't send me a reply' (10J25.4 r.10).³⁹ 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 Šolomo ben Y'huda's letters. He also occasionally spells the negative particle with *waw*, though retaining the *'alef*, לוא, when it is functioning as a negative conjunction in the construction שלוא, i.e., שלוא 'so as not to' (13J14.5 r.11; 12.217 r.11); it is written defectively when it is simply the negative adverb, שלא 'which [we have] not' (13J14.8 r.30).⁴⁰ 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: אלהינו 'our God' (AS 145.107 r.7); והאלהים 'and God' (13J20.25 r.19). Other names and titles are also usually written defectively: משה 'Moše' (10J12.17 r.21); יאשיהו 'Yošiyahu' (Misc. 35.44 r.1); יעקב 'Ya'aqov' (8J36.10 r.6); חכהן 'Hakkohen' (18J4.4 r.35); השפט 'the judge' (13J20.13 r.11); although we can find them written *plene* יעקוב (13J16.24 r.9; 13J34.2 r.9), השופט (13J16.18 r.10) and הכוהן (13J8.14 r.12).⁴¹ Only the drafts of letters by 'Efraim ben Šmarya are orthographically-unusual enough for us to encounter a reading such as שלמו 'Šolomo' (Gil (1983) no. 334=PER H 135 r.16) for שלמה, 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: אנכי 'I' (13J11.4 r.11); הכל 'everyone' (13J9.2 r.24); נכה 'before' (13J25.5 r.7).

In BH inflected forms of the direct object marker את are usually written defectively.⁴² Both *plene* and defective spellings occur in the letters, with the former predominating: אותנו 'us' (18J4.4 r.12); מאותו 'from the same' (13J20.3 r.16); however, letters of Babylonian provenance, under the influence

³⁸For the practice of avoiding two *yods* or two *waws* see Joüion §7c. Šolomo Hakkohen Ga'on's unusual use of ברות is probably occasioned by the *plene* spelling having been used in the previous line, in ברות 'in pits' (Gil (1983) no. 50=ENA 4020.42 r.31), an example of the *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 *waw*, Gil (1983) no. 49=ENA 2804.8 r.26.

³⁹Although it could also be the case that the writer is intending to write לו 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!'

⁴⁰The same spelling, לוא, is the dominant form of the negative in the Dead Sea scrolls, Abegg, p. 329.

⁴¹These names are always defective in the Hebrew Bible. כהן, for example, occurs 250 times in the MT, never with a *mater lectionis waw*; Andersen and Forbes p. 129. יעקוב written *plene* is probably under the influence of Arabic orthography, where the name is written with *waw*, Ya'qūb.

⁴²Andersen and Forbes p. 129.



of conservative biblical orthography, show a greater proportion of defective spellings of אהו 'him' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.20; NS 308.122 v.19). Contemporary Karaite marriage documents also attest both spellings.⁴³ The adverbial modifier מאד is another particle that occurs in both *plene* and defective form in the letters: מאד (13J16.13 r.12); למאד (13J17.17 r.2); מאוד (16.275 r.22); למאוד (18J4.17 r.19). Both spellings are employed side by side, probably as a deliberate orthographic device, in the writings of Šolomo ben Yehuda למאוד עד מאד 'greatly' (13J9.2 r.18).

The *pe-'alef* verbs are always written defectively in the 3 singular and plural prefix conjugation: יאמרו 'they will say' (10J14.19 r.7); יאבדו 'they will perish' (16.68 r.18); ותאבד 'and it will vanish' (13J13.14 r.25); יאכל 'it shall [not] devour' (13J13.14 m.1). The infinitive of אמר also only marks an \bar{o} vowel with *waw* when the RH form is employed, i.e., לומר 'to say' (28.24 r.57) but always לאמר 'saying' (13J13.14 r.29). The 1 singular prefix conjugation is always *plene*, ואומר 'and I said' (10J10.22 r.4), as is the participle, ואומרים 'and saying' (13J9.9 r.8). Verbs middle or final-*'alef* are often written defectively, although overall the *plene* spelling is more frequent: שואלים 'asking' (18J4.5 v.15; 12.44 v.3 and elsewhere) and שאלים 'asking' (13J19.15 r.18); ולשאול 'and to ask' (18J4.5 r.31) and לשאל 'to ask' (10J12.22 r.19); בואו 'his coming' (16.261 r.11) and יבא 'he will come' (10J10.9 r.8); למלאות 'to fill' (32.8 r.8) and למלאה 'to fill' (13J23.7 r.12). Regular verbs in the 2 and 3 masculine singular prefix conjugation very occasionally write the \bar{o} vowel defectively: ימכר 'he will sell' (13J13.28 r.23); תכתב 'you will write' (8.3 r.16); a letter from Aleppo writes *plene* and defective side by side, ידרש ויהקור 'may he inquire and seek' (12.17 r.11); but by far the more common spelling is *plene*: יגזור 'he will decree' (13J16.17 r.22); יחמול 'may he spare' (NS J92 r.13). The regular *qal* infinitive is also rarely found written defectively, לכתב 'to write' (13J14.5 r.10) but לכתוב 'to write' (13J13.14 r.23), both cases from letters written by Šolomo ben Yehuda.

Numerals that have an \bar{o} vowel are mostly written defectively, as is the usual style in BH: שלשה 'three' (13J20.3 r.2); משלש 'from three' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.15); שמנה 'eight' (NS 308.122 v.19); ושלשים 'and thirty' (12.338 v.8). *Plene* spellings are far less frequent, שלושת 'three' (6J3.14 r.6) and שלושה 'three' (13J15.14 r.9).⁴⁴

In summary, the trend observed in the letters is for *waw* to mark \bar{o} 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 \bar{u} vowel

Tiberian short *qames*, *qames-hatuf*, is not usually represented by a vowel letter: קדשו '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 *waw* consistently marking \bar{o} even in the numerals, e.g., משלושה r.6 and שמונה r.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 *g'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.

(13J24.11 r.19); להרגני 'to kill me' (12.273 r.20); גמרי 'my finishing' (12.273 v.17); בקרבן 'as an offering' (6J3.1 r.12); והכמתו 'and his wisdom' (12.272 r.14); קדקדו 'his head' (10J30.3 r.12)). However, particular attention is shown to it in the letters, demonstrated by the frequent vocalised examples: שָׁמְעוּ 'his report' (13J11.2 r.7); בְּהֵנִי 'my thumb' (20.114 r.25); נְדָבָם 'their donation' (Gil (1983) no. 405=Dropsie 392 r.6).

Waw marks the prefix vowel of the *hofal* conjugation: הוצרכתי 'I was forced' (12.338 r.14). However, it stands for *u* rather than *o*, i.e., morphologically reflecting the RH *hufal* rather than the BH *hofal*, as can be seen from the vocalised example והצריך 'and he had to' (13J30.3 r.4).

Šolomo ben Yehuda does not normally employ a *mater lectionis* for short *o*, ארחי 'my way' (10J11.29 r.18); ויגר 'and he dwelt' (10J11.30 r.10); כשמעי 'when I heard' (10J27.2 r.17); באמרם 'when they said' (13J16.14 v.17).⁴⁵ Although once the reading באומריו 'when he said' (Gil (1983) no. 72=ENA 2804.15 r.13) is attested. Drafts of letters by 'Efraim ben Šmarya (who tends towards a more individual style of vocalisation) also employ *waw* on occasion, בשומר 'when he keeps' (12.273 v.13) and, possibly, גודלו 'his greatness' (12.273 r.7) but not אזנכם 'your ear' (12.273 r.15).⁴⁶ Šolomo Hakkohen Ga'on once writes והחולי 'and the sickness' (Gil (1983) no. 50=ENA 4020.42 r.37), though it occurs among many defective spellings, and a letter addressed to Yehuda ben Sa'adya has למוכרנו 'to sell us' (10J27.8 r.13), i.e., למכרנו. 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.⁴⁷

The *ū* vowel

Waw marks the Tiberian long *ū* vowel in nearly all cases: טורים 'lines' (13J24.11 r.20); חמודיו 'his sons' (6J3.14 r.7); זימון 'summons' (10J25.5 r.5); החשוד 'the suspect' (13J9.2 r.19); סגורה 'closed' (10J10.22 r.3).

Only two definite cases of defective *ū* may be found in the corpus: דלתו וגלותו 'his poverty and his exile' (NS 309.20 v.9) is attested in a letter of Šmu'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 Šolomo ben Yehuda: האלף '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 כְּאַלֶּף.

The *u* vowel

The Tiberian short *u* vowel usually takes *mater lectionis waw* in the letters, in the *pu'al*: המעולה 'the

⁴⁵אורחותיה 'her ways' (10J11.30 r.14) could show a form with *waw* marking Tiberian short *qames*, however, this is as likely to represent the alternative form written with *holem* which is attested in BH at Psalms 119:15 ארחתיך. When Šolomo ben Yehuda's letters attest the noun again, ארחותם 'their ways' (NS324.104 r.9), the spelling reflects short *qames*, ארחותם, a suffixed form which is attested in Joshua 2:7 and Proverbs 9:15.

⁴⁶גודלו could be the BH variant form attested at Psalms 150:2, גָּדְלוּ, rather than the commoner גִּדְלוּ, Deuteronomy 5:21.

⁴⁷Segal §39; Revell (1970) p. 100.

distinguished' (13J11.2 r.1); *הַמְשׁוּלֵשׁ* 'the threefold' (13J31.1 r.18); in the *huf'al*: *וְהוּכְרַח* 'and he was forced' (NS 309.20 v.7); *הוּקְשָׁה* 'hard' (10J10.22 r.7); in nouns: *ירושה* 'inheritance' (13J33.12 r.8); *אומתו* 'his people' (13J33.2 r.4).

The common spelling of the widely used *q³tull5/q³tullat* nominal form is with *waw*: *גדולת קדושת* 'the great and holy' (6J3.14 r.3; 10J9.14 r.1 and frequently elsewhere); *סגולתנו* 'our treasure' (16.261 r.29). Only one letter attests the defective spellings *גדלת קדשת* 'the great and holy' (32.8 v.5).

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

מידעם '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., *מִידְעִי* 'my companions' Psalms 88:9.

All other defective forms showing Tiberian short *u* are vocalised with *qibbus*: *שְׁלַחתי* 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8); *וְתַמִּים* 'and *Tummim*' (13J20.9 r.15); *וְהִצַּרְךְ* 'and he had to' (13J30.3 r.4); *מִנְתָּח* '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 *ī* vowel

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

BH allows for the defective spelling of long *ī* in words other than *ראשון*, but it is very rare.⁴⁹ Two verb forms with stem vowel *ī* appear to have been written defectively in the letters, *להעד* 'to bear witness' (13J13.14 r.12) and *ולהתר* '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 *עוד* nor *נתר* are attested in the *hif'il* infinitive construct in the Hebrew Bible but both their infinitive absolute forms are, *הָעֵד* (Genesis 43:3; 1 Samuel 8:9; Jeremiah 11:7) and *הִתַּר* (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 *לאספתו* 'to his death' (NS 298.27 r.9) is found in an orthographically irregular letter from Iraq; the *plene* spelling, e.g., *אסיפתו* 'his death' (10J27.7 r.10), is found frequently elsewhere. Another problematic spelling is *כתבתי*, found in a letter of Moše ben 'Eliyyahu Hallevi: *הייתי חלף כתבתי* 'I would have changed my handwriting' (13J20.18 v.5). Although possibly the consonants could be read as the BH noun *כְּתוּבָת* 'writing, mark' with the 1 singular pronominal suffix, the use of *הכתיבה* twice earlier in the letter (13J20.18 v.1) 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.

כתבתי, unusually without *yod* marking \bar{i} .⁵⁰

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: קהילות 'the communities' (13J16.24 r.4) and קהלה 'community' (13J17.4 r.5); התפילה 'the prayer' (10J32.9 r.8) and תפלה 'prayer' (13J26.16 r.20); מינה 'from her' (10J27.7 r.11) and מנהו 'from him' (8J16.12 r.12); איגרתינו 'our letters' (10J27.7 r.8) and ואגרת 'and a letter' (16.6 r.24). The spelling can vary across the letters of a single writer; Yošiyahu Ga'on attests both וחיבה 'and love' (AS 149.60 r.7) and חבתו '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., לבלתי 'so as not to' (20.114 r.42), as do the numerals, e.g., חמשה 'five' (24.43 r.35) and בששה '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: עימי 'with me' (10J14.19 r.22); the use of *plene* orthography before an ungeminated consonant is extremely unusual; the spelling ואים '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 *hireq* is sometimes written, e.g., ומקור 'and from the cold' (13J20.3 r.14) and בשמחות 'with joy' (13J11.1 r.10).

Short *i* is nearly always written with *yod* in the *qittūl* noun pattern: זימון 'summons' (10J25.5 r.5); בחילוק 'in the apportioning' (13J20.3 r.19); בריבון 'in the teaching' (20.141 r.28); the defective spelling is particularly unusual: וקבוץ 'and the gathering' (Box Misc. 26.22 r.6). The defective spelling is preferred in the related quadriliteral *qilqūl* pattern: בכלכולם 'in their upkeep' (12.99 r.5); and וסמסום 'and ?' (Misc.36.203 leaf 1 v.4); מטכסוך 'because of the conflict' (13J26.1 r.15); although *plene* spellings occur: הפילפול 'the debate' (12.17 r.5). The majority of writers never spell the short *i* under preformative *m*- in certain noun patterns with *yod*: מבטחנו 'our trust' (8J20.1 r.10); מסעדינו 'our support' (13J26.16 r.2); although the unusually full orthography of Šolomo Hakkohen Ga'on provides a number of exceptional examples, למיצוות 'for the commandments' (24.43 r.34) and מיקדש 'a sanctuary' (24.43 r.32).⁵¹

Verbs of the *pi'el* suffix conjugation are frequently written *plene*: אישר 'he blessed' (10J12.17 r.4); וחזק 'and he strengthened' (13J33.6 r.7); ונידו '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: שצוינוהו 'that we ordered' (8J20.1 r.11); וקבלנו 'and we received' (13J13.17 r.8); דברתי 'I spoke' (10J10.22 r.13); though there is considerable variation; we find both וחפשתי 'and I sought' (13J11.9 r.9) and חיפשנו 'we sought' (13J16.24 r.19), and the post-biblical verb שגר 'to send' always shows *yod*, e.g., שיגרו 'they sent' (NS 308.122 v.2) and שיגר 'he sent' (24.6 r.39). Note that the *i* vowel

⁵⁰The orthography could be deliberate due to the frequent occurrence of the noun כתובה, 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: אני חולה במעי ועיני ולא אוכל לעמוד ולולי כי אני חולה הייתי חלף כתבתי 'I am so sick in my bowels and eyes that I cannot stand; were I not sick I would have changed my handwriting' (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*: כתבו 'write' (13J16.17 m.8).

The verbal preformatives -נְ, -מְ and -הְ are written without *yod* in most letters: הנקראים 'who are called' (18J4.4 r.15); ומתגדלת 'and it grows' (13J16.14 r.32); להמנות 'to be counted' (10J11.29 r.7); although, again, the *plene* forms are employed sporadically: להיתמנות 'to be counted' (13J16.17 r.26); ולהיסתופף 'and to stand at the threshold' (13J20.18 r.10); המיתוספים 'which are increasing' (Misc. 36.140 r.32); וכשניתברר 'and when it became clear' (10J27.7 r.4); הניכבד 'the honoured' (13J15.13 r.11); הנישלח '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 Š^omarya, הנזכרת ... הניזכר 'mentioned...mentioned' (13J8.14 r.7).

In summary, the marking of short *i* with *yod* shows great variation across the corpus. Š^olomo Hakkohen Ga'on, for example, gives a very full orthography, writing the nominal preformative *mi-* as -מִי and even writing the 1 plural prefix conjugation preformative with *yod*, נִיכתוב '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. Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda 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 \bar{e} vowel

Tiberian long \bar{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 אל, all of which represent standard biblical orthography: חמודיך 'your sons' (10J9.25 m.22); מנחותיך 'your gifts' (13J9.2 r.17); פרקיה 'its sections' (20.141 r.22); אליה 'to her' (10J11.30 r.15). In one letter, *yod* also marks \bar{e} in a number of pausal forms of the infinitive construct with the 2 masculine singular suffix, להציליך 'to save you' (NS 325.81 r.9) and להועיליך 'to benefit you' (NS 325.81 r.9), and in the preposition בשביליך, בשביליך 'for you' (NS 325.81 r.8).

In addition, *yod* marks \bar{e} in other suffixes. Once it is found in the 3 masculine plural suffix of the preposition על in a letter of Š^omuel ben Moše of Tyre: עליהם 'upon them' (13J26.3 r.21). However, we do not find this orthography with the 3 masculine plural suffix repeated in any of his other letters: ביניהם 'between them' (13J18.1 r.20); עליהם 'upon them' (10J12.25 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 \bar{e} in the 3 feminine singular pronominal suffix on the prefix conjugation verb in letters of the *g^oonim* Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda and Š^olomo Hakkohen: יכונניה 'may he establish it' (18J4.26 r.27; 10J11.30 r.10; 13J9.2 r.56; 20.181 r.7); יגונניה 'may he protect it' (13J9.2 r.15). The *plene* orthography may represent a merging of \bar{e} and \bar{e} , 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., ותלמידיה 'and her scholars' (13J6.3 r.1). This orthographic practice was not universal since it is not followed in the same construction as

⁵²Morag (1971) p. 1125; Kutscher (1982) p.154.

attested by 'Efraim ben Š^omarya or 'Evyatar Hakkohen Ga'on: יכוננה 'may he establish it' (12.273 v.15; 10J24.1 leaf 1 v.14).

In other cases the \bar{e} vowel is not usually marked with *yod*: ממנו 'from us' (10J10.22 r.2); נגע 'wound' (18J4.4 r.11); הכנסת 'the synagogue' (8J22.7 r.11); הפחה 'the governor' (13J14.5 r.9); הפרי 'the fruit' (16.68 r.14). The form אניני 'I am not' (13J11.4 r.8), showing *plene* \bar{e} , found in a letter from Byzantium, is a rare exception (although it is probably an error by metathesis of the נ and י in אניני).

The ϵ vowel

Tiberian short ϵ is not usually marked with a *mater lectionis*: אורך 'length' (13J15.1 r.24); בעושר '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 איפשר 'it is possible' (10J1 leaf 1 r.8) from a copy of a letter of Š^orira Ga'on; a different copy of the same text attests אפשר (28.24 r.31) so it is unwise to make any connections between Babylonian practice and this particular spelling on this example alone.

Ḥatef-segol, ultra-short ϵ , takes a *mater lectionis yod* on two occasions, in the Hebrew opening to a Judaeo-Arabic letter from Š^olomo ben Me'ir Ga'on, האימונים 'the faithful ones' (8J14.24 r.5), and in a noun of the same root in a letter of Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda, אימונה ['faithfulness' (NS J172 r.8).⁵³ Though an isolated case in the letters, a phonetic shift of $\epsilon > i$ can be found in other *geniza* manuscripts as well as being attested in the pronunciation of some modern North-African communities.⁵⁴ Elsewhere *ḥatef-segol* is not marked: באמונתו 'in his faith' (12.338 r.8); האלהים 'God' (13J15.4 r.5).

The \bar{e} vowel

Yod, of course, marks Tiberian \bar{e} in the masculine plural construct: וכמשפטי 'and like laws' (8J20.1 r.8). The RH demonstrative אלו is often written *plene*, אלו טורים 'these lines' (13J24.11 r.20), whereas the BH demonstrative אלה is always written without *yod*, אלה טורים 'these lines' (13J34.3 r.11). The RH prefix conjugation form יהא only occasionally features *yod*, יהיא 'it will be' (13J26.3 r.5); BH pausal forms are never spelled *plene*, עצמו 'they are mighty' (20.114 r.26, from Psalms 38:20). *Nif'al* infinitive constructs may or may not show *yod* after preformative -ה: Yosef Hakkohen writes להיאסף 'to be gathered in' (10J27.7 r.11) with *yod* whereas Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda does not write a *yod* in להעזר 'to be helped' (13J9.2 r.8, r.18; 13J23.1 r.22) nor in the 1 singular prefix conjugation of irregular verbs, אחשב 'I will be considered' (10J11.29 r.16). For the *yē-* preformative of the *nif'al* 3 singular and plural, see the remarks on the consonantal *yod*.

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

⁵⁴For instance the relativizer ψ 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 ϵ raising to *i* due to the following high vowel, \bar{u} , i.e., [h⁵'imūnīm] and ['imūn⁵]. Another explanation could be that the *yod* is marking *šere* 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-S AS 1.37, an Isaiah text, where the Tiberian *šere*, *segol* and *ḥatef-segol* are used more or less interchangeably.

The Tiberian \bar{e} vowel is often indicated by *yod* in nouns and adjectives: בגזירת 'with a decree' (18J4.17 v.4); העידה 'the congregation' (13J15.4 r.5); this is especially the case when the word derives from post-biblical Hebrew: מטירוד 'from trouble' (10J10.22 r.13); מדימון 'from demons' (10J11.30 r.6). However, not all long \bar{e} 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: צדה 'provisions' 13J14.20 r.6); זר 'crown' (8J14.24 r.12); לשמע 'for a report' (10J27.7 r.2); חלק 'part' (12.336 r.17). Naṭan ben 'Avraham, more conservative than most, very rarely uses *yod* to mark internal *šere*, in either biblical or rabbinic vocabulary: אחרים 'others' (10J9.25 r.12); תבל 'world' (13J31.1 r.6); הערל 'the Christian' (8J20.1 m.2); טפל 'of secondary import' (10J9.25 r.14). He only employs a *plene* orthography in nouns of the pattern $q^{\bar{e}}tēl$: דליקה 'its fire' (8.3 r.10); שאילתך 'your request' (8.3 m.2). This pattern is usually *plene* throughout the letters: Š^{mu}'el ben Moše of Tyre attests השאליות 'the questions' (13J26.3 r.8) and Š^{lomo} ben Y^{huda} regularly writes the *yod*, e.g., באבדת 'with the loss' (16.275 r.8); overall the defective form is rare and limited to occasional BH nouns, e.g., לפלטה 'for a remnant' (12.775 r.13).

Participles and nouns derived from participles, such as the $q\bar{e}tēl$ pattern, show both defective and *plene* spelling of \bar{e} in the letters as a whole: למיליץ 'for an advocate' (13J23.13 r.21) and ומליץ 'and an advocate' (13J24.11 r.22); במיתים 'with the dead' (13J23.13 r.15) and המתים 'the dead' (13J11.9 r.9); שמחים 'happy' (13J14.20 r.7) and שמיחים 'happy' (6J3.14 r.2). Different versions of forms of זקן, in particular, abound: לזקננו 'to our elder' (13J20.25 r.12) and זקיננו 'our elder' (16.261 r.29); both *plene* and defective spellings occur within a few lines of each other in the same letter of 'Evyatar Hakkohen Ga'on, הזקינים 'the elders' (10J24.1 leaf 2 v.25) and והזקינים 'and the elders' (10J24.1 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., יצילים 'he will save them' (13J14.10 r.12). The letter is intended for a public reading to the community of the Jerusalmmites in Fustāt and is mostly written in rhyming prose: ... יושעים וירעים ... אל ינעים יושעים וירעים ... ירגיעם ... ישעשעם 'may he save them and cherish them...delight in them...give them rest...not disturb them' (13J14.10 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, ישמרים 'may he keep them' (10J15.31 r.7); the usual spelling of the suffix across the corpus is defective: יאמזם אינו ויברכם ויגבירם '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 \bar{e} in closed, stressed syllables. החביר 'the *haver*' (20.102 r.30) and המתאזיר 'who girds himself' (13J14.10 r.22) are two of the very few examples that the letters provide. The first is from Š^{lomo} ben Yehuda who, in his other writings as well as elsewhere in the same letter, employs only the form without *yod*, החבר 'the *haver*' (20.102 r.1, 13J9.2 r.1, etc.); the second example comes again from Yošiyahu Ga'on. Similar forms with *yod* in the *hithpa'el/nithpa'al* verbal conjugations are attested in other letters, המתנציה 'the victorious' (18J4.26 r.12) and להסתפיה 'to be joined' (AS 145.61 r.3). However, there is slim evidence from the letters that furtive *paṭah* was pronounced before final guttural letters, e.g., גרוע 'diminished' (13J14.10 r.19) and thus the Tiberian *šere* 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: להתפלל 'to pray' (18J4.26 r.23).⁵⁵

⁵⁵תמיה 'astonished' (12.217 r.11), also spelled defectively ותמה 'and surprised' (10J13.2 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*, הו- and וְנו- 'may he bless him' (10J15.31 r.4); ותניהו 'and give him' (18J4.26 r.8); ולכבדיהו 'and to honour him' (NS 309.20 v.10); יבואינו '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. Naṭan ben 'Avraham avoids it entirely, יגוננהו 'may he protect him' (13J31.1 r.7) and וּבְזָכְרֵנוּ 'and when we remember' (8J20.1 r.3); Nəḥemya Hakkohen Ga'on is similar (as are many Babylonian writers), וישמרהו 'and keep him' (16.6 v.2). Šlomo ben Yəhuda's usual style is defective, וישקהו 'and that waters him' (13J9.2 r.32) and ישמרהו 'may he keep him' (13J33.6 r.3), but we can find isolated examples with *mater lectionis yod*, ויברכיהו 'and bless him' (18J4.15 v.2); when 'Avraham ben Hagga'on, Šlomo's son, acts as his scribe the spelling with *yod* is more prevalent: תשבּיחיהו 'give him praise' (13J11.9 r.7); ויראיהו 'and cause him to see' (13J17.4 r.7).⁵⁶

BH preserves a semantic distinction between יְ- and י- 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 ē 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 orthography of a minority of our letters, e.g., ברכינו 'our knees' (13J9.2 r.10) but נשיאנו 'our Nasi' (13J15.1 r.16) and זה מכתבנו זה 'this letter of ours' (13J19.15 r.13), it is no longer a feature of the dominant style. We regularly find unquestionably singular nouns written *plene* with *yod*: תפלתינו 'our prayer' (8J14.202 r.2); ואתה אהובינו 'and you are our beloved' (AS145.61 r.4); כתבינו זה 'this letter of ours' (10J24.1 leaf 1 r.8); משנתנו זאת 'from this year of ours' (13J16.24 r.14); שלישיבתנו 'of our academy' (NS 324.112 r.4). *Plene* spellings are sometimes employed alongside those presenting a more biblicising orthography: וגדולינו ... ליקירנו 'to our dear...and great one' (13J17.4 r.2); וכתרנו ונזרנו וגאוננו 'our lord, our ga'on and our crown and our diadem' (13J20.18 r.17). Šlomo ben Yəhuda, while usually maintaining the semantic distinction, occasionally uses a *plene* form, particularly on regular feminine nouns (i.e., those that take ת- before the suffixes), קנאתינו 'our jealousy' (13J15.1 r.5) and תפלתינו 'our prayer' (AS 151.20 r.19).⁵⁸ Naṭan ben 'Avraham prefers to follow BH practice, even spelling the suffixes of prepositions according to their BH forms, i.e., אלינו 'to us' (8J20.1 m.9) but אצלנו 'with us' (8J20.1 v.1), but twice uses *yod* on nouns from biliteral roots, לקמינו 'to our [=my] father-in-law' (8J20.1 m.2) and ולבינו 'and our heart' (8J20.1 r.2).⁵⁹

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., ותמהנו '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 *šere* marked by *yod* in a stressed, closed syllable.

⁵⁶Although, this is not always the case when 'Avraham ben Hagga'on acts as his father's scribe: יזכיהו וישיגיהו '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, יגמליהו 'may he reward him' (10J10.9 r.13) but ויפדהו 'and redeem him' (18J4.17 r.8).

⁵⁷Jouion §6d n. 2.

⁵⁸The extensive use of *yod* after the ת of feminine nouns in the letters' orthography may be influenced by the feminine plural form, which takes *yod* before the suffix in BH: אגרותינו 'our letters' (13J9.2 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, תפלתינו 'our prayer' (r.6).

⁵⁹But he writes לבנו 'our heart' (13J31.1 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 Naṭan ben 'Avraham, probably caused

The opposite trend, not spelling the \bar{e} vowel with *mater lectionis yod* before even plural suffixes, is attested much more rarely. One letter in particular, from the community of Ašqelon, presents a number of defective plural forms: אִלְכֶם 'to you' (13J19.15 r.13, r.18); אֲדוֹנָנוּ 'our lords' (r.13); עֲלֵנוּ 'upon us' (r.17); זִקְנָנוּ 'our elders' (r.19); בִּימֵהֶם 'in their days' (v.3). Such spellings are attested in the text of the MT, e.g., עֲלֵהֶן '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 \bar{e} 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 \bar{e} in a closed syllable by *yod* though attested is unusual in the corpus.

He

The \bar{e} and $\bar{\epsilon}$ vowels

Mater lectionis he marks the Tiberian long vowels \bar{e} and $\bar{\epsilon}$ in word-final position as in BH: הַקְשָׁה 'the hard' (12.336 r.12); יַעֲשֶׂה 'he will do' (13J21.19 r.16); קוֹנֵה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ 'Creator of Heaven and Earth' (13J16.18 r.17).

The \bar{o} vowel

He marks the Tiberian long *qameṣ* (\bar{o}) termination of the regular feminine noun, pronominal suffixes and suffix conjugation verb, and in the 2 masculine singular pronoun: וּבִקְשָׁה 'and request' (13J23.12 r.21); בָּהּ 'in [them]' (18J4.17 r.15); וְאָמְרָה 'and it said' (18J4.17 r.31); אַתָּה 'you' (10J9.25 r.12).

The common spelling of the 2 masculine singular suffix conjugation termination is defective, as is the dominant form in BH: רָמַזְתָּ 'you hinted' (13J13.14 r.33); עָשִׂיתָ 'you have done' (20.181 r.39); אָמַרְתָּ 'you said' (13J34.2 r.10).⁶⁰ A large number of *plene* forms are employed, though; N^oḥemya Hakkohen Ga'on attests several, עָשִׂיתָ 'you have done' (12.851 r.9), הִחְזַרְתָּ 'you returned' (16.6 r.21) and הִחְלַשְׁתָּ 'you weakened' (16.6 r.21); from other writers we find עָשִׂיתָ 'you have done' (12.212 r.18); הִייתָ 'you were' (8J20.1 r.3); נִסִּיתָ 'you have [not] tried' (13J23.19 r.14); וּנְמַשְׁכַּתָּ 'and you were drawn' (13J26.23 r.19). Although the spellings עָשִׂיתָ, הִייתָ and נִתַּתָּ 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: צִוִּיתָהּ 'you ordered' (10J14.19 r.14); וְנָתַתָּה 'and you gave' (r.3); חִזַּרְתָּהּ 'you returned' (r.4); but חִזַּרְתָּ 'you returned' (r.21) and שִׁנְדַּרְתָּ 'that you donated' (r.20). Thus, the writer may vary the orthography of \bar{o} 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., שֶׁלַכְתָּהּ 'that you went' (r.14)

Occasionally, the *plene* spelling is employed to make explicit a rhyme scheme. Šolomo ben Yehuda makes the assonance clear in one phrase by using the *mater lectionis*: וְהַטּוֹרַח אֲשֶׁר טָרַחְתָּ וְהַיְגִיעָה אֲשֶׁר יִגְעַתָּה 'and the burden which you bore and the toil which you suffered' (13J14.8 r.17).

The *ō* vowel

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

'Alef

'Alef is employed to mark long *ā* vowels in proper names of Arabic origin, following Arabic (and Judaeo-Arabic) orthographic practice: מִרְגָּא 'Murajjā' (13J14.5 r.6); אֵל קָאֵדֵר 'al-Qādir' (13J14.5 r.8); קִירוּאָן 'Qayrwān' (8.3 v.2); דְּמִיַּאֵט 'Damietta [Dumyāt]' (13J26.16 r.5). It is also the *mater lectionis* for *ō* in proper nouns drawn from Aramaic, בְּאַלְכְּסַנְדְּרִיַּא 'in Alexandria' (10J9.14 r.7), and in the Aramaic suffixes and emphatic endings preserved in some Jewish titles and epithets: מְרִנָּא 'our lord' (10J25.4 r.1); וְרַבְנָא 'and our *rav*' (13J18.1 r.13); רַחֲמָנָא 'the Merciful One' (18J4.4 r.1).

Beyond its use in words from Arabic or Aramaic 'alef is rarely employed as a *mater lectionis*.⁶² The noun צוּאָר, attested as לְצוּאָרוֹ 'and for his neck' (10J30.3 r.5) in the letters, reflects BH orthography of 'alef for Tiberian *ō*. This probably influences the same spelling found in the post-biblical noun כּוּוּנָה 'intention' in a letter of Hayya Ga'on, כּוּוּנָתוֹ 'his intention' (20.100 r.21), since both צוּאָר and כּוּוּנָה are from middle-*waw* roots.⁶³ רַמְאָנִי 'he betrayed me' (13J13.21 r.16), from a letter of 'Eli Hammumḥ ben 'Avraham, is attested in BH without the 'alef, רַמְנִי 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. תּוּבְלָנָא 'let them be borne' (18J4.2 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 -נָה 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 נָא which often occurs in jussive expressions. The other example of *mater lectionis* 'alef is כְּמָא 'some' (13J18.28 r.17). This occurs in a letter which shows many non-standard orthographic features; the spelling of the feminine ending הָ- as אָ- probably reflects Arabic rather than Aramaic influence.⁶⁵

but שְׁבַאֲתָא '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.

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

⁶³Other letters attest only the spelling without 'alef: כּוּוּנָתִי 'my intention' (10J13.2 r.24) in a letter of David ben Moše.

⁶⁴Segal §205. A similar phenomenon occurs in Šolomo ben Yehuda's use of רַאֲמָה 'uplifted' (13J9.2 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 רַאֲמָה.

⁶⁵Judaeo-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: להוועד 'to assemble' (20.141 r.17); יוועדו 'they will gather' (13J18.1 r.5); כוונתי 'my intention' (10J13.2 r.24); מקוים 'waiting for' (Gil (1983) no. 418=ENA 2804.7 r.9).⁶⁶ Equally often, though, only a single *waw* is used: כיון 'as soon' (10J24.3 r.17); וקייתי 'and I longed' (16.275 r.24); ציויתה 'you ordered' (10J14.19 r.14); ומקוים 'and waiting for' (10G5.8 v.12); כוונתו 'his intention' (20.100 r.21). Both spellings of *-vv-* may be found alongside one another, for example, in a letter of 'Efraim ben Š^omarya, מתאוה להתוודות '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*: קיינו 'we longed' (8J22.1 r.4); שצוינוהו 'that we ordered' (8J20.1 r.11); ישה 'he will place' (13J31.1 r.21); whereas Yošiyahu Ga'on attests two: כוונתנו 'our intention' (10J32.9 r.4). The essentially conservative Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda is another who, in letters from his own hand, attests only single *waw*, as expected: צואה 'order' (13J13.14 r.23); מתאיים 'the desiring' (13J14.8 r.32); המקיים '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*: אחזיתי 'my statement' (12.273 r.14); ונשתון 'and an epistle' (13J26.13 r.9); הנלים 'who are joined' (32.8 r.47); דהן 'a table' (16.68 r.5); or it can be written with two *waws*, although this is less widespread: גלויכם 'those around you' (Box Misc. 28.231 r.19); כווסתך 'your way' (6J3.1 r.7); גישתון 'epistle' (24.43 r.45); לרוחה 'widely' (18J4.4 r.19). When *v* is the initial consonant of a word, RH orthography is followed by writing two *waws*: וייעדינו 'and our meeting[s]' (20.141 r.19); ווסת 'way' (13J26.3 r.25); וודאי 'of course' (10G5.8 v.16).

Naṭan ben 'Avraham, וענוותו 'and his humility' (10J15.10 r.6), תקותך 'your hope' (10J15.10 r.10) and גלויך 'those around him' (13J31.1 m.6), and Yošiyahu Ga'on, גארתו 'his pride' (13J14.10 r.21) and ותריוחו 'and bring relief' (13J26.16 r.17), employ only single *waw* for *v* alone. Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda's style is similar, even with rabbinic vocabulary such as the desiderative הלואי 'O that...' (13J23.11 r.5), which we might expect to show the fuller orthography of RH texts. However, תאוות לבו 'his heart's desire' (20.181 r.5), a biblical phrase from Psalms 21:3, unusually for this writer, has two *waws*.⁶⁷

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

⁶⁶The practice extends from Hebrew into Judaeo-Arabic as well, Blau (1999) p. 135.

⁶⁷The orthography in this case could point to a plural form, *-vot*, as in another of the *ga'on's* letters, תאוותם '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*, ותאוותי 'and my desire' (13J17.17 r.11); but 'Avraham ben Hagga'on overall evidences a far less conservative orthographic style.

The writing of two *waws* is the norm with the various combinations of *v* and an *o* or *u* vowel: [vō] תאוותיו 'his desires' (20.141 r.24); [vō] לחוות 'to tell', ולהשתחוות 'and to prostrate oneself' (13J20.18 r.10); [vū] וצו 'and ordered' (28.24 r.80). This is the case even with Naṭan ben 'Avraham and Yošiyahu Ga'on: [uvv] מנורה 'made beautiful' (13J31.1 r.9); [vō] עוונם 'their sin' (10J32.8 r.8). Šalom ben Yehuda also writes two *waws* for most combinations, e.g., מרווחת 'spread' (10J11.29 r.12) and לצוות '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: [vō] מעוון 'from sin' (13J31.8 r.17) but העון 'the sin' (13J14.8 r.13) and המצוות 'the commandments' (13J33.12 r.12) and המצות (13J33.12 r.5).⁶⁸

The orthography of word-final *v*

The 3 masculine singular pronominal suffix on plural nouns, [-5v], is spelled י- in the letters, as in the MT: חמודי 'his sons' (6J3.14 r.7); בעיניו 'in his eyes' (10J11.30 r.14); אזניו 'his ears' (Misc. 35.14 r.4). A draft of a letter from 'Efraim ben Šmarya preserves the unique spelling of נפלאותב 'his wonders' (12.273 v.10) for an expected נפלאותיו; 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 עכשיו also shows the י- ending, which is its common form in RH texts: ועכשיו 'and now' (24.6 r.16). However, on a number of occasions in letters of Babylonian origin, we find the spelling without quiescent *yod*, ו-, e.g., עכשו 'now' (10G5.8 v.5, v.12; 13J25.5 r.32) in letters of Hayya Ga'on and his father, Šrira Ga'on.⁶⁹ Conversely, the *plene* spelling י- can be found representing [5v] where it is not found in BH, in בקיו 'in line' (10J24.8 v.18). A similar spelling in a letter from 'Eliyyahu Hakkohen, העניו 'the poor' (13J23.12 r.12), is found in the MT in the *q^ore* of Numbers 12:3.

Consonantal *yod*

The geminated *y*

The geminated *y* of middle-weak verbs is usually written with two *yods*: להצטייד 'to be caught' (13J11.2 r.17); לקיים 'to establish' (13J33.12 r.12); ופייסנוהו 'and we persuaded him' (16.68 r.19); שתסייעוהו 'that you aid them' (12.146 r.12); מסויימים 'certain' (13J23.12 r.8); this includes adjectival forms from such roots: בגיטות 'by invaders' (Gil (1983) no. 50=ENA 4020.42 r.17); only occasional spellings with a single *yod* are found: מחויב 'bound' (12.273 r.6).⁷⁰ The widely-used adjectival form חייב is usually written with two *yods*: חייבין 'must' (13J23.11 r.16); although, a letter of Yisra'el

⁶⁸The two spellings of המצוות occur in the same letter, showing again how the orthography often varies within a single body of text. מצות is the usual spelling in the MT, cf. Joüon §7c, and is the only spelling in Karaite marriage documents, Olszowy-Schlanger p. 99.

⁶⁹According to Yeivin, p. 1143, some manuscripts with Babylonian supralinear vocalization demonstrate a pronunciation equivalent to Tiberian עכשו, i.e., that the *waw* is not a consonant but is marking a final *ō* 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 Mishor (1989), attests the reading עכשו 'now' (r.10), but other Palestinian spellings in the letter, such as the double *yod* in עד בלידיי 'without limit' (r.2), would probably indicate a Palestinian pronunciation of consonantal *v*, i.e., עכשו.

⁷⁰Judaeo-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*: חייבין (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.1); חיבים (leaf 2 v.10); חייבים (leaf 6 r.7); חיבין (leaf 6 r.15).

The orthography of geminated *y* in nouns varies, with two *yods*: עשייתם 'their deed' (NS J92 r.12); גביית 'collection' (13J26.13 r.10); and with a single *yod*: ורטיה 'and a compress' (8.3 r.11); בעשית 'as a making' (13J9.2 r.21). The spelling of the plural of nouns ending in *i* similarly varies: הענים 'the poor' (NS 321.2 r.2) and לעניים 'for the poor' (Misc. 35.14 r.11) both occur in letters of Šalom ben Yehuda; הגוים 'the Muslims' (18J4.26 r.36) and גויים 'Non-Jews [Muslims]' (12.212 r.15).

The ungeminated *y*

Ungeminated *y* in the letters is normally represented by a single *yod*: יסוד 'foundation' (13J15.4 r.7); כענין 'let it be' (8J21.6 r.12); ובנין 'and the building' (12.239 r.25); והרמיות 'deception' (13J14.8 r.19); כענין 'according to the passage' (8J20.1 r.8). Less common is the use of two *yods*: וליישר 'and to straighten' (10J12.17 r.23); רביית 'plenty' (NS 324.104 r.15); וכענין 'and according to the passage' (13J16.16 r.16); although it is the accepted spelling in the letters for the post-vocalicity in the RH plurals בניירות, בעיריות 'with parchments' (13J14.10 r.22), and בעיריות, עיריות 'in towns' (20.141 r.27).⁷¹

Certain combinations of the ungeminated consonant *y* and a vowel, however, are always written with two *yods* in our corpus. The syllable *yī-* is always written so: ייחולינו 'our expectation' (12.99 r.9); יישוביהם 'their populations' (16.6 r.8); וייפן 'and may he turn' (18J4.4 r.2); in one letter of the Palestinian academy the practice extends even to the biblical name Yišai, יישיי (10J30.5 r.11). The syllable *yē-* is usually written *plene*: ייטב 'may he improve' (8J18.15 r.6); this principally involves the *nifal* conjugation of first-guttural verbs: ייעשה 'it will be done' (NS 321.2 r.14); ייעשבו 'they will be considered' (13J13.14 v.2); ייעזרו 'they will be helped' (10J10.22 r.11). Only יאסף '[before] he was gathered in [=died]' (12.99 v.12) in a letter of Šamu'el ben Hofni 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: יישאר 'he will be left' (12.336 r.15); יינצל 'he will be saved' (10J12.17 r.2); יימצאו 'they will be found' (10J14.8 v.5); a rare exception is ויקבר 'and be buried' (13J33.2 r.16).

The orthography of *ay*

The syllable *ay* is spelled mostly with a single *yod* in names, nouns and suffixes of BH origin: אפרים 'Efraim' (13J24.11 r.3); מרדכי 'Mordakai' (6J3.14 r.5); אולי 'perhaps' (13J20.18 r.22); הקיץ 'the summer' (J2.74 r.12); דברי 'my words' (13J9.2 r.30); עלי 'about me' (13J9.2 r.15). Although we can also find the spelling with two *yods* on occasion: הקיץ 'the summer' (10J27.7 r.2); עלי 'about me' (6J4.25 r.9). This spelling is more frequently employed where it distinguishes otherwise graphically identical forms, such as the 1 singular suffix on plural nouns from that on singular nouns, e.g., דרכיי 'my ways' (16.275 r.19) and מכתבי 'my letters' (13J13.28 r.2). It also commonly occurs in the dual ending: שורותיים 'two lines' (10J9.14 r.6); שיטותיים 'two rows' (20.106 r.1). Vocalisation may be used instead for the same effect, particularly by those writers who display a conservative orthography: עניני 'my affairs' (J2.74

⁷¹The influence of RH orthography is also probably responsible for the occasional writing of עניין, which despite being a noun found in the Hebrew Bible is generally employed in the letters in an expression drawn from rabbinic literature, כעניין 'according to the [biblical] passage', and is used to introduce quotations from the Hebrew Bible.

r.8); תורוֹתֵיִם '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*: עדיין 'still' (Gil (1983) no. 281=Mosseri II 181 r.7); לקיימו 'to establish him' (16.68 r.13). Yošiyahu Ga'on's spelling לקימו 'to establish him' (AS 149.60 r.8) is very unusual.⁷²

The orthography of final syllable *ay* in examples such as וכדי 'and [we] should' (13J9.2 r.10) and תניי 'condition' (13J18.1 r.24) reflects the spelling found in the Palestinian tradition of RH, where the best manuscripts show a preference for יי-.⁷³ The Babylonian tradition of RH prefers the spelling יא-, examples of which are less common, but may be found in the corpus, e.g., פנאי 'my face' (13J9.9 r.17).⁷⁴ From Babylon, Hayya Ga'on attests וודאי 'certainly' (10G5.8 v.16) and the *ga'on* Naṭronai's name appears in a letter from Sura, נטרונאי (AS 148.147 r.1). However, examples are not limited to letters from Babylonian writers; Šalom ben Yehuda attests two rabbinic words spelled this way, הלואי 'O that!' (13J23.11 r.31) and והתנאי '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 יא- is also to be found in a Palestinian tradition of RH, in use alongside יי-, i.e., in the Eastern branch of Palestinian RH.⁷⁵

The spelling תניה 'condition' (13J25.10 r.27), instead of תניי or תנאי, 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 *ε* vowels. There is some evidence of short *qameṣ* being pronounced as, or similar to, an *o* vowel, perhaps indicating a Palestinian background pronunciation for some writers, such as Šalom ben Yehuda, but the retention of BH orthography for *qameṣ* 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 *ε*, 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'onic period.⁷⁶ There are very few spellings found

⁷²And not repeated in his other letters, e.g., לקיימו (Gil (1983) no. 46=Bodl MS Heb b. 11.28 r.18).

⁷³Kutscher (1963) pp. 251–255; Bar-Asher p. 26.

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 יי-, though the spelling יא- 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 *ā* 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 Naṭan ben 'Avraham, pretender to the ga'onate, and Yošiyahu, the Palestinian *ga'on*, are of a similar geographical origin and their orthography is suitably 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 *nifal* 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*. Naṭan 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 ״- in בלידי״ (r.2) as already mentioned, but also uses the Babylonian RH spelling כאן, e.g., לכאן 'to here' (r.7), instead of Palestinian כן (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 archaic biblical pronoun *המה* is well-attested in the corpus, both as an independent pronoun, e.g., *המה הקהל הקדוש* 'they are the holy community' (16.251 r.3); *המה השרים* 'they are the princes' (12.99 r.15), and, albeit less frequently, as an element of demonstrative constructions, e.g., *הזהובים ההמה* 'those *dinars*' (16.275 r.8); *הדברים ההמה* 'those things' (10J12.17 r.3).³

Overwhelmingly *הם* is the principal pronoun of the 3 masculine plural in the corpus; *המה* is employed less frequently (although not as rarely as *אנכי*) and its role often appears to be to avoid a repetition of too many *הם* pronouns in close proximity, as in *הם המה הקהילות הנהדרים* 'they are the respected communities' (13J16.24 r.4).⁴ The corresponding archaic 3 feminine plural pronoun, *הנה*, is not attested.

The biblical 1 plural pronoun, *אנחנו*, is employed alongside the rabbinic pronoun *אנו* 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* N^oḥemya Hakkohen writes *שאנחנו משלחים* 'that we send' (12.851 r.13) and *ואנו מבקשים* 'and we are requesting' (12.851 r.18); Naṭan Hakkohen writes from Tiberias *ואנו מודיעים* 'and we are hereby informing' (13J23.13 r.10) and *צר לנו גם אנחנו* 'it is hard for us as well' (13J23.13 r.15); Yeshu'a Hakkohen ben Yosef writes from Alexandria *ואנו שמחים* 'and we are happy' (12.338 r.9), *כמו שעשינו אנחנו* 'as we ourselves did' (12.338 m.8), *ואנו נחפוץ* 'and we desire' (12.338 v.4), and *ואנחנו משתדלים* 'and we will endeavour' (12.338 v.13).

In the corpus as a whole, *אנו* occurs more frequently than *אנחנו*. Naṭan ben 'Avraham, for instance, employs *אנו* more frequently than *אנחנו*. In his total correspondence of 8 letters, Naṭan uses the 1 plural pronoun 13 times: *אנו* 9 times and *אנחנו* 4 times.⁶ For him, *אנו* is the principal pronoun of body text, e.g., *ואפילו למסור דיין עליו אנו מתפחדים* 'and we were even afraid to pass judgement on him' (8J20.1 r.9), whereas *אנחנו* is only attested in the usual closing formula of the *praescriptio* that he uses just before the main body of the letter begins: *שלום אנחנו מודים לאל כי טוב* 'we are well, thanking God for he is good' (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 *הן* are frequent, e.g., *והן אסורין* '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 *המה* in demonstrative constructions only occurs a dozen times in total in the Bible; *ההם* occurs more than three times as often.

⁴Compare *הם רבותינו* 'they are our masters' (24.6 r.5), where the repetition is retained. Also, another letter demonstrates how different pronouns are employed together: *הוא איהו גיהו אדוננו* '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.

⁵*אנו* is of course attested in BH, in the *k^otiv* 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-30v; 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 אנו everywhere else, perhaps unusually, since he is in many ways quite a conservative, biblicising writer. The letters of Yosef Hakkohen ben Šolomo Ga'on also seem to share a similar attitude towards the biblical pronoun.⁸ 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 מו- and הו-, to the exclusion of הם- and ו-, e.g., חכמימו 'their wise men' (13J16.24 r.6), ועימהו 'and with him' (13J16.24 r.15), מנהו 'from him' (13J16.24 r.17) and צדקיהו 'his righteousness' (8J16.12 r.13). In similar fashion, he only uses אנהנו for the 1 plural pronoun, e.g., גם אנהנו כן עשינו 'we also did so' (13J16 r.23), and does not attest אנו at all. Other writers who prefer the biblical pronoun are Šmu'el ben Ḥofni, the Babylonian *ga'on*, who only employs אנהנו, and Sa'adya Ga'on, who, in the extant copies of his letters, attests אנו only occasionally, but אנהנו much more frequently, even paired with distinctively post-biblical vocabulary.⁹ 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, אנו and אנהנו may be regarded as interchangeable.

נחנו, the rare biblical pronoun, is only encountered once in the corpus, in a letter of Šolomo ben Yehuda: נחנו מה '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 את, the rabbinic 2 masculine singular pronoun, may be found in poetic texts of the period, it, along with the rabbinic 2 masculine plural pronoun אתן, is not attested in the letters.¹⁰

The demonstrative pronoun

The demonstrative pronouns attested in the letters are:

ms	זה	זה 'when they heard this' (13J21.13 r.23)
fs	זאת	זאת 'after all this' (13J20.25 r.5)
	זו	זו 'one after another' (16.275 r.21) ¹¹
pl	אלה	אלה 'these words of ours' (28.24 r.74)
	אלו	אלו 'in these days' (16.18 r.11)

The rarer BH feminine pronoun זה could possibly be attested in examples containing the feminine noun עת and the demonstrative, such as זה בעת זה 'at this time' (12.775 r.9) and בעת הזה 'at

⁸Yosef Hakkohen ben Šolomo Ga'on's own letters are 8J16.12, 13J16.24, 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).

¹⁰את is a form widespread in RH but it may also be found in LBH and at Qumran, Fernandez p.18. Dunaš ben Labraṭ (a tenth-century Spanish writer of poetry and prose) uses את rather than אתה 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: מזו הישיבה 'from this *yeshiva*'.

this time' (6J3.31 r.8).¹² However, since the examples only concern the noun עת, it is more probable that the זה stands for the masculine pronoun and that עת is being treated as a masculine noun (perhaps under the influence of Arabic, see *Nouns*).

The biblical plural demonstrative אלה occurs more frequently than the rabbinic אלו in the letters: אלה, used nearly sixty times in the corpus is attested over three times as often as אלו, with approximately fifteen occurrences. Writers rarely mix אלה and אלו, even in separate letters. Only one clear example, a letter from Alexandria, shows the use of both demonstratives: טורים אלה 'these lines' (13J34.3 r.11) and in the next line באילו הימים 'in these days' (13J34.3 r.12), using biblical word-order for the BH demonstrative and rabbinic word-order for the RH one.¹³ However, in general, the two do not meet. A preference may be shown: Šlomo ben Yehuda, along with Babylonian writers, prefers biblical אלה, while Naṭan Hakkohen from Ašqelon is one of the few to employ only אלו in their letters.¹⁴

The feminine demonstratives זאת and זו also show a disparity in numbers similar to that of the masculine demonstratives. זו is attested one third the number of times that זאת 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. Šlomo ben Yehuda attests זו אחר זו 'one after another' (16.275 r.21) in one letter and לפני זאת 'before this' (10J11.29 r.10) in another, whereas a letter from Aleppo gives us examples of both in the same text: זו בדרך זו 'in this way' (12.17 r.17) and אחר כל זאת 'after all this' (12.17 r.21). זאת is often employed as the independent neuter pronoun, e.g., וזאת ידועה 'and this is known' (28.24 r.7), a role that זו appears only rarely to take on in the letters, occurring mostly as a demonstrative adjective.

In addition, the following intensive demonstratives are attested:¹⁵

ms	הלזה	מכתבנו הלזה 'this letter of ours' (12.44 v.6)
fs	הלז	זאת האגרת הלז 'this letter' (13J11.4 v.1)

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

¹²There are a number of letters in the Taylor-Schechter collection which show the זה demonstrative with עת: Box Misc. 28.231 r.15; 6J3.23 r.10; 10J24. leaf 1 r.4; 13J19.15 r.15. The feminine זה 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., גם זה ראיתי '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., בזו המדינה 'in this town' (13J26.13 r.21); זאת האגרת '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 M^ovorak'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 אלו; 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. Joüon §36 b.

4:25 הלזו 'this Shunnamite woman', attests to its use for the feminine in BH.¹⁶ The longer feminine form הלזו, found in both BH and RH, is not employed at all in the letters.¹⁷

Only two letters use הלזו: 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 Šalom Ga'on's handwriting), Misc. 36.140 r.28. In all three examples of the intensive הלזו/הלזו 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:¹⁸

pl. הללו טורים 'these lines' (13J24.11)

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 Pumbediṭa, dating from around 850 C.E., הללו הדברים 'these words' (NS 308.122 v.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., שתי שורות הללו 'these two lines' (13J11.2 r.14) or שיטותיים הללו '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., באותו הזמן 'at that time' (16.3 r.21); אותו היום 'that day' (12.217 r.11).

The personal pronouns may also be used in the role of demonstrative adjectives, e.g., אל המקום 'to that place' (10J11.30 r.12); האיש ההוא 'that man' (12.732 r.12).

The possessive של

The RH independent possessive pronoun של attests the following suffixes:

1s	שלי	הקרן שלי 'my total sum' (12.338 v.10)
2ms	שלך	הקהל הקדוש שלך 'your holy community' (10J12.22 r.27)
2fs	—	(unattested)
3ms.	שלו	כתב שאינו שלו 'a letter that isn't his' (10J9.25 r.4)
3fs	שלה	נסח שלה 'it's copy' (NS 169.11 r.15) ¹⁹
1pl	שלנו	מן המים שלנו 'from our water' (13J26.13 r.5)
2mpl	—	(unattested)
2fpl	—	(unattested)

¹⁶Some Mišna manuscripts read הלזו for הלזו, cf. Segal p. 41 §74.

¹⁷Extremely rare in BH, הלזו is only attested in Ezekiel 36:35; it is only slightly more common in RH, Fernandez p. 22.

¹⁸Composite, since it is formed from RH הלה plus אלו, Fernandez p. 22. The uniquely rabbinic form הלה is not attested in the letters.

¹⁹A 3 feminine singular form of של, שלהה, is attested in 13J20.9 r.19. Such a form is not found elsewhere and is probably simply an error for שלהה; although perhaps the additional ה- is connected to the pronunciation of the *he* with *mappiq*, שְלֵהָ. If so, it is the only such example.

3mpl	שלהם	להציל את שלהם 'to save what is theirs' (24.6 r.31)
3fpl	—	(<i>unattested</i>)

The particle של is employed 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., חמותו של משה 'the mother-in-law of Moše' (10J12.25 r.6); לאלכסנדריה של מצרים 'to Alexandria, Egypt' (12.114 r.17); אב בית דין של כל ישראל 'Av Beṭ Din of all Israel' (Gil (1983) no. 214=Bodl MS Heb c 28.59 r.16); ששוחו של אדם כמותו 'because a man's messenger is like himself' (13J23.11 r.35).²⁰

As in BH and RH vocalisation, the particle is attested with *segol* in a letter penned by the inveterate vocaliser Naṭan ben 'Avraham, שלקדושים 'of holy men' (13J31.1 r.16).²¹

In the earlier manuscripts of RH the possessive particle של is normally written attached to the following noun; the writing of של 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 Kokva letters.²² In the *geniza* letters של is normally written attached to the following noun: בשיבה שלפום בדיחא 'in the *ḡšiva* of Pumbodita' (NS 308.122 v.4); שלגולה 'of the dispersion' (16.6 r.1); רצונו שלמקום 'the Lord's will' (28.24 r.55); this is particularly the case in letters from Babylonian *g'onim*, Šrira Ga'on's בני מערב של 'from the people of the West' (16.3 r.10) is a rare exception.²³ Elsewhere, more variation is shown regarding the positioning of של: the Qazar letter writes the של separately: קהל של קייוב 'the community of Kiev' (12.122 r.8); ברזל של 'of iron' (12.122 r.13); but a letter from Fustāt prefixes it: שפוט שלגוים 'the judgement of gentiles' (16.304 r.35). Šlomo ben Yehuda generally treats של as a separate particle, כותב האגרת, בכיר ידיו של כותב האגרת 'with the signature of the letter writer' (12.328 r.15) and בדורו של יתומים 'father to orphans' (20.178 r.15), but occasionally writes the two together, שליירמיהו 'in Jeremiah's generation' (20.102 r.20).²⁴ 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 את

The direct object marker is frequently attested in the corpus, both as an independent particle, e.g., ויקבל יוסף הכהן בן יעקב 'why do you forget all this?' (28.24 r.9) and

²⁰The last phrase is found in M. *B^ḡraḳot* 5:5.

²¹The whole phrase is בני שלקדושים 'descendant of holy men', from B. *P^ḡsaḥim* 104a.

²²As well as in RH, של is attested as a prefix to the noun in LBH, Song of Songs 3:7 מטתו שלשלמה 'the litter of Šlomo', and in the Dead Sea texts, Fernandez pp. 30–31. On the other hand, the Bar Kokva letters demonstrate that various strains of RH probably treated the particle differently, since there של is not prefixed to a determined noun, Kutscher p. 142.

²³A significant problem concerning letters from Iraq is that many letters of the Iraqi *g'onim* are North African copies, made by local members of the Babylonian community there to send on to the scattered Babylonian congregations. However, in this case, it appears that Šrira's letter may well be a source text and not a copy, see Gil's introduction to 16.3 (Gil (1997) no. 20).

²⁴Neither does it appear that there is a determined/undetermined distinction being made, since the proper name 'Jeremiah' accepts the prefix.

הזה 'and Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya'aqov received this *get*' (13J16.24 r.21), and with suffixes, e.g., ועוזב אותנו 'yet he is forsaking us' (10J27.2 r.14) and הכי אקח אותה 'would I take it?' (13J15.1 r.19).

The direct object marker takes the usual BH suffixes: כי יפרנס אותי 'that he will provide for me' (13J16.14 v.18); וסמכנו אותו 'and we ordained him' (10J9.25 r.4); מודיע אני אתכם 'I am informing you' (13J13.21 r.14).²⁵

In the 3 masculine plural both the common אותם, e.g., ונתתי אותם 'and I gave them' (Box Misc. 35.14 r.11), and the rare BH אתהם, e.g., שמ צורם אתהם 'their Rock keep them' (16.95 r.10), are attested, though only the biblicalising Hebrew of Šṣrira Ga'on attests the use of the latter.²⁶

The negative particle אין

The negative אין is attested both as an independent particle, e.g., כבר אין בי כוח 'I already have no strength left in me' (13J13.28 r.18) and אין עוזר 'no one helps' (10J27.8 m.1), and with suffixes, e.g., ואינכם מחזיקים בברית גאון 'and you do not keep to the covenant of the *ga'on*' (16.6 r.13); ואיננו 'and we do not know' (12.851 r.13) and אינם יכולים 'none of them are able' (13J25.5 r.29).

Like RH, the particle generally takes the suffixes without epenthetic *nun*.²⁷ The 3 masculine singular form is the rabbinic אינו, e.g., ומי שאינו יכול 'and whoever can't' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 6 r.6) and כתב שאינו שלו 'a letter that doesn't belong to him' (10J9.25 r.4), rather than BH איננו, thereby avoiding any ambiguity with the 1 plural in unpointed text. The 1 singular form is usually attested without epenthetic *nun*, i.e., איני, which is the usual form in RH. The biblical form with *nun*, אינני, is attested only rarely; Šlomo ben Yehuda uses it occasionally, e.g., ואם אני אינני אצלך 'and though I am not with you' (10J27.2 r.10–11) and ואינני דואג 'and I do not worry' (12.217 r.25), but also employs איני, e.g., איני רואה כי 'I do not think that...' (13J14.8 r.15) and איני מתקנא [א] לא 'I covet neither silver, gold nor clothing' (13J14.8 r.32). The reading אנני in the letter of the lady Maliḥa from Byzantium 'Me, I'm not alright' (13J11.4 r.8) is probably an error for אינני, איני, though, is used later in the same text שאיני מנחת עצמי 'because I do not allow myself' (13J11.14 r.17).

For the 3 masculine plural אינם, the biblical form, is most commonly used. איןן, which exhibits the rabbinic masculine plural ending -ן, is found only rarely. In a letter written by Byzantine Jews אין is used alongside אינם, איננו, ליקח אותנו 'they cannot take us' (10J27.8 r.12) and איננו ואינם יכולים לפ[ר]נסנו 'and they are unable even to support us' (10J27.8 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

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

²⁶אתהם is very rare in the Hebrew Bible, only attested 5 times, e.g., ויברך אתהם 'and he blessed them' Genesis 31:55.

²⁷Fernandez 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: משלושה אחים 'from three brothers' (20.178 r.11); masculine construct: שבעת שמימה 'seven heavens' (13J14.10 r.4); feminine absolute: בפרוטה אחת 'with a single coin' (16.18 r.14); feminine construct: שתי הכיתות 'the two denominations' (24.43 r.6).

The numbers 10–19 are formed as in BH: עשרת זהובים 'ten *dinars*' (13J23.19 r.32); באחת עשרה ברכות 'with eleven blessings' (NS 309.20 r.9); בשנים עשר זהובים 'with twelve *dinars*' (12.338 v.9). So too are the units 20, 30 etc.: ועשרים זהובים 'and twenty *dinars*' (13J13.17 r.9); חמשים זהובים '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): בששה ועשרים בחודש 'on the twenty-sixth of the month' (10G5.7 r.5); שלשה ושלשים 'thirty-three' (13J14.20 r.5); this is also the standard construction in BH (and in Arabic).²⁸ Or the unit may follow the tens, again with both in the absolute, as is customary in LBH: כבעשים ושנן לחודש '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, וארבעה זהובים וחצי 'forty-four and a half *dinars*' (12.338 v.7), and, in the very next line, reverses the order, בשנים ושלשים זהובים 'with thirty-two *dinars*' (12.338 v.8), with something of a chiasmic effect. A similar interchange is found in the Hebrew of the Karaite *k^atubbot*, 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 מאה for one hundred, ומאה זוזים 'and a hundred *zuz*' (13J20.13 r.8), using the dual מאתים for two hundred, ומאתים וחמשים זהובים 'two hundred and fifty *dinars*' (13J26.13 r.27), and using the masculine construct numeral before מאות for further multiples, מתשע מאות זהוב 'from nine hundred *dinars*' (13J15.1 r.9) and שמונה מאות זוז 'eight hundred *zuz*'.

As in BH, one thousand uses the noun אלף ברכות, אלף 'with a thousand blessings' (12.114 r.13), the multiples 3000–9000 use the masculine construct before the plural אלפים, שמונת אלפים 'eight thousand' (13J31.3 r.13), and multiples greater than ten thousand use the masculine number plus the singular noun אלף, אלף עשר שנים 'twelve thousand' (13J23.11 r.16).³¹ A

²⁸Joüon §100j. This is also the form of the intermediate numerals in the Dead Sea texts, Abegg p. 355.

²⁹Gibson §47c.

³⁰Olszowy-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 אַלְפִים, e.g., אַלְפִים אִישׁ, 'two-thousand men' Judges 20:45, is not used for two thousand; instead the only example of two thousand is שְׁתֵּי אַלְפִים (10J12.25 r.5) where Šamu'el ben Moše of Tyre unusually uses the feminine construct before אַלְפִים, contrary to biblical use.³²

The ordinal numbers attested in the letters take the same forms as in BH; masculine: בְּדוֹר 'in the first generation' (NS 308.122 v.6); בַּלַּיִל שֵׁנִי 'on the second night' (10G5.7 r.6); בֶּן 'son of the Third' (16.261 r.27); אֲדוֹנֵינוּ הַרְבִּיעִי 'our master the Fourth' (13J11.4 r.13), etc.; feminine: אַגְרַתְּכֶם הַרְאִשׁוֹנָה 'your first letter' (12.328 r.17); אַגְרַתְךָ הַשֵּׁנִית 'your second letter' (13J26.23 r.13). שְׁנִית is also attested at NS 169.11r .9, 20.100 r.7 and 20.181 r.35; the ordinal שְׁנִי, 'second', which is the usual feminine form in RH is not found in the letters.³³

The relativizer

The relativizer is the particle that marks a relative clause. BH attests two relativizers, אֲשֶׁר and, to a lesser extent, -שׁ. In RH and Talmudic Hebrew the principal relativizer is -שׁ. אֲשֶׁר did not entirely die out in RH, though, and it may still be found in the Mišna, though only when referring back to biblical sources and in the blessing formulae.³⁴ Both אֲשֶׁר and -שׁ are attested in the role of relativizer in the *geniza* letters: אֲשֶׁר יִתְפַּלְלוּ בוֹ 'to the place in which they pray' (13J20.13 r.11); לְמַקּוֹם שֶׁנִּגְלָה בוֹ 'to the place in which it was revealed' (Misc. 35.44 v.4).

The pointing of -שׁ 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 -שׁ with *segol* 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 as -שׁ before the third person pronouns, the first singular pronoun, אֵין and the conditional conjunctions אִילוֹ and אִם.³⁵ 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 -שׁ, even before a guttural: שֶׁקֶרְאָנוּ 'that happened to us' (Misc. 35.49 r.22); מִן הַקּוֹצִים שֶׁבְּעֵם 'from the thorns among the people' (13J23.1 r.20); הַדּוּחַק שֶׁאֲנִי בוֹ '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: בְּאֲשֶׁר '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.

³²The letters show few examples of the dual overall. It mainly occurs in the regular feminine noun (those that take the plural -וֹת) where its form is unambiguous; see *Nouns*.

³³For its use in RH see Fernandez p. 86. It is attested in contemporary literary texts though, occurring in the Scroll of 'Evyatar, בְּשָׁנָה הַשֵּׁנִיָּה 'in the second year' (10K7.1 leaf 1 v.22).

³⁴Azar p. 214.

³⁵Bar-Asher pp. 14–15.

r.13); מאשר 'from which' (18J3.9 r.4); and, rarely (only used by Šolomo ben Yehuda), לאשר 'to whom' (13J31.7 r.12). Additionally, it may follow various other prepositions, such as על אשר 'about that which' (18J4.17 r.24); את אשר 'that which' (10J24.1 leaf 1 r.10); בעד אשר 'on behalf of the one who' (10J10.22 r.10); אל אשר 'to the one whom' (13J15.1 r.20); תחת אשר 'under which' (20.102 r.3).

The relativizer -ש usually requires the insertion of an indefinite or interrogative pronoun or כל between it and a preposition; some of the numerous examples are: -ש כל מה 'whatever' (13J26.16 r.24); -ש למי 'to the one who' (10J32.9 v.7); -ש כל מי 'whoever' (24.43 r.16); -ש מה 'whatever' (8J20.1 m.9); -ש על כל מי 'against whomsoever' (10J9.25 r.4); -ש מי 'someone who' (10J9.25 r.20).

אשר is employed more frequently than -ש in the corpus, occurring approximately twice as often. However, certain constructions utilising -ש are more common than the equivalents with אשר, for instance the indefinite constructions -ש מי, and כל מי -ש, common in RH, are used more often than their biblical counterparts מי אשר and כל איש אשר. Conversely, באשר is more widely employed than -ש במה though -ש ממה occurs as often as biblical מאשר. Nevertheless, the RH relative constructions employing מה and מי are sometimes the only examples of the relativizer -ש attested in letters: for all but indefinite relatives some letters employ only אשר. Šolomo ben Yehuda's letters for example indicate a marked preference for אשר over -ש. Out of forty of his letters -ש is used only nine times: once in the midrashic quotation formula בו שנאמר 'about whom it is said' (10J12.17 r.21); once in a quotation from the Talmud, B. *Qiddušin* 75b הקוצים 'from the thorns among the people' (13J23.1 r.20); once with מה לי, ותן לי מה שנקצב לי, מה 'give me what has been determined for me' (20.178 r.19); four times with מי, e.g., ומי שיש בו בינה, מי 'and whoever has understanding' (Misc. 35.14 r.24); only once does -ש occur independently in an original context: משאל ששאלני 'a request that he asked me' (13J14.5 r.6). Other letter writers exhibit similar tendencies: Nəḥemya Hakkohen, the Babylonian *ga'on*, attests -ש only in certain post-biblical idioms, e.g., בשנה שעברה 'in the last year' (16.6 r.6) and על כל שעברו 'about all that has passed' (12.851 r.15), but in other cases the relativizer is אשר.³⁶ However, another letter from Babylon reflects the opposite tendency: NS 308.122, dated around 850 C.E., employs only the relativizer -ש. A late, fifteenth-century, letter, 13J21.10, which comes from Egypt, shares the same style and employs only -ש. as does the much earlier Qazarian letter (12.222).

Overall, excepting the letters at the temporal and stylistic extremes of the collection, אשר and -ש were regarded as interchangeable. This is paralleled in other contemporary sources; the Qazarian document (Misc. 35.38, the 'Schechter Text') attests both: וידברו דברים שאין לנו לספר 'they said things that are not for us to relate' (leaf 1 r.20) and הוציא לנו את בהספרים אשר שם 'bring us out the books that are there' (leaf 1 v.9). The Scroll of 'Evyatar (T-S K7.1), a historical work written in the late eleventh century, attests מצליח... שהיה מדמשק 'Maṣliḥ...who was from Damascus' (K7.1 leaf 2 r.1) alongside examples such as כבוד גדול אשר לא היה מעולם 'a great honour such as never was before' (K7.1 leaf 2 r.20). Spanish writers such as Mənaḥem ben Saruq

³⁶Nəḥemya Hakkohen Ga'on's letters are: 8J20.3; 12.851; 16.6; Bodl MS Heb b12.25; Gil (1997) no. 14=Mosseri VIII 479. They display the mix of biblical and post-biblical forms typical of *geniza* letters: אשר and -ש as relativizers, biblical complementizer כי and rabbinic final conjunction -ש כדי.

tend to use both interchangeably.³⁷ Even Karaite marriage documents attest both, sometimes in the same document.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 כִּי and -שׁ.

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, as well-attested in the letters as in any strain of Hebrew, e.g., נֶאֱמַנְנוּ הַמְמוּנָה מִפִּינוּ 'our faithful servant who was appointed by our [=my] own mouth' (10J9.25 m.10); הַשְּׁלִיט הַנִּקְרָא חַיְדָרָה 'the ruler who is called Haidara' (13J26.13 r.7).³⁹ However, in addition to this common usage the definite article is also employed as a relativizer on the finite verb.⁴⁰ The definite article occurs in this role in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., וְכֹל הַהִקְדִּישׁ שְׂמוּאֵל 'and all that S^omu'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.⁴¹ Examples of its use in the corpus are the unambiguous [גודל] הַצַּעַר 'the size of the grief and strength of the blow that struck us' (12.80 r.11–12) and הַשְּׂמוּעָה הַרְעָה הַהִגִּיעָה 'the evil report which arrived' (13J31.8 r.6–7), from letters of Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda, and וְעֻבְרוֹ הַהִנְיָח '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 הֵ instead: הַהוֹבִיל 'that he bore' (13J16.17 r.1); הַהוֹתְקָנָה 'which was prepared' (16.304 r.23).⁴² However, there is ample evidence of the use of relative הֵ on the verb הִיהָ, which appears to be its principal role in the corpus: יִצְחָק הַכֹּהֵן זָקֵן הַקְּהִילוֹת הִיהָ עֲנִי 'Naṭan Hakkohen, elder of the congregations, who was humble' (18J4.11 r.19); שְׁנֵי הַצְּדִיקִים הָיוּ גוֹדְרֵי פְּרִצוֹת 'the two righteous men who were "repairers of breaches"' (13J31.8 r.8); עִיר אֱלֹהֵינוּ מְקוֹם תְּהִלָּתוֹ הִיהָ בֵּית חַיִּינוּ 'the city of our God, place of his praise that was once house of our life' (10J24.1 r.2–3); בְּרֵכָה זְכוֹת רֵאשׁוֹנִים הָיוּ בָּהּ 'blessing of those formerly in it' (8J2.4 v.3); וְטַבְעוּ הַסְּפִינּוֹת הָיוּ לְמִצְרַיִם פּוֹנוֹת 'the ships that were turning towards Egypt sank' (24.6 r.22); הוֹדַעְנוּ יֻקְרָנוּ הִיהָ 'we have informed our friend of what has happened' (10J9.25 m.20); כֹּל הַהוּוֹה בְּאוֹתוֹ שָׁבוּעַ אֲשֶׁר נִסְעָנוּ 'all that happened in the same week that we voyaged' (13J20.3 r.3).

It can be seen from the examples that the construction הֵ plus the verb הִיהָ 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 *nifal* of הִיהָ, in which cases the

³⁷Saruq's language is outlined in Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 235.

³⁸Olszowy-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, אֲשֶׁר, and Gil (1983) no. 294=Gottheil-Worrell 32 r.23, -שׁ.

³⁹Technically, of course, the definite article is not functioning as a relativizer since the participle may form a relative clause without its use, hence 'pseudo-relative'. See Waltke §19.7.

⁴⁰In this case the definite article is acting as a relative marker, and, syntactically, is identical to -שׁ, cf. Waltke §19.7c.

⁴¹For its use in Sa'adic language see Saenz-Badillos p. 216.

⁴²Due 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^olomo ben Y^ohuda's הִיתָה זֹאת [בִּימֵיכֶם] 'has such a thing happened in your days?' (13J13.28 r.26) which is a quotation from Joel 1:2.

actual parsing of the construction is problematic, since the participle and suffix conjugation are consonantly identical, e.g., *ולא נכחד מיקיר כל הנהיה* 'and it isn't hidden from [our] friend all that there was' (13J17.4 r.13–14); *ואם לכתוב מקצת הנהיה* 'and even to write a fraction of what happened...' (18J3.9 r.6). However, due to the otherwise identical syntax of *ה הודעתי בו כל הנהיה* 'I have made known in it all that has occurred' (13J17.4 r.4) and *הודענו יקירנו ההיה* 'we have informed our friend of what has happened' (10J9.25 m.20) it is clear that these should be read as suffix conjugation verbs with the relative *ה*. The same is probably true of Dani'el ben 'Azarya's phrase *וכשמע השלום הנתחדש* '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 *nitpa'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 *כי*, e.g., Psalms 78:35 *ויזכרו כי* 'they remembered that', less commonly, *אשר*, e.g., Exodus 11:7 *למען תדעון אשר* 'so that you may know that' and, in LBH, *-ש*, e.g., Qohelet 2:13 *וראיתי אני ש-* 'and I saw that'.⁴⁴ RH employs *-ש* both for the complementizer and relativizer, e.g., *Mišna B^o rako^t 5:5 יודע אני שהוא מקובל* 'I know that it is accepted'; it doesn't continue the use of either *כי* or *אשר* in the role of complementizer.⁴⁵

The letters adopt a position between that of RH and BH in their choice of complementizer. *אשר*, although retained alongside *-ש* as a relativizer, is never found marking a complement clause (and, as described later, it occurs less often in composite conjunctions, being replaced by *כי* or *-ש* in such constructions); instead, the letters employ both biblical *כי* and the LBH and rabbinic *-ש* as complementizers. It is quite usual to find both employed in the same letter: an early letter from Pumb^odita attests *-ש* and *כי*: *וברור לעיני הכל שישבת פום בדיתא מרובה היא באלופים* 'and it is clear to everyone's eyes that the *y^ošiva* of Pumb^odita is overflowing with *'allufim'* (NS 308.122 r.v.3); *ואמרנו כי הממון הזה עישו אתו* 'and we said that this money had crushed him' (NS 308.122 v.19). A letter of Š^omu'el Haššliši written over a century and a half later also employs both complementizers: *להודיע רבינו כי בימים האלה נשמעה שמועת אברהם בן שאול כי נפטר* 'to inform our master that in recent days we have heard a report that 'Avraham ben Ša'ul has died' (16.68 r.17); *ותובעים אנו מרבינו שישים עליו עין* 'and we are seeking from our master that he keep an eye on him' (16.68 r.21).

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

⁴³For use of the demonstratives *זה*, *זו* and *זו* as relative pronouns see Waltke §19.5.

⁴⁴Gibson §90 states that the complementizer *אשר* is mainly a feature of the later books of the Bible.

⁴⁵Fernandez p. 51–52; Segal §423.

husband attests just -ש, e.g., *להלות ממך מאד מאד שלא תרחק ממנו* 'to entreat you greatly not to put a distance between us' (13J21.10 r.14); *שמענו שדעתך ללכת לטורקיה* 'we have heard that it is your intention to go to Turkey' (13J21.10 r.16). The Palestinian *ga'on*, Dani'el ben 'Azarya also seems to prefer -ש to כי, but attests both, whereas Šalom ben Yehuda, his predecessor as *ga'on*, very rarely uses -ש.

To a certain extent the choice of complementizer, כי 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: *אי אפשר* -ש 'it is impossible that' (28.24 r.32) is a pure RH construction, e.g., *Mišna Ševu'ot* 7:8, and consequently attests the rabbinic complementizer, as does *רצונו* -ש 'it is our will that' (NS 169.11 r.10), found at *Mišna Z'rahim* 1:4. It should be no surprise that we find *וסבור הייתי* -ש 'and I had thought that' (13J16.17 r.31) and *וכמדומה אני* -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., *ודעו אחינו* כי 'and know, our brothers that...' (1J26.16 r.10), should write -ש when using the RH obligatory formula, *וראי ל* -ש, i.e., *וראי* -ש 'and one such as he should' (10J32.8 r.1). On the other hand, certain letters using rabbinic constructions biblicalise them in the manner that we are accustomed to from Karaite texts.⁴⁶ Šalom ben Yehuda, 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 *וכמדומה אני* כי 'and it appears to me that' (10J12.17 r.2) and *והיינו סבורים* כי 'and we had thought that' (13J9.2 r.23).

There is another side to the question of -ש versus כי 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.⁴⁷ Can a similar situation be responsible for the alternation between כי and -ש in some of the letters? Verbs denoting knowing and understanding, such as *ידע* and *זכר*, generally, but not universally, take the complementizer כי, as do the similar 'knowledge' constructions *כי גלוי לאל* and *לא נעלם כי*, *גלוי לאל* and *לא נעלם כי*. Non-factive complements, in particular following verbs with a volitive or directive aspect, tend to prefer the complementizer -ש, e.g., *בקש* -ש, *רצה* -ש, *תבע* -ש, *קיוה* -ש, *חפץ* -ש, *ציוה* -ש. Again, this distinction is not necessarily made in many letters, e.g., Šalom ben Yehuda attests כי *וקיויתי* 'and I hoped that' (16.275 r.24); כי *ציוה* 'he ordered that' (12.14 r.17); although, even in his letters we can find *ואני שואל ממך שתתן הכתב[ים] אשר שלחתי אל הקהל אל המשוש* 'and I ask you to give the letters, those that I sent to the community, to the *Masos*' (13J23.1 r.27), thus suggesting that the general use of volitives with -ש 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 כי over -ש or *vice versa*, the provenance of phrases and constructions employed in the letters and,

⁴⁶Maman pp. 255–258.

⁴⁷Holes p. 226. Non-factive as I am using it refers also to events that are subsequent to the action in the main clause, i.e., when the complement clause describes actions or events that are taking place in the future.

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:

כי 'because I sent letters to him' (13J13.14 v.2); 'because the people of Israel are in great straits' (13J26.16 r.15); 'because the Alluf promised' (10G5.8 v.15). This is the most common causal conjunction used in the letters.

יען כי 'because you were like a restorer of the soul to us' (8J20.1 r.3); 'because he toiled' (Misc. 35.14 r.14). Its sister BH conjunctions **יען** and **יען אשר**, so common in BH, are not found at all in the corpus.⁴⁸ Instead this conjunction is employed, though only in the letters of Naṭan ben 'Avraham, Šʿrira Ga'on and Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda, **יען כי לו הע[ד]ה** 'because his is the congregation' (13J33.12 r.21). Possibly **כי** was preferred as an element of the construction due to its strong connection with the notion of causality, not so apparent with **אשר**.

על כי 'because the Tora of the Lord is inside him' (13J25.10 r.22); 'because a wise man has been taken from among them' (NS 92.33 r.5). It is a rare BH conjunction.⁴⁹ It is not very common in the letters and is not found in the letters of either Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda or the Babylonian *gʿonim*.

RH origin:

לפי ש- 'because I am the one who quiets down conflicts' (13J16.17 r.28); 'because the hour was pressing' (18J4.4 r.28); 'because I didn't want to investigate' (13J16.17 r.23). This RH conjunction is one of the most common in the letters.⁵⁰

מפני ש- 'because you hear [only] the slanderers' (13J16.17 r.19); 'because the people of Israel captured it' (20.106 v.2); 'because they didn't come' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 5 v.9). This too is very

⁴⁸For these constructions in BH see Gibson §125.

⁴⁹Gibson §125 Rem.1.

⁵⁰The 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); 'for they trust' (13J23.13 r.22); '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.
- שכן 'because al-Lādhiqī wants to be appointed over them' (13J16.17 r.26). Only attested here in the letters, it is similarly quite rare in RH.⁵¹
- הואיל ו- 'since no scholars have been dwelling among them' (10J9.14 r.13); 'because his intention was to name' (10J12.17 r.6). It is mainly used by Šlomo ben Yhuda.
- בשביל 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 -ש לפי and is similar to BH אשר כפי.
- ביען ש- / יען ש- 'because his father [...] was an elder of our generation' (12.146 r.13); 'because he is the son of good people' (12.146 v.2). יען 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 -ש and כי. יען is not attested as a conjunction alone in the MT, and only occurs in Ezekiel 13:10; 36:3 וביען, 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.
- מתוך ש- 'because it is impossible for us to write' (12.851 r.14). It is only attested in a letter of Nḥemya Ga'on. The conjunction may be found in the Babylonian Talmud, B. Švu'ot 32b יכול לישבע מתוך שאינו יכול לישבע 'because he cannot make an oath'.
- מפני כי 'because I am ill' (13J20.18 v.3). Adapted from RH -ש מפני, the construction can be found in Karaite writings, where the biblicalisation of rabbinic and talmudic constructions through the substitution of כי or אשר for -ש is frequent.⁵² The letters of the corpus always use כי 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 אשר מפני, e.g., Exodus 19:18, which is presumably the antecedent of RH -ש מפני.

למען כי וּלְמַעַן כִּי הָיָה אֲדוֹנֵינוּ נִשְׂאֵנוּ דְנִיָּאל גֹּאֲוֹן 'and it was because our lord, our Nasi, Dani'el was *ga'on*' (8J2.3 r.1). The conjunction is another used by Karaites, as well as being found in the letters of Šolomo ben Yehuda.⁵³ *למען* is associated with causality by association with the BH causal conjunction *יען*, and *למען* alone can be found denoting cause in Spanish Hebrew poetry.⁵⁴

בעבור כי/עבור כי [עֵבֹר כִּי הֵלֵב בְּטוֹחַ] 'because each man [' (8J20.3 r.2); *בעבור כי* 'because the heart is sure' (10J11.30 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-Nahāwendī, the Karaite, attests a causal conjunction *בעבור כי*.⁵⁵

The comparative conjunction

BH origin:

כאשר כְּאֲשֶׁר בְּרֵאשׁוֹנָה 'as your forefathers used to do' (16.6 v.12); *כאשר* 'as it was at the first' (8J2.4 r.10). It is employed far less frequently as a comparative than as a temporal conjunction in the corpus.

כמו כְּמֹה וְכֹמוֹ עֲלֵינוּ נֹאמֵר 'as it is said of us' (13J25.5 r.33). Very rare in both BH and the letters. The arch-bibliciser Šrira Ga'on uses it.

RH origin:

כמו ש- כְּמֹה שֶׁעִשִּׂינוּ אֲנַחְנוּ עִמָּם 'as we did with them' (12.338 m.8); *כמו ש-* 'as they taught us' (13J25.10 r.21). A straightforward RH conjunction that is quite common in the corpus.⁵⁶

כמות ש- כְּמוֹת שֶׁהָיָה בְּקִרְאָתְךָ אוֹתוֹ חֵבֵר 'as he was when you named him Haver' (13J26.23 r.17). Only attested in Šolomo ben Yehuda's writings, other letters use *כמו ש-*.

כענין ש- וְאֵנּוּ שׁוֹאֲלִים מִמֶּנּוּ לְהַקְדִּים הַכְּתָב כְּעִנְיָן שֶׁצִּוִּינוּהוּ 'and we are requesting from him that he forward the letter as we ordered him to' (8J20.1 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.

כמקרא ש- כְּמִקְרָא שֶׁכְּתוּב 'as is written in the Bible:...' (18J4.4 r.31). It is used to indicate quotations from the Hebrew Bible.

כאילו וְכֵאִילוּ נִגְדַּ עֵינֵינוּ 'and it is if he is before our eyes' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.8).

Others:

⁵³Maman pp. 256–257.

⁵⁴Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 223.

⁵⁵Maman p. 256; it is attested in Nahāwendī's *Laws*, §30, 75b.

⁵⁶The list of RH comparative conjunctions is in Fernandez, pp. 198–199.

- כמו כי to inform that as from today (?)' (13J16.24 r.13). It is difficult to sort out the syntax of this sentence. כמו כי is attested in contemporary Karaite writings as a comparative conjunction, and so it is included here.⁵⁷
- כמו אשר 'he has left us as he created us' (13J9.2 r.41). It is only used by Šlomo ben Yehuda 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^o* 'imoṭ of Toviyya ben Moše.⁵⁸

The concessive conjunction

The concessive conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

- אם 'though, brothers, you may have forgotten us [...] we have not forgotten you' (13J25.5 r.2); 'and though letters to him are lacking' (13J26.3 r.8). BH attests the use of the conditional אם as a concessive conjunction, e.g., Numbers 22:18; Job 9:15. It is a construction widely employed in the letters, perhaps its frequent use is aided by the influence of the Arabic concessive *wa'in*.⁵⁹

RH origin:

- אף על פי ש- /אפעלפי ש- Both forms of the conjunction are attested in the letters, written as one word, 'and although he promised' (8.3 r.14), and as several, 'and although you need no admonition from me' (13J20.9 r.7). Both Yošiyahu Ga'on (13J26.16 r.11) and Naṭan ben 'Avraham (8.3 r.14) write it as one word; most others, including Š'arira Ga'on, 'Elḥanan ben Š'marya and Yisra'el Hakkohen Ga'on write it as separate words.

- אפילו '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:

- אף לפי ש- 'and despite the fact that trouble surrounded us [...] his mercies didn't forsake us' (12.146 r.4). An unusual variant of אף על פי ש- that is only attested in this letter of an unknown Babylonian *ga'on*, although it possibly also occurs in ואף לפי (Misc. 35.49 r.13) where unfortunately the text is damaged.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Maman p. 257, where it is explained as equivalent in meaning to כשם ש-.

⁵⁸Maman p. 258.

⁵⁹Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 225 points to the use of ואם in the poetry of Ibn Ghayyat of Spain as an example of Arabic-influenced Hebrew.

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

The adversative conjunction

The adversative conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

- כי** 'he only had eyes and heart for what could feed him and give him drink' (13J9.2 r.32). As in BH, **כי** may be adversative after a negative. It is rare in the letters and is found mainly in Š^lomo ben Y^huda and Š^rira Ga'on, two of the more biblicising authors in the corpus.
- אבל** 'my name is Š^{mu}'el [...] but it is Mawhūb among the world at large' (12.347 r.28).
- כי אם** 'God will not abandon those who fear him, on the contrary he will support them in his mercy' (12.347 r.28). **כי אם** is common as an exceptive adverb in the letters but may also be found, as here, introducing an adversative clause.

RH origin:

- אלא** 'don't delay me any longer but act for the honour of heaven' (10J9.13 r.16). Like **כי אם** 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:

- אך כי** '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 **כי**, as an adversative after a negative main clause.

The conditional conjunction

The conditional conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

- אם** 'if you want to force us, force us!' (10J9.25 m.2); 'and if the one who returns it desires, let a deed of compensation be drawn up for him' (10J12.25 r.11); 'and if I look for something from the Bible...I find it' (13J11.2 r.12). The BH *realis* conditional conjunction is widespread in the letters.
- לולי** '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, לילא, is also attested, for instance in a letter of Nəḥemya Ga'on (16.6 r.7), in Šarira Ga'on (Gil (1997) no. 28=AIU VII E23 §4 line 10) and in an early letter of Šalom ben Yəhuda (12.14 r.11); later letters by him use לולי, as do writers from North Africa and Palestine. It seems that only the Babylonians regularly employ the spelling with 'alef.

לו וְלוּ הַגְדַּתִּי לְאַבְיָרְנִי; וְלוּ יִכּוּלְתִּי עֲפֹתִי 'and if I could, I would have flown' (13J16.14 v.4); וְלוּ הַגְדַּתִּי לְאַבְיָרְנִי; וְלוּ יִכּוּלְתִּי עֲפֹתִי 'and were I to have told ^{to our prince} 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 ללא, attested as a vocalised form, לָא (12.732 r.8).⁶¹

RH origin:

אילו 'if it had ^{reached him} he (may he live forever) would have written a reply instantly' (10J9.25 r.5); 'and had someone seen him [instead] grieving' (13J23.11 r.25). The RH *irrealis* conjunction is common in the letters and is also found written defectively אלו (13J23.11 r.25).

אילולי 'and had everyone asked me' (13J16.17 r.34). It is not widely used when compared with אילו.

אילולי 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:

לולי ש- '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 אילולי ש- and BH לולי; it is also attested in a letter of Yošiyahu Ga'on, 10J32.8 r.3.⁶²

לולי כי '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 כי, the Karaite Mənaḥem, וְלוּלִי כִּי הַדְּבָר נְחוּץ 'and if the matter were not urgent' (13J9.9 r.14) and also Ṭoviyya ben Moše (12.347 r.23).⁶³

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:

⁶¹This spelling attested in the *ketiv* of 2 Samuel. 18:12.

⁶²It is attested in Ibn 'Ezra's commentary on Genesis 2:17, in the form לולי ש-.

⁶³Ibn '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' (10J24.8 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^oonim* Š^orira, N^oḥemya and Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda, as an alternative to the rabbinic *כדי*-ש. The biblical *אשר* למען, 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' (13J11.5 r.13); 'so that they be not forgotten' (10J24.8 v.20). It is simply the negative of למען.
- פן 'lest they roll onwards from there to this land' (NS 321.2 r.4).
- לבלתי 'so that she doesn't let him hop about in the courtyard' (13J20.3 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.
- לבעבור '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:

- על תניי ש- 'and I was minded to go there on condition that it wouldn't bother any of my brothers' (13J25.10 r.27).⁶⁵ Neither this common RH composite construction nor the following one occur widely in the letters; preference is given to the more concise conjunctions *כדי* and למען.
- על מנת כן ש- / על מנת ש- 'on condition that if the money weren't handed over at such-and-such a time then they would return us into their charge' (10J27.8 r.10).
- כדי ש- 'so that we may meet tomorrow at the synagogue' (8J22.7 r.10); 'so that I can write to them' (13J25.5 r.22). It is a very common conjunction in the corpus, though less well-used by the biblicalising

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

⁶⁵*על תניי* is written with the unusual spelling *תנייה* in this example.

Šʿrira Ga'on.

- כדי שלא כדי שלא תשתכח המשנה 'so that the Mišna isn't forgotten' (13J25.5 r.23); כדי שלא תסור 'so that love does not depart from among us' (16.6 r.9).
- ש שיחרה עלי גאונינו 'that our *ga'on* should be angry at me' (13J20.18 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.
- שלא שלא היה רוח לעיין בשאלותכם 'so that there wasn't time to study your questions' (16.62 r.16).
- שמה נתיירא שמה תומעט אימתו על הציבור 'feared lest his hold over the public lessens' (Gil (1983) no. 368=ENA 3765.6 r.10).

Others:

- למען ש- למען שאשוב 'so that I can return' (13J16.16 r.18). This variant on BH אשר is the only example and occurs in a letter of a scribe called Moše.⁶⁶
- בעבור ש- בעבור שאבקש מן הזקנים דבר 'so that I could seek something from the elders' (Gil (1983) no. 294=Gottheil-Worrell 31 r.25). Ṭoviyya ben Moše uses this variant on BH בעבור אשר.
- עבור ש- עבור שיהיה להם אצלכם חן 'so that they would obtain grace on your behalf' (13J19.15 r.24). It is very rare, only being employed, albeit twice, in this letter from Ašqelon.
- לבל לבל תהי למכשול ופוקה 'that she not be [grounds for] remorse or qualm of conscience' (10J11.30 r.9); לבל יוכל אותו האיש לגבות מנחלת אחיו 'so that that man will not be able to take from his brother's share' (10J14.1 r.8). These are the only examples of לבל plus a finite verb, formed by analogy with its use in final infinitive clauses.

The temporal conjunction

The temporal conjunctions attested are:

BH origin:

- כאשר וכאשר ראו זקני רמלה 'and when the elders of Ramle saw' (16.261 r.25).
- עד אשר עד אשר בא אל דמשק 'until he came to Damascus' (10J10.9 r.3).
- אחרי אשר אחרי אשר הזכיר 'after he mentioned' (10J1 leaf 2 v.9). This occurs in letters by Šʿrira and his son Hayya only.

⁶⁶ למען ש- 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.

- טרם טרם 'before he died' (12.99 v.11). This is the only example of the conjunction before a finite verb.
- בטרם בטרם 'before I go' (12.217 r.25). Also attested at 13J26.13 r.27. Neither טרם or בטרם is common in the letters.
- עד עד 'until God helps me and I come back' (13J20.9 r.18). עד with the finite verb is attested frequently in the letters.
- עדי עדי 'until I die' (18J4.20 r.16). This archaic form only occurs here.
- עד לא עד 'before the setting of the sun' (10J14.8 v.14). It is a construction used three times by Šolomo ben Y'huda.
- עד כי עד 'until the last coin is gone from the pocket' (8J2.1 v.4). This is a rare biblical construction, Genesis 49:10.
- עד ש- עד 'until it became clear to us' (10J9.25 r.4). Originally a LBH construction, it is often found in the letters; Šolomo ben Y'huda, however, is exceptional in not employing it, preferring the more characteristically biblical אשר.
- מיום אשר מיום אשר 'ever since the day he chose us' (13J9.2 r.40). It is only attested here.
- מאז מאז 'ever since our forefathers became silent' (10J1 r.17). It is rarely attested.
- מעת מעת 'from the moment he came, the dispute began' (13J23.1 r.26). It is a rare expression in BH, מעת 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 Y'huda, as well as Hillel the lepers' representative from Tiberias.

RH origin:

- אחר ש- אחר 'after I circumcised the flesh of my foreskin' (12.732 r.1). It is only used twice in the letters.
- כש- כש 'and when its lying and falsehood became clear to us' (10J247.7 r.4). Although in general it is a common conjunction, it is extremely rare in the letters of Šolomo ben Y'huda who prefers the biblical temporal conjunctions.
- לכש- לכש 'when you read this letter of ours' (16.95 leaf 1 v.12). This rabbinic construction is only found here, in a letter of the Babylonian *ga'on* Š'rirra, and in 10J14.8 v.15.
- כיון ש- כיון 'as soon as it is revealed' (10J24.3 r.17).

- מאחר ש- מאחר 'after we've done what was suitable' (13J16.17 r.18). It is attested only three times in the letters.
- בשעה ש- בשעה שיבוא ר' יפת 'when *rav* Yafet comes' (13J16.17 r.8).
- לאחר ש- לאחר שנתנם לי 'after he gave them to me' (10J14.19 r.13). Used twice in this letter, it is also attested in 13J14.20 r.6.
- בזמן ש- בזמן שאין עושין 'and while no one did' (28.24 r.56). Only used twice in the letters.
- כל זמן ש- כל זמן שאני עסוק ברצוני הצבור 'and all the time that I am occupied with public duties' (20.141 r.40).
- Others:**
- עת אשר עת אשר שמעו 'and when they heard' (13J23.19 r.8). It is used only here, by Šlomo ben Yehuda; it is a biblicised form of עת ש-, which is attested in RH, e.g., M. 'Orla 1:2.
- בעת אשר בעת אשר עמדה לו השעה 'at the time that he succeeded' (13J23.19 r.19). This construction is only used by Šlomo ben Yehuda.
- בעת כי בעת כי עמדה לו שעה 'when he succeeded' (10J14.8 v.23). It is only attested here, in a letter of Šlomo ben Yehuda.
- העת והעת כתבנו 'and when we wrote' (18J4.5 m.2). The MH of Moše ibn 'Ezra attests the same use of העת with the sense of בעת.⁶⁷ The use of all the temporal conjunctions attesting עת as an element may owe something to the fact that the most common Arabic temporal conjunction is the similar *'id* 'when'.
- לעת ש- לעת שיטלטל 'and when he moves' (20.94 r.17). It is only attested here, in a letter from Tiberias.
- בעת בעת יצאתי ממצרים 'when I set out from Egypt' (13J20.13 r.8). It occurs several times in the letters, although not used by Šlomo ben Yehuda who attests many other permutations of עת.
- בעת ש- בעת שאלך להחבות 'when I shall go to hide myself' (13J16.18 r.16). It occurs twice in the letters.
- עד העת אשר עד העת אשר הבטיח 'until the time that he promised' (13J9.2 r.42). This is the only example, from a letter of Shlomo ben Yehuda.
- עד זמן ש- עד זמן שאבוא או אכתוב 'until the time that I come or write' (12.239 r.11).
- אחרי ש- אחרי שלא בא תשובה 'and after no reply came' (10J32.8 r.4). It is only attested here.
- מיום ש- מיום שנפרדנו 'from the day that we were separated' (8J21.6 r.8)

⁶⁷Saenz-Badillos pp. 242–242.

- מיום מיום נחו מספריו 'from the day that his uncles died' (13J23.1 r.25). Only Šalom ben Yehuda uses this construction.
- לפני ש- לפני שתתקן עם הראש 'before you straighten things out with the Head' (Misc.35.43 leaf 1 v.15). This is the only example.
- מאחרי אשר מאחרי אשר באו לידו מכתבי 'after my letters came into his possession' (13J14.8 r.11). It is only used by Šalom ben Yehuda.
- מאחרי מאחרי כתבתי הכתב 'after I wrote the letter' (Gil (1983) no. 130=Mosseri Ia4 r.7). It is only used by Šalom ben Yehuda who attests a number of other similarly asyndetic constructions.
- כ- כידעו 'when they knew' (12.99 r.5). The use of כ on the finite verb as a temporal conjunction is a payṭannic construction which is found in Sa'adya's language as well as other medieval writers.⁶⁸ It is not a particularly well-attested construction in the corpus, however.
- עוד ש- ועוד שזכר נכבדנו 'and while our honour remembered' (10J24.1 leaf 3 r.6).
- בעוד אשר בעוד אשר נפל הכתל 'when the wall fell' (NS J172 r.15). It is only used by Šalom ben Yehuda.
- עד אשר ליום עד אשר ליום יגדלו 'until they come of age' (20.178 r.19). It is only attested here in a letter of Šalom ben Yehuda.

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

The copulative and disjunctive conjunction

BH origin:

- ו- ונשמו מסלות אשר החריבו ארץ הצבי 'who have laid waste the land of Israel and left the highways deserted' (13J9.2 r.8). This is, of course, universally attested, as are the following conjunctions.
- או או לשאוב ממנו מים חיים 'or to draw from it living water' (10J11.29 r.17).
- אם ולא נודע לנו אם שב ואם לא 'and it isn't known to us if he is returning or not' (13J16.14 r.23).
- אף אף כתוב בהם תנאים קשים 'also hard conditions are written in them' (13J13.28 r.20).
- אף כי אף כי במקבלי מתנות 'and how much the more among receivers of gifts' (13J16.14 v.14).

⁶⁸Saenz-Badillos pp. 212, 215.

RH Origin:

או ש- לדין או שיתן או שיתקן הדבר 'to judge either to give them or set the matter in order' (ENA 4010.5 v.8). It is found only rarely in the letters.

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 אשר as an element, i.e., יען אשר and למען אשר. In addition, אשר features less often in the coinages and MH conjunctions; we do not find מפני אשר for instance but we find מפני כי and מפני ש- with ש- and כי 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 יען כפי ש-, ש- לולי ש-, ש- לולי כי, למען כי, לולי כי and אף על פי כי. The particular association of כי with the notion of causality led to its preponderance in causal compounds. Though אשר, 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 אשר in post-biblical Hebrew, and therefore to its relative scarcity in conjunctive compounds.⁶⁹

Certain writers in the *geniza* may be singled out for their own particular preferences in the field of conjunctions. Šlomo ben Yehuda shares with the Babylonian *ga'on* Šarira a taste for the BH conjunction למען over the RH כדי ש- and they both continue to employ the biblical adversative כי. 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 Šlomo ben Yehuda's writings and that Šarira is one of only a few writers to use the RH conjunction לכש-. 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. Šmu'el ben Moše of Tyre is represented by four letters in the *geniza*, and is a good example of the averagely literate letter-writer.⁷⁰ For conjunctions, he of course attests ו- for coordination, גם for inclusion and אם for the *realis* conditional: these BH conjunctions have no post-biblical replacements. The other biblical conjunctions attested are כי for the causal, כאשר for the temporal, אבל for the adversative, לולי for the *irrealis* conditional and אם for the concessive. The rabbinic conjunctions are כדי ש- and final ש-, כש- and מאחר ש- temporal, אלא adversative and לפי ש- causal. In this, Šmu'el ben Moše'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 כי and לפי ש-, which two are the commonest causal conjunctions

⁶⁹Maman pp. 255-258 shows the large number of conjunctions in use by the Karaites that employ כי as an element, they outnumber those which use אשר by a considerable margin.

⁷⁰These letters are 13J26.13, 13J18.1 and 10J12.25 (these two fragments comprising a single letter), 13J22.25, and Mosseri II 181 (=L.183).

in the letters.⁷¹ Additionally, we can see that no Medieval Hebrew coinages are present in the letters of Šamu'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.⁷² The Babylonian *g'onim* in particular employ very few medieval conjunctions, a fact that is also true of Sa'adya's writings.⁷³ The writers of the Palestinian *y'siva* employ more, as can be seen in Naṭan ben 'Avraham's letters or those of Šlomo 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:

אחרי	זקן אחד 'after a certain elder' (13J26.13 r.19)
אל	אל אחינו קהל דמיאט 'to our brothers, the community of Dumyāt' (13J26.16 v.1)
אלי	מגמת כתבי אלי החבר 'the purpose of my letter to the Haver' (13J18.1 r.12). This form with the archaic <i>yod</i> ending is employed very occasionally in our texts, in each case it stands before the name of the letter's recipient: להגיע כתבי אלי כבודך 'for my letter to reach your honour' (10J9.14 r.19); מכתביי אלי ידיד 'my letters to [my] friend' (13J13.28 r.2). Rather like מלפני, its use was probably regarded as more formal and polite than אל alone.
אצל	וישבו כל היום אצלנו 'and they sat all day with us' (8J20.1 v.1)
את	להתהלך את שוטר '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-	בני ארץ ישראל בצרה גדולה 'the people of Israel are in great straits' (13J26.16 r.15)
באין	באין ספר 'without a letter' (13J13.14 r.12)
בגלל	בגלל חמודו 'on account of his son' (13J16.20 r.20)
בין	בין שני כליותיי 'between my two kidneys' (6J3.21 r.9)
בלא	בלא חטא 'without sin' (12.17 r.4)
בלי	בלי מצרים 'without distress' (8.3 r.1)
בלעד-	ואין צור בלעדו 'and there is no rock apart from him' (10J11.29 r.10)
בלתי	בלתי טהורות 'without purity' (10J24.3 r.4)
בעד	בעדכם ובעד כל ישראל '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'.

⁷¹Avraham 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 כִּי as well as אִם כִּי and אֵלָא. 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.

⁷²For instance כִּי לַמַּעַן is one of the better attested MH conjunctions in the letters, but is only found four times in our corpus, mostly in Šlomo ben Y'huda's correspondence; כִּי מִפְּנֵי is only found once.

⁷³Rabin p. 136.

- בעבור 'and on account of your brother's generous donation' (16.18 r.9)
- בתוך 'in the middle of the festival' (24.43 r.10)
- זולת 'in somewhere different from the city of *Ḥaṣor*' (13J16.18 r.17). Both forms זולתי and זולת are attested in letters of Shlomo ben Yehuda: 'apart from someone' (13J31.7 r.22) and זולת זאת 'apart from this' (10J27.2 r.10).
- זולתי 'apart from this last one' (13J15.1 r.20)
- חוץ, חוץ מן 'outside the city' (18J3.9 r.31). It is also attested in the form חוץ מזה 'apart from this' (13J20.18 r.14).
- חוצה ל- 'Egypt is outside the land' (8J2.2 v.14)
- טרם 'and before his death' (10J27.7 r.10)
- יען 'on account of his acts of kindness' (18J4.26 r.27). יען is only attested here in the letters as a preposition (though with a conjunctive role, governing an infinitival causal clause); it is slightly more common as a conjunction before finite verbs.
- כ- 'according to the custom of the *g^oonim*' (13J26.16 r.16)
- כמו 'like the refining of silver' (13J26.13 r.18)
- כנגד זה 'this one to that one' (Misc.35.4 leaf 5 r.8)
- כעל 'according to all that he has done us' (12.16 v.18)
- כפי 'like (=in proportion to) our longing for him' (13J31.1 m.2)
- ל- 'thanking him' (8.3 r.7)
- לאין 'without limit' (12.14 r.4)
- למען 'for the sake of his name' (12.775 r.11)
- לנגד 'before them' (12.17 r.14)
- לפי 'because of the confusion of the roads' (10J12.22 r.4)
- לפני 'and to pray before our God' (10J32.8 v.2).
- לקראת 'to the dear [...] teacher Šamu'el' (10J9.14 r.1). It is a common biblical construction that is surprisingly rare in the letters.
- מאחר 'and after I finished' (12.273 v.17)
- מאחריו 'and after him' (10J25.8 r.22)
- מאין 'without inhabitant' (16.18 r.14)
- מאצל 'from the honoured elder' (13J26.3 r.14)
- מאת יי 'and his reward will be from the Lord' (13J16.18 r.17)
- מבין 'there was taken from among them' (NS 92.33 r.5)
- מבלי 'and without doubt' (8.3 r.13)
- מדי 'time to time' (10J1 leaf 2 v.7).
- מול 'facing the temple of the Lord' (13J11.5 r.17)
- מיד 'and we accepted it from our elder' (13J13.17 r.8)
- מלפני 'from before the Lord of Lords' (13J16.18 r.2)

- מן פרידתנו ממך 'our separation from you' (8J20.1 r.3)
- מני אחותכם 'from your sister' (13J11.4 v.1). Quite rare, מני is only used to denote the sender of a letter, מני קהל צהרגת 'from the community of Şahrajt' (10J22.7 m.1); מני אלהנו בן שמריה 'from Elḥanan ben Šʿmarya' (Bodl MS Heb a 3.21 r.10); מני אוהבו 'from his friend' (ENA 4009.4 r.6); this can be compared to the similar use of an archaic form in אלי which is always employed to denote the addressee.⁷⁴
- מסביב מסביב המקום 'around the place' (32.8 r.32)
- מעל מעליהם 'from upon them' (13J16.17 r.32)
- מעם ותהיה משכרתו שלימה מעם יי 'and his full reward will be from the Lord' (13J33.12 r.17)
- מפני מפני הדיוקני 'on account of the money-order' (13J15.1 r.19)
- מצד מצד המלכות 'provided for by the kingdom' (13J26.16 r.14). It is only attested in this letter.
- מתוך מתוך דבר 'from out of something' (16.267 r.14)
- מתחת מתחת ידי החשוד 'under the hands of the "suspect"' (13J9.2 r.19)
- נגד נגד אולמו 'in front of his porch' (18J4.17 r.10)
- נכח נכח פנינו 'before our face' (13J25.5 r.7). This rare BH preposition is only found in the letters of Šʿrira Ga'on. Elsewhere, commoner forms such as נגד are preferred.
- סביבותיו סביבותיו אנשים 'he collected men around him' (16.261 r.19)
- עד ועד תומו 'and until his end' (10J14.10 r.23)
- עדי עדי החבר 'until (up to?) the Ḥaver' (10J22.7 r.22)
- עד בלי עד בלי די 'until there is not enough' (12.16 v.9). It is also found in עד בלי ירח '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. עד בלי does not occur in any other context.
- עד ל- עד לנפשות הגיעו 'they have reached the limit' (13J9.2 r.31)
- אחר אחר עשר דורות 'after seventeen generations' (10J14.10 r.27)
- על עליו 'and bring us relief' (13J26.16 r.17)
- על ידי על ידי מר רב אהרן 'and I wrote by means of master and teacher 'Aharon' (13J34.2 r.11)⁷⁵
- על אודות על אודותיך 'concerning you' (13J9.2 r.60)
- על דברת על דברת השמועה הרעה 'on account of the evil report' (13J31.8 r.6). This is the only example.
- עם עם גוים 'with Muslims' (10J27.2 r.15)
- תחת תחת חבר 'instead of Ḥaver' (13J15.1 r.10)

⁷⁴Theoretically, in 13J11.4 or the Bodleian example, מני could be the rare variant form of the preposition with the 1 singular suffix, attested in BH as מני or מני (see GK 103i), with the name in apposition, i.e., 'from me, Elḥanan'. 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 מן with *yod 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:

אחורי	יאמר אותו אחורי 'he says it behind my back' (10J24.8 v.7)
בבלתי	[] בבלתי יציאה 'without leaving' (NS 257.75 r.2), which is a biblicalising preposition formed from בלתי by analogy with BH בבלי, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:42.
בשביל	ואני לא אשלח אותם בשבילך 'and I won't send them for you' (13J20.25 r.16)
כמות	כמות אדם חבוש 'like a bound man' (8J21.6 r.9). This use is rare since the usual form without suffixes in the letters is כמו, e.g., כמו אש 'like fire' (10J14.8 v.7) or כמוו 'like the rich' (NS 321.2 r.3).
לאחר	לאחר צעקות וצרות 'after cries and distress' (13J26.13 r.17)
לאצל	והשליח שבא לאצלך 'and the emissary who came to your place' (13J16.17 r.8)
ליד	ליד מודיעות 'beside declarations' (13J15.1 r.19)
מקודם ל-	מקודם לענישת אחינו 'before the heavy tax [was imposed] on our brothers' (13J26.16 r.13). It is only attested in this letter; לפני and טרם with temporal value are employed elsewhere: לפני מיתחו 'before his death' (NS 308.122 r.28); וטרם זה היום 'and before this day' (16.3 r.8).
משום	משום שלום הדרך '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 לפי.
עבור	עבור נושאם '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 בעבור is not used as often as בעד or בעבור in our texts. It may be found in Spanish Hebrew, e.g., in the poetry of Dunaš ben Labrat. ⁷⁶
על גבי	על גבי השאלות 'beside the questions' (NS 308.122 v.21)
קודם	קודם ביאתו 'before his arrival' (13J16.20 r.8). The RH preposition is also employed in a letter from Qayrwān, קודם ההגה 'before the festival' (16.62 r.21) and in one of Šarira's קודם יציאתו 'before his departure' (10J25.8 v.23); as with ל- מקודם, elsewhere we find that לפני and טרם are preferred for 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 עבור or בבלתי but they are not used widely. Common RH prepositions such as לשום/לשם, על שם, משום/משם and מחמת 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 על דברת, נכח, and כעל 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., עדי, מני, אלי, are an exception, being found across many different letters. In the case of מני and אלי, 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

⁷⁶Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 229. It is used instead of בעבור to fulfil metrical requirements.

expressions involving the rarer demonstrative pronouns). *אלי* or *מני* are not attested outside the context of these epistolary idioms.

Suffixes of the preposition

The prepositions *בעד*, *ל-*, *עם*, *אצל*, *ב-*, *עבור*, *[ב]נגד*, *[ל]נגד*, *זולת*, *את*, *מאת* and *בשביל* take the singular suffixes:

Singular		Plural
1	לי (13J16.18 r.16)	עמנו (10J32.8 r.11)
2m	בך (12.851 r.6)	בעדכם (Misc. 36.140 r.33)
2f	—	—
3m	בשבילו (13J9.9 r.10)	להם (NS 308.122 v.26)
	בעדיהו (AS 145.61 r.10)	עמהם (Misc. 35.11 r.19)
	למו (Misc. 35.40 r.5)	למו (12.256 r.13)
3f	לה (13J16.24 r.16)	בהן (16.275 r.6)

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

Despite the fact that the pronoun *המה* is employed in the letters, the preposition with the suffixes of the 3 plural *המה-* and *הנה-* is only attested in a paraphrase of 2 Samuel 12:8: *כל אלה וכהמה וכהמה* 'all these and as much more' (13J11.5 r.3). The other poetic suffix found in BH, *מו-*, is attested quite frequently in the letters, most commonly it occurs on *ל-*, i.e., *למו*, but we also find *עלימו* (13J14.10 r.6) and *במו* (13J13.21 r.8). In BH *למו* is employed commonly as an alternative of *להם* but may also represent the 3 masculine singular as a pausal form.⁷⁷ In the letters, it is extremely rare for the singular, only *וניתן למו* 'and it was given to him' (Misc. 35.40 r.5), and is usually the plural, *למו ברית אבותם* 'to remember for them their fathers' covenant' (12.256 r.13).

The two forms of the 3 masculine singular suffix are the common *ו-* and the less common *[ו]הו-*. The suffix *הו-* 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 *-ה-* to biliteral prepositions is attested in the 3 masculine plural in the BH preposition *עמהם*, e.g., Deuteronomy 29:16. With this precedent and with the wider use of the *הו-* suffix on nouns, the letters occasionally employ the longer suffix. In particular it is the preferred suffix in the letters of Yosef Hakkohen ben Šolomo Ga'on, *ועימהו* 'and with him' (13J16.24 r.15), *עימהו* (Gil (1993) no. 408=ULC Add 3347 r.18) and *מנהו* 'from him' (13J16.24 r.17), where it is also the main 3 masculine singular suffix used on nouns, e.g., *צדקיהו* '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, *בעדיהו* 'on his behalf' (13J26.3 r.9), and its use is extended even to prepositions from trilateral roots, *עבורהו* 'for him' (Gil (1993) no. 376=ULC Or 1080 J4 r.7).

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

⁷⁷Jouion §103f.

Genesis 41:44 בַּלְעָדָיִךְ.⁷⁸

The preposition -כ, with the exception of כהמה and כהנה, mentioned above, takes the form כמו or, from RH, כמות before suffixes. The singular suffixes are added to either כמו or כמות 'like you' (16.18 r.14) and שכמותך 'that is like you' (20.173 r.45); כמוהו 'like him' (NS 169.11 v.11) and כמותו 'like him' (12.775 r.11); כמוה 'like her' (12.80 r.17) and כמותה 'like her' (18J4.20 r.34); the 1 plural suffix is added to כמו, כמונו 'like us' (28.24 r.69); the other plural suffixes are attested only with כמות, כמותכם 'like you' (10J9.25 r.15); כמותם 'like them' (10J12.22 r.18).

The preposition מן is attested as follows:

Singular		Plural
1	ממני (NS 321.2 r.17)	ממנו (13J26.16 r.8)
2m	ממך (8J20.1 r.3)	מכם (10J9.25 r.15)
		מיכן (10J9.14 r.19)
3m	ממנו (8J20.1 r.11)	מהם (13J14.10 r.28)
	מנהו (8J16.12 r.12)	
3f	מינה (10J27.7 r.12)	—

Note the only 3 feminine singular form attested is מינה rather than BH ממנה. The 3 masculine singular מנהו 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 הו- suffix. The RH 2 masculine plural מיכן is only attested once; the RH prepositions הימנו and הימנה do not occur in the corpus.

The prepositions על, לפני, לפני, אל, מלפני, אודות, עד, תחת, אחר, סביבות, אחור are attested with the following suffixes of the plural noun:

Singular		Plural
1	עלי (13J16.18 r.16)	על אודותינו (13J33.12 r.13)
2m	תחתך (12.80 r.10)	עדיכם (13J23.13 r.23)
2f	עליך (Gil (1997) no. 673=Bodl MS Heb c 13.20 m.2)	
3m	עליו (18J4.4 r.29)	אליהם (13J20.18 r.25)
	עדיהו (10J22.7 r.9)	
3f	עליה (13J22.25 r.18)	עליהן (16.275 r.6)

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

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

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

⁷⁸Perhaps the orthography is defective, כַּ, although this is not usually the case with Šolomo ben Yehuda whose writing this is.

of Šamū'el ben Ḥofni, וביניו (12.99 v.13).⁷⁹ In the plural the letters attest both the forms ביני and בינות before suffixes: בינינו (13J20.25 r.7); בינותינו (18J3.18 r.6). However, בינות is only found before the suffixes of the 1 plural and the 3 masculine plural poetic suffix, בינותימו (13J16.24 r.2); whereas ביבי is used for all the remaining plural suffixes: ביניכם (8J2.4 r.8); ביניהם (13J18.1 r.20); it is also found before the 3 masculine plural poetic suffix as well, מבינימו (NS 92.33 r.5).⁸⁰

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 -מו- and -י- 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 -הו- 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 -כמות- or with very rare exceptions such as the 2 masculine plural suffix on מיכך, 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.⁸¹ 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.⁸² 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:

- אי וְאִי אַתֶּם מְשַׁגְּרִים לָהֶם '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 אִי אִפְשָׁר לְמֵאוֹס, e.g., וְאִי אִפְשָׁר לְמֵאוֹס 'and it is impossible to reject' (13J9.2 r.57).

⁷⁹Joüon §103n.

⁸⁰Comparing the situation in the letters with that in BH, we can see that it is almost identical: BH attests ביניכם, e.g., Joshua 24:7, and ביניהם, e.g., Job 41:8, but doesn't attest בינותיכם or בינותיהם; BH does however employ בינותינו, e.g., Joshua 22:34, which is used in the letters, alongside ביניו, e.g., Joshua 22:27. The only differences lie in the BH preposition בינותם, e.g., Genesis 42:23, which is not found in the letters, and the letters' use of the suffix ימו 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 Joüon (Joüon §102), among others.

אל	אל תכלאם ממני 'do not hide them from me' (20.114 r.27)
בלי להרוות	בלי להרוות 'without saturating [?]' (AS 145.61 r.11). It is also used before a finite verb, בל תשחת, 'do not destroy' (13J16.14 v.14).
לא	לא נוכל לעשות הדבר 'we shall not be able to do the thing' (13J20.25 r.9)
לאו	לאו 'if not' (13J16.17 r.23). לאו is only found in the RH construction אם לאו.
לבל	לבל לקחת 'not to take' (20.102 r.46). לבל does not take prefixes in BH, and is a medieval composite by analogy with ללא.
לבלתי	לבלתי לכת 'not to go' (13J25.5 r.27)
ללא	ללא יועילו 'to no benefit' (13J16.17 r.35). Though rare in BH, ללא can be used to negate a finite verb, e.g., ללא בקשני 'without seeking me' Isaiah 65:1
שלוא	שלוא לארעו 'so as not to harm him' (13J14.5 r.11). Only Šalom ben Yehuda attests the use of שלוא as an adverb modifying an infinitive construct. He also uses it in שלוא לקרות 'that [I] do not name' (12.217 r.11) and שלוא להזכיר 'that he shouldn't mention' (20.181 r.29).

Of the remaining adverbs of manner, the more common in the corpus are:

הרבה 'greatly' (13J11.4 r.10)	This BH adverb is very common, but we also find the adverbial use of the adjective רב, also from BH, ורב טרהתי 'and I have toiled much' (13J16.4 v.6).
מהרה 'quickly' (13J14.10 r.6)	The letters always use BH מהרה rather than LBH במהר.
מאד 'very' (10J10.22 r.7)	עד מאד is found in a number of different adverbial phrases, עד למאד (13J16.17 r.9); למאד (8J20.1 m.4); מאד מאד (13J21.10 r.15); ולמאד עד מאד (13J9.2 r.18).
קל וחומר 'how much more' (12.247 r.10)	The RH phrase is one of several rabbinic formulae which occur in the letters, e.g., כיוצא בו 'equally' (20.141 r.39) and על אחת כמה וכמה 'how much the more' (13J9.2 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.
כלל 'total' (13J8.14 r.11)	An RH adverb, we also find כלל with the preposition for the same meaning, בכלל 'in total' (13J33.2 r.20). ⁸³

Adverbs of time

⁸³Fernandez p. 172.

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

- כֵּן 'afterwards' (13J14.20 r.15) The BH adverb (e.g., 1 Samuel 10:5), is attested more often than the equivalent RH form, אַחַר כֵּן 'afterwards' (10J27.8 r.7). Other similar composite adverbs with the same sense are אַחַר כֹּל זֹאת (12.17 r.21); מֵאַחַר כֵּן (13J8.14 r.15); לְאַחַר (13J14.20 r.1).
- תָּמִיד 'always' (13J8.14 r.28) The BH adverb, e.g., Proverbs 28:14, is always used for this sense and RH תָּדִיר is not attested.
- עַכְשָׁיו 'now' (13J16.17 R.4) While עַכְשָׁיו is frequently attested in the letters, adverbial phrases involving prepositions invariably use BH עַתָּה, e.g., עַד עַתָּה 'until now' (10J32.8 r.8); עַד עוֹלָם 'forever' (18J4.4 r.21). In addition, we find the form לְעַתָּה 'now' (13J15.1 r.21) used exclusively by Šolomo ben Yehuda. It is not attested in BH, but shows the *lamed* which occurs in a number of similar temporal adverbs, particularly in RH, e.g., לְאַחַר כֵּן, לְמַחֵר, לְאַחַר כֵּן, לְעוֹלָם and לְעַד.⁸⁴
- לְאַחַת 'at once' (10J25.5 r.4) לְאַחַת is a form characteristic of the Babylonian tradition of RH.⁸⁵ This example occurs in a letter of Dani'el ben 'Azarya, who originally hailed from Iraq, but we also find it in Naṭan ben 'Avraham's letters, 10J9.25 r.5), which demonstrates the spread of the Babylonian tradition, as we have already noted. Only Šolomo ben Yehuda attests the genuine Palestinian RH form of the adverb, עַל אַתָּר (13J16.14 r.26).
- לְפָנַי 'previously' (12.217 r.9) Šolomo ben Yehuda attests a number of adverbs formed from לְפָנַי כֵּן: לְפָנַי זֶה, לְפָנַי כֵּן 'before this' (20.181 r.25) and לְפָנַי זֹאת 'before this' (10J11.29 r.10). Other writers in the corpus do not use these expressions.
- בְּכָל זְמַן 'all the time' (13J26.16 r.3) Yošiyahu Ga'on attests this adverb, along with עַת בְּכָל (10J32.8 r.1). All other writers in the corpus employ expressions with עַת, e.g., בְּכָל עַת (16.18 r.8) and בְּכָל עַת וְעַת 'every time' (12.273 r.8), despite the fact that the influence of the Arabic cognate, zaman, tends to make זְמַן a more commonly used term elsewhere in the MH of Arabic-speakers.⁸⁶
- אָז 'then' (10J27.17) אָז is very widely used in the corpus, but we also find the

⁸⁴Fernandez p. 173.

⁸⁵Bar-Asher p. 28. The form is influenced by Babylonian Aramaic.

⁸⁶Saenz-Badillos (1993) p.225.

adverb with the י- affix, e.g., אזי (13J18.1 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:

- שם 'there' (13J16.18 r.11) שם, of course, continues to be used in the corpus. In addition we find the forms with 'directive he', e.g., שמה (13J25.10 r.27), and various prepositional prefixes. לשם 'to there' (20.94 r.10) is an RH adverbial, used instead of שמה, while both לשמה 'to there' (13J27.3 r.16) and משמה 'from there' (10J10.9 r.2) are hybrid forms not attested in BH.
- כאן 'here' (16.95 r.16) כאן, the Babylonian RH form, is the usual form taken of this adverb in the corpus.⁸⁷ The Palestinian form, כן, is not attested in the corpus but may be found in a letter by a pilgrim to Egypt (of unknown origin, unfortunately), לצאת מכן 'to get out of here' (Gil (1983) no. 403=PER H 17 13 r.11).⁸⁸ Šlomo ben Yḥuda prefers BH פה ושם, פה ושם 'to cause ruination here and there' (13J23.19 r.5).
- הנה 'here' (13J20.3 r.17) The BH adverb occurs frequently and is also used with the preposition עד, ממהלה עד הנה 'from Maḥalla to here' (10J9.14 r.18).
- להיכן 'where?' (10J13.2 r.18) This is a RH adverb.⁸⁹ The BH adverb איה also occurs, but only in the context of a phrase drawn from the Hebrew Bible, איה סופר את המגדלים '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. Šlomo ben Yḥuda, 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,

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

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

⁸⁹Fernandez p. 172.

relativizer and prepositions but we also find the pervasive influence of RH and significant contributions from MH. **אנו** is commonplace; RH provides a third of all demonstratives in the letters. The biblical particle **את** is often attested but **אין** is inflected mainly in its rabbinic guise. We find **כי** and **-ש** and **אשר**; **כי** and **-ש** interchange; **-ש** and **אשר** interchange. Some archaic forms are employed, prepositions in **-י** and the pronoun **המה**, 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 **ה** as a relative or **-כ** 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 ם־ or ה־ 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 ם־ 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, Payṭannic 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 ה־ and the ם־ suffix, both of which are attested in the letters.

The ה־ suffix is found in certain lexicalised adverbials drawn from BH such as חלילה 'far be it' and מאומה 'anything' as well as in Biblical personal names.¹ 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'.² It is attested on the common nouns ארץ and שמים, on the adverbs שם and הוֹך, and on the proper nouns מצרים and ירושלים: ארצה מצרים: 'to the land of Egypt' (12.80 r.14); השמימה 'heavenwards' (Gil (1997) no. 13=Bodl MS Heb f 34.40 r.17); שמה 'there' (10J24.1 leaf 1 v.10); חוצה 'outside' (8J2.4 v.1); מצרימה 'to Egypt' (12.80 r.8); ירושלימה 'to Jerusalem' (13J14.10 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 שמימה 'heavens' (13J14 r.5), i.e., without the definite article, which occurs in the opening of a letter by Yošiyahu Ga'on: the writer utilises the poet's freedom to adapt forms to fit a metrical scheme.³

The adverbial ם־ suffix is only found, as is mostly the case in BH, on occasional, frozen forms: ויומם 'and by day' (13J9.2 r.6); ריקם 'empty, emptily' (13J23.11 r.25).

Other BH suffixes, such as the paragogic ך־ or *hireq compaginis*, are extremely rare and their occasional use is limited to forms actually attested in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., the construct forms of אב 'father' and אה 'brother': אבי היתום 'father of the orphan' (Gil (1983) no. 158=ULC Or 1080 J106

¹Jouion §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: שבעת שמימה ועליה שבעת שמימה 'a vision of Jerusalem, and upon it seven heavens' (13J14.10 r.4).

sun set' (NS 321.2 r.9).⁸ עת is mainly feminine in BH, with only late texts treating it as masculine: in the corpus עת occasionally takes feminine concord, וכגעה עתו 'and when his time arrived' (10J27.7 r.10) and בעת הזאת 'at this time' (13J9.2 r.43), but is predominantly masculine: בעת זה 'at this time' (12.775 r.9); בעת הזה 'at this time' (6J3.23 r.10); והעת דחוק 'and time is pressing' (8J21.6 m.1); בא עת 'time has come' (12.217 r.12). Perhaps in this case the Arabic vernacular is influencing the gender of עת since the equivalent Arabic noun, *waqt*, is masculine.⁹ דרך is principally feminine in the letters, בדרך אחרת 'by another path' (18J4.20 r.31), בדרך קצרה 'in a short way' (20.94 r.35) and דרך ישרה 'a straight way' (8J3 v.5). Very occasionally it is treated as masculine by Šolomo ben Yehuda, ... דרכי נכחדים 'my ways...are hidden' (10J27.2 r.11), משני דרכים 'from two paths' (10J11.29 r.17) and בדרך ישר 'in a straight path' (NS 321.2 r.9), but he also uses the feminine, הדרך השלישית 'the third way' (10J11.29 r.18).¹⁰

The noun פעם possesses common gender in the letters, despite the fact that in BH (with one exception only, Judges 16:28) it is treated as feminine. Accordingly we find בפעם אהת 'one time' (13J33.2 r.16) and בפעם הזאת 'this time' (13J15.11 r.21; 13J16.14 r.26; 8J21.6 r.10) alongside ופעמים רבים 'and many times' (12.99 r.7), כפעם הראשון 'like the first time' (18J4.20 r.16) and שני פעמים 'twice' (13J15.1 r.19). The phrase הזאת פעם, i.e., showing feminine concord, occurs probably because it is well-attested in BH in this form, e.g., Exodus 8:28, 2 Samuel 17:17 and Jeremiah 16:21. Although, this is certainly not true of a different phrase, בשבע פעמים 'seven times' (13J11.4 r.4), which is found in the letter of a certain Maliḥa to her brothers, despite שבע פעמים, with feminine concord, being frequently employed in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., in 1 Kings 18:43, 2 Kings 4:35 and Joshua 6:4 among others. The masculine plural concord used in ופעמים רבים 'and many times' (12.99 r.7) may be due to the apparently masculine form of the plural, or a desire for euphony; similar examples are באותם שנים 'in those years' (13J16.17 r.15), הדודות היקירות 'the dear counsels' (18J4.20 r.24), שלומות ענופות 'peace branching out' (13J26.3 r.1).¹¹

The gender that nouns exhibit in the Hebrew Bible provides the gender for most nouns attested in the letters with very few deviations from it. Although there is some evidence for the subtle effects of Arabic, the gender of cognate or related nouns in the vernacular language occasionally affecting the gender shown by their Hebrew equivalents in the texts, this is far from decisive and touches only a few examples (most of which anyway show a lack of consistency regarding gender in the Hebrew Bible anyway, e.g., שמש and עת).¹² There is no evidence for widescale changes from BH, such as the

⁸In Arabic, *al-šams* 'the sun' is a feminine noun, Wright I §291 b.

⁹Biblical expressions such as בא העת 'the time has come', Ezekiel 7:7 and 7:12, probably also lie behind similar phrases in the letters, such as בא עת.

¹⁰Biblical influence may cut both ways here, because we can find both בדרך ישרה, Psalms 107:7, and בדרך ישר, Jeremiah 31:9, in the Hebrew Bible. This probably accounts for the differing gender shown in similar phrases in the letters. Biblical influence is not entirely decisive though, since another example quoted above, from a letter written in Ruqqa, reads בדרך אחרת (18J4.20 r.31) despite the masculine version of the phrase דרך אחר occurring in the Bible, at 1 Kings 13:10.

¹¹The phenomenon of the attributives of masculine plural nouns in -ות- also taking the -ות- ending is encountered in other strains of MH, under the influence of Arabic, cf. Goldenberg p. 1629.

¹²Whereas nouns that are unambiguous in BH as regards gender are not affected by their Arabic equivalents, e.g., דעת, as described above, is feminine in the letters despite its Arabic equivalent, *ʿalm*, being a masculine noun. In other strains of MH דעת may be found with masculine concord as a result, cf. Goldenberg p. 1629.

treatment of nouns in *ת-ית* 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: לשָׂכָר אֶרֶץ 'for the reward of the land of the living' (10J11.29 r.17); דְּבַר עֶצֶב 'a hurtful word' (24.6 r.35); מְקוֹם אֲבוֹתָיו 'the place of his ancestors' (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.9). However, most examples of the masculine singular construct are unpointed and therefore indistinguishable from the absolute: פְּקִיד הַסּוֹחְרִים 'clerk of the merchants' (24.43 r.13); כְּמִנְהַג גְּאוּנִים 'according to the custom of the *g^oonim*' (13J26.16 r.16); שֶׁר הַשְּׂרִים 'the prince of princes' (13J15.4 r.2).

The feminine singular construct of nouns ending in *ת-* takes the ending *ת-ת*: בְּמִדְיַנַּת קִירוּאן 'in the city of Qayrwān'; בְּקִרְיַאת הַמִּכְתָּב 'in the reading of the letter' (13J15.11 r.19); לְעִנִּישַׁת אַחֵינוּ 'the punishment of our brothers' (13J26.16 r.13).

The masculine plural noun takes the ending *י-* in the construct: דְּכִי מַחֲשָׁבוֹת 'the surging of thoughts' (13J14.10 r.16); כָּל זְקֵנֵי הַקְּהָל 'all the elders of the community' (13J15.11 r.26); וְשׁוֹמְרֵי דָתוֹ 'and the keepers of his law' (8J33.5 r.7).

The feminine plural construct form of the noun is unmarked from the plural absolute in purely consonantal texts: קְהֵלוֹת מִצְרַיִם 'the communities of Egypt' (12.338 v.5); מִידוֹת הַשְּׁבַח 'the measures of praise' (10J12.17 r.20).

BH irregular nouns used in the letters mostly retain the same form in which they are commonly found in the Hebrew Bible: אַנְשֵׁי קְהֵילוֹת רוֹמְנִיָּא 'men of the Byzantine communities' (13J11.4 r.15); בְּנֵי כְתָתוֹ 'members of his sect' (12.775 r.10); בְּנוֹת יְהוּדָה 'daughters of Y^ohuda' (13J27.3 r.12); בְּחֵי מְדֵרְשׁוֹת 'schools' (28.24 r.13); אָבִי הַיְתוֹם 'father of the orphan' (Gil (1983) no. 158=ULC Or 1080 J106 r.30); וְשֵׁמוֹת הַחֲתוּמִּים 'and the names of the signatories' (13J18.1 r.24).

Certain other irregular nouns show more than one form of the construct in BH: שָׁנָה 'year' attests both שְׁנֵי (Genesis 23:1) and שְׁנוֹת (Deuteronomy 32:7). However, only the form שְׁנוֹת is attested in the letters: וְשְׁנוֹת חַיִּים 'and years of life' (12.775 r.3; 10J24.1 r.11; NS 309.10 v.4), cf. Proverbs 6:10; וְשְׁנוֹת יָמִים 'and years of existence' (13J23.12 r.7). The plural construct of יוֹם is attested as יָמֵי (Genesis 3:14) and, more rarely, יְמוֹת (Psalms 90:15) in BH; most letters have only the commoner BH form יָמֵי: בְּיָמֵי הַנֶּפֶט 'in the days of the deceased' (16.6 r.12); מִיָּמֵי מֹשֶׁה 'from the days of Moše' (16.3 r.28); כָּל יָמַי 'all the days of my existence' (6J3.21 r.10); although יְמוֹת is found in several letters: מִיְמוֹת תְּהֵלָה 'from the age of praise' (13J20.28 r.19); וּמִיְמוֹת שְׁהִיְתָה הַיְשִׁיבָה 'and from the days that the academy was...' (20.106 v.42); מִיְמוֹת עוֹלָם 'from days of old' (6J1.11 r.3).¹³ BH מִים attests two forms, מֵי (Genesis 7:7) and מִימֵי (Exodus 7:19), for the construct, both of which are found in the letters, each occurring

¹³The last phrase is based on Deuteronomy 32:7. Fernandez p. 65 explains how RH makes a distinction in meaning between יָמֵי 'days [of]' and יְמוֹת 'age/epoch [of]'. Possibly this is behind the use of יְמוֹת 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: כמימי הגשמים 'like water of the rains' (13J31.3 r.5) and מי העיר 'the city's water' (10J13.2 r.5). לילה is attested with the singular construct ליל (Isaiah 21:1) and the plural construct לילות (Isaiah 21:8) in BH, while RH attests the construct לילי. For the singular construct the letters show the usual singular ליל, ליל שבת, 'Sabbath night' (13J20.9 r.25), and the rabbinic plural form לילי שבת, 'on Sabbath night' (18J3.9 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 rabbinic sources its use is widespread.¹⁵ The dual ending ים is indistinguishable from the masculine plural suffix in unvocalised texts, except when the *ay* diphthong is written with two *yods*, i.e., -יי-. 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., עינים '[two] eyes' (6J4.10 r.6), ידיים '[two] hands' (12.99 v.7) and וברכים 'and [two] knees' (12.99 v.9); the dual is also employed on certain numerals: מאתים וחמישים 'two-hundred and fifty' (13J20.25 r.2); שנים 'two' (NS J15 r.14); שתים '(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 ות- 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: תורות 'two laws' (Gil (1997) no. 73=JTS MS Schechter (Genizah) 4 r.27); שיטותיים הללו 'these two lines here' (20.102 r.1); שורותיים 'two lines' (10J9.14 r.6); שורותיים אלו 'these [two] lines' (10J24.3 r.3); none of these forms is actually attested in BH. With the exception of תורותיים, 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., שני פעמים 'two times' (13J15.1 r.19), שתי אלפים 'two thousand' (10J12.25 r.5) and בשתי שורות 'in two lines' (13J11.2 r.3). The BH duals פעמים 'twice' (Genesis 27:36), יומים 'two days' (Exodus 21:21) אלפים 'two thousand' (Numbers 4:36) and, probably, שבועים '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.

¹⁵Joüon §91; Fernandez p. 65.

¹⁶The letter of the teacher Yḥi'el ben 'Elyaqim attests the phrase שבועים שנים או שלשה 'two or three weeks' (13J20.3 r.20). Although this could be an example of the dual, it is more likely to be the alternative plural form in ים- 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.¹⁷

The plural noun

The plural ending of the regular masculine noun in BH is ים-, although occasionally the ending ין- can be found in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁸ In RH the ending ין- is more frequent, under the influence of Aramaic.¹⁹ In the letters, both the biblical and rabbinic endings are found, with the biblical ים- by far the more common. ים- is the standard ending of BH regular masculine nouns and adjectives found in the letters: והזקנים 'and the elders' (12.17 r.12); השרים 'the princes' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.10); הצדיקים 'the righteous' (12.16 v.17); הצעירים 'the insignificant' (13J19.19 r.4). Most of the vocabulary emanating from post-biblical sources also shares the ים- plural termination: ולתגרים 'and to merchants' (13J20.13 r.24); הרבנים 'the Rabbanites' (13J11.5 r.23); אפוטרופים 'administrators' (AS 148.147 r.3); לסטים 'bandits' (10J10.9 r.4).

The alternative plural ending, the RH termination ין-, 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 ין- 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 *g'onim* Šʿrira and Hayya stand out in our corpus through their employment of the rabbinic ין- termination with BH nouns and adjectives: במקומות אחרין 'in other places' (10J1 leaf 1 r.14) and פעמין רבות '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 Šʿmu'el Haššliši), נסין 'miracles' (8J22.7 r.14).²⁰ For the most part the RH ending is found on post-biblical vocabulary, e.g., from the letters of the Palestinian *ga'on* Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda: פיתקין 'pamphlets' (10J27.2 r.13); כינויין 'titles' (13J31.8 r.1); ביחוסין 'in genealogies' (NS 324.104 r.22); פירושיין 'commentaries' (Misc. 35.14 r.24); חייבין 'bound' (13J23.11 r.16); from Babylonian letters: רגילין 'accustomed' (10J1 leaf 1 r.14); צריבין 'required' (10G5.8 v.4); חייבין 'obligated' (28.24 r.50); רשאיין 'permitted' (28.24 r.61);²¹ והנאין 'and teachers' (NS 308.122 v.4); a Karaite letter also attests the use of the RH termination on a rabbinic noun: שני דפין 'two leaves' (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.15).²² The RH noun יסור appears with the ין- ending in the works of both Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda, יסוריין 'torments' (Gil (1983) no. 122=Bodl MS Heb c13.23 r.20) and Šʿlomo Hakkohen Ga'on, הייסוריין 'the tortures' (Gil (1983) no. 49=ENA 2804.8 r.17).

¹⁷Blau (1999) p. 88.

¹⁸Jotūn §90b.

¹⁹Fernandez p. 63.

²⁰We could include also 'Eliyahū Hakkohen ben Šʿlomo Ga'on's use of the plural ending ין- on יום 'to the end of days' (12.775 r.11), but this is a quote from Daniel 12:13, one of the examples of the ין- plural in LBH.

²¹But רשאים in a letter of Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda, 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 צריך and חייב usually take the -ין ending, although they may occasionally be found in -ים, צריכים 'must' (Box Misc. 28.231 r.14) and חייבים 'obligated' (12.146 r.4), and both forms may occur in the same letter: אנו חייבין להודות לו 'we must thank him' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.1) and אנו לדעת אותו חייבים 'we must know him' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 2 v.10), from a letter of Yisra'el Hakkohen, the Babylonian *ga'on*.²³ The post-biblical word קרא 'Karaites' often has the form קראין in the plural, הקראין 'the Karaites' (Misc. 35.43 r.10; 13J13.28 r.22); the plural noun ends in -ין even in combination with other post-biblical vocabulary showing the -ים ending: הרבנים והקראין 'the Rabbanites and the Karaites' (Gil (1997) no. 73=JTS Schechter (Genizah) 4 v.3).

The plural ending of the regular feminine noun is -ות: המקהלות 'in communities' (Misc. 35.15 m.29); והדירות 'and the dwellings' (18J3.9 r.2). Those BH feminine nouns which lack -ה but affix the plural -ות also continue to be found with this ending in the letters: ברחובות 'in the streets' (18J3.9 r.30); הרוחות 'the spirits' (NS 324.104 r.35); נפשות 'souls' (13J9.2 r.11); אגרותינו 'our letters' (13J9.2 r.17); קשתות 'bows' (18J3.9 r.21); דתות 'laws' (13J14.10 r.30); היסודות 'the foundations' (13J31.7 r.2); דלתותיה 'its doors' (18J4.4 r.16); similarly, irregular feminine nouns drawn from RH retain their -ות endings: זוגות 'pairs' (13J23.11 r.16) and כתות 'parties' (13J9.2 r.12). Irregular feminine nouns that instead take the -ים ending in BH are also found: עתים 'times' (12.99 r.7); שנים 'years' (Misc. 35.15 r.35); פעמים 'times' (13J11.4 r.4).²⁴ In addition we find שורים 'lines', מגמת שורים אלה 'the purpose of these lines' (13J34.3 r.11), instead of the more usual שורות (13J11.2 r.3, r.14; 18J4.15 r.17; 20.114 r.18).²⁵

Certain irregular masculine nouns are attested with the -ות plural in BH, which is retained in the letters: אבות 'fathers' (10J11.30 r.22); מארמנותיהם 'from their palaces' (18J3.9 r.9); פירותיה 'her fruits' (NS 324.104 r.28); שבועות 'weeks' (10J27.2 r.18); הלבבות 'the hearts' (13J13.14 r.2); במקומות 'in places' (NS 169.11 v.10); מעונות 'from sins' (18J4.4 r.22); שימות 'names' (13J26.3 r.25); ואורחות 'and paths' (Misc. 35.43 v.6); המחנות 'the armies' (13J9.2 r.7; 10J12.22 r.5).²⁶ Others which retain the -ות suffix in the letters are derived from post-biblical Hebrew; they mostly consist of nouns of the pattern -ון: יגונות 'grief' (24.6 r.23); פקדונות 'deposits' (10J12.25 r.14); מזונותיה 'her sustenance' (10J24.1 leaf 1 v.23); פתרונותיך 'your interpretations' (Misc. 35.11 r.10). The use of the -ות suffix with the noun pattern -ון is extended to cover even certain nouns that are attested with -ים in BH, such as עזבונותיו 'his estate' (16.68 r.18), attested in the plural as עזבונך 'your wares' at Ezekiel 27:33. The letters also prefer to follow RH by writing שלומות for the plural of שלום, despite שלומים being attested in BH (Jeremiah 13:19); שלומותיו 'his peace' (13J23.1 r.2); שלומות ענופות 'peace branching out' (13J26.3 r.1); השלומות מצליחות 'the peace prospering' (10J27.1 r.5); שלומות תדורים 'frequent peace' (Gil (1983) no.

²³Šolomo ben Yḥuda appears to mark a semantic distinction with the RH and BH terminations, between the adjective 'obligated', חייבין (13J23.11 r.16), and the noun 'debtors', which he writes להייבים 'to debtors' (Misc. 35.43 r.26).

²⁴Although, פעמים, the plural of פעם, always takes masculine concord in the letters.

²⁵Possibly this is a deliberate variation on the usual formula or perhaps the writer was confusing שורות and טורים, which are more or less interchangeable in meaning, compare the similar epistolary formula אל טורים שנים הזקן 'two lines to the elder' (NS J15 r.14) in a letter of Šolomo ben Yḥuda.

²⁶Although מחנה is also attested both as a feminine noun, e.g., Psalms 27:3, and with the -ים ending in BH, e.g., Numbers 13:49, the letters only attest מחנות and give it masculine concord as is usual in post-biblical Hebrew: המחנות הנועדים 'the armies that are gathering' (13J9.2 r.7).

87=ULC Or 1080 J265 r.2).²⁷ Similarly, הוקותיה 'its laws' (18J3.18 r.6) shows the preferred RH plural ending, rather than BH חֻקִים, Deuteronomy 4:5. On the other hand, though, the וות- plural is also used on some RH nouns which show the ים- plural in rabbinic sources: והמנהגות 'and the customs' (Misc. 35.11 r.11) and פסיפסות 'mosaics' (13J34.2 r.26).²⁸

The nouns חיל עינין, עולם, and עולמות, all three of which can be found with the וות- plural in RH, are attested with both וות- and ים- plural endings in the corpus: החילות 'armies' (13J26.1 r.15) and החילים 'the soldiers' (13J26.13 r.26); עניינות 'matters' (24.6 r.22) and ענינים 'matters' (10J24.3 r.4); שני עולמות 'two worlds' (10J27.1 r.5) and שני עולמים 'two worlds' (13J15.13 r.1).

Feminine nouns of the pattern וות- can take several different plural endings in BH and post-biblical Hebrew. In the letters we find predominantly a plural ending in יות: בגליות 'in exiles' (NS J92 r.14); זכיות 'merits' (NS J172 v.4); חניותיהם 'their stalls' (13J13.28 r.24); המלכיות 'the kingdoms' (NS J92 r.14); ועדיות 'and testimonies' (13J9.2 r.25), despite BH עדותיך 'your testimonies', Psalms 119:14. The plural יות- is also attested in an early letter from Pumbedita, בפורעניות 'with punishments' (NS 308.122 r.23), but other Babylonian letters apparently employ the plural יות-, at least with the noun רשות: רשויות 'authorities' (13J6.3 r.1) and ברשויותנו '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, מלכיות Daniel 8:22 and החניות Jeremiah 37:16, and we don't find any examples of the plural of רשות in non-Babylonian letters to compare. However, on the basis of the evidence we have, we could argue that there is an apparent division falling along geographic lines and that the North African and Palestinian letters which show the יות- 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 ויות- represent the morphology found in the Babylonian RH tradition, as might be expected.²⁹

The rabbinic plural termination צות- is not a productive form in the letters. We find it mainly on the plural of the noun דיוקני 'money-order', e.g., דיוקנאות (13J34.2 r.5), but it also occurs in המקראות 'the events' (12.114 r.12).³⁰

Only two examples of the broken plural are found in the corpus, the BH שווקים 'markets' (18J4.20 r.26), attested in Song of Songs 3:2, and the Babylonian Aramaic-derived plural of מר, ומרוותינו 'and our masters' (24.6 v.1), used in a letter from Palermo.

²⁷The noun also varies in gender in these examples. שלומים (8.31 r.2) is attested in a letter of Yešu'a Hakkohen ben 'Avraham, but such an unambiguous example is rare: שלומינו 'our peace' (10J30.5 r.16) and other similar forms probably represent singular nouns spelled *plene*.

²⁸מנהג 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.

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

³⁰The ending is misspelled in a draft letter of 'Efraim ben Šmarya, הדיוקנאות 'the money-orders' (13J16.20 r.26), but the orthographic quality of his draft letters is so generally poor that it isn't wise to draw any firm conclusions. המקראות 'the events' connects the noun with the root קרה/קרא 'to happen' rather than קרא 'to read', whence we obtain the identical form 'the *Miqra'ot*'.

Although the gentilic ending is properly -יִים in BH it is often contracted to -ים .³¹ The letters follow this ambiguous example and show both uncontracted and contracted forms in equal measure: הגוים 'the Muslims' (18J4.26 r.36) and גויים 'Muslims' (12.212 r.15); הקראים 'the Karaites' (13J19.15 r.19) and הקראיין (13J13.28 r.22); ישמעאליים 'Išma'elites' (Gil (1997) no. 33=Firkovitch v.1) and הערביים 'the Arabs' (13J26.13 r.2).

In summary, the morphology of the plural noun is inherently biblical rather than rabbinic, with the masculine plural -ים predominating. However, the influence of post-biblical language is evident in the occasional uses of the -ין ending and the wider use of the -ות plural. Different writers use the biblical and rabbinic plurals to varying extents: Šərirā Ga'on attests a great many rabbinic plural forms, while Naṭan ben 'Avraham rarely uses any. Šəlomo ben Yəhuda occupies the middle-ground, attesting a fair number of rabbinic plural affixes on post-biblical vocabulary, particularly the RH adjectives הייב and צריך, but not on BH nouns and adjectives. Such different approaches are common in MH: among Spanish writers, for instance, Mənaḥem ben Saruq frequently employs the rabbinic -ין while Dunaš ben Labraṭ'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, צלם ומגנם 'their shadow and their shield' (13J14.10 r.9), and the feminine noun taking -ת before the suffix, קריאתם 'their call' (13J14.10 r.13). The masculine plural noun, with a few exceptions noted below, shows -י before the suffix, מעשיו 'his deeds' (10J15.10 r.5), and the feminine plural is -ות or -ותי (both found in BH, see below), בנדבותיהם 'in their donations' (13J33.6 r.17) and צדקותם '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 *qameṣ* in דלתו 'his poverty', nor of *pataḥ* in דברנו 'our leader' (20.114 r.20), but reduction of *holem* to *qameṣ* in בקני '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: שמותם 'their names' (12.733 r.10); לבותם 'their hearts' (13J23.11 r.27). The plural of the noun יום, 'day', with suffixes is attested as ימי in BH, e.g., ימיו '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 ימות in use, i.e., ימותיו 'his days' (10J13.2 r.3) and ימותם 'their days' (12.256 r.6). The noun שנה, 'year', also attests two different forms of the plural with the suffix, שנותיו 'his years' (10J13.2 r.3), which is common in the letters, and ושניו 'and his years' (Misc. 35.14 r.5) which is only used by Šəlomo ben Yəhuda. BH attests both שני שניהם, Job 36:11, and שנותם, Psalms 78:33, with suffixes.

The pronominal suffixes of the noun

The following pronominal suffixes are attested with the singular noun:

1 sing.	-י	דרכי 'my way' (10J11.29 r.16)
2 masc. sing.	-ך	קהלך 'your community' (13J9.2 r.61)
2 fem. sing.	-ך	עינך 'your eye' (13J20.9 r.8)

³¹Jouion §90b.

³²For Mənaḥem ben Saruq see Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 24; for Dunaš ben Labraṭ see Saenz-Badillos (1981) p. 4.

3 masc. sing.	ו-	שכרו 'his reward' (10J10.22 r.14)
	הו-	קהלהו 'his community' (13J16.14 r.9)
	(-יהו)	כבודיהו 'his honour' (6J9.2 r.2)
3 fem. sing.	ה-	איחורה 'its delay' (10J11.30 r.14)
1 plural	נו-	מדינתנו 'our town' (12.222 r.7)
	(-ינו)	ישיבתינו 'our academy' (13J11.9 r.3)
2 masc. plural	כם-	שלומכם 'your peace' (13J19.15 r.14)
2 fem. plural	—	(unattested)
3 masc. plural	ם-	דרכם 'their way' (13J13.17 r.11)
	ן-	עצמן 'themselves' (10J9.14 r.12)
	מו-	תחנתימו 'their petition' (24.6 r.53)
3 fem. plural	—	(unattested)

The bracketed forms represent frequently attested orthographic variants.

The vocalisation of the 2 masculine singular suffix where attested reflects BH הָ- rather than RH הַ, e.g., in the supralinear vocalization used by Naṭan ben 'Avraham: נִרְךָ 'your candle' (10J15.10 r.2), אֹרְךָ 'your light' (10J15.10 r.2) and לְקוֹנֶךָ 'for your Creator' (10J15.10 r.9), and in an Karaite letter showing extensive Standard Tiberian vocalisation, אִגְרָתְךָ 'your letter' (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.14).

The 3 masculine singular suffix [י]הו- is employed on biradical nouns such as פה, אה, רע, and אב as well as nouns from final-weak roots, such as שדה: פיהו 'his mouth' (13J13.14 r.27); אחיהו 'his brother' (10J27.2 r.5); רעיהו 'his friend' (13J33.2 r.12); אביו 'his father' (12.328 r.12); לשדהו 'to his field' (NS 324.104 r.34). However, as in *piyyuṭ* and other literary texts of the period, e.g., Sa'adya's 'Egbron, קדשהו 'his holiness' (Allony, §1 line 2), the הו(-) suffix may also be employed on trilateral nouns, e.g., קהלהו 'his community' (13J16.14 r.9); שכרהו 'his reward' (8J18.15 r.2); Šāma'ya the Ḥaver writes both שלומיהו and שלומו, '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 Šāloṃo Ga'on: וזכרהו 'and his memory' (Misc. 36.140 r.34); רצוניהו 'his will' (8J16.12 r.8); צדקיהו 'his righteousness' (8J16.12 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 Fuṣṭāṭ: ... אביוהו '... his father...and his elder...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 הו(-) 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 Šāloṃo ben Yehuda to 'Efraim ben Šāmarya: וחקן וחסד ימציאהו ובכל אשר יעשה יצליחהו בך שמריהו עדן נוחהו '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 Šāmaryahu, whose rest is 'Eden' (20.102 r.7).

By far the commonest use of the הו- suffix is on the nouns אב and אה. The common BH 3 masculine singular suffixed forms of these two nouns, אביו and אחיו, are rarely attested in the letters, instead we find predominantly אביוהו 'his father' (13J31.8 r.4) and, particularly, אחיהו 'his brother' (10J27.2 r.5). The use even intrudes into quotations from the Hebrew Bible, Jeremiah 31:34 את איש את איש לא ילמדו עוד איש את איש 'no longer shall they teach one another, or say to one another

“Know the Lord”, etc.’ (13J33.12 r.22), where, despite its explicit marking as a quotation (i.e., with supralinear dots and [וג]מר at the end) the phrase shows the replacement of the Hebrew Bible’s אָחִיו with אחיהו. This follows the greater pattern in the letters, where אחיו is generally reserved for the plural noun; the use of אחיהו for the singular gives less ambiguity in unpointed texts.

A pronounced characteristic of a great many *geniza* letters is the *plene* orthography of *šere*. This is particularly evident in the 1 plural pronominal suffix, where, in BH, the orthography of *šere* provides a semantic distinction, differentiating the singular noun from the plural.³³ 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: כוונתינו ‘our intention’ (10J32.9 r.4); קהילתינו ... סגולתינו ... עדתינו ‘our congregation...our treasure...our community’ (Misc. 36.140 r.29); sometimes both spellings occur together: לידינו ואהובינו ‘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, דרישותינו ותפלתנו ‘our entreaties and our prayer’ (10J9.25 m.8).

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

The rabbinic 3 masculine plural suffix ך- is rarely found in the corpus, surviving in only occasional use alongside BH ם-. It is attested twice in a letter of Naṭan ben ‘Avraham, שומעים הרפתן ‘they hear themselves reviled’ (8.3 r.18) and שדרכן של תלמידי חס ‘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 Šārirā Ga’on, מלאכתן ‘their work’ (28.24 r.55) or in a letter from Alexandria בענין ‘in their affair’ (13J34.3 r.15), but it does not supplant the biblical suffix to any substantial degree.

The poetic suffix מו- is only occasionally found with the singular noun; other rare BH suffixes such as 3 masculine singular ה-, 2 masculine singular כה- and 2 feminine singular כי- are not attested in the corpus.³⁵

The following pronominal suffixes are attested on the plural noun:

1 sing.	י-	דברי ‘my words’ (13J9.2 r.30)
	(י-)	מכתבי ‘my letters’ (13J13.28 r.2)
2 masc. sing.	יך-	מנחותיך ‘your gifts’ (13J9.2 r.17)
2 fem. sing.	יך-	יקרותיך ‘your precious things’ (13J20.9 r.9)
3 masc. sing.	יו-	ושנותיו ‘and his years’ (13J22.25 r.5)
3 fem. sing.	יה	ובחוריה ‘and its young men’ (13J33.6 r.10)
1 plural	ינו-	ברכינו ‘our knees’ (13J9.2 r.10)
2 masc. plural	יכם-	נבואותיכם ‘your prophecies’ (13J9.2 r.36)
2 fem. plural	יכן-	בחיכן ‘in your lives’ (8J14.27 r.7)
3 masc. plural	יהם	דבריהם ‘their words’ (13J9.2 r.36)
	(הם-)	בימהם ‘in your days’ (13J19.15 v.3)

³³Jouion §6d n. 2.

³⁴BT *Yoma* 23a and BT *Šabbat* 88b, respectively.

³⁵The full list of rare BH suffixes is found in Jouion §94h.

	הָ-	יָדֵיהֶן 'their hands' (28.24 r.57)
	מֹ-	חֲכָמֵיהֶם 'their wise men' (13J16.24 r.6)
	מִ-	אֲגִרֹתָם 'their letters' (13J14.8 r.6)
3 fem. pl.	יָהֶן	נִוְשָׁאֵיהֶן 'their grooms' (NS J17.2 r.9)

In addition, the orthographic variant ב- is attested for the 3 masculine singular pronominal suffix in a draft of a letter by 'Efraim ben Šmarya, נפלאותָב 'his wonders' (12.273 v.10), for נפלאותָיו. It is probably a scribal error.

The 3 masculine singular suffix י- is pointed with *qameṣ* as in Standard Tiberian Hebrew, הוֹרָיו 'his parents' (Gil (1983) no. 288=ULC Or 1080 J146 r.9).

Plural nouns with the ending וֹת- often take the 3 masculine plural suffix of the singular noun, ם-, a biblical phenomenon.³⁶ Suffixed forms such as אֲבוֹתָם 'their fathers' (12.256 r.5), שְׁנוֹתָם 'their years' (13J14.10 r.15), שְׁמוֹתָם 'their names' (10J10.5 r.10), לְבוֹתָם 'their hearts' (13J23.11 r.27) and אֲרָחוֹתָם 'their paths' (NS 324.104 r.19) are more common than those with the suffix יָהֶם in the letters, only אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם 'their fathers' (NS 324.104 r.10) and שְׁשְׁנוֹתֵיהֶם '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 ם- suffix on plural nouns facilitates the rhyming of singular and plural: Šlomo ben Yehuda writes מִגְמָתָם ... שְׁאוֹלוֹתָם ... תְּשׁוּבוֹתָם 'their purpose...their questions...their answers' (13J14.8 r.9); Yošiyahu Ga'on rhymes שְׁנוֹתָם ... טוֹבוֹתָם 'their goodness...their years...their spirits' (13J14 r.15).

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, מַעֲשָׂיהֶם 'their deeds' (13J14 r.13), נִסְתָּהֶם 'their wonders' (r.14) and שׁוֹשְׁקֵיהֶם '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 בִּימֵיהֶם 'in your days' (13J19.15 v.3) in a letter from Ašqelon and גְּבִירֵיהֶם '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 מֹ- 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 ךְ- or the masculine plural suffix ךְ- 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 הָ- suffix, even on trilateral nouns; the *plene* spelling of יָ- on singular nouns

³⁶Ibid., §94g. We do not find the construction using the RH suffix ךְ-.

³⁷BH attests only שְׁמוֹתָם, לְבוֹתָם and אֲרָחוֹתָם, Numbers 13:4, Isaiah 44:18 and Joshua 2:7 respectively; אֲבוֹתָם only gives way to אֲבוֹתֵיהֶם in LBH, *ibid.*, §94g.

³⁸The last example is apparently just an error, since all other cases in the letter are spelled with *yod*. 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 יָהֶו- and יָהֶו- for the singular noun.

(with rare exceptions); the use of **והם**- rather than **ותיהם**- 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 **הו**- in the Hebrew, but since the suffix was already productive in payṭannic 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 Mumḥe 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 **מומחה** 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 *praescriptio* 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 *praescriptio*, before launching into the business of the letter with the common introductory element **ודע** '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., **עֵדֶן=עֵדֶן נִבְרָע**, 'his rest be in the Garden of 'Eden' (r.4)). Of these 54 nouns, 5—**אברהם** (r.1); **חגין** (r.4); **עֵדֶן** 'Eden' (r.2); **יפת** (r.6); **ישראל** (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: **שלום** 'peace, wellbeing' (r.1); **מאדון** 'from the lord' (r.1); **ובינה** 'and understanding' (r.2); **יקירי** 'my dear one' (r.4); **ואהבתך** 'and your love' (r.9); **ברכה** 'a blessing' (r.13). The post-biblical nouns, for the most part, are to be found originally in RH, e.g., **שיטות** 'lines' (r.10) and **בבית הכנסת** 'in the synagogue' (r.11), as well as a smaller number from Talmudic Hebrew, e.g., **חסידותך** 'your piety' (8J22.7 r.9); only the occasional MH usage is attested, e.g., the commonly occurring substantival use of the passive participle **חמוד**, e.g., **וחמודו** 'and his son' (m.2); no nouns that could be described as payṭannic (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* Yošiyahu which is addressed to the Jerusalemite community in Fustāt (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.³⁹ 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 Šamu'el Haššliši on behalf of the young (but soon to be infamous) Naṭan ben 'Avraham (16.68), but show a wider use of sources as well as different influences, such as the language of the *piyyut*.⁴⁰ 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 *praescriptio*, 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 *paytanim*, the letter writers didn't delight in employing *hapax legomena*.⁴¹ Only a few examples of *hapax legomena*, except when they occur in biblical quotations, are found, e.g., מלחם 'from war' (13J16.17 r.7) reflects a noun לָחֶם found only in Judges 5:8; להקותינו 'our bands' (13J14.10 r.11) is the plural of the noun לְהִקָּה, a construct attested only at 1 Samuel 19:20; rare, but non-*hapax*, nouns are similarly infrequent, e.g., מזורינו 'our wound[s?]' (13J33.2 r.10) and באהב '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 8J22.7 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

³⁹Some examples of rare BH nouns found in the letter are: ממצוקה 'from straits' (13J14.10 r.12); שועתם 'their cry for help' (r.13); ניהומם 'their comfort' (r.18); whole phrases, such as למשנא דתותיו 'the changing of his laws' (r.25), also find their way into the text; an example of rhymed prose is יחזו כסאות ומנות נאות לבית דויד בְּאוֹת '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.

⁴⁰Some examples of a wide use of sources are the nouns: אסקובטר 'expert scribe' (16.68 r.1), Latin *exceptor*, medieval דהןן 'table' (r.5) and the *paytanic* forms משאלו 'his request' (r.16) and בשמין 'perfume' (r.2).

⁴¹Sa'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 כנסת, סנהדרין, חזן 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.

Qūl: זוזים 'silver coins, *dirhāms*' (13J20.13 r.14); שוק 'market' (13J26.13 r.10)

Qōl: ואודות 'and the causes' (13J16.24 r.12)

Although על אודות is a BH composite preposition with the meaning 'concerning' (e.g., Genesis 26:32) the occasional use of אודות without על 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 אודות should be אודה* but, probably by analogy with the plural of nouns such as אובות-אוב 'bottle' and קולות-קול 'voice' in BH, the letters attest a form אוד for the singular, e.g., אוד ושאלה 'concern or request' (Gil (1983) no. 405=Dropsie 392 r.22); אוד וחשח 'concern or anxiety' (10J11.30 r.24).

Qāl: כת 'sect, party, denomination' (13J11.5 r.23); המס 'the poll-tax' (13J11.5 r.18)

The plural of כתות, כיתות 'sects' (32.8 r.28), demonstrating the *i* vowel, is also attested. Gemination of the ת in the singular suffixed form is shown by the full orthography of כתתו 'his sect' (12.775 r.10).

The noun מס 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:/Q:l כטיפי 'like drops' (20.141 r.15); וכיר (ידי) 'and [my] signature' (13J18.1 r.28) [Greek loanword]

יד כיר is the widely used phrase for 'signature' in the letters.⁴² Talmudic חתימה, e.g., וחתימות 'and signatures' (NS 308.122 v.21), is less frequent.

Qil5: ואיצת 'and the haste' (16.275 r.6); באתו 'his arrival' (13J16.20 r.8); בדירה 'in the dwelling' (13J14.5 r.13); וסיעתו 'and his company' (13J14.5 r.18)

Derived from middle-weak roots, nouns of the form *qil5* are of different types, e.g., agent (סיעה) and place (דירה), but a major use is as an action noun (*nomen actionis*), particularly in the form of the noun ביאה 'arrival'. This noun may be found in a concrete sense in BH, but in post-biblical language it is primarily an action noun.⁴³ In the letters it most frequently occurs in phrases concerning the Messiah, e.g., וביאת משיחו 'and the arrival of his Messiah' (12.247 r.21), but it is also employed in preference to (or sometimes alongside) the infinitive construct בוא with regard to more mundane events, אני מחכה לביאת כתבו 'I am awaiting the arrival of his letter' (10J10.9 r.15) and ומקוים לנו לביאת התשובה '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 המילה 'circumcision' (13J20.18 r.22) and במיתה 'in death' (13J31.8 r.9).⁴⁴

Qitt5: וחיבתנו 'and our esteem' (16.3 r.33); הסיטותים 'the two lines' (18J4.4 r.28); וקידה 'and worship' (10J30.3 r.5)⁴⁵

The spelling הסיטותים occurs only in this example, other letters attest שיטה, e.g., שיטותיים '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 חיבה in the letters since its cognate *ḥubb* is the main Arabic term for 'love'. However, its use in such phrases as the parallel expression אהבתם וחיבתם 'their desire and love' (6J3.21 r.11) probably owes more to the well-known liturgical phraseology, e.g., ואהוב וחביב from the 'Emet v^o Yaššiv blessing of the Š^oma', as it does to the influence of the vernacular.

Qōṭēl: נושא 'subject' (10J27.7 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 מיתה 'death' as often as the euphemisms פטירה, lit. 'departure', and, particularly, אסיפה, lit. 'gathering up'.

⁴⁵Interestingly, it is the use of the noun קידה 'worship' or 'prayer', lit. 'bowing down', in the epistles of Ya'aqov ben Š^omu'el that incensed the Karaite Sahl ben Mašliaḥ, as he wrote: 'You wrote קידה 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.

נושא is used in the introductory phrase to the main body of Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya'aqov's letter: עסק נושא איגרתינו זו...כי 'the purpose of the subject of this letter [...] is that...' (10J27.7 r.8). Other letter-writers use מגמת גלל, or just עסק alone.

Qōṭṭl: קהוגן 'as is fitting' (16.3 r.30); לבית עולמו 'to his cemetery' (10J12.22 r.8)

עולם is found in BH, but the compound expression בית עולם meaning 'cemetery' is taken from RH (e.g., *Wayyiqra Rabba* 19.1).

Qōṭēl: חבר 'the Haver' (13J11.5 r.6); הכשירה 'the proper' (13J20.9 r.2)

Drawn from Talmudic Hebrew where it denotes a 'learned man, a scholar', חבר is a title which was bestowed on members of the Palestinian academy.⁴⁶

Qōṭīl: והזרז 'and the zealous' (13J17.4 r.5); חביבי 'my dear one' (13J20.9 r.5); שליח 'emissary, agent' (10J12.22 r.6); תדירות 'frequent' (10J30.3 r.2)

This is the main Hebrew adjectival form; other examples are הזהיר 'the observant' (13J34.2 r.3) and רגיל 'usual' (NS 169.11 v.8). Although, surprisingly, RH תדיר is rarely used compared to the medieval *qōṭūl* form derived from it, תדור, e.g., תדורות 'frequent' (10J32.8 r.2).

Qōṭūl: הבחורים 'the young men' (13J26.13 r.20); זהובים 'gold coins, *dinars*' (13J26.13 r.16); המודיו 'his sons' (13J20.13 r.22); ובחרוזי 'and in the rhymes' (12.146 r.8); שלוחינו 'our emissary' (13J26.13 r.8)

חמוד, literally 'delighted in; precious' usually refers to a son in the letters, e.g., Šlomo ben Yḥuda refers to his own son 'Avraham as המודי 'my son' (13J15.11 r.9); a letter to the *ga'on* mentions יהיה המודך 'Yaḥya, your son' (12.247 r.18).⁴⁷

Qēṭel: כווסתו 'according to his way' (18J4.4 r.23); יכלו 'his ability' (18J4.4 r.23); במלל 'in speech' (10J30.3 r.6); בעלץ 'in exultation' (12.146 r.2); עסק 'business' (10J27.7 r.8); פלל 'prayer' (Box Misc. 26.22 r.4); תכל 'end' (10J30.3 r.24)

ווסת or וסת is the common word for 'way' or 'manner' in the letters; a rabbinic noun, it occurs more often than biblical דרך when referring to 'way of behaving'. 'Avraham ben Hagga'on is the only writer to attest the form ושת, ש, presumably denoting ש, which is etymologically more original than that with ס i.e., וושתו 'his way' (10J10.9 r.8).⁴⁸

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

⁴⁷Though חמוד is used, to our minds, sometimes loosely, for instance in the letter of Naṭan Hakkohen ben Mḥvoraḳ to 'Eli Hakkohen ben Ḥayyim where the writer signs נתן הכהן חמודו 'his son, Naṭan Hakkohen' (18J4.4 r.35, v.1). Naṭan was actually the brother of 'Eli's daughter-in-law; *ibid.*, §307 n. 73.

⁴⁸Cf. Jastrow p. 374. וסת is also used in *piyyuṭ*, occurring in Yannai's poetry; Zulay (1945) p. 219.

Talmudic Hebrew is the source for some nouns of this pattern, e.g., נסרים 'boards' (13J34.2 r.26) and הקרן 'the principal sum' (12.338 v.10), but many are drawn from Payṭannic Hebrew which produced a great number of nouns of this pattern either through the exploitation of verbal forms, e.g., מַלְל 'speech' from Talmudic מַלַּל 'to speak', or through the shortening of existing nouns, e.g., תְּכֵל 'end' from biblical תְּכֵלָה.⁴⁹ יכּל is a payṭannic-style segolate noun which is used by different writers in the letters (Naṭan Hakkohen in 18J4.4 r.23 and 'Efraim ben Šʿmarya in 12.273 r.7) but is not attested elsewhere, thus this pattern also provides a model for coinages in the corpus.

Qōṭal: בּוּחַק 'under pressure' (13J26.16 r.14)⁵⁰

Qōṭel: כּוֹסֵף 'yearning' (20.141 r.17)

Another example is בּתוֹסֵף 'in addition' (13J26.3 r.6) which is a segolate created by shortening RH תוֹסֵפֶת 'addition' (e.g., M. *Tʿrumot* 5.6).

Qāṭal: אַעֵן 'response' (10J30.3 r.4); מַעַשׂ 'deed' (13J18.1 r.2); בּנְחָץ 'in need' (13J20.13 r.17); חַחֵן 'favour' (Box Misc. 26.22 r.4)

Like the *qēṭel* nouns, these payṭannic segolate forms are well-attested in the letters. In particular, shortened forms such as מַעַשׂ from מַעֲשֶׂה are popular, e.g., בְּבַהֵל 'in alarm' (13J15.1 r.2) from BH בְּהִלָּה תַאֵב, 'longing' (13J15.1 r.3) from rare BH תַּאֲבָה and דַּאֲגָה 'anxiety' (13J13.21 r.2) from BH דַּאֲגָה.

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

Qəṭāl: הַדְּחַק 'the pressure' (8.3 r.14); בְּכֻלָּל 'in general' (13J20.13 r.25); הַכְּתַב 'the letter' (13J20.13 r.13); בְּפִרְטָא 'in particular' (12.17 r.13); הַשְּׁטָר '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 חַשְׁשׁ 'anxiety' (16.261 r.32) and וְהַחֲשָׁד 'and the suspicion' (10J11.29 r.15). חַשְׁשׁ, a borrowing from Babylonian Aramaic חַשְׁשָׁא 'anxiety', occurs on several occasions in phrases where it is parallel with צוּרְךָ, e.g., וְאִם יִהְיֶה צוּרְךָ אִו חַשְׁשׁ תּוֹדִיעֵנוּ, 'and if you have any need or worry let us know' (16.261 r.32). A similar noun חַשְׁחָא is probably also a *qəṭāl* from the same root; it occurs in letters by Šʿlomo ben Yəhuda and Šʿmu'el ben Moše, אִוְד וְחַשְׁחָא 'concern or anxiety' (10J11.30 r.24; 13J18.1 m.3), used in the same context as חַשְׁשׁ.

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

⁴⁹Goldenberg p. 1610; Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 212; Kutscher (1982) p. 156.

⁵⁰It is a frequently used noun in the corpus, evidently a reflection on the difficult times faced by the Jewish communities.

כלל is commonly employed as an alternative to כל, e.g., 'and all the blessings' (13J11.4 r.4).

Qṭṭl: סכום 'sum total' (13J16.20 r.26)

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

Qitl5: בפרצת 'in the breach' (13J17.4 r.4); קצבה 'limit' (10J30.3 r.24); בשיחווה 'in prostration' (10J30.3 r.5); שכלה 'understanding' (13J11.5 r.4)

שכלה, used by Šlomo ben Yḥuda, is a payṭannic form derived from the BH segolate noun שְׁכַל 'insight'. שיחווה is a coinage from the biblical verb השתחווה 'to prostrate oneself'.

Qṭṭl5: וחזונתי 'and my grief' (J2.74 r.7); רחבת 'width' (13J18.1 r.11); of quadrilateral: בפרנסותם 'in providing for them' (12.99 r.5)

This pattern shaping the abstract noun is most commonly found in the corpus in the form הדרה 'glory' which is a BH noun, found in Proverbs 14:28 הדרת־מלך 'the glory of a king', but is employed in the letters as an honorific address. Examples of הדרה are very frequent, e.g.: להודיע להדרת אדוננו 'to inform our glorious lord [*lit.* the glory of our lord]' (10J9.14 r.6); אל הדרת יקרת צפירת מרנו ורבנו 'to the glorious, dear, diadem, our master and teacher' (32.8 r.16); ליקרת הדרת שתי הקהלות 'to the dear, glorious two communities' (13J19.15 v.1). It is probably a calque on the Arabic honorific *ḥadra* 'presence', also found in letters and documents as a term of address, e.g., חצרת מרדכי 'glorious Mordai' (Misc. 28.61 r.7). יקרה 'preciousness' is formed on analogy of הדרה from the adjective יקר and is also used, as can be seen in the examples already quoted, as a prefaced honorific.

Qṭṭl5: אסיפת 'death' (10J27.7 r.9); ואפידת 'and a girding' (NS J92 r.4); בחינות 'examinings' (13J26.13 r.18); דחיקת 'pressure' (16.275 r.7); ישיבת 'academy' (13J26.16 r.1); וכסיפתי 'and my yearning' (J2.74 r.7); ובלחישא 'and in a whisper' (10J30.3 r.6); ובמתיקות 'and with sweet things' (12.146 r.9); מנפילתינו 'from our downfall' (6J3.23 r.5); ועלצתנו 'and our rejoicing' (16.3 r.5); בעמידה 'in standing' (10J30.3 r.5); לענישת 'for the punishing fine' (13J26.16 r.13); עתירתך 'your petition' (12.247 r.7); ופגיעה 'and strike' (18J4.4 r.6); ופטירת 'and death (*lit.* departure)' (12.146 r.5); הפסיקות 'the allocations' (10J12.22 r.11); פרידתו 'his separation' (J2.74 r.7); צריפת 'purification' (13J26.13 r.18); מקריאתו 'from reading it' (13J17.4 r.18); וברחישה 'and in movement' (10J30.3 r.6); שכינת 'presence' (13J11.5 r.17); בשמירתו 'in keeping him' (13J20.9 r.9); בשתיקה 'in silence' (10J24.8 v.1); ותביעת 'and seeking' (16.275 r.6)⁵¹

⁵¹ תביעה is attested several times in the corpus as is the verb. The root is from RH, being a secondary formation from BH בעה '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'.

$Q^{\circ}t\tilde{l}5$ 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 $q^{\circ}t\tilde{l}5$ nouns used in the letters are drawn from the post-biblical traditions of Hebrew. From RH we find examples such as שמירה, שכינה and עמידה from the list above as well as a great many others from the wider corpus, e.g., ופקידת 'and the visitation' (12.213 r.2); ובדיקה 'and examination' (12.336 r.4); ביצירת 'in creation' (13J26.3 r.7); ביציאתו 'on his departure' (13J17.17 r.18); בנשיאת 'in the carrying up' (10J11.30 r.11); ומציאת 'and finding' (13J15.1 r.2). Talmudic and Medieval Hebrew provide an equally large number, such as צריפה, בחינה, פגיעה, דחיקה and נפילה from the list above as well as חריטת 'inscribing' (13J22.25 r.12), וארירות 'and curses' (13J14.10 r.23), פרידתנו 'our separation' (8J20.1 r.3), הכתיבה 'the writing' (13J20.18 v.1), וברדיפת 'and in pursuit' (20.181 r.39) and חזירת 'return' (16.6 r.20) from the wider corpus. Various coinages from this pattern are: מכסיפתו 'from his yearning' (18J4.20 r.33), an alternative to כוֹסֵף which is found in use by many different letter-writers; ואפידת 'and a girding' (NS J92 r.4) is a coinage by Yošiyahu Ga'on from BH; אפוד בעליצה 'and in rejoicing' (13J23.12 r.3) is attested in several letters, as an alternative form of BH עליצות; ובתמידת 'and in the regularity' (10J10.5 r.11) is a secondary formation from the BH noun תמיד, itself originally from a root מוּד; many more can be found in the wider corpus.

Although a few nouns of this pattern are derived from adjectives, e.g., מרירות 'bitter things' (13J14.10 r.22) and ובמתיקות '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. הפסיקות 'the allocations' (10J12.22 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.

$Q^{\circ}t\tilde{l}5$: דליקתה 'its fire' (8.3 r.10)

דליקה 'fire' is taken from RH, e.g., *M. Šabbat* 16.1.

$Q^{\circ}t\tilde{l}5$: פרוטה 'a *p^oruta*' (16.3 r.23); תשובה 'repentance' (13J14.5 r.12)

תשובה is a noun meaning 'return' or 'answer' in BH, but in this example the narrower RH meaning of 'repentance' is implied, i.e., כי כבר עשה תשובה 'because he has already made repentance' (13J14.5 r.12).

$Q^{\circ}t\tilde{l}5$: גדולת 'greatness' (13J26.16 r.5); קדושת 'holiness' (13J26.16 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: ליקירינו כבוד גדולת קדושת מר ור עלי החבר 'to our dear,

⁵²פסיקה in Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, פסיקא in Babylonian, means 'charitable donation'.

honourable, great and holy master and teacher, 'Eli the Haver' (13J23.13 r.2). Like the other honorific address הדרה, הדרת, they are employed in construct before the name of the addressee. קדושה is attested as an epistolary formula in the Yerušalmi, where a letter sent from Palestine opens with לקדושת חנניה 'to the holy Hananya', Y. *Sanhedrin* I, 19a.⁵³

Other nouns are attested, used in the same contexts on the model of קדושת and גדולת: סגולת 'treasure' (20.181 r.1), from Talmudic Hebrew, and the elsewhere unattested עגולת 'encircled [crowned?]' (8J3 v.17).

Q^otill⁵: ורטיה 'and their action' (NS J92 r.12); גביית 'collection [of tax]' (13J26.13 r.10); ורטיה 'and a compress' (8.3 r.11)

Although it is not a widely employed form, with the possible exception of עשייה, q^otill⁵ is a favourite pattern of the Palestinian ga'on Yošiyahu, who exhibits a number of examples in rhyming sequences in his letters: ראייתם 'their seeing' (12.256 r.2); הגייתם 'their speaking' (12.256 r.2); נטיית 'the inclination' (13J14.10 r.24); הגיית 'speech' (13J14.10 r.25); שטיית 'deviation' (13J14.10 r.25).

The q^otill⁵ noun אמיתה 'truth', a secondary formation from BH אמת, is attested fairly frequently in the letters, always in the construct: האמת אמיתת 'the veracity of the truth' (12.17 r.13); באמיתת שררותינו 'in the truth of our authority' (16.6 r.14); אמיתת דברינו 'the truth of our words' (12.146 r.20); אמיתת 'the truth of [' (8J20.3 r.12). Goldenberg explains the frequency of אמיתה in other medieval Hebrew literature stemming from Arabic lands as due to the influence of the similarly patterned Arabic noun *ḥaqīqa* '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 אמת and never אמיתה; it is only in the construct that we always find אמיתת and never אמת.

Qatt⁵l: ולתגרים 'and to merchants' (13J20.13 r.24)

תגר 'merchant' is a RH agentive noun, e.g., *M. Bava Meši'a* 4.4.

Qatt^l: פשיט 'teaching' (16.3 r.14)

Qitt^l: אידור 'majesty' (10J27.7 r.6); איחור 'delay' (J2.74 r.8); ואישור 'and confirmation' (13J11.5 r.8); וגידולה 'and its greatness' (10J27.7 r.7); בחיזוקכם 'in your effort' (AS 148.147 r.5); וחילוף 'and change' (10J12.22 .4); בחילוף 'in strength' (20.141 r.20); בחינוך 'with a prayer' (10J30.3 r.4); ייחול 'longing' (8.3 m.2); ביצוב 'in standing' (10J30.3 r.5); וכיזובה 'its lying' (10J27.7 r.4); וכינויי 'and his titles' (13J14.5 r.9); מילולך 'your speech' (10J12.22 r.23); מעוטכם 'your smallness' (13J26.16 r.9); בניחוץ 'with urgency' (18J4.4 r.28); עידון 'luxury' (13J18.1 r.3); ופילול 'and prayer' (10J30.3 r.4); פירוטיהם 'their

⁵³Mann (1922) vol. 2, p. 383.

⁵⁴Goldenberg p. 1629.

detailings' (13J16.20 r.13); הציבור 'the community' (20.141 r.41); קיבוץ 'gathering' (10J27.7 r.12); בקיצור 'in short' (10J12.22 r.1); ריבוץ 'teaching' (20.141 r.43); בריכוך 'with softening' (13J11.5 r.11); ברינון 'in rejoicing' (10J30.3 r.4); וריצוי 'appeasing' (13J11.5 r.2); שיבוש 'confusion' (10J12.22 r.4); ושיטוח 'and extension' (10J30.3 r.5); בשינון 'by memory' (10J30.3 r.4); שיקורה 'its falseness' (10J27.7 r.4); בחינוי 'with recounting' (13J11.5 r.8)

This pattern, along with *q^otāl* and *haqtāl*, 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., רינון and פילול, שינון, חינון, שיקור, חילון, איחור, ייחול, עידון, חילוף, שיבוש, מיעט among those listed above as well as a very large number from the wider corpus among which are: מינוי 'appointment' (12.336 r.6); בקיום 'as regards the preservation' (10J32.9 r.7); הפיזור 'the dispersion' (8J22.7 r.8); בחילוק 'in the distribution' (13J20.3 r.19); וטירוף 'and distraction' (10J10.22 r.13); עיכוב 'hindrance' (16.6 r.26); ובפיוסו '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: ציבור occurs at 2 Kings 10:8 as 'heap', but the RH meaning 'community', e.g., M. *B^oraḳoṭ* 5:5, is instead required by Šalom ben Y^ohuda, עסקי הצבור 'affairs of the community' (10J12.17 r.15); similarly, קיבוץ 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 Haver, על קיבוץ עזבונו 'over the gathering together of his inheritance' (10J227.7 r.12), as in Talmudic Hebrew (e.g., B. *K^otubboṭ* 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: וגידולה '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 *qittāl* 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: והעיתור 'and the praying' (8J2.2 r.6) from BH עָתַר 'to pray'; דיגול 'prominence' (16.68 r.20) from BH דָּגַל 'to look'; בניחורץ 'with urgency' (18J4.4 r.28) is formed from the BH root נָחַץ which is only attested as a *qal* passive participle, נָחוּץ 'urgent', at 1 Samuel 21:9; ריבוץ 'teaching' (20.141 r.43) is from a *pi'el* verb, Talmudic רָבַץ 'to teach/spread [the Torā]'.
 Qattāl: בבטלה 'in idleness' (12.17 r.19); כוונה '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: כוונתו 'his intention' (20.100 r.21); כוונתי 'my intention' (10J13.2 r.24). Only a few other *qattāl* forms are used in the letters, and these mostly

reflect a concrete meaning, e.g., כתקנה 'according to the ordinance' (13J33.12 r.7), בבקשתם 'in their request' (12.256 r.7) and צואתו '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, *qittūl*. As a result, we find more examples of RH קיבול, e.g., בקיבול 'with acceptance' (13J14.10 r.9), for the קבל derived action noun, than RH לקבלתם, e.g., לקבלתם 'for their reception' (13J23.13 r.24).⁵⁵

Qatṭōlī: הרבנים '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.

Qilqūl: בכלכולם 'in their upkeep' (12.99 r.5); הפילפול 'the debate' (12.17 r.5); וציימצום 'and the reduction' (12.17 r.19)

A post-biblical pattern, the *qilqūl* is the *qittūl* pattern for action nouns derived from geminate verbs and, like *qittūl*, is widely attested in the letters: וסמסום 'and ...?' (Misc. 36.203 leaf 1 v.4); מסכסוך 'because of the conflict' (13J26.1 r.15). Occasionally in RH it also serves as a pattern for agentives, although הסרסור 'the broker' (18J4.20 v.12) is the only example to be found in the corpus.

Šiqṭūl: ושכלול 'and completion' (12.247 r.20)

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

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

Summary of patterns with affirmative י-:

The *-ī* suffix occurs frequently in the letters but mainly in the form of the Hebrew gentilic adjectival ending: הדרמשקי 'the Damscene' (12.336 r.20); הירושלמין 'the Jerusalemites' (13J8.14 r.21); הגרי 'Hagrite' (10J24.1 leaf 2 v.18).⁵⁶ We find the *-ī* suffix in use in the ordinal numerals, of course, and also occasionally as an agentive ending, e.g., in the RH השולחני 'the money-changer' (AS 145.107 m.3), or a general adjectival ending, e.g., RH השאי '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 betrays 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, רגלי '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 *qatṭōl* 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.

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

⁵⁷Cf. Goldenberg p. 1628; Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 258.

Heqtēl: הַפְסַד 'the loss' (12.17 r.18)

We also find והתמד 'and diligence' (10J32.9 v.4), derived from RH תמיד, והשכל 'and wisdom' (10J22.7 r.4), הפתחה 'its entrance' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.5) and ההפסד 'the loss' (12.17 r.18).

Haqt5l5: כהבטחה 'like the divine promise' (AS 153.82 r.7); בהזכרתינו 'in mention of us' (12.247 r.15); בהסכמת 'with the consent' (10J24.8 v.4); בהפרתנו 'in our annulment' (13J26.13 r.23); והצלחות 'and successes' (13J17.4 r.2); בהשפלה 'in humiliation' (AS 153.82 r.11); והתדרת 'and perseverance' (10J27.7 r.5); התמדת 'continuance' (10J27.7 r.5)

Haqt5l5 is a frequently attested pattern in the letters, used for nouns derived from the *hifil* conjugation. Most nouns of this pattern are already found in RH and Talmudic Hebrew, such as הבטחה, השכרה, הפרה, השפלה from the list above and from the wider corpus: ההוצאה 'the expenditure' (10J25.8 v.3); הכרעתם 'their decision' (13J31.8 r.9); בהודאה 'with a confession' (8J20.3 r.11).⁵⁸ Often the nouns are employed in similar contexts to those in which they are found in the source texts: והפרשת ימים 'and crossing of seas' (8J20.1 r.5) derives from *B^o resit Rabba* 6, הפרשת הים הגדול, 'crossing the great sea'; ברדיפת השלום 'bringing about peace' (13J14.8 r.5) and בהבאת השלום 'in the pursuit of peace and bringing it about' (20.181 r.39), compare *M. Pe'a* 1:1, והבאת שלום 'and bringing peace'. Other examples of this pattern are medieval in origin, such as הסכמה and הצלחה from the list above and from the wider corpus: בהחזקת טובה 'in gratitude' (13J15.11 r.17) and מהשאה 'from beguiling' (12.733 r.8). A number are not attested outside these letters: ההועלה 'the benefit/profit' (10J11.29 r.14), from root יעל 'to profit' used only in the *hifil*, is found instead of RH תועלת 'profit'; בהבדאת 'in the invention [of their words]', occurs parallel to שיקור 'lying' (13J16.20 r.13); והתדרת 'and perseverance', mentioned above, which is a secondary formation from the Talmudic adjective תדיר 'regular'.⁵⁹

The Babylonian *'aqt5l5* pattern is barely found in the corpus; only the Palestinian *haver* 'Efraim ben Š^amarya and the Babylonian N^ohemya Hakkohen Ga'on employ examples of it: אחויתי 'my declaration' (12.273 r.14); מאונותינו '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 Š^alomo ben Y^ahuda: מעש והצלחת בכל מהשכל 'and wisdom in every deed, and success' (13J15.1 r.2) and וחשק והבטחת 'and desire and promise' (13J15.1 r.3). In this letter the construct form הַצְלָחַת is used in place of the absolute in order to follow a rhyme scheme composed of segolates, and nouns and participles with segolated

⁵⁸Note that N^ohemya Hakkohen, the Babylonian *ga'on*, uses, as would be expected, the Babylonian RH spelling of הודאה, rather than western הודייה.

⁵⁹The preference for adjectives and nouns formed from the root תדר, דור in its secondary form, for the meaning 'regular' is almost certainly due to the fact that the cognate root in Arabic *dawr*, in the form of the adjective *dawrī*, is the main term for 'periodic, regular'.

endings: ומתחת...משלחת...רווחת...והצלחת...ונחת...צומחת...והבטחת (13J15.1 r.1-3).

In RH the spelling of *haqt5l5* nouns from final-'alef and final-weak roots differs between the traditions of Palestinian and Babylonian RH; Palestinian RH attests the spelling יהי-, Babylonian אה-.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^oonim*, e.g., Nəḥemya Ga'on, בהנאתינו 'to our benefit' (8J20.3 r.11) and בהודאה 'with a declaration' (r.12), but are also the rule in letters of Palestinian origin, e.g., Šəlomo ben Yəhuda, התראה 'legal warning' (20.178 r.3), or of North African origin, e.g., from Alexandria, בהנאותם 'for their benefit' (13J11.2 r.17). The only clear example of the Palestinian spelling in the corpus is הנייה, in הניית עולם 'worldly benefit' (10J11.30 r.5), from a letter written by Šəlomo ben Yəhuda, who in all other cases spells this noun—which occurs frequently—with 'alef, להנאת עולם 'for worldly benefit' (10J27.2 r.11), ההנאה 'the benefit' (20.102 r.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.

Miqṭōl: כמנהג 'like the conduct' (13J26.16 r.16); משאל 'request' (13J14.5 r.6)

מְנַהֵג 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.

משאל is a payṭannic-style shortening of the common BH word מְשַׁאֵל 'request'. Although this technique is not all that 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 משאל occurs far more frequently than its base form and is attested in writings by the *g^oonim* Šəlomo ben Yəhuda (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 Ḥaver of Tiberias (Gil (1983) no. 236=DK 123 d r.2), son of the *ga'on* Avraham (13J21.19 r.1), Naṭan Hakkohen ben Məvorak (18J4.4 r.19) and many more. It is noticeably absent from the writings of the Babylonian *g^oonim*, who, through the lack of an established payṭannic background, employ far fewer examples of the poetic techniques of word creation and adaptation than are found in western, particularly Palestinian, texts.

Məqallō: מגמה 'aim' (13J14.5 r.5)

⁶⁰Bar-Asher p. 26.

⁶¹The *mišnayot* found in copies of the Babylonian Talmud reflect the Babylonian tradition of RH, thus with the hegemony of the Bavli in the West the Babylonian RH tradition became dominant and eclipsed the native reading traditions. *Ibid.*, pp. 2-4, 6-10.

מגמת 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 כונה, 'intention' by Šolomo ben Yehuda, who generally avoids that post-biblical noun, e.g., הואיל והיתה מגמתו לקראות 'since his aim was to name' (10J12.17 r.6) and מגמתם '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 Šolomo uses it following a very lengthy and formal *praescriptio* to present the purpose of writing, ומגמת מכתבנו הלזה, וכבודכם 'and the purpose of our letter to you, our honour' (Misc. 36.140 r.28); similarly, Šmu'el ben Moše of Tyre writes חוות...החבר...אלי כתבי 'the purpose of my letter to the Ḥaver...is to tell' (13J18.1 r.12); a letter from Alexandria also employs it, [ע]הודי...אלה...הודי 'the purpose of these lines ... is to inform' (13J34.3 r.11); as does a message from Ašqelon, ולבודיעכם...להרבות שלומכם...ולבודיעכם '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 מגמת occurs presents the main body of the letter.

M^oqilṣ: המדינה 'the city' (13J26.13 r.3)

מדינה always refers to a 'city' in the texts, despite its use in the Hebrew Bible for 'district' or 'province': המדינה הצור 'the city of Ḥaṣor' (13J16.18 r.17); למדינת צפת 'to the town of Šəfat' (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 *madīna*, 'town' or 'city' only, that is probably decisive.

Muqtṣl: המומחה 'the specialist' (13J20.13 v.1)

מומחה is found in RH where it means 'skilled, practical one' (e.g., *B^orešit Rabba* 30). Like חבר it was bestowed as a title on worthies of the community in the *geniza* period.

Other patterns with preformative -מ:

A medieval noun with the preformative -מ is מסרף / משרף 'maternal uncle'. In the corpus it is found only in the letters of Šolomo ben Yehuda: מסרפך 'your uncle' (13J13.28 r.33); מסרפו 'his uncle' (13J23.1 r.10); משרפו 'his uncle' (12.261 r.15). The single spelling with ש—presumably ש—comes from a letter in which 'Avraham ben Hagga'on was acting as his father's scribe. As with his unique spelling of וסת as ושת, i.e., ושתו 'his way' (10J10.9 r.8), mentioned above, 'Avraham is presumably attempting to write an etymologically more original spelling.

Taqtūl: ותעדודי 'and restorations' (13J18.1 r.3)

Unattested outside this letter, תעדוד 'restoration' is apparently a coinage from the BH root עוד the *pol'el* of which is used in Psalm 146:9 יעודד 'he restores'. The coinage of nouns from verbs, particularly rare verbs, found in the Hebrew Bible is a payṭannic

technique found in the letters.⁶² Although, we come across it only rarely and always in the poetic opening praises, not the body text.

Taqtōlet: וחרעומת 'and complaint' (16.275 r.6)

Among letter writers only Šlomo ben Yehuda attests this common RH noun (e.g., *M. Bava Meš'a* 6.1). Another *taqtōlet* pattern that appears in his letters is the elsewhere unattested form תותרת meaning 'remainder', from root יתר, which he employs in preference to the common BH noun יתר 'remainder, rest' (e.g., 1 Chronicles 19:11), perhaps by analogy with a form like RH תוספת 'addition': כי הם תותרת החוב אשר ערב נשיאנו 'for they form the remainder of the debt which our Nasi guaranteed' (13J15.1 r.16) and ולא נמצא בה תותרת 'and no remainder is found in it' (NS 324.104 r.30).

Taqlūt: ותחרות 'and rivalry' (12.17 r.6)

תחרות 'rivalry, contention, strife' derives from RH (e.g., *Vayyiqra Rabba* 9).

Qāṭlūt: הנגידות 'length/continuance' (10J27.7 r.6); לגמילות 'for doing' (AS 148.147 r.5); 'the office of Nagid' (6J3.23 r.13)

אריכות is the aramaizing form of BH אורך. Although we find both nouns in the letters, אריכות 'long life' (13J23.13 r.7) and ארך ימים 'length of days' (12.775 r.3), RH אריכות 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.

Qaṭlūt: 'uprightness' (NS J92 r.10); וכשרות 'and worthiness' (NS J92 r.10); המלכות 'the Government' (13J26.16 r.12)

Though מלכות, '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., ובעת שהינו מתפרנסים, מצד המלכות 'and while we were provided for by the government' (13J26.16 r.12).

Qāṭūt: רשיותנו 'our authority' (16.3 r.33); זכות 'benefit' (13J26.16 r.11); דוות (לבבי) 'sickness [of my heart]' (J2.74 r.7);

Qaṭl5yūt: אחריות 'guarantee' (13J18.1 r.22)

Summary of patterns with afformative ו-:

ו- 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., אחריות 'surety' (13J18.1 r.22); זריות 'diligence' (13J24.11 r.21); קטנותכם 'your youth' (13J11.4 r.20); במהירות 'with speed' (13J20.14 r.22); אומנותכם 'your skill' (28.24 r.49). A similar proportion are drawn from Talmudic Hebrew: בדלותם 'in their poverty'

⁶²Goldenberg p. 1611.

(16.6 r.23); וצניעות 'and modesty' (10J11.30 r.22); במרותו 'with his authority' (13J14.10 r.26); חסידותך 'your piety' (8J22.7 r.9); וגסות 'and presumptuousness' (16.261 r.14). A large number are medieval coinages, particularly those denoting an abstract quality derived from an adjective: הנמיכות 'the lowness' (10J11.29 r.14); היחידות 'the solitariness' (13J13.14 r.10); רכות 'softness' (Misc. 35.11 r.6). The connection of the *-ית* affirmative with nouns denoting the abstract is so strong that we find many nouns employing *-ית* even where there is a well-attested form of a different pattern available, e.g., MH בעליזות 'in rejoicing' (13J16.24 r.14) rather than BH עליזה 'rejoicing'; Aramaic-derived בזדנות 'in insolence' (10J32.9 r.14) rather than BH זדון 'insolence'; ובסחרותכם 'and in your trade' (28.24 r.49) rather than BH סחורה 'trade, merchandise'; RH וענוותנותו 'and his humility' (Arabic Box 47.243 r.10) is found along with BH ענוה 'humility', e.g., וענוה 'and humility' (10J11.30 r.22); שררותינו 'our authority' (16.6 r.14) is used alongside שררה 'authority' (NS 323.21 v.6); even the previously unattested בעזרותנו 'in our aid' (16.95 leaf 1 r.5) occurs once, despite the wide use of the BH noun עזרה '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., הנשיאות 'the Nasi-ship, the office of Nasi' (32.8 r.18); הנגידות 'the Nagid-ship, the office of Nagid' (6J3.23 r.13); חזנות 'cantorship' (13J24.11 r.21); אנטילירות '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.: עכרות 'turbidness' (13J19.15 r.3); דוות 'sickness' (J2.74 r.7); ובתאדירות 'and in the glory' (12.273 v.14); כנענות 'trade' (10J25.8 v.4).

Qilqūlīt: לחלוהית 'vitality' (13J25.10 r.28)

The noun is a rare RH word (e.g., *B²rešit Rabba* 48), also found at 13J15.11 r.24.

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

Talmudic Hebrew רבית is used in preference to BH תרבית and נשן, 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.

Qatlōn: החזן 'the cantor' (13J26.16 r.6) is actually a *qattāl* agentive pattern

Although not generally employed in the letters beyond a few well-attested nouns, ככתבן 'like a writer' (28.24 r.52) and דרשן 'interpreter' (13J11.9 r.7), the affirmative does provide Šalom ben Yehuda with the opportunity to form a lengthy sequence of rhyming epithets in one letter: הישרן הצרבן הסרבן בחקרן הגברן 'the upright, 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 קטלון to the Western Palestinian קטלון.⁶³ The Eastern branch is found in the oral traditions of North African Jewry; Šalom ben Yehuda was

⁶³For 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 *qatlōn*.

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 -וֶן, below.

Qittōlōn (?): וּבְגֵרְסוֹן 'and in the acquisition [of knowledge]' (12.146 r.7)

וּבְגֵרְסוֹן 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 גַּרַס 'to acquire', attested as a noun in Babylonian Aramaic גִּירְסָנִי 'my accumulation', B. *Y^avarmot* 117a.

Summary of patterns with affirmative וֶן-:

The וֶן- 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* Š^arira coins a number of nouns with the affirmative for a rhyming sequence contained in the opening of a letter:

וּבְגֵרְסוֹן... חֲלָצוֹן... לְחִמּוֹן... בְּאִמְצוֹן... 'in courage... oppression... deliverance... suspicion' (AS 148.49 r.5). Moše Hassofer also presents two new abstract nouns, וְעִלְצוֹן 'and rejoicing' (13J16.16 r.13) and וְחִפְצוֹן 'and desire' (13J16.16 r.13), from a similarly rhymed phrase: וְכֵן יִהְיֶה רִצּוֹן בְּגִילָה וְעִלְצוֹן וּמִלְאֵי חִפְצוֹן 'and so let it be, with rejoicing and exultation and fulfilment of desire' (13J16.16 r.15). Š^alomo ben Y^ahuda uses the *payṭannic* noun בְּשִׁמּוֹן 'perfume/perfumer' to make a rhyme: הַנְּקוּב בְּאֵב הַמּוֹן הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּתַחֲכֻמוֹן 'who is named "the Father of Many", who is seated in the academy, who is filled like a pomegranate with all the spices of a merchant and perfume[r?]'.⁶⁶ (13J16.14 r.5). A productive affirmative, וֶן- 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: פְּתֻחוֹן פֶּה 'permission' (13J16.18 r.11); רִבּוֹן 'lord' (20.94 r.7); בְּעִלְבוּנִי 'in my humiliation' (20.181 r.20); only the occasional noun of medieval origin surfaces: רִישִׁיוֹן 'permission' (16.267 r.11).

A noun frequently used in the letters is גְּאוֹן '*ga'on*, head of the academy' (13J26.16 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 גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב 'the pride of Ya'aqov', Psalms 47:5 etc.⁶⁷ The phrase refers to the Palestinian academy in Š^alomo ben Y^ahuda's letters, e.g., שְׁלֹמֹה הַצֶּרֶף רֹאשׁ יְשִׁיבַת גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב בְּרַבִּי, 'Š^alomo ben Y^ahuda the Younger, Head of the Academy of the 'Pride of Ya'aqov', Son of a Scholar' (13J9.2 r.62), but historically was used of both the Palestinian and Babylonian *g^ašivot*.⁶⁸

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

⁶⁵Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 212. M^anaḥem ben Saruq also created nouns with the וֶן- affirmative for his writings; *idem* p. 235.

⁶⁶The *paytan* Š^amu'el Haššliši also employs בְּשִׁמּוֹן in the opening of a letter of recommendation, rhyming it with קַנְמוֹן 'cinnamon' (16.68 r.2).

⁶⁷Brody p.49.

⁶⁸Gil (1992) §728 and notes. Although, in the letters of the Babylonian *g^aonim* the Babylonian title is usually רֹשֵׁף הַיָּסוּד שֶׁלְגוֹלָה, 'Head of the Academy of the Dispersion', e.g., שְׁרִירָה נַחְמִיָּה הַכֹּהֵן רֹאשׁ הַיְשִׁיבָה שֶׁלְגוֹלָה (16.6 r.1), שְׁרִירָה

Qəṭāy: תניי 'condition' (13J18.1 r.24)

The question of the spelling of nouns ending in final *-ay* has already been discussed above.⁶⁹ As with the הנאה and הנייה distinction, both Babylonian and Palestinian spellings are found in the letters.

Contractions: בירבי 'son of the scholar' (13J26.16 r.1)

בירבי, also found as ברבי, was understood as 'son of a scholar', i.e., 'son of a learned man, and is probably in origin a contraction of Aramaic ר[י]ב[י] בי[ר].⁷⁰ It usually occurs in place of בן or בר in names, particularly of the more prestigious letter writers, and is often abbreviated: יהושע החבר ביר עליו החבר 'Yəhošu 'the Haver son of the scholar 'Eli the Haver' (13J16.18 r.22). Certain writers such as Šlomo ben Yəhuda and Šmu'el Hašliši sometimes use it in a slightly different way, omitting the father's name, but retaining *birabbi* as a mark of their status: שלמה הצ ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב ברבי 'Šlomo the Younger, Head of the Academy, son of a scholar' (13J23.1 m.10); שמואל השלישי בחבורה בירבי 'Šmu'el the Third in the Academy, son of a scholar' (16.68 r.27).

Loanwords: אנטילרות '[power of] attorney' (10J12.22 r.11); אפוטרופים 'administrators' (AS 148.147 r.3); הדיוקנאות 'the money orders' (13J16.20 r.26); בהדיוט 'the commoner' (16.3 r.27); מרנא 'our lord' (10J27.7 r.11); בנימוסי 'with the customs' (18J4.4 r.18); ונשתון 'and official letter' (13J26.13 r.9); ורבנא 'and our teacher' (13J26.16 r.6); סנהדרין 'the Sanhedrin' (13J26.16 r.19); סניגור 'advocate' (8.3 r.17); קטיגור 'prosecutor' (8.3 r.17); פיתקי '[tax] receipts' (13J11.5 r.20)

Some loanwords are already found in BH, such as the Persian נשתון '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., דינרים 'dinars' (18J4.20 r.38), טריים 'taris' (8.13 r.15) and קירטים 'qirats' (13J26.3 r.13)—jurisprudence, e.g., סניגוריה 'her advocates' (13J33.2 r.23), and bureaucracy, e.g., סיקריקון 'confiscated property' (12.338 r.16) and ובדפטרם 'and in documents' (13J14.10 r.30). Terms not belonging to these fields are found, of course, e.g., נימוס 'custom' and הדיוט 'commoner', mentioned above, as well as others like הקולמוס 'the reed pen' (13J16.24 r.16), לסטים 'bandits' (10J10.9 r.4) and קברנטנו '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 נוסח / נסח 'copy', e.g., נסחם 'their copy' (NS 169.11 r.5) and מהנסחים 'from the copies' (13J16.17 r.22), taken from Arabic *nuska*. The most

ראש הישיבה שלגולה (Misc. 36.203 r.1) and ראש הישיבה שלגולה בן חפני הראש אב הישיבה שלגולה (Misc. 36.169 r.1).

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.⁷¹ 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, Šlomo ben Yehuda and others only employ the rabbinic noun דיוקנא / דיוקני 'the money-order' (13J8.14 r.10). Similarly, to translate Arabic *barā'a* 'poll-tax receipt' a Hebrew compound פיתקי המס lit. 'notes of the tax' (13J11.5 r.20) is used; ענישה / עונש lit. 'fine; indemnity', e.g. מקודם לענישת 'prior to the punishing tax on our brothers' (13J26.16 r.13) refers to a special tax (i.e., as distinct from the *jizya* 'poll-tax' and *karāj* 'land-tax'), translating Arabic *garāma*, also literally 'fine; damages'; נשתון translates Arabic *sijill* 'official letter, letter of appointment'. Homophony explains the preference for the noun כתב over מכתב for 'letter', due to the similar pattern of the Arabic cognate *kitāb*, 'letter'.

Summary

The most popular noun patterns in the letters are *qēṭel* and the other segolates, *q^oṭīl^o*, *qittūl*, *haqt^oṭīl^o* and nouns with the *-ūt* 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^oṭīl^o* and *qittūl*. 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^oṭīl^o* for the action noun.⁷²

How does this compare with the different traditions of Hebrew? RH also favours the patterns *q^oṭīl^o*, *qittūl* and *haqt^oṭīl^o* for its word creation, but the other common rabbinic patterns *qatt^oṭīl^o* and *heqtel* feature far less prominently in our corpus.⁷³ In the letters a certain amount of levelling has gone on, a few patterns have become dominant and both the *qatt^oṭīl^o* and *heqtel* have been supplanted by the related *qittūl*, for the *pi'el*-derived noun, and *haqt^oṭīl^o*, for the *hif'il*-derived. Other features of the RH noun such as the occurrence of אָדָן for אָדָם and similar examples of אָדָן, 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 *paytanim*: *piyyuṭ* favours nouns from the patterns *qēṭel*, *qittūl*, *q^oṭīl^o* and *qitlōn* in particular.⁷⁴ Though the

⁷¹In so doing, the letter-writers are continuing a tradition of linguistic nationalism begun by the early Palestinian *paytanim*. 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.

⁷⁴Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 212.

letters do not demonstrate a wide use of nouns of the pattern *qiṭlōn*, 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 payṭannic 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 *qēṭel*, *qiṭṭūl* and *q³ṭīl*.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., כתב or nouns from the root תדר. 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 הידוּשׁ for the meaning 'event', however, in our letters the י- adjectival form is no more common than in earlier traditions of Hebrew and for 'event' we find only the undoubted hebraism מאורע.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 contemporary 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., דיוקנא 'money-order', גביית המס 'tax collection', הלוייה 'loan', דינר 'dinar', קרן 'capital', שולחני 'banker', סכום 'sum' and הוצאה 'expenditure'.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 224.

⁷⁶Goldenberg p. 1627. 'Event' is always Hebrew מאורע in the corpus, e.g., מאורעי 'what happened to me', lit. 'my event' (28.24 r21); מאורע 'event' (24.6 r.28).

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:

1s	תי-	כתבתי 'I wrote' (10J10.22 r.5)
2ms	ת-	מאסת 'you rejected' (16.3 r.24)
	(תה-)	חזרתה 'you returned' (10J14.19 r.3)
2fs		(<i>unattested</i>)
3ms	-	זכר 'he remembered' (12.336 r.8)
3fs	ה-	וגברה 'and it grew strong' (13J26.13 r.2)
1pl	נו-	כתבנו 'we wrote' (16.6 r.25)
2mpl	תם-	פקדתם 'you [haven't] paid attention' (13J25.5 r.6)
2fpl		(<i>unattested</i>)
3pl	ו-	כתבו 'they wrote' (20.181 r.8)

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*, טרחתה 'you toiled' (13J14.8 r.18), as it is occasionally in BH and often in RH.¹

¹Jouion §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:

1s	-א	אכתוב 'I will write' (13J20.13 r.19)
2ms	-ת	ותכתוב 'and you will write' (12.347 m.8)
2fs	ת-י	תשמעי '[do not] listen' (Gil (1997) no. 673=Bodl MS Heb c 13.20 m.3)
3ms	-י	יחמול 'he will spare' (NS J92 r.13)
3fs	-ת	והישקוט 'and it will be quiet' (24.43 r.42)
1pl	-נ	נכתוב 'we will write' (16.3 r.27)
2mpl	ת-ו	והפתחו 'and you will open' (12.16 v.7)
	ת-וּן	תאמרון 'you will say' (10J1 leaf 1 v.3)
2fpl		(unattested)
3mpl	י-ו	יחסרו 'they are lacking' (13J26.3 r.13)
	י-וּן	יעזבו 'they forsake' (10J1 leaf 2 v.6)
3fpl	ת-נה	תשכחנה 'they will forget' (16.6 r.9)

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, ין- ending of the feminine plural prefix conjugation is not attested.³

Of the two types attested, the 2 masculine plural in וּן- is barely used; it is found only twice in our corpus, occurring once in a letter of Šʿrira Ga'on, תאמרון 'you will say' (10J1 leaf 1 v.3) and once in a letter of Elḥanan ben Šʿmarya, תעשון 'you will do' (18J4.5 vm.5). Neither is a creative use of the 2 masculine plural paragogic inflection, since both these particular morphological forms are attested in BH, תאמרון 2 Kings 19:6 and תעשון 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* Šʿrira, again, and that other biblicaliser, Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda, who account for the great majority of occurrences.⁴

Although Šʿrira employs the form in the body of his letters, Šʿlomo ben Yʿhuda's use is more characteristic of the situation in the letters as a whole. It may occur in the *praescriptio*, where the וּן- ending is a useful rhyming element, יעמתון...יואמתון...ינתננון...יכלאון '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, ירביון יסגיון יאתיון 'may they increase and grow' (Box Misc. 28.231 r.20); ירביון יסגיון יאתיון

²Fernandez p. 106.

³For its rarity in BH see Joüon §44e.

⁴Šʿrira 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); ירביון נצח 'may they increase forever' (13J11.9 r.17).⁵ 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 עמתחון יעמתחון 'may they join' (16.275 r.1); nevertheless, many of the forms used are found in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., ירבין Deuteronomy 8:13 and יאתיון Isaiah 41:5. Interestingly, the suffix is more frequently employed on *lamed-he* verbs—often also displaying the original final *yod* for the ending -יון—than any other stem: it occurs frequently on the *lamed-hes* רבה, שגה/סגה, אתה, היה, ראה, עשה, כלה and חיה in the corpus.

The Babylonian *ga'on* Š^ʿrira uses paragogic *nun* frequently, e.g., ואם יתעצלוֹן העם מה יעשון חכמיהם 'and if the people are lazy what will their wise men do? Will they go hungry or thirst?' (13J25.5 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. Š^ʿrira, along with other speakers of the Iraqi dialect of Arabic, such as Hayya and Š^ʿmu'el ben Ḥofni, 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.⁶ 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 Š^ʿrira's Hebrew letters.

The cohortative

The cohortative is attested as follows:

1s	אשאלה 'I ask' (8J22.7 r.6)
1pl	נקשיבה 'let us [not] pay heed' (20.102 r.24), strong <i>qal</i> not attested
3ms	יעתיקה 'may he remove [them]' (13J14.10 r.12), strong <i>qal</i> not attested

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., אשאלה 'I ask' (8J22.7 r.6) at Judges 8:24, אבקשה 'I will seek' (12.146 r.15) at Psalms 122:9, אדברה נא 'I will speak' (16.6 r.8) at 2 Samuel 14:15 and ואמר '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: ואשבה משומם 'I sat appalled' (10J10.22 r.4) is taken from Ezra 9:3; ואזמרה ואשירה '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 אשירה and אזמרה effectively to supplant the normal prefix conjugation form for the 1 singular of these verbs, neither אשיר or אזמר.

⁵The *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.

⁶See 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 Heb. 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: *אאפידה* 'I will gird' (13J14.10 r.2), from Yošiyahu Ga'on, where the cohortative partakes of a rhyme scheme in הָ, and *ואשתתפה* 'and I will join up with' (13J11.4 r.12), from the lady Maliḥa's letter.

Šalom ben Yehuda often attests the 1 singular cohortative in *waw*-consecutive constructions, e.g., *ואלכה* 'and I went' (16.261 r.22) and *ואשאלה* 'and I asked' (16.275 r.23). When using the verb *אמר* he only attests the 1 singular cohortative in the *waw*-consecutive, never the indicative, *ואומר* 'and I said' (Misc.35.11 r.13, 18; 16.275 r.12, etc.). Though *ואמר* is attested in BH, e.g., Judges 6:10, the indicative *אמר* is considerably more common for the *waw*-consecutive.⁷ 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 Šalom's letters.⁸ Another medieval writer, Sa'adya Ga'on also employs the same construction in his literary prose, e.g., *ואתנה* 'and I gave', *Egron* (Allony) §1 line 70.

The 3 masculine singular cohortative *יעתיקה* 'may he remove [them]' (13J14.10 r.12) is not attested in the Hebrew Bible (only the indicative *יעתק* 'is removed' Job 14:18) although similar examples of the 3 cohortative are used.⁹ Yošiyahu Ga'on uses the cohortative *יעתיקה* solely to achieve a rhyme in one of his more ornate letters, *פוקה וממלכות חזקה ואותם יעתיקה מכל מכאוב ופוקה*, 'may he save them from straits and from hard rule, and remove them from all pain and distress' (13J14.10 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 Yošiyahu 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.¹⁰

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, Yošiyahu Ga'on's usual tendency to mark *šere* in closed syllables leads to spellings such as *ישיה* 'may he place' (13J14.10 r.6) and *יקשיב* 'may he give attention' (13J14.10 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 *אמר* occurs 18 times with the *waw*-consecutive as opposed to 94 times for the indicative in the Hebrew Bible. Similarly, although the cohortatives *אשאלה* and *אלכה* are both attested in BH, Judges 8:24 and Genesis 45:28 respectively, the *waw*-consecutives attested show only the 1 singular indicative, e.g., Genesis 24:47 and Judges 19:18 respectively.

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

⁹For instance in Isaiah 5:19 and Job 11:17. Cf. Joüon §45a.

¹⁰Tbid., §46a–b.

showing long *i* stem vowels, albeit used as optatives. However, since Yošiyahu often uses *yod* to mark *šere* in such circumstances, e.g., יושיעם 'may he save them' (13J14.10 r.5), these could well represent morphological jussives, i.e., יִשַׁע as attested in Job 9:33 and יִקְשִׁיב like וִיקְשִׁיב 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., ומי יתן ויהי שלום ביניכם 'and O that there could be peace between you!' (13J23.11 r.23) and ויהי כשמעתי 'and when I heard' (10J27.2 r.17).

The most commonly occurring—and orthographically unambiguous—jussives in the letters are those of the final-weak verb יהיה, e.g., יהי אל עזרם 'God be his aid' (13J9.2 r.31) and ואל תהי בוגדה 'and let her not become a traitress' (10J11.30 r.17). The use of the jussive of this root is extremely common across the corpus probably because it is such a well-attested form in the Hebrew Bible, even if it plays less of a role in the post-biblical language. Examples from the corpus are: וברוך יהי שמו לעולם 'and his name be blessed forever' (12.16 v.22); משכורתכם תהי שלמה "your reward be full" (12.146 m.3); וברוך תהי נא עצתך טובה אל[י]ן 'now let your advice to him be good' (12.80 r.15). In addition to the BH forms יהי and תהי, though, one can find, through their use in RH, the aramaizing forms יהא and תהא.¹² In RH, they are morphologically indicative—the 1st person has a similar form אהא (not attested in the corpus)—but the letters often use them as a substitute for the יהי/תהי morphological jussives due to their resemblance (perhaps they were also pronounced similarly at this time). When the Fustāt community wishes their *ga'on*, Šalom ben Yehuda, well, they use the RH form of the verb as a jussive, יהא מכל עבדיו 'peace may he have from all his servants' (16.304 r.5). Similarly, a certain Yišḥaq writes יהא שמו מבורך 'may his name be blessed' (8J21.6 r.12), substituting יהא for יהי which is found in the version of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible, יהי שם יהוה מבורך 'May the Lord's name be blessed', Psalms 113:2 and Job 1:21. Other writers do use the BH jussive form in similar constructions, e.g., יהי מבורך לעולם 'may he blessed forever' (Misc. 36.203 leaf 1 v.13).

Šalom ben Yehuda, who often employs BH יהי, also attests the RH aramaizing forms, but, unlike most other writers in the corpus, he does not employ them as jussives: ואמרו...מה תהא עליהן 'and they said...what will become of them?' (20.178 r.14); אומר ירא אני כי לא תהא ממנו תוחלת 'saying, "I am afraid that there is no more hope for us"' (10J10.22 r.2). Interestingly, Šalom ben Yehuda is probably also showing the influence of RH when he writes יהי לי 'somewhere that I won't know what will happen to me' (10J11.30 r.18); although יהי 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 employing the jussive in this example can be seen from a similar phrase in another of his letters, עד אשר יעשה לי איהם 'until I know what God will do to me' (10J11.30 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 יהא or, identically to the BH jussive, יהי. In the absence of further evidence (vocalised forms, the use in quotes from RH) we can only assume that יהי is referring to the BH jussive form, in both pronunciation and usage.

¹³Ibid., p. 123.

יעשה rather than the jussive יעש is written.

Another writer who attests both יהי and תהא in his letters is Naṭan ben 'Avraham: כטל וכרביב יהי לו 'may he be like the dew and like the rain' (Gil (1983) no. 184=Bodl MS Heb. d 66.69 r.13); להי לא למעוז יהי 'may he be for him a refuge' (Gil (1983) no. 188=Mosseri V 341.1 r.7); ותהא תפילתך עריבה 'and 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 Naṭan's own hand, the last in a letter of his scribe. Judging by Naṭan's biblicising style, it seems unlikely that he himself would employ תהא for the jussive; instead it is probably the product of his scribe.¹⁴

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: יגל לבם 'may their heart rejoice' (13J14.10 r.3), Psalms 13:6; ויגר 'and he dwelt' (10J11.30 r.10), Genesis 20:1; וישב 'and he returned' (10J11.30 r.13), Genesis 22:19; וירם 'and it was uplifted' (18J4.20 r.7), Hosea 13:6; ותגל '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: יעש 'may he act' (13J17.17 r.18), 2 Samuel 2:6; יצו 'may he order' (6J3.23 r.14), Deuteronomy 28:8; ויחר לי 'and I became angered' (16.275 r.22), Genesis 4:5; יחי 'may he live' (13J31.1 r.12), Deuteronomy 33:6; ירב 'may it increase' (8J20.1 v.3), Job 34:37; ירב 'may it increase' (8.3 m.4), Job 34:37; ויוסף '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., ויט חסד '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 ויפן 'may he turn' (18J4.4 r.30) the jussive is only attested in BH in the *waw*-consecutive, ויפן 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., יחי לעד 'live forever' (6J9.2 v.4), ושלום...ירב 'and peace...increase' (8.3 m.2) and יהי צורם בעזרם '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 ותעש בדבר בהזכרתנו בתפילה '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 הדיה, 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.¹⁵

The *waw*-consecutive

The biblical construction of the *waw*-consecutive of the prefix conjugation (and jussive) is often attested in the corpus, e.g., ויסתמו עלינו מבוא המים 'and they shut off our access to water' (13J26.13

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

¹⁵One possible exception is the *hif'il* verb in the phrase כל אויביו יגחן במכות '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 הגחן 'to bring down' from BH middle-weak גיח 'to burst forth' through גיחון 'belly', i.e., 'to cause to fall on the belly'. However, it could equally be a *pi'el*. It is perhaps better connected with גחן 'to bend', e.g., גחונין 'bent [in grief]' from *B^orešit Rabba* 20, i.e., 'may he cause them to bend beneath his blows', in which case a *hif'il* would be a possibility.

r.4); וְתָרַב מְרִיבַת הָעַם בְּהַר עַד מְאֹד (Misc. 35.11 r.16). In unvocalised text it is not always apparent, e.g., וַיֵּצֵא 'and he set out' (18J4.4 r.20) is composed of either the *waw*-consecutive plus the prefix conjugation, e.g., וַיֵּצֵא Genesis 8:7, or weak *waw* plus the suffix conjugation, e.g., וַיֵּצֵא Habakkuk 3:5. However, occasional vocalised examples do exist, e.g., וַנְחַלֵּק 'and we divided up' (Gil (1983) no. 31=ENA 2804.1 r.12) and וַתֵּרְאֶה 'and it appeared' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 v.2). These show the expected *paṭah* under the *waw*.

The commonest *waw*-consecutive attested in the corpus is the *waw* plus the jussive of the verb הִיָּה, and it is used to introduce a subordinate temporal clause, a very common BH construction: וַיְהִי בְשִׂאלֵם 'and when he asked them' (12.80 r.13); וַיְהִי בְעֵת רִדְתּוֹ 'and when he went down' (16.261 r.13); וַיְהִי בְרֵאוֹתַי 'and when I saw' (Misc. 35.11 r.12); וַיְהִי כֹאֲשֶׁר רָאָה 'and when he saw' (16.261 r.19). Another common example is וַיֹּאמֶר '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., וַיִּתֵּן...וַיִּכְתְּבוּ 'and he gave...and they wrote' (13J16.24 r.20), or, where applicable, a jussive, e.g., Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda attests the jussives of two middle-weak verbs וַיִּגֵּר...וַיֵּשֶׁב '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., וַיִּרָם 'and it was uplifted' (18J4.20 r.7) and וַתִּגַּל 'and it rejoiced' (18J4.20 r.7). Although, it is surprising that Š^orira Ga'on, a clearly biblicising writer, shows וַיִּצוּם 'and he fasted' (13J25.5 r.26), despite וַיִּצַּם 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, וַיִּצוּם.¹⁶

The form of the final-weak verbs with the *waw*-consecutive shows some divergence from BH. וַיִּצַּו '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., וַיִּצַּו Genesis 2:16, etc., and so it would have been well-known to the letter-writers. וַיִּהָר is similarly very well attested in BH, e.g., וַיִּהָר Genesis 4:5, etc. Other final-weak verbs in the letters, however, rarely show apocopation when occurring in the *waw*-consecutive, e.g., וַתִּמְנָה 'and she appointed' (13J16.24 r.16); וַיִּכְלָה 'and it ended' (16.6 r.12); וַתֵּרְאֶה 'and it appeared' (12.114 r.10); וַיִּקְרָה דָבָר 'and something happened' (13J16.14 r.23); וַאֲשַׁנָּה 'and I repeated' (16.275 r.23). Some are ambiguous, do they represent *waw*-consecutives or not? וַיִּקְשָׁה עָלַי הַדְּבָר עַד מְאֹד וַיְהָר לִי עַד מוֹת '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.¹⁷

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. N^ohemya Hakkohen Ga'on writes וַיִּכְלָה קִיץ 'and summer came to an end' (16.6 r.12), because

¹⁶Another 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 Š^orira Ga'on.

¹⁷Or even it could be the rare BH construction of the unapocopated *waw*-consecutive representing a durative or iterative past tense; cf. Joüon §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 כלה is not attested in BH. Instead the Hebrew Bible has the jussive, יָכַל 'wastes away' Job 33:21, and the *waw*-consecutive of the 3 feminine singular, וַתִּכַּל 'it was finished' Exodus 39:32. For ואשאל ואשאל 'I asked and I asked again' (16.275 r.12) BH attests only the 1 singular prefix conjugation, אֶשְׁנֶה 'I will [not strike] twice' 1 Samuel 26:8. Moreover, the 1 person rarely takes an apocopated form with the *waw*-consecutive in BH.¹⁸ וַתֵּרָא 'and it appeared' (12.114 r.10) is modelled on the prefix conjugation with weak *waw*, וַתִּרְאֶה 'and let it appear' Genesis 1:9, although the vocalisation might reflect the apocopated form, only attested in BH for the 3 masculine singular, וַיֵּרָא 'and he appeared' Genesis 12:7. וַיִּקְרָה 'and it happened' (13J16.14 r.23) is used in the letters despite the required apocopated *waw*-consecutive form being attested in BH, וַיִּקְרַח '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 ויאמר, ויצו, ויהי or ויחר. In the case of ותמנה 'and she appointed' (13J16.24 r.16) there are two influences on the form. Firstly, תִּמְנֶה '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, עשתה לה ותמנה לאנטלר 'she did it and appointed for herself a mandatory' (13J16.24 r.16) is actually derived from the Palestinian Talmud, Y. *Sanhedrin* II, 19d וימנה [ליה אנטלר] '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. Joüon 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 Šolomo ben Yəhuda's frequent use of the cohortative with the *waw*-consecutive (far more frequently than it actually occurs in BH), that, writing forms such as ויקרה and ואשנה, 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 Naṭan ben 'Avraham is taken verbatim from the Hebrew Bible, והיית [אך שמ[ה] 'and you will be rejoicing' (10J15.10 r.2), which is found at Deuteronomy 16:15. והזכרת 'and remember', in a letter from Babylon, והזכרת ... שא שלום 'greetings...and remember' (12.247 r.4-5) and, also in a letter of Naṭan ben 'Avraham, והזכרת ... תכתב להם 'write to them...and remember' (8.3 r.16), probably both rely on והזכרתני 'but remember me' from Genesis 40:14 and are used as imperatives. ודברת אליו 'and speak to him' (13J20.3 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 -ן, a unique form for the *waw*-consecutive of the past tense, it is less recognisable and

¹⁸Joüon §79m.

¹⁹Idem.

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:

ms	וכתוב 'and write' (16.6 r.7)
	תנה 'give' (20.178 r.19)
fs	ועשי 'and do' (13J20.9 r.8)
mpl	כתבו 'write' (13J16.17 m.8)
fpl	(unattested)

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 *-י* it is unlikely to have been used. Other contemporary *geniza* documents do not employ the form in *-נה* when the opportunity arises, e.g., a court record which addresses speech to two women uses the morphologically masculine plural imperative, שמעונו אהיותינו 'hear us, our sisters' (12.232 r.18).²⁰

The paragogic *he* is attested as a suffix of the masculine singular imperative three times in the corpus: וחוסה 'and have pity' (16.6 r.22); תנה 'give' (20.178 r.19 and 13J16.17 r.6). Two of these three examples are by the biblicalising writers, the *g^o'onim* Š^orira and Š^olomo ben Y^ohuda. 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: חוס is only attested in the imperative with the *-ה* suffix in BH, Joel 2:17 and Nehemiah 13:22; תנה is attested more frequently than the base form תן in BH.²¹

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: ובו לא ימשלו 'and him they will not rule' (Misc. 35.40 r.18) is a straightforward adaptation of a phrase from Deuteronomy 15:6, ובך לא ימשלו 'they will not rule you'; יום ידרושון ותורתו יחפצון 'day after day they seek [him] and delight in his teaching' (10J14.1 r.1) is drawn from Isaiah 58:2 (so probably the verb יהפמון was also intended to be read as a pausal form, but that the vocalisation is defective as in the MT); קחו את אחיכם וילכו 'take your brethren and go'

²⁰Edited in Friedman (1986) pp. 335–339.

²¹תן is attested eighteen times while תנה 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, Joüon has the opinion that: '[it] is emphatic in origin, but in practice does not soften seem to add any particular nuance' (Joüon §48d). This adequately describes the situation in the letters.

(13J20.25 r.9) reproduces the sequence of verbs קָח...וְלָכֹךְ found in Exodus 12:32. An exceptional example is 'Efraim ben Š^omarya's יבולו 'may it be brought' (13J8.14 r.23), which is not attested in BH. However, a pausal form with long *qameṣ* is attested, יבָּלו, 'and are borne away' Job 21:30. Therefore, the form יבולו could represent a spelling with *waw* as a *mater lectionis* for long *qameṣ*, 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.²² Errors and strange orthographic quirks are, as we have already noted, a frequent occurrence in the letters of 'Efraim ben Š^omarya.

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.²³

The active participle

The *qal* active participle is attested as follows:

ms	המוֹסֵר 'who offers up' (13J31.1 r.17)
fs	פּוֹסֶקֶת 'ceases' (13J31.1 r.19)
mpl	כּוֹתְבִים 'write' (16.95 r.18)
	כּוֹתְבֵינָן 'write' (10G5.8 v.10)
fpl	כּוֹשְׁלוֹת 'fail' (16.24 r.8)

The feminine singular participle usually terminates in ת-, e.g., הדולקת 'which burned' (J2.74 r.15); אומרת 'saying' (13J9.2 r.12); ופוסלת 'and hews' (20.102 r.4).²⁴ Exceptions are the apparent verbal adjective צמחה 'springing up' (13J11.7 r.5) and the substantive בוגדה 'traitress' (10J11.30 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 *šere* (cf. Gesenius §50d), and features in a rhymed sequence, ואהבה סימן ברכה ערוכה, 'and love, a sign of a long blessing and happiness springing up and of cries of joy and rejoicing' (13J11.7 r.5). The second example is a substantival use of the participle, 'traitress', which is also the only form attested in BH, בוגדה, Jeremiah 3:8.

The masculine plural form of the participle is attested with both the biblical ים- and the rabbinic ין- ending. Whereas the preferred ending of the regular masculine plural noun is ים-, with ין- 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., שומעין 'hearing' (13J16.17 r.14), or the other for post-biblical vocabulary, e.g., מתפרנסים 'provided

²²The spelling of *qameṣ* 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 *Roš Haššana*, וְהַמְיֹסְרוֹת in T-S F4.115, noted in Morag (1988) no. 127, reflecting perhaps a Palestinian or Sefardi pronunciation.

²³Qumran Hebrew attests a great many so-called 'pasual 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.

²⁴This is similar to the situation in RH and BH, though BH also attests participles in ת-, but they occur less frequently, see Joüon §50g and Fernandez p. 130.

for' (13J26.16 r.12).²⁵ The ending ין- is perhaps more popular in letters from Babylon, Šʿrira Ga'on seems to prefer the RH ending (see his letters 10J1, 28.24 and 13J25.5 in particular but another Babylonian, Nəḥemya Hakkohen, reflects the opposite tendency), but it can also be found across the whole extent of the corpus, e.g., Šʿlomo ben Yəḥuda מבקשין 'seeking' (20.102 r.20) and נפטרין 'dead' (20.178 r.32), Dani'el ben 'Azarya יושבין 'dwelling' (NS 92.33 r.4) and from Aleppo המהלכין 'who walk' (12.17 r.8). Verbs often alternate between the different endings in the same letter, e.g., כותבין 'writing' (10G5.8 v.10) and ומקוים 'and longing' (10G5.8 v.12). Identical verbs can take the different endings in the same letter, e.g., a ninth-century letter from Pumbədiṭa attests both הדריין 'who dwell' (NS 308.122 r.1) and הדריים (v.13); this is more common when similar forms would appear within a few lines of each other: Šʿlomo ben Yəḥuda, והרוב מחללין...והם יאמרו אנחנו המחללים, 'and the majority desecrate [the Sabbaths]...but they say that it is us who desecrate [them]' (13J33.12 r.6); Naṭan Hakkohen, נותנין לו שכר 'giving him a reward' (18J4.4 r.25) and נותנים לו שכר 'giving him a reward' (18J4.4 r.26).

The passive participle

The *qal* passive participle is attested as follows:

ms	הרצוף 'who is imbued with' (8.3 r.9)
fs	כְּרוּתָה 'cut' (13J31.1 r.18)
mpl	הנקובים 'who are named' (13J19.15 r.9)
	שנואין 'hated' (10G5.8 v.17)
fpl	הרוטות 'inscribed' (13J14.10 r.20)

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

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

The infinitive absolute

The *qal* infinitive absolute is attested in the following form:

Inf. abs.:	שמוע 'hear' (13J23.12 r.11)
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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, *qāṭōl*. 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., שמוע שמעתי 'I have indeed heard' (13J23.12 r.11); ודמוע דמעתי 'and I have cried' (13J23.12 r.11); ידוע ידעתי 'I surely know' (20.173 r.41). Though we also encounter the biblical construction of the participle of הלך followed by the infinitive absolute for the sense of continuity, but it occurs exclusively in the biblicalising letters of Šʿrira Ga'on:

²⁵Although, on occasion certain particularly characteristic RH constructions do take, perhaps deliberately, the rabbinic ין- ending, e.g., Šʿlomo ben Yəḥuda's use of the impersonal plural participle in a jussive sense, אין מורדין ואין מעבירין 'one may neither remove nor displace' (10J11.29 r.8).

הולכת והסור 'is continually diminishing' (10J1 leaf 1 r.18); הולך ואבוד 'is continually perishing' 13J25.5 r.18).²⁶ Most of the infinitives absolute in the letters are actually attested in the Hebrew Bible: e.g., ודמוע 'and weep' (13J23.12 r.11), at Jeremiah 13:17; אמור 'say' (10J1 leaf 1 v.3), at Exodus 21:5; שאול 'ask' (13J21.19 r.4) and ידוע '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., שׁרירא Ga'on's use of שוח 'speak' (18J3.18 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.: לכתוב 'to write' (20.114 r.44)

In addition, though not in the *qal*, the corpus demonstrates frequent examples of the *hifil* infinitive taking an affix -ה-, presumably -ה-, in order to facilitate the rhymes of the *praescriptio*. For this, see the section on the *hifil*, 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: חוות 'telling' (13J18.1 r.12); אכול 'eating' (18J4.26 r.27); עשות 'doing' (13J24.11 r.1); תת 'giving' (16.62 r.14), and very frequently elsewhere. Or it may be used with only a pronominal suffix, e.g.: עשותו 'his doing' (18J4.26 r.27); עוברי 'my passing' (12.114 r.10); לכתי 'my going' (13J25.10 r.26). It also takes the prefixed inseparable prepositions ב- and כ-, e.g., ב-: ביהותינו 'when we were' (8J2.1 v.10); בקיימו 'when he establishes' (8J8.1 v.11); וכשמוע 'and as soon as he heard' (18J4.26 r.17); וכראות 'and when he saw' (12.114 r.28).

Although the RH construction of prefixing the infinitive with מל- after verbs of preventing, etc. is found in the letters, e.g., מלכתוב 'from writing' (12.851 r.6); מלתן 'from giving' (AS 148.147 r.4); מלהרע 'from doing evil' (10J32.8 v.1); מלהיות 'from being' (13J27.3 r.10), the BH construction of prefixing מ- onto the base form of the construct is also well-attested: מראות 'from seeing' (12.273 r.24); מעשות 'from doing' (13J20.18 m.1); מהלך 'from going' (8J8.1 v.3); מהיות 'from being' (10J24.8 r.18); ממצוא 'from finding' (Misc. 35.15 r.20).²⁸ 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 חלילה 'far be it for you to err'.²⁹ Šolomo ben Yehuda attests only the RH construction in his letters, e.g., מלתת 'from giving' (13J34.2 v.7).

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

²⁷A 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., שאול נשאל 'it has been asked' (13J21.19 r.4); *ibid.*, §123p.

²⁸Fernandez p. 144.

²⁹Genesis 27:1, 18:25; Numbers 22:16; Exodus 9:28; Isaiah 58:13, respectively.

The infinitive construct takes the following pronominal suffixes:

1s	ני-	להרגני 'do you mean to kill me? [=Exodus 2:14]' (10J24.8 r.18)
	י-	לכתי 'my going' (13J25.10 r.26)
2ms	ך-	ובהיותך 'and when you were' (8J14.20 r.5)
2fs		(unattested)
3ms	הו-	ולכבדו 'and to honour him' (NS 309.20 v.10)
	ו-	למכרו 'to sell it' (13J18.1 r.21)
3fs	ה-	להשחיתה 'to destroy it' (13J13.14 r.28)
1pl	נו-	בהיותנו 'when we were' (8J2.1 v.10)
2mpl	כם-	עזבכם 'your leaving' (16.6 r.17)
2fpl		(unattested)
3mpl	ם-	למכרם 'to sell them' (16.275 r.15)
3fpl	ן-	לראותן 'to see them' (10G5.8 v.15)

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

The ו- suffix is the most frequently used for the 3 masculine singular. It may be objective, e.g., להודיעו 'to inform him' (13J14.23 r.5) and להכריחו 'to force him' (13J15.1 r.11), or subjective, e.g., צאתו 'his setting off' (20.102 r.8). The usual objective suffix is הו-, e.g., הודיעהו 'informing him' (12.338 r.14) and להשמיעהו 'to cause him to hear' (AS 151.20 r.5), but it too may be used as a subjective suffix, e.g., בואהו '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:

1s	ני-	הבהילני 'he warned me' (13J16.20 r.7)
2ms	ך-	הודענוך 'we have informed you' (Misc. 35.44 v.5)
2fs		(unattested)
3ms	ו-	נצרו 'may he save him' (AS148.147 r.3)
	הו-	ושאלתיהו 'and I asked him' (13J11.2 r.7)
	ו-	ושאלתיו 'and I asked him' (NS 321.22 r.13)
3fs	ה-	כתבתיה 'I wrote it' (6J3.21 r.10)
1pl	נו-	מנעונו 'they held us back' (13J26.13 r.10)
2mpl	כם-	הודענוכם 'we have informed you' (12.99 v.11)
2fpl		(unattested)
3mpl	ם-	נתתים 'I gave them' (16.275 r.24)
3fpl	ן-	התדרנון 'we have made them frequent' (10J32.8 r.4)

The suffixes attested are identical to those of the BH suffix conjugation.³⁰ We find only the BH 3 masculine plural suffix, e.g., שמניתים 'who I appointed' (13J16.17 r.29), and not the RH suffix in ך-, despite its use in the corpus as an occasional suffix on the noun.

³⁰See the list in Gesenius §58a.

The 3 masculine singular ending הו -, e.g., והודעתיהו 'and I have informed him' (13J16.17 r.11), is marginally more common than ו - or ו - in the corpus, possibly because of the influence of the homophonous Arabic pronominal suffix. Note that the similar suffix on nouns הו - is also more widely attested in the corpus than in BH.

The 2 masculine plural suffix conjugation verb takes the affix הו - rather than הם - before suffixes, as in BH: עזבתונו 'you have forsaken us' (16.6 r.12); ושכחתונו 'and you have forgotten us' (16.6 r.12); והשלכתונו '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	ני -	וימנעני 'and hold me back' (13J16.18 r.13)
2ms	ך -	ישמרך 'may he keep you' (8J22.7 r.5)
2fs		(unattested)
3ms	ו -	ישמרו 'may he keep him' (13J20.28 r.6)
	הו -	וישמרהו 'and may he keep him' (18J.15 r.22)
3fs	ה -	יחלקה 'he will distribute it' (13J26.3 r.18)
1pl	נו -	וישמיענו 'and may he let us hear' (18J4.4 r.31)
2mpl	כם -	ישמרכם 'may he keep you' (13J11.9 r.5)
2fpl		(unattested)
3mpl	ם -	ישמרם 'may he keep them' (10J11.28 r.5)
3fpl	ן -	ישמעון 'they will hear' (24.43 r.7)

Although the principal 3 masculine singular suffix is the biblical הו -, e.g., ישלחהו 'he will send it' (NS J15 r.15), a suffix in ו - is also widely attested. This is the suffix ו - 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., ישמרו צורו 'his Rock keep him' (18J4.20 m.3), compare the similarly rhymed biblical suffixes, ישמרהו ויחייהו '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 Šolomo ben Yehuda, $\text{יעטרו וצל סתרו ויעטרו}$ [יהי] צור עזרו וצל סתרו ויעטרו, 'may] the Rock be his aid and the shade of his shelter, may he crown him and let him find grace and hope' (13J14.5 r.1); the use of this suffix allows for the rhyming of verbal and nominal elements together. The suffix is found right across the corpus, occurring, for instance, in an extremely biblicalising letter of Nəḥemya Hakkohen, the Babylonian *ga'on*, ... $\text{מר רבנא ניסין ישמרו}$ 'our master and teacher Nissin, [God] keep him and give him strength' (16.6 r.2).

The employment of the ו - 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: יִרְדְּפוּ 'he will pursue him' Hosea 8:3 and יִקְרָאוּ 'he will call him' Jeremiah 23:6.

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

³¹Ibid., §59a. Although the letter-writer, Nəḥemya Hakkohen Ga'on, does well to use such an obscure morphological form since it is only attested 3 times in the whole Hebrew Bible.

r.13) and *ישימהו* 'may he set him' (NS 321.2 r.22), however, as always in the letters, there are exceptions, *אל ימיתו* 'may God kill him' (13J23.1 r.18) is Šalom ben Yehuda's earnest wish against his rival.

The following nunated forms of the pronominal suffix are attested:

3ms	נו-	יקראנו 'it should befall him' (13J20.3 r.14)
3fs	נה-	ואביאנה 'and I shall bring it' (16.275 r.14)

Only a very small number of nunated suffixes are used in the corpus. In addition to those listed above, we find *תניחנו* (13J26.1 r.8), *ישורנה* '[who] will see?' (Misc. 35.43 v.11), *יערכנו* 'one may [not] compare him' (8.3 r.2) and *יניחנו* 'may he give him rest' (12.217 r.5). In nearly every case, the MT attests the particular form used: *יקראנו* 'it should befall him' (13J20.3 r.14) is taken from *יקראנו* '[lest] it befall him' Genesis 42:4; *ואביאנה* 'and I shall bring it' (16.275 r.14) is derived from *אביאנה* 'I will bring it' Isaiah 46:11; *רוח יי תניחנו* 'the spirit of the Lord give him rest' (13J26.1 r.8) is found in Isaiah 63:14, *רוח יהוה תניחנו* 'the spirit of the Lord gave him [them] rest'; *מי ישורנה* 'who will see?' (Misc. 35.43 v.11) occurs in a phrase taken directly from Job 17:15, *מי ישורנה* 'who will see?'. Natan ben 'Avraham's use of *לא יערכנו* 'one may not compare him' (8.3 r.2) uses the morphology found in Leviticus 24:8, *יערכנו* 'he shall set it in order', but draws inspiration from the similarly nunated verb *לא יערכנה* 'they cannot equal it' Job 28:17. Only Šalom ben Yehuda's *יניחנו* '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 *תניחנו* 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, *qāṣṭōl* and *qāṣṭēl*, represented by the verbs *כָּבֵד* 'to be heavy' and *קָטוֹן* 'to be small'.³²

The suffix conjugation of the stative verb is formed as in BH, e.g., the *כבד* type, *וגדלה* 'and it grew' (10J32.8 r.8), and the *קטון* type, *יכולתי* 'I could' (20.178 r.23); *יכלו* 'they could [not]' (24.6 r.27).

The prefix conjugation of the stative verb in BH shows stem vowel *ā* for both types. With the exception of *יכול*, which is irregular, the corpus only attests examples from the prefix conjugation of the *כבד* type, e.g., *יכשר* 'it [wouldn't] be right' (13J23.1 r.22); *והגדל* 'and may it grow' (8J8.15 r.6). *יכול* is a mixed verb which forms its prefix conjugation either from a *qal* passive or from a *hufal* form.³³ Examples from the corpus are: *יוכלו* 'they will be [not] be able' (6J3.21 r.8); *יוכל* '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 *ō* in the prefix conjugation, for instance *הפץ* 'to desire' which has the suffix conjugation *הפצו*, e.g., Genesis 34:19, but the prefix conjugation *יהפץ*, e.g., Qohelet 8:3.³⁴ In the corpus the prefix conjugation of *הפץ* is attested once with a vowel letter *waw* indicating the stem vowel *ō*, *אחפוצ* 'I want'

³²Joüon §41b.

³³See the discussion, *ibid.*, §75i.

³⁴*Ibid.*, §41b.

(13J26.13 r.27), but on other occasions lacks a vowel letter, e.g., יחפץ 'he desires' (13J13.14 r.31). However, this is presumably just following the BH practice of never writing יחפץ with a vowel letter (all seven times it is used in the MT it has defective spelling).

The stative verb possesses a verbal adjective form rather than a participle proper: מלאים 'full' (13J11.2 r.9); חדלים 'ceasing' (Misc. 36.140 r.32).³⁵

The verbal stems

The *nif'al*

Infinitive absolute: (unattested)

Infinitive construct: וליפתח 'and to be opened' (18J4.20 m.11); להחשב 'to be considered' (Misc.35.49 r.30); להכליל 'to be collected' (13J31.8 r.19); בהכתב 'when it was written' (20.102 r.18); מלהכניס 'from entering' (13J20.18 r.13); ליכנס 'to enter' (10J9.14 r.21)

The commonly occurring form of the *nif'al* infinitive construct is that with preformative *he*, as in BH; only two infinitives of the strong verb show the elision of the preformative, וליפתח 'and to be opened' (18J4.20 m.11), despite להפתח being attested in BH, at Isaiah 51:14, and ליכנס 'to enter' (10J9.14 r.21), BH attests only the *qal* infinitive construct of כנס, at Nehemiah 12:44.³⁶ The loss of the intervocalic *he* of the *nif'al* infinitive construct is common in RH, though examples may be found in the later books of the Hebrew Bible too, e.g., Proverbs 24:17 בכשלו 'when he stumbles'.³⁷

Imperative: הזהר 'beware' (16.261 r.29); והזהרי 'and beware' (13J20.9 r.9); והזהרו^א 'and beware' (12.733 r.8)

The imperative is written *plene* in a letter of Nəḥemya Hakkohen Ga'on, showing the short *i* vowel under the preformative, והיזהר 'and beware' (8J20.3 r.10).

Cohortative: (unattested)

Jussive: (unattested)

Suffix conjugation: נשארונו 'we were left' (16.6 r.15); נמכרו 'they were sold' (24.6 r.27); ונסתרה 'and it was hidden' (13J26.3 r.17); נחשבתם 'you were considered' (18J3.18 r.6)

Prefix conjugation: ותימשך 'and it will be drawn' (24.43 r.40); יישאר 'it will be left' (12.336 r.15);

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 *he* occur in BH; it is slightly more common with the weak verbs.

ייתפשו 'they will be caught' (13J14.8 r.13)

The two vocalised examples of Naṭan ben 'Avraham show *qameṣ* under the first root letter: יִהָרַג 'he will be killed' (10J9.25 r.11); נִכְנַס 'we [shan't] enter' (10J9.25 m.1).

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

Participle: נִכְסָה 'it longs' (13J31.1 r.15); נִכְבְּדוּת 'honoured' (18J4.20 r.10); נִשְׁבַּעוּ 'vowing' (24.43 r.14)

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

The feminine singular termination of the participle is overwhelmingly in הַ-, which is also more common in BH and RH: הַנּוֹכַחַת 'mentioned' (13J8.14 r.7); הַנְּשַׁלְּחָה 'which was sent' (12.733 r.1); הַנּוֹבְגָה 'which is conducted' (6J3.1 r.6).³⁸ Two examples only of the feminine singular participle in הַ- are attested: הַנְּמַצָּאָה 'left behind' (12.247 r.22) and הַנִּכְשָׁרָה 'the fitting' (10J30.3 r.21). The first is taken directly from BH and therefore shows BH morphology; it occurs in a phrase וַיִּרְחַם עַל הַשְּׂאִרִית הַנְּמַצָּאָה 'and may he have mercy on the remnant left behind' (12.247 r.22), the principal element הַנְּמַצָּאָה 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: בְּעִצָּתוֹ הַיִּשְׁרָה וּמִלְתּוֹ הַמְּאוֹשְׁרָה וְאִמְרָתוֹ הַנִּכְשָׁרָה 'with his straightforward counsel and his approved word and his fitting speech' (10J30.3 r.21).

The *pi'el*

- Infinitive absolute: (unattested)
- Infinitive construct: לְבַקֵּשׁ 'to seek' (13J26.13 r.8); לְבַטֵּל 'to cancel' (24.43 r.14); לְחַזֵּק 'to encourage' (10J9.25 r.9)
- Imperative: דַּבֵּר 'speak' (13J34.2 r.28); קַבֵּל 'receive' (13J21.10 r.2); וְהָרָה 'and be hurry' (16.6 r.26)
- Cohortative: אֶבְקֹשׂ 'I will seek' (12.146 r.15); אֶדְבַּר 'I will speak' (16.6 r.8); אֶזְמַר 'I will praise' (10J13.22 r.7); וְאֶבְרַכֶּה 'and I will bless' (13J25.10 r.13); וְנִסְפְּרָה 'and let us declare' (Misc.35.4 leaf 1 v.16)
- Suffix conjugation: סִפְּרָנוּ 'we told' (10J15.10 r.9); אִירַשׁ 'he betrothed' (10J27.7 r.10); וְבִירַכְתִּיהוּ 'and I blessed him' (13J16.17 r.25)

³⁸Jouion §50g; Fernandez p. 131. Although BH attests the feminine in הַ- it is actually not as common as that in -ת.

- Prefix conjugation: תקבל 'you will receive' (8J14.20 r.6); ואשבח 'and I shall praise' (12.146 r.5); יקבץ 'may he gather in' (13J19.15 r.11)
- Participle: ומאשר 'and testifying' (13J11.5 r.9); והמבקשים 'and who seek' (13J19.19 r.3); מכבדים 'honouring' (13J19.15 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: שלחתי 'I was sent' (20.114 r.8); שוגרו '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: תקיים 'may it be established' (10J24.1 leaf 1 v.18); יקובל 'may it be received' (13J19.15 r.1); יבורכו 'may he be blessed' (18J4.20 m.4)
- Participle: משובחות 'praiseworthy' (16.3 r.7); המעוטרים 'who are adorned' (Misc. 35.49 r.8); מעוברת 'pregnant' (13J21.10 r.19); מפורש 'explained' (12.222 r.13)

A vocalised example shows the stem vowel *qameṣ* in the participle as in Standard Tiberian Hebrew: מנתח 'cut up' (Misc. 36.207 leaf 1 r.4).

In BH the feminine singular participle usually has the termination ת-, although the ת־ 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 ת-, as it does in the *qal* stem: מיושרת 'made level/straight' (NS J92 r.5); משולחת 'sent' (10J11.29 r.12); מרווחת 'spread about' (10J11.29 r.12); מנוטפת 'overflowing' (13J35.1 r.7). However, in a number of cases the participle shows the ending ת־: ומשוגבה 'and secure' (NS J92 r.5); המאושרה 'which is blessed' (10J30.3 r.21). These are taking the rarer ending in order to fit the rhyme scheme, i.e., ויד רמה 'ואחרית טובה' and בעצתו הישרה 'ומשוגבה

³⁹Fernandez p. 96.

⁴⁰Jouön §50g.

ומלתו המאושרה ואמרתו הנכשרה '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 ה- ending in BH. There are no examples of the feminine singular participle in ה- 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: להקדים 'to despatch' (8J20.3 r.1); להפריחך 'to cause you to blossom' (13J33.2 r.26); להכריז '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 ה- 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 Šlomo ben Yehuda to Sahlān ben 'Avraham: שלום שלום להגדילה ברכות להרבות משמי מעלה ותהילה רונינה וריצוי תפלה וחוץ וחסד למצוא להשכילה בעיני אלדים ואדם להכלילה כל אלה וכהנה וכהמה להכפילה ליקר תפארת כב גך קדו מר ור סהלאן '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 Sahlān' (13J11.5 r.1–3); another similar example occurs in the opening lines of a letter by Šamu'el ben Moše: ... להכלילה ... להכפילה ... להקהילה ... להקבילה ... להתלילה ... להצהילה ... להובילה ... להסלילה ... סלה .. סלה '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 ה- is perhaps formed by analogy with the alternate BH infinitives like יראה and אהבה, 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., להנסיקה 'to bring up' Daniel 6:24.

Imperative: הברר עצמך 'explain yourself' (10J22.7 r.13); החרים 'pronounce the ban' (Misc. 35.11 r.17); התמיד 'make constant' (8J21.6 r.10)

The examples attested in the corpus present problems for establishing the form of the *hif'il* imperative; only הברר resembles the usual BH imperative in orthography, e.g., Deuteronomy 13:16 החרם 'devote/destroy'. החרים and התמיד present problems: does the *yod* represent a spelling \bar{e} or \bar{i} ? We know

that *yod* may often be used to spell \bar{e} in the corpus, although it is not common in a closed syllable: הזרים occurs in a letter of Šolomo ben Yehuda who, as demonstrated earlier, is far less likely than others in the corpus to spell \bar{e} 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 \bar{i} , 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 *hif'il* imperative showing the unusual spelling יִ or the stem vowel \bar{i} in the masculine singular without the presence of affixes, e.g., 2 Kings 2:6 הָשִׁיב ‘restore’ and Psalms 94:1 הוֹפִיעַ ‘shine forth’.⁴² So, with these precedents from BH we cannot state with certainty how the *hif'il* imperative would have been vocalised, either with stem vowel יִ or יְ .

Cohortative:	ארגיעה ‘I will move [?]’ (Misc. 35.44 r.3); אאפידה ‘I will gird’ (13J14.10 r.2)
Jussive:	Possibly יגחן ‘may he bring down’ (13J15.14 r.16)
Suffix conjugation:	השקית ‘it silenced’ (8.3 r.10); הכתירוהו ‘they have crowned him’ (10J15.10 r.6); הרכילו ‘they have slandered’ (13J16.17 r.18)
Prefix conjugation:	ותרויחו ‘and bring relief’ (13J26.16 r.17); וישליכם ‘and he threw them away’ (13J26.13 r.15); שיקניט ‘that he angers [himself]’ (13J16.17 r.13)
Participle:	המרכילים ‘the slanderers’ (12.17 r.6); מאכיל ‘feeding’ (16.18 r.5)

The *huf'al*

Infinitive absolute:	(unattested for the strong verb)
Infinitive construct:	(unattested)
Imperative:	(unattested)
Cohortative:	(unattested)
Jussive:	(unattested)
Suffix conjugation:	והוכרח ‘and he was forced’ (NS 309.20 v.7); הזקקתי ‘I am obliged to’ (10J9.14 r.5); הובדלו ‘they were divided’ (NS 324.104 r.32); ההותקנה ‘which was established’ (16.304 r.23)

The usual vowel under the -ה in BH is short *qames*, e.g., הַמְלִךְ Daniel 9:1, but as the *plene* orthography shows, backed up by the occasional vocalised example, e.g., והצִרְךְ ‘and he had to’ (13J30.3 r.4), the texts present *huf'al*

⁴¹Another possible *plene* example may be found in a letter of Šolomo ben Yehuda, this time in the handwriting of his son, who regularly acted as his scribe: הזהר והזהיר ‘be aware and warn’ (16.261 r.30)

⁴²Jotūn §54 c.

forms such as are found in RH.⁴³

Prefix conjugation: יַעֲרַךְ 'it [cannot] be compared' (8.3 r.4); יוֹשֵׁמֶר 'may it be kept' (12.222 r.12); וְתוֹכְפֵל 'and be doubled' (8J16.12 r.11); pausal: יִבְּוֹלוּ 'may it be brought' (13J8.14 r.23)

Again, the orthography and vocalisation reflect a short *u* vowel like the RH *hufal*, however, an *u* vowel is also often encountered in the prefix conjugation in Tiberian BH, e.g., יִשְׁלְכוּ Isaiah 34:3.

Participle: מוֹפְקָדִים 'appointed' (13J13.14 r.15); מוֹבְהָק 'distinguished' (NS 308.122 v.23); מוֹתְמָדוֹת 'constant' (10J30.3 r.2)

Although no vocalised examples of the participle of the strong verb are attested in the corpus, the spelling of short *u* with *waw* in each example is unlikely given its overall rarity in the letters.⁴⁴ The orthography reflects a prefix vowel *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.⁴⁵

One exception to the seemingly universal use of the *hufal* occurs in the doubly-weak verb נָכָה from a letter of the twelfth-century Babylonian *ga'on* Šamu'el ben 'Eli: מְכִים 'beaten, downtrodden' (NS 309.20 r.6) reflects a *hofal* form מְכִים. The vocalisation is unusual since Tiberian Hebrew prefers *u* before geminated consonants in the *hofal/hufal*, attesting this very form in the MT as מְכִים 'they are beaten' Exodus 5:16. Both the Babylonian tradition of BH and the Eastern tradition of RH also prefer *u*, but it is generalised in the *hufal*, not just before geminated consonants. The pointing with *qameṣ*, reflecting *qameṣ-qatan*, seems to be characteristic of the Western tradition of RH, unusual perhaps for a Babylonian letter.⁴⁶

The feminine singular participle of the *hufal* always terminates in ת-, e.g.: וּמוֹחֲזָקֶת 'and fortified' (13J16.18 r.12); מוֹצְנֶפֶת 'wrapped up' (13J26.3 r.1); מוֹכְפֵלֶת 'doubled' (16.68 r.12).

The *hitpa'el/nitpa'al*

Two stems are included in this category: the BH *hitpa'el* and the RH *nitpa'al*. The *nitpa'al* is only distinguished from its biblical counterpart in the suffix conjugation of our letters, where both stems

⁴³Fernandez p. 97. Although BH does attest a number of examples with *u*, e.g., וְהִשְׁלַכוּ Jeremiah 22:28; cf. Joüon §57a.

⁴⁴Also further evidence is provided by the vocalising habits of the writers: as has been noted earlier, short *qameṣ* 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 *hofal*, i.e., showing *qameṣ*, such as מְפַקֵּד, is an additional argument, albeit from silence.

⁴⁵Joüon §57a.

⁴⁶See Bar-Asher pp.15–17 for the whole question of the *hofal/hufal* in the different traditions of Hebrew.

are attested. In all other parts of the verb (including the participle) the stem follows, consonantly at least, the BH *hitpa'el* stem.

- Infinitive absolute: (unattested)
- Infinitive construct: וְלִהְיוֹתְנֵדָב 'and to make donations' (10J9.25 r.16); וְלִהְיוֹתְנֵאָהָב 'and to be loved' (10J12.17 r.23); בְּהִתְחַבֵּר 'because of his consorting with' (13J26.23 r.18)
- Imperative: וְהִתְרַחֵק 'and distance yourself' (16.6 r.26); הִשְׁתַּדְּלוּ 'make an effort' (10J27.8 r.15); וְהִתְאַמֵּץ 'and be strong' (13J15.1 r.24)
- Cohortative: וְנִתְחַזְּקָה 'and let us show strength' (20.181 r.12); וְאֶשְׁתַּתְּפָה 'and I will join up with' (13J11.4 r.12)

The first cohortative occurs in a phrase drawn from 1 Chronicles 19:13, חֲזַק וְנִתְחַזְּקָה '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: שְׁנִסְתַּדְּרוּ 'that they were arranged' (NS 169.11 v.6); וְנִצְטַרְכוּ 'and they were forced to' (Misc. 35.49 r.27); נִתְקַבְּצוּ 'they have come together' (10J9.25 r.17); הִסְתַּלְּקוּ 'they ascended [=died]' (10J1.1 r.1); הִתְהַלֵּךְ '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 Mišna 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*.⁴⁷ 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. Šarira Ga'on uses a *hitpa'el* in the opening line of one of his letters, הִסְתַּלְּקוּ 'they ascended [=died]' (10J1.1 r.1), but elsewhere employs only the *nitpa'al* suffix conjugation, e.g., וְנִתְמַעֲטָה 'and it has diminished' (13J25.5 r.20) and לְכַשְׁנֵתִי שְׁבֵבָה 'and when it was at ease' (28.24 r.27).

Sometimes the reason for the occurrence of a *hitpa'el* rather than a *nitpa'al* is clear: Hayya Ga'on attests a *hitpa'el* in נָחַ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּנַח 'Noah walked with God' (10G5.8 v.9), which, though not marked as a quote, is a phrase

⁴⁷Fernandez 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. Šolomo ben Y^əhuda attests only one suffix conjugation *hitpa'el* in his letters in the corpus, also התהלך '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'al* in the corpus; similarly we find only BH השתחוה, e.g. השתחוונו '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., נשתנה '[nothing] has changed' (NS 321.2 r.19); נתגלה 'it was revealed' (20.94 r.30); ונתאזר 'and he girded himself' (13J14.10 r.30). Another factor that may be at work is the fact that the *nitpa'al* developed this form because of the association of -נ with the passive. In the case of התהלך 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.⁴⁸ והגיעה הנדבה is another BH verb that is only attested in the *hitpa'el* in the corpus, e.g. שהתנדבו זקניי בכל 'and the donation that the elders of Babylon donated, has arrived' (12.146 r.18), perhaps it too 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. Š^ərira Ga'on's הסתלקו 'they ascended' (10J1.1 r.1) and Šolomo ben Y^əhuda's שנתסלק 'who ascended' (NS 324.103 r.21). The existence of two similar stems allows scope for personal preference and style.

- Prefix conjugation: אתהלך 'I walk about' (12.217 r.21); תחושל '[don't] weaken' (8J21.6 r.11); יתאחרו 'they [wouldn't] be late' (18J4.17 r.13)
- Participle: ומתנהגים 'and behave' (16.6 r.15); המתפלל 'who prays' (32.8 r.31); ומתגדלת 'and grows' (13J16.14 r.32)

The feminine participle, although not frequently attested, always takes the termination ת-: משתאפת 'eager for' (12.146 r.8); מתמללת 'is spoken' (18J4.26 r.10).

No unequivocal example of the *nitpa'al* participle, which is attested in RH and among the Karaites, is attested in the corpus.⁴⁹ It is not always possible to distinguish an intended participle from a suffix conjugation form in the

⁴⁸Waltke §26.1.2b.

⁴⁹Fernandez p. 132; Haneman pp. 216–217; Maman pp. 247–248; on the use of a *nitpa'al* participle among the Byzantine Karaites see Hopkins p. 94 n. 10, where he gives an example of a *nitpa'al* and *hitpa'el* participle of the same verb functioning side by side. It was medieval scribes who edited out the *nitpa'al* participle from manuscripts of the Mišna, 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'al, 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 *הנחודש* in *הנחודש השלום וכשמע השלום* 'and when we heard of the peace that had come about' (12.44 v.4). At first sight it looks like a *nitpa'al* 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 נתחדש דבר* '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 Naṭan ben 'Avraham, *הודענו יקירינו ההיה* 'we have informed you, our friend, of what has happened' (10J9.25 m.19).⁵⁰ Without any definite examples of a *nitpa'al* 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 *ת* of the stem and the sibilant: *משתתפים* 'sharing' (16.95 r.10); *שנסתדרו* 'were arranged' (NS 169.11 v.6).⁵¹ In addition, if the root letter is *צ* then the *ת* of the stem is replaced by *ט*: *ומצטער* 'and grieving' (12.328 r.20); *יצטרך* 'he needed' (18J4.4 r.21). This occurs without exception in the corpus.⁵²

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.

<i>Qal</i> infinitive construct:	<i>לאחוז</i> 'to grasp' (8J2.2 r.13)
<i>Qal</i> suffix conjugation:	<i>שאחזנו</i> 'that took hold of us' (18J4.5 r.18)
<i>Qal</i> prefix conjugation:	<i>תאגרונה</i> 'they will gather' (10J30.5 r.15)
<i>Qal</i> active participle:	<i>עובר</i> '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*

⁵⁰Naṭan ben 'Avraham writes a similar phrase in a different letter showing the use of the relative construction *מה ש-* rather than *ה-* plus the finite verb, *מה שיתחדש מן הקהל* 'and let him write at every opportunity, informing us of what is going on in the community. Similarly, a certain Yish'aq writes to 'Efraim ben Šmarya *בעבורי מה נתחדש לי אדם ולא הגיד אדם* 'and no one has told me what happened because of me' (8J21.6 r.8).

⁵¹Joüon §17b.

⁵²The reading *שנתסלק*, from a letter of Šlomo ben Yehuda edited in Gil (1993), no. 155, NS324.103 r.21, is a printing error since the manuscript clearly reads *שנסתלק*.

in the corpus, presumably indicating a prefix vowel \bar{e} : ייעשה 'it will be done' (NS 321.2 r.14) and ייחשבו 'they will be considered' (13J13.14 v.2). However, since this is also often the spelling of the *yi*-prefix of the *nifal* 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: ולבחור 'and to choose' (16.6 r.4)

The infinitive retains the \bar{o} 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., לשאל 'to ask' (10J12.22 r.19); see *Orthography*. But the vowel is evidenced when a *plene* spelling is employed, e.g., ולשאול 'and to ask' (18J4.5 r.7) and למאוס 'to reject' (13J9.2 r.57)

Qal suffix conjugation: קראתיהו 'I did [not] call him' (13J23.19 r.27)

Qal prefix conjugation: יגעל 'he will [not] hate' (10J11.29 r.8); ויכאב 'and it is in pain' (10J10.22 r.3); ימחול 'he will forgive' (13J9.9 r.12; NS 308.122 v.26); יסעוד '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 \bar{a} is usual, like that of the stative verb, whereas in RH the stem vowel \bar{o} tends to replace it, by analogy with the strong verb.⁵⁴ Of the examples above, געל and כאב show a stem vowel of biblical \bar{a} , like תגעל Leviticus 26:11 and יכאב Proverbs 14:13, whereas סעוד and מחל attest a probable stem vowel \bar{o} . Although סעוד is a verb attested in BH, the fact that מחל is a post-biblical creation may well account for its showing RH morphology in the corpus.

Šalom ben Yehuda's employment of RH morphology in יגעור 'he will rebuke' (13J23.1 r.4), which shows an \bar{o} vowel despite being attested in BH at Zechariah 3:2 with an \bar{a} vowel, יגער, 'let him rebuke you', is due to the need for it to conform to the rhyme scheme of his

⁵³Jouion §69a.

⁵⁴Saenz-Badillos (1993) p. 191: 'in the prefix-conjugation, there is a tendency for verbs with second vowel in *a* to be replaced by forms with *o*'. Some rare examples of middle-guttural BH imperatives and prefix conjugation forms retain the strong verb's stem vowel of \bar{o} , cf. Gesenius §64c.

letter's opening phrase, להודיע ראש הפעור צור אותו יגעור ויישן ולא, 'to inform [you] of the deed of the 'Head of P^o'or'—the Rock rebuke him that he may sleep and never be roused' (13J23.1 r.4). The use of similar *yif'ols* in place of BH *yif'als* is also attested in the poetic language of *piyyut*.⁵⁵ The Karaite Ṭoviyya ben Moše also uses the RH morphology in his literary work.⁵⁶

Qal active participle: צועקים 'crying out' (13J9.9 r.7)

Other stems: With regard to the stems *pi'el*, *pu'al* and *hitpa'el/nitpa'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., **y^ovurrāk* > *y^ovōrāk*, like יברך 'it will be blessed' 2 Samuel 7:29.⁵⁷ 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 מבורך 'be blessed' (8J21.6 r.12) reflect a pronunciation with *ō*, i.e., *m^ovōrāk*, 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 consonantal.

Qal infinitive construct: לתבוע 'to seek' (18J4.5 r.31)
ולגרע 'and to diminish' (NS J15 r.11) is probably just written defectively rather than reflecting a different stem vowel, since all other examples show *ō*, e.g., לתמוה 'to be astonished' (10J15.8 r.4); ולבחר 'and to choose' (16.6 r.4); להסור 'to lack' (10J1 leaf 1 r.18).

Nothing can be said about furtive *paṭah* in the infinitive construct due to the absence of any vocalised examples.

Qal suffix conjugation: שכחה 'she has forgotten' (13J15.1 r.11)

ותמהנו 'and we were astonished' (20.100 r.14) and שתמהו 'that surprised' (NS 308.122 v.2) show the retention of the consonantal *he* of the root.

⁵⁵Yeivin (1996) pp. 108–109. He gives an example of the same root, גער, which in the imperative (which shares the stem vowel of the prefix conjugation) shows the same stem vowel, *ō*, געור 'rebuke' (from a *piyyut* 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.

⁵⁶Maman p. 245.

⁵⁷Jouön §69a. Of course, some verbs (usually with radical ה, ה or ע) do not alter the preceding vowel, cf. Gesenius §64d.

Qal prefix conjugation: אשכח 'I shall forget' (6J3.21 r.11)

The stem vowel *ā* replaces *ō* in the prefix conjugation, יפרע 'he will punish' (NS 308.122 v.26), and in the imperative, שלח 'send' (16.6 r.27), as in BH.⁵⁸

Qal active participle: יגע 'toiling' (13J23.19 r.2); שמיחים 'rejoicing' (6J3.14 r.2)

The verb תמה in the *qal* is inflected both as an active participle, תמהים 'astonished' (13J34.3 r.17), and a verbal adjective form, תמיהים 'astonished' (13J21.10 r.10).

As already discussed in *Orthography*, spellings such as המתמציה 'the victorious' (18J4.26 r.12) and להסתפיה 'to be joined' (AS 145.61 r.3) may indicate a pronunciation with furtive *patāh* under the final guttural letter. A single vocalised example of the *qal* passive participle from a letter of Yošiyahu Ga'on testifies to its presence in the *qal* passive participle, גרוץ '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: אבד, אמר and אכל.

Qal infinitive construct: לאמר 'to say' (13J26.13 r.20); לומר 'to say' (28.24 r.52); לאכל 'to eat' (10J9.14 r.12)

The usual form of the infinitive follows BH by retaining the 'alef. The infinitive constructs לאמר and לאכל are always written defectively, which is overwhelmingly the case in the MT.⁶⁰ On a number of occasions we find, instead of לאמר, RH לומר 'to say', e.g., in the

⁵⁸Jouön §70.

⁵⁹These verbs are אכל, אבד, אמר, אבה and אפה; cf. *ibid.*, §73a.

⁶⁰Although it is unusual for the *ō* vowel not to be written with *waw*, other infinitives are occasionally spelled defectively in the letters, e.g., לכתב 'to write' (13J14.5 r.10); see *Orthography*. Nevertheless, without vocalisation we cannot be certain that לאמר was vocalised לאמר, and not, as in RH, לאמר, 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 לאוכל and even לוכל in Karaite texts of the period; in addition, he regards the spelling לאכל 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., לאכול Habakkuk 1:8, that orthography is not a sound guide in these cases to the actual form taken by the word.

post-biblical idiom כלומר 'that is to say' (13J16.17 r.10).⁶¹ RH לוכל isn't attested.⁶² The appearance of לומר in the corpus isn't limited to its use as a component of rabbinic idioms since we also find כי לומר '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 לאמר. However, לומר isn't common in the letters, appearing only in isolated instances without any apparent pattern to its use.

Qal suffix conjugation: אמרתי 'I said' (10J24.8 v.5)

The *pe-'alef* verb is regular in the suffix conjugation.

Qal prefix conjugation: יאמר 'he will say' (13J16.17 r.38); ויאבדו 'and may they perish' (24.43 r.40)

Although BH orthography is always followed and no vowel letter is used, the one vocalised example. ויאבדו 'and they will perish' (13J14.10 r.14), shows *ō*.

Qal active participle: אומרים 'saying' (13J19.19 r.7)

The initial-*nun* verb

This category includes the verbs נתן and לקח.

Qal infinitive construct: לקחת 'to take' (13J26.13 r.11); ליקח 'to take' (13J26.1 r.15); לשאת 'to bear' (13J9.2 r.10); לישא 'to carry' (10J9.25 r.16); לתת 'to give' (13J25.5 r.30); וליתן 'and to give' (10J9.25 r.16); וליתנם 'and to give them' (13J16.17 r.7); ליטעם 'to plant them' (12.256 r.17); ליטול '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 נשא, נתן and לקח.⁶³ Thus we find both לתתם 'to give them' (13J16.14 v.3) as well as ליתנם 'to give them' (13J16.17 r.7). Writers frequently demonstrate both forms in their letters: Šalom ben Yehuda attests both לתת 'to give' (13J23.19 m.15) and RH ליתן 'to give' (13J23.11 r.19); he also uses לישא 'to take (as his wife)' (Gil (1983) no. 148=Bodl MS Heb d 76.56 r.10) as well as לשאת 'to bear' (13J9.2 r.10). Naṭan ben 'Avraham employs וליתן 'and to give' (10J9.25 r.16) as well as לתת

⁶¹Fernandez p. 145.

⁶²Perhaps not surprisingly since it is rare even in rabbinic texts;idem.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 144–146.

'to give' (10J15.10 r.11).⁶⁴

Qal infinitive absolute: שׂוא 'carry' (Misc. 36.140 r.4)

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 שׂוא, attested several times in BH, e.g., Jeremiah 10:5. Instead the form used resembles the anomalous infinitive construct found at Psalms 89:10, שׂוא.

Qal suffix conjugation: גע 'it arrived' (Misc. 35.14 r.5); וכנגעה 'and when it arrived' (10J27.7 r.10); ונתתה 'and you gave' (10J14.19 r.3); ונפלתה 'and I have fallen' (13J23.1 r.17)

With the exception of the verb נגע, the suffix conjugation is inflected according to BH practice. In the case of נגע we find many examples of the 3 masculine singular גע, the 3 feminine singular געה and the plural געו used in the *qal* for the meaning 'arrived', i.e., the usual meaning of the *hif'il* הגיע in BH. In inflecting נגע as a middle-weak verb the letter-writers are following a payṭannic practice, which began in the early *piyyuṭim* and was continued in contemporary poetry.⁶⁵ However, it is clear that the use גע, 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 גע is Šolomo ben Yehuda, 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: גע מכתבו 'his letter arrived' (Misc. 35.14 r.5; 20.102 r.8); געה אגרתכם 'your letter arrived' (12.328 r.7); געו כתבם 'their letters arrived' (13J13.28 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.: וכנגעה עתו 'and when his time came' (10J27.7 r.10) Yosef Hakkohen ben Ya'aqov of Tyre; גע מכתב 'the letter arrived' (NS 321.29 v.4) 'Efraim ben Šmarya; גע מכתב 'a letter arrived from him' (10J12.22 r.8) Hillel Heḥḥaver of Tiberias. The Babylonian writers do not show this technique of the

⁶⁴Naṭan ben 'Avraham uses the RH form ליתן, along with לישא, probably because he is employing a rabbinic idiom, לישא וליתן בדבר, 'to argue the matter' (10J9.25 r.16), whereas לתת is simply being used as the verb 'to give'. Maman p. 246 quotes a contemporary Karaite document from Fuṣṭāṭ (T-S 16.171) which attests the same idiom and uses the RH form of the infinitive construct, לישא וליתן 'and he knows how to negotiate'. Rabbinic morphology often infiltrates the letters through RH idioms, for instance, הייבין and רשאין showing the RH ין-ending, and כלימר showing the RH infinitive form, as mentioned earlier.

⁶⁵Yahalom chapter 7 deals with the *piyyuṭ*'s treatment of verbs, pp. 86–87 deal especially with the use of various different verbal types as middle-weaks. Yosef ibn Abitur, a tenth-century Spanish poet, uses the same techniques; Saenz-Badillos (1993) pp. 222–223.

Qal prefix conjugation:

ויקח 'and he took' (13J26.13 r.12); ישא 'may he raise up' (18J4.4 r.10);
וינצרהו 'and may he protect him' (16.6 v.2); ותפול 'and let it fall' (16.6
r.22); ינשה 'he can forget' (13J25.5 r.5)

The verb נצר is widely attested in the corpus since it features in the most common blessing formulae of letters, e.g., ישמרו שדי ויעזרו 'keep him, Almighty, and help him and protect him' (10J30.3 v.2); ישמרו צור וינצרו ויעזרו 'keep him, Rock, and protect him and help him' (NS 324.112 v.2); ישמרו קדושנו וינצרו יוצרנו '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: וינצור 'and may he protect' (16.68 r.26; 13J16.18 r.4); וינצרו 'and save him' (AS 149.27 r.2). Certainly the phrase used by Naṭan Hakkohen ben M^ovorak is quite exceptional in assimilating the *nun*, יצרו ומצרו ושמרו צור '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 *ṣade*, as can be seen in some *pe-nuns* with second radical *ṣade*, *ṭeṭ* or *zayin* in RH.⁶⁶ 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., תצריני '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., ינצרו וחקיו ותורותיו ינצרו 'that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws' Psalms 105:45 (note the same juxtaposition of שמר and נצר). 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.⁶⁷

ינשה 'he can forget' (13J25.5 r.5) is another verb that shows a retention of *nun*, perhaps because no example of the *qal* prefix conjugation is attested in BH.

Qal imperative:

וקחו 'and take' (13J20.25 r.9); קח 'take' (10J14.8 v.19); ותן 'and give' (13J20.3 r.19); שאר 'raise up [your eyes]' (10J27.8 r.11)

⁶⁶Segal p. 78.

⁶⁷Yeivin (1996) p. 115–116.

The imperative of *נשא* is attested dozens of times in the corpus in the popular greeting formula *שא שלום גדול*, e.g., *שאו שלום גדול* 'many greetings' (13J11.9 r.2); *שאו שלום ממנו* 'greetings from us' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 1 v.8); *שא אהובנו שלום רב* 'many greetings, our friend' (13J26.1 r.9).

Qal active participle: *נוצר* 'preserver' (13J16.14 v.11)

Hifil: *הגידו* 'they said' (28.24 r.17); *ההגיעה* 'which arrived' (13J31.8 r.7); *יזיקני* '[no one] will harm me' (13J16.18 r.14); *ינגידהו* 'may he proclaim him leader' (Misc. 136.169 v.3); *להנגיע* '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., *להצילכם* 'to save you' (10J1 r.20), except when the second radical is a guttural, e.g., *ינעים* 'may he make pleasant' (NS 309.20 r.1). However, a number of verbs show the retention of *nun*, e.g., *להנזיר*, *להנגיע* and the prefix conjugation *ינגיד* above. The language of the *paytanim* uses unassimilated forms of *pe-nuns* in order to distinguish between similar looking verbs: Yeivin quotes an example from a *piyyut* *הונגעו* 'they were struck', which uses an unassimilated form to distinguish its immediate source as *נגע* rather than the common *להגיע* 'to reach'.⁶⁸ The same technique may explain the occasional lack of assimilation in the letters: *ינגידהו* 'may he proclaim him leader' (Misc. 136.169 v.3) is a denominal from *נגיד* 'Nagid, leader' rather than connected with *להגיד* 'to tell'; *להנגיע* 'to cause to touch/strike' (18J4.26 r.3) is, like the example of Yeivin, to be connected with *נגע* rather than *להגיע* 'to reach, arrive'.⁶⁹

A letter from Palermo uses both assimilated and unassimilated forms of the same verb together: *אורם ולהנגיה כוכביהם* '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.⁷⁰

מוציל 'saves', from a phrase *לולי רחמי צור שהוא מוציל* 'were it not for

⁶⁸Ibid., 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 *נגע* than *הגיע*.

⁶⁹Another verb in the same letter also shows an unassimilated *nun*, *להנשירן* 'to separate him' (18J4.26 r.16). It is probable that the occasional RH preference for not assimilating the *nun* before *ט*, *צ* and *ז* is to blame in this case.

⁷⁰It is possible, though, that *להנגיה* could be a *nifal* with *אורם* as subject rather than object, but since the *nifal* of this verb is not attested in BH I am more inclined to see it as an alternative form of *להגיה*. Š³rira Ga'on attests the *hifil* with assimilation, *להגיה שביליהם* 'to illuminate their paths' (28.24 r.5).

the mercy of the Rock, that he saves...' (13J22.25 r.23), shows a long *o* vowel under the preformative by analogy with the *hifil* of the initial weak (*pe-waw*) verb. Perhaps the writer was conflating מושיע and מציל.

Other stems:

The other stems, the *nifal*, e.g., ילקח 'it will be given' (13J11.5 r.19) and גיטלים 'borne' (13J14.10 r.9), the *piel*, e.g., לנשא 'to exalt' (18J4.26 r.24), the *pu'al*, e.g., יוצלו 'may they be saved' (13J8.14 r.21) and וכשיוגד 'and when it is said' (13J18.1 r.9), the *hitpa'el/nitpa'al*, e.g., שהתנדבו 'that they offered' (12.146 r.18), follow the model of the BH *pe-nun*. The *huf'al* is usually written with *waw*, reflecting the Tiberian Hebrew morphology of *u* before a geminated consonant in the *hof'al/huf'al*, e.g., שהוצל 'he was saved' (24.6 r.59) and מוטל 'is laid' (10J9.25 r.12). The exceptional participle form מְכִיָּם 'beaten, downtrodden' (NS 309.20 r.6), apparently a *hof'al*, is considered above.

The final-'alef verb

Qal infinitive construct:

לגמוא 'to swallow' (20.100 r.18); ממצוא 'from finding' (Misc. 35.15 r.20); לשנוא 'to hate' (13J23.1 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 קרא, where the verb is inflected as if it were from a final-weak root.⁷¹ This is often attested in the corpus: לקרות 'to read' (13J20.3 r.10; 12.273 v.8); לקרות 'to name' (10J32.9 v.5; 12.217 r.12).

The Hebrew Bible attests two different forms of the infinitive construct of קרא, קרא, e.g., 1 Samuel 3:6, which is very common, and קראות Judges 8:1, which is attested just once. Both are attested in the corpus, e.g., Šalom ben Šemah, acting as Šalom ben Y^hhuda's scribe, writes the common form לקרוא 'to read' (AS 120.62 r.9), but in another text writes לקראת 'to call' (18J3.9 r.27). The defective orthography is not unusual with this verb (probably because of the presence of 'alef): Yisra'el Hakkohen Ga'on spells it the same way, לקראתו 'to read it' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 3 r.10) and לקראת 'to read' (Misc. 35.4 leaf 5 r.1), as does a letter of Šamu'el ben Hofni Ga'on, בקראת 'in reading' (Gil (1997) no. 52=ENA 4050 r.10).

Šalom ben Y^hhuda himself, when writing his own letters, shows a certain consistency in mainly using the biblical א-א- form, usually

⁷¹Fernandez p. 146.

spelled in full, e.g., ולקראותם 'and to read them' (10J10.22 r.9); לקראות 'to name' (10J12.17 r.6); לקראותם '[not] to read them' (13J14.8 r.24); though, once it is written defectively, חבר בקראתך אותו 'when you named him Ḥaver' (13J26.23 r.17). However, he also employs the RH final-weak infinitive construct, לקרות 'naming' (21.217 r.12), and once employs a mixed form, לקראו 'to call' (NS 323.21 v.4).

Qal suffix conjugation:

קרינו 'we have read' (10J9.25 r.8); קראנו 'we have read' (20.100 r.25); קראתי 'I didn't call him' (13J23.19 r.27); מצאתני 'it found me' (20.114 r.13); מצינו 'we [didn't find]' (NS 324.104 r.36)

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 קרא only the 1 plural קרינו is treated as a final-weak, but we find it attested several times. Other parts of the verb קרא show retention of the א, e.g., שקראונו 'that befell us' (16.3 r.3).⁷² The same situation is encountered with the verb מצא, we find that the 1 plural regularly takes the form of a final-weak, מצינו, whereas other parts of the verb retain the biblical morphology, e.g., מצאתי 'I found' (10J9.14 r.16). RH shows a similar pattern.⁷³

Qal prefix conjugation:

יקראנו 'it befall him' (13J20.3 r.14); יקראהו 'he will read it' (12.336 r.7); נקרא 'we write' (16.3 r.26); ימצאו 'they will [not] find' (13J25.5 r.27)

The verbs יקרה 'it will befall' (10J14.8 v.4) and ויקרה 'and it happened' (13J16.14 r.23) are derived from a *lamed-he* root קרה, attested in BH, e.g., יקרה 'it befalls' Qohelet 2:14.

Qal active participle:

The active participle is not well attested in the corpus. Šolomo ben Yehuda employs קורים 'reading' (NS J172 r.15) which is the RH form instead of BH קראים 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., הקרואה 'which is called' (13J16.13 r.15); הנשואה 'married' (20.102 r.49); שנואים 'hated' (13J14.10 r.31); more usually, as in RH, the *lamed-'alef* takes the form of the final-weak, e.g., מצויין 'found' (NS 308.122 r.3); הקרוי 'called' (20.94 r.21; 24.6 r.17).⁷⁵

⁷²Although the verb קרא with the meaning 'to meet' is often treated as a final-weak in BH; cf. Jotūn §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 *ū*, i.e., *ō* becoming *ī* since it is pronounced at the same height as *ū*, 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,

Šolomo ben Yehuda prefers the biblicalising form of מצא for the feminine singular, e.g., מצואה 'found' (13J15.1 r.12), but attests the masculine singular as a final-weak ומצוי 'and are found' (13J16.14 r.4). Šrira Ga'on similarly attests the two different types, המצוי 'which is found' (16.3 r.10) and מצויית 'found' (16.3 r.10) but מצואות 'found' (28.24 r.12).⁷⁶

Šolomo ben Yehuda, Šolomo Hakkohen and a letter from Ašqelon all attest instances of mixed forms, showing uncertainty over the proper form of the participle: הקראוי 'who is called' (13J16.14 v.18); המצאוי 'which is found' (8J16.12 r.8); קרואי 'called' (16.251 r.10).

Nif'al:

The *nif'al* shows retention of 'alef in all parts of the verb, e.g.: הנקראת 'who is named' (13J11.4 r.6) and יכלאון '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 ת-. However, while one of Šrira Ga'on's letter has the reading ונמצאת 'and it is found' (13J25.5 r.17), another letter shows the termination תה-, הנמצאה '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., הנמצאה Isaiah 37:4.

The usual termination of the infinitive construct in the corpus is אות-, e.g., from Šolomo ben Yehuda, להקראות 'to be read' (20.181 r.22; NS J15 r.10; from Yošiyahu Ga'on, 'and to be called' (10J32.9 v.10); this matches the morphology that we sometimes find in RH, e.g., M. 'Avot להבראות 'to be created'. Although BH does not attest the *nif'al* infinitive construct of קרא, we would expect a form in א-, like ובהנשא 'and when they arose' Ezekiel 1:19, which is only found in a letter of Šrira and Hayya, להיקרא 'to be read' (Gil (1997) no. 27=ENA 4009.15 r.3).

Pi'el:

BH attests two different versions of the *lamed-'alef* infinitive construct *pi'el* in approximately equal number, e.g., מלא 1 Kings 2:27 and מלאת 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, למלות 'to fulfil' (NS 321.29 v.3); more usually we find the ending ואת-, e.g., למלאות 'to fulfil/fill' (13J13.14 r.30; 32.8 r.8; 24.6 r.28), which is common in RH.⁷⁷ This latter termination is usually

e.g., נשוי Psalms 32:1.

⁷⁶Although both T-S 16.3 and 28.24 are copies of letters by Šrira Ga'on, thus the orthography cannot be assumed to be original.

⁷⁷Fernandez p. 146.

written defectively, e.g. למלאַת 'to fill' (10J27.1 r.6). That the orthography represents a pronunciation אַת- can be determined, in this case, from the rhyme scheme, i.e., מצליחות...כפולות...למלאַת, 'prosperous.. doubled...to fill' (10J27.1 r.5–6). However, Naṭan ben 'Avraham perhaps employs a different form, since we find a phrase [פנ]י תבל תנוב[ה] למלאַת 'to fill the whole world with fruit' (13J31.1 r.6), based on Isaiah 27:6, which vocalises the infinitive with Babylonian *šere*, i.e., indicating a mixed form between BH לְמַלֵּא and לְמַלְאֵת.⁷⁸

Other stems:

The other stems are inflected as in BH, e.g., the *hif'il* ימציאו 'may he cause him to find' (13J26.21 r.2); the *huf'al* יומצא 'may it be found' (16.304 r.18); the *pu'al* הממולא '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 *waw* of the initial-*waw* verbs appears only in certain stems in BH.⁷⁹

The verb הלך is included in this category.

Qal infinitive construct: צאתו 'his leaving' (24.6 r.39); לדעת 'to know' (NS 321.29 v.8); ללכת 'to go' (13J25.5 r.27); לישב 'to dwell' (13J21.19 r.9); לירד 'to go down' (NS 321.22 r.12); לידע 'to know' (10J24.3 r.12); ליעצו '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. לישב (13J16.17 r.29, r.38; 10J24.8 v.13), the RH infinitive construct, supplants BH לשבת almost completely in the corpus.⁸⁰ Even biblicising writers like Šlomo ben Yehuda show the occasional RH infinitive, e.g., לישב 'to dwell' (Gil (1983) no. 130=Mosseri I a 4 r. 16), although he continues to attest the BH form, לא לשבת 'not to dwell' (NS J172 v.2). As for לירד, only לירד is attested, BH לרדת not occurring in the corpus. Conversely, RH ליצא isn't attested. Both BH לכת and RH לילך are found; however, only Naṭan ben 'Avraham (unusually for this biblicising writer) attests the RH form, 8J20.1 m.12; elsewhere the infinitive of הלך is either לכת, e.g., לכתו 'his going' (12.80 r.13); לכת 'going' (13J25.5 r.27), etc., or, once,

⁷⁸It is possible that this is not actually an infinitive but the BH noun מְלֵאָה 'fulness' attested only once in BH at Song of Songs 5:12, however, its rarity makes the infinitive the more likely reading.

⁷⁹Joüon §74–77.

⁸⁰The 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 לידע, showing that the influence of rabbinic morphology is quite widespread.

the rarer BH form מהלוך, הלוך 'from going' (10J14.1 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: יעצוני 'they advised me' (13J23.19 r.12); הלכתי 'I went' (13J11.2 r.7)
- Qal* prefix conjugation: וילך 'and he went' (10J11.30 r.13); וארד 'and I went down' (10J27.2 r.18); היטב 'let it be glad' (12.851 r.8); אוכל 'I can' (13J23.11 r.23)
- Qal* imperative: ודעו 'and know' (12.16 v.9); ולכו 'and go' (10J1 leaf 1 v.9)
- Qal* participle: יגע 'toiling' (13J23.19 r.2); וליוצא 'and for the one who goes out' (13J9.2 r.9)
- Nif'al*: The *nif'al* is inflected according to BH practice, e.g., להיוועד 'to meet' (8J3 r.5); ויועדו 'and they met together' (20.181 r.12)
- Pi'el*: The *pi'el* is inflected according to the rules of BH, e.g., ייסרהו 'let him punish him' (12.851 r.3) and מייחלים 'longing for' (16.3 r.2). However, יוועדו 'may he appoint him' (13J18.1 r.5), which, although it looks like a *nif'al* form is actually a *pi'el* taking an object suffix ו-, is used instead of an expected *ייעדו.
- Pu'al*: The few *pu'al* forms attested follow BH practice: מיוחס 'of distinguished birth' (12.222 r.7); המיוסרין 'the tortured' (8J14.20 r.8).
- Hif'il*: The *hif'il* is inflected according to BH, e.g., ומודים 'and thanking' (NS 308.122 r.7); מלהוריד 'from bringing down' (NS 324.104 r.38). The community of Ašqelon's ויועדנו 'and may he cause us to meet' (13J19.15 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.⁸¹
- Huf'al*: The *huf'al* is inflected as in BH; indeed most examples are already found in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., יובל 'may it be carried' (10J9.14 v.1, etc.), found at Isaiah 18:7; הוצק 'it was poured' (6J9.2 r.1), found at Psalms 45:3. The exception is יובולו 'may it be brought' (13J8.14 r.23), discussed above, which shows *waw* where the MT vocalises with *gameš*.
- Hitpa'el/Nitpa'al*: Quite a few examples occur in the corpus, e.g., להתודות 'to give thanks' (NS 321.29 v.5); נתואשתי 'I despaired' (12.273 r.24); יתיעץ 'let him consult' (20.178 r.37); המיתוספים '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 קוים in BH (i.e., it becomes קוים in the *pi'el*), which is extended to a great many different middle-weak roots in RH and post-biblical Hebrew in general.

Qal infinitive construct: סור 'depart' (28.24 r.34); לשוב 'to return' (13J15.1 r.14); מוש 'move' (13J15.1 r.14)

Qal suffix conjugation: עפתי 'I would have flown' (13J16.14 v.6); נחה 'it became quiet' (10J27.7 r.4)

ראמה 'is uplifted' (13J9.2 r.53) showing medial *'alef* is taken from BH where it appears at Zechariah 14:10.

Qal prefix conjugation: תסור 'it will not depart' (16.6 r.10); וישמהו 'and may he place him' (12.80 r.5); תבואנה 'they will come' (NS 257.75 r.15)

Qal cohortative: נגילה 'we will rejoice' (8J2.1 r.13); ינובה 'he will bear fruit' (18J4.4 r.10)

The unusual use of the cohortative affix ה- on the 3 masculine singular is probably the best explanation for ינובה 'he will bear fruit', from a rhymed praise by Naṭan Hakkohen ben M^ᵉvoraḳ, ותקוה וינובה 'and hope, and in a good old age he will be fruitful' (18J4.4 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: וישב 'and he returned' (10J11.30 r.13); וירם 'and it was uplifted' (18J4.20 r.7); ותגל 'and it rejoiced' (18J4.20 r.7); יגל 'may it rejoice' (13J14.10 r.3)

In addition there is the possible pausal jussive ויצום 'and he fasted' (13J25.5 r.26), discussed above.

Jussives of the middle-weak are not always clearly discerned in an unvocalised text. ירום 'may it be exalted' (13J17.17 r.17) occurs in a

⁸²Jouon §80–81.

⁸³Segal pp. 80–85.

phrase bestowing blessings on the Nasi, יָרוּם יְקָרוֹ 'and our Nasi, his honour be exalted', and should be translated as a jussive: whether the writer was making this morphological distinction, i.e., between the indicative יָרוּם and the jussive יְרוּם, e.g., Numbers 24:7, is impossible to determine due to the lack of vocalisation and the fuller orthography of \bar{o} vowels usual in the corpus.

Qal imperative: וְשִׂמוּ 'and place' (12.99 r.14)

Qal active participle: וְהַבָּאִים 'and those who come' (13J26.13 r.17); הַדְרִיךְ 'who dwell' (NS 308.122 r.1)

Nifal: הַנְּמוּל 'the one to be circumcised' (13J20.18 r.16); יִיעוֹר 'may he [not] be roused' (13J23.1 r.9); לִיאֹר 'to be bathed in light' (J2.74 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: שְׁתַּסִּיעוּהוּ 'that you assist him' (12.146 r.12); וּפִיִּסוּהוּ 'and they persuaded him' (24.6 r.25); לְפִיִּס 'to persuade' (13J16.17 m.4); לְעִיִּן 'to search' (13J16.17 r.12); מְצִינִים 'marking' (8J14.20 r.1); יִקְיִמוּ 'may he establish him' (10J12.25 r.1); לְקִיִּים 'to establish' (13J33.12 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 קִיִּים (from BH), עִיִּין and פִּיִּיס (both from RH). A previously unattested *pi'el* of a middle-weak root is וִיאִיִּלוּ 'may he strengthen him' (10J30.3 r.22)—parallel to וִיסְעֵדוּ 'may he support him'—which is a denominal from the BH noun אֵיל.

Pu'al: Fewer *pu'als* are attested because it appears that the *hitpa'ellnitpa'al* was preferred for forming the passive of middle-weak *pi'els*: מְחוּיב 'is bound' (122.273 r.6); יִקְוִים 'may it be established' (13J8.14 r.27); מְסוּיִמָּה 'noted' (18J4.20 r.6).

Hifil: The *hifil* is widely used in the corpus, and is mostly inflected as in BH, e.g.: וְלָהֲרִים 'and to raise up' (13J23.1 v.9); וְשִׁנְיָחָהוּ 'and that we allow him' (13J24.11 r.17); הִמְרִינוּ 'we changed' (Misc. 36.140 r.22); יִסִּיר 'may he remove' (13J13.21 r.2).

The 1 singular suffix conjugation is attested in two different forms, with a separating vowel \bar{o} before the תִּי- affix, וְהִבְנִינֹתִים 'and I understood them' (18J4.20 r.10) and הִשִּׁיבֹתִי 'I have given back'

(13J26.13 r.24), or, as is preferred in RH, without, וכשהיבנתי 'and when I discerned' (20.173 r.33).⁸⁴ השיבותי is attested often in BH, e.g., Numbers 22:8, and this probably decides the choice of ותי- whereas the 1 singular suffix conjugation *hif'il* of בין is not.

מנחת 'allow' (13J11.4 r.18) is a feminine singular *hif'il* participle of נוה with a rare segolate ending, i.e., מנַחַת, of the type preferred in the RH *hif'il* verb.⁸⁵

להעד appears to be a 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 עור in BH or maybe the writer is influenced by the form of the infinitive construct *hif'il* for the geminate verb, e.g., לְהִטֵּב 2 Samuel 3:12.

Huf'al:

Very few examples of the middle-weak *huf'al* exist in the corpus: יומר 'let it [not] change' (13J8.14 r.27); יוטב 'may it become better' (13J16.14 r.9).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'al:

A number are attested, mostly RH verbs. The suffix conjugation takes the form *nitpa'al/nitpa'el*: להצטייר 'to be caught' (13J11.2 r.17); ונסתייע 'and he was helped' (24.6 r.33); ונתקיים 'and it was fulfilled' (10J24.8 v.21); the participle has the prefix מת-: מתקיים 'is fulfilled' (Misc. 36.140 r.27). The archaising prefix conjugation יתקימו 'may they endure' (AS 148.49 r.9) shows Šarira Ga'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: מעורד 'he restores' (10J30.3 r.18); ויעודדכם 'and may he restore you' (12.146 r.10); ויגודדם 'and may he drive them out' (10J30.5 r.9); יכונה 'may he establish it' (12.273 v.15); ולעורר 'and to awaken' (J2.74 r.19); ירוממהו '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.⁸⁷

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁸⁵Fernandez p. 132.

⁸⁶הוטב is a slightly ambiguous form since both the roots יטב and טוב could lie behind it.

⁸⁷indeed, note that nearly all of the examples are used in optative and desiderative phrases, 'may it be so', describing blessings upon Jerusalem (יכונה), the recipient of the letter (יעודדהו) or curses directed against enemies (ויגודדם). The stem hardly features in the prosaic narrative of the letters.

- Polal*: The *polal* is only attested as **וּמְרוּמָם** 'and extolled' (10J11.29 r.10), a construction found at Nehemiah 9:5.
- Hitpolel/Nitpolel*: 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 **נַת-** stems in the corpus): **וַנְתַּעֲזֹרְתֶם** 'and you roused yourselves' (13J33.12 r.26); **וְהַתְּבוּנוּ** 'consider' (16.6 r.23); **הַמְתַּלְוִינִים** 'those who shelter' (12.273 v.8); **יִתְרוּמָם** 'may he be exalted' (13J19.19 r.7).
- Pilpel*: The use of this verbal stem is limited mainly to the common BH verb **כּוּל**, e.g.: **וּלְכַלְכַּל** 'to support' (12.99 r.9; 12.733 r.15); **יִכְלַכְךָ** 'may he support you' (12.733 r.16); **יִכְלַכְלֵם** 'may he support them' (12.347 r.28); although the rarer forms **שִׁיטְלֵטֵל** 'that he will transfer (?)' (20.94 r.17) and **הַמְעַרְעֵרִים** 'who stir up' (13J16.17 r.30) are also attested.
- Pupal*: **מְטוּלְטָלִים** 'cast (?)' (10J24.3 r.14) is the only example of this stem. For the passive of *pilpel* stems the corpus prefers the *hitpalpel/nitpalpel*.
- Hitpalpel/Nitpalpel*: The suffix conjugation has the form *nitpalpel*, **וּמַתְּחַלְחֵל** 'and he writhed' (24.6 r.34). The other examples act as the passive of **כַּלְכַּל**: **לְהַתְּכַלְכַּל** 'to be supported' (13J16.14 v.9); **מַתְּכַלְכַּלְתָּ** 'supported' (13J16.14 v.11).

The final-weak verb

- Qal* infinitive construct: **לְרֹאוֹת** 'to see' (16.3 r.3); **כַּעֲשׂוֹתְכֶם** 'as you did' (16.6 r.12)
- Qal* suffix conjugation: **רָבְתָהּ** 'it has grown' (10J1.1 v.17); **שָׁבְכוּ** 'they cried' (12.851 r.11); **רָאָתָהּ** 'she saw' (18J3.9 r.7)

The verb **עָשָׂה** takes different forms before a pronominal suffix in the corpus: Naṭan Hakkohen of Tiberias twice writes **עָשָׂאךָ** 'has made you' (13J33.2 r.20; 16.248 r.12) and the similar morphology **עָשָׂאוּהָ** 'they did it' (12.114 r.4) appears elsewhere. In treating the lamed-he as lamed-'alef before a suffix they are following a common RH practice (the 'alef distinctive of the Babylonian branch), e.g., **עָשָׂאָךְ** M. T⁹rumoṭ 8:1.⁸⁸ The same appearance of 'alef may be found once in the *pi'el* of **רָמָה** in the corpus, **רָמְאַנִי** 'he betrayed me' (13J13.21 r.16).⁸⁹ These are the only examples 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

⁸⁸Fernandez p. 115; Segal §205.

⁸⁹The same word, spelled without 'alef, is found in 2 Samuel 19:27, **רָמְנִי**.

the *ga'on* Dani'el ben 'Azarya, עשהו '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 Naṭan Hakkohen of RH morphology.

Qal prefix conjugation: תהא 'it will be' (20.178 r.14); ותרבנה 'may they increase' (24.43 r.39); ויעשה 'and he made them' (13J23.1 r.20); ירביון 'may they increase' (13J11.9 r.17)

A single example of the aramizing suffix conjugation of היה, הויה 'that happened' (13J20.3 r.3) is attested in the letter of a teacher. Compare Šalom ben Yehuda's use of the imperative הוי, below.

With the added exception of the wide use of יהא and תהא (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 ה- affix of the plural verb, e.g., the lady Maliḥa writes יאתייו 'may they come' (13J11.4 r.4);⁹⁰ Nḥemya Hakkohen, the Babylonian *ga'on*, uses ישלייו '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: יהי 'may he be' (13J9.2 r.31)

The jussive of the final weak verb is only regularly attested for the verb היה and is dealt with above.

Qal imperative: ועשה 'and do' (16.6 r.23); ואתיו 'and come' (AS 148.49 r.8); הוי 'be' (20.102 r.18)

אתיו '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 Šarira Ga'on, who, as we have seen with his use of the יון- affix, has a preference for these archaic BH verbal forms.

הוי is the RH imperative of היה, 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 הוה.⁹¹ This example, used by Šalom ben Yehuda, is the only one in the corpus.

- Qal* active participle: התועים 'straying' (16.6 r.25); הולכת 'it goes' (AS 149.60 r.7)
- Qal* passive participle; ורצויים 'and favoured' (18J3.18 r.11); כראוי 'as is fitting' (16.3 r.29); ראויה 'suitable' (13J16.13 r.13)
- Nifal*: The *nifal* follows BH practice, e.g., יימחה 'may it not be wiped out' (AS 149.60 r.2) and והנלויים 'and those joined' (10J9.15 r.13), with the exception of the feminine singular participle which shows the RH termination ת-/ית- in most cases, e.g., נעשת 'done' (10J11.29 r.13) and נתלית 'hangs' (13J16.14 r.32).⁹²
- Pi'el*: Although the *pi'el* infinitive construct follows the BH model in most letters, e.g., לשנות 'to change' (10J24.3 r.4) and לצוות 'to order' (13J16.18 r.16), it is worth drawing attention to Naṭan ben 'Avraham's approach. He attests the infinitive construct with final ה, e.g., לתה 'to declare' (13J31.1 r.10), לצוה 'to order' (13J31.1 r.9) and לקוה 'to hope for' (13J31.1 r.9), i.e., like the form of the infinitive absolute in BH, e.g., קנה 'look for' Jeremiah 8:15, and despite the fact that the correct forms are attested in BH, e.g., מְתוֹת 'from declaring' Job 32:6, and in the letters of others in the corpus, e.g., לחוות 'to tell' (13J26.1 r.18). The reason for Naṭan's choice of infinitives ending in ה is, like often in the letters, because it fits the chosen rhyme scheme, וישע לצוה וישע לקוה וחסד מנווה כגן ר'וה ושם טוב לתה 'order peace and hope for salvation and kindness made beautiful like a watered garden, and declare a good name' (13J31.1 r.9).
- Other stems: The other stems are inflected as in BH, e.g.: the *hif'il*, וישקהו 'and gives him to drink' (13J9.2 r.32); the *huf'al*: והקשה 'and it was hard' (12.851 r.11); the *pu'al*: ומגולה 'and it is revealed' (NS 308.122 v.3); the *nitpa'al*: נתגלה 'it was revealed' (20.94 r.30). A rare exception is המכונה 'who is called' (13J15.14 r.24) which takes the form of a final-*'alef* verb, contrary to the attested BH form יכנה '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.⁹³ On the other hand, RH and later traditions of Hebrew tend to ignore this

⁹¹Fernandez p. 152.

⁹²For the participle of the final-weak verb in RH, see Fernandez p. 131.

⁹³Jouön §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 trilaterals, e.g., the *qal* suffix conjugation, and other parts all as biliteral, e.g., the *qal* prefix conjugation.⁹⁴

Qal infinitive construct: לחוק 'to engrave [=to write]' (13J23.19 r.3)

Qal suffix conjugation: שממו 'they are desolate' (13J25.5 r.21); אפפּונו 'they have encompassed us' (12.146 r.5); הננך 'he has favoured you' (10J12.17 r.24); ושהנו 'we have been humbled' (13J26.1 r.11); ודלנו '13J26.1 r.11); והקקתיה 'and I have inscribed it' (6J3.21 r.9)

Both שממו and אפפּונו follow the pattern of BH, using a trilateral base to form the suffix conjugation, שממו itself is attested at Isaiah 52:14 and for אפפּונו a similar form אפפּוני 'they encompassed me' is found at 2 Samuel 22:5.⁹⁵ הננך 'he has favoured you' (10J12.17 r.24) displays the inflection of the transitive verb plus pronominal suffix that can be seen in סבבניו 'he has surrounded me' Hosea 12:1, despite the fact that the 3 masculine singular of הנן plus a pronominal suffix is attested in BH, albeit showing an apparently intransitive inflection, הנני 'he has dealt graciously with me' Genesis 33:11. It is possible that הננך represents the same form, i.e., הנך, 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., trilateral, in all conjugations, rather than the confusing mix of trilateral and biliteral forms that it has in the Hebrew Bible.

'Avraham ben Hagga'on's writing of ושהנו ודלנו 'and we have been humbled and brought low' (13J26.1 r.11) is contrary to the usual BH practice, where the 1st and 2nd persons take an *ō* vowel before the affix.⁹⁶ The correct BH inflection of דלנו, דללנו 'we are brought low', is actually attested at Psalms 79:8 and thus 'Avraham's use of דלנו is particularly unusual. The morphology of both ושהנו and דלנו 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., קמנו 'we shall rise' Psalms 20:9.⁹⁷

והקקתיה 'and I have inscribed it' (6J3.21 r.3) takes an unexpected form, also lacking *ō*. Again, the correct BH inflection is attested for

⁹⁴Segal p. 85ff.

⁹⁵שממו is the expected form, despite its stative meaning 'are desolate' since in BH the suffix conjugation of שמם is based on the trilateral root (whereas normally the stative geminate forms the suffix conjugation from the biliteral base); cf. Joüon §82k.

⁹⁶It is highly improbable that the spellings are in fact defective and a long *o* 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, Joüon §82o.

this verb, albeit in a slightly different form, i.e., חִקְוֹתֶיךָ 'I have inscribed you' Isaiah 49:16. Unlike 'Avraham ben Hagga'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 trilaterals whenever possible in the *qal* suffix conjugation, e.g., חִקְקֹתִי 'I have enacted a law' B. *Yoma* 67b.⁹⁸

Qal prefix conjugation:

וַיַּחֲוֶן 'and he shows favour' (13J9.2 r.9); יַחֲקֵן 'it will inscribe' (13J23.13 r.17); וַיַּחֲנֶם 'and may he favour them' (16.251 r.5)

יַחֲוֶן is the usual form of חֲוֶן in BH, e.g., יַחֲוֶן Deuteronomy 28:50.⁹⁹ Though not attested in BH, we would expect a similar form for the transitive חֲקֵן, i.e., *יַחֲקֵן. Perhaps יַחֲקֵן 'it will inscribe' (13J23.13 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 גִּנָּן, a transitive verb, which is attested as יַגִּן 'he will guard' at Isaiah 31:5, etc.¹⁰⁰

וַיַּחֲנֶם 'and may he favour them' (16.251 r.5) is found in a letter with many examples of Babylonian vocalisation sent from Ašqelon. It shows the Babylonian *o* vowel where Tiberian has short *qames*, e.g., מִחֲנֶם 'show them [no] mercy' Deuteronomy 7:2, possibly a feature of the Babylonian pronunciation tradition.¹⁰¹

Qal active participle:

וְלַחֲוֹנִין 'and to the one showing pity' (13J15.11 r.15); וְלַסּוֹבֵב 'and to the one going around' (13J11.15 r. 15)

These participle forms are attested in BH, e.g., at Proverbs 28:8 and at 2 Kings 6:15 respectively.¹⁰²

The passive participle is regular: הַרְגוּג 'the desired' (10J22.7 r.10).

Nifal:

Most examples of the *nifal* are attested in BH, e.g., וְנִקְלַחְתִּי 'and I have become contemptible' (18J4.20 r.10) is based on the *waw*-

⁹⁸Cf. Segal p. 86, from where this example is taken.

⁹⁹This is despite the verbs originally stative meaning, cf. Joüon §82k:

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, §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: לַמַּעַן לֹא יַזְיִקוּ הַבָּאִים אֵלֶיהָ מִכָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְרַצּוֹת אַבְנֵיהָ וְלַחֲוֹנִין עַפְרוֹתֶיהָ וְלַסּוֹבֵב שְׁעָרֵי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְלַהַתְפַּלֵּל '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' (13J11.15 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 וַיִּקְלֹטֵי 'I will make myself contemptible' attested at 2 Samuel 6:22 and shows the same defective spelling; נֹאֲרִים 'cursed' (13J23.11 r.7) is a participle found at Malachi 3:9. An exception is להַכִּל 'to be gathered' (13J31.8 r.19), a post-biblical verb, which shows the preferred RH trilateral form.¹⁰³

Hifil:

Many of the *hifils* in the corpus follow BH practice and are indeed attested in the same form in the Hebrew Bible, e.g.: מִסַּב 'repeat' (13J20.18 v.4) is attested as מִסַּב at Jeremiah 21:4; הִרְעוֹתִי 'I have done [no] evil' (12.217 r.9) is at Numbers 16:15; לַהֲרַע 'to do evil' (32.8 r.13) is at Genesis 31:7. However, a quite significant number show a trilateral inflection, despite RH also preferring biliteral forms.¹⁰⁴ The following trilaterals are among those attested: וְלִהְדָרֵיהֶם 'and to liberate them' (Misc. 35.49 r.18); וְהִדְרִירָם 'and he liberated them' (24.6 r.21); וַיִּכְלִילֵנוּ 'and may he crown him' (12.338 r.9); לְהַסְבִּיבָם 'to surround them' (10J30.3 r.10). Only the last is taken from a biblical verb, attested with the infinitive construct לְהַסִּב 'to bring over' 2 Samuel 3:12; however, the letter-writer prefers the trilateral, transitive, form of the infinitive.

Huf'al:

The post-biblical verbs show the trilateral base form, e.g., הוֹזַקְקוֹתִי 'I am obligated' (10J9.14 r.5) and יוֹכַלְלוּ 'may they be joined' (13J15.1 r.3); this extends to the BH verb עָמַם, which despite being attested as יוֹעַם 'it has grown dim' in Lamentations 4:1 is inflected as a trilateral by Šolomo ben Yehuda, וַיִּוְעַמְם 'may they be dimmed' (13J23.1 r.18). However, Šarira Ga'on treats the suffix conjugation as biliteral, הוֹעַם 'is darkened' (13J25.5 r.20), the BH form found at Lamentations 4:1.

Hitpa'el/Nitpa'al:

This stem isn't widely attested, but we find both *hitpa'als*, in the infinitive and participle, and *nitpa'als/nitpa'els*, in the suffix conjugation, e.g.: מִתְחַנְנִים 'imploring' (12.256 r.7); וַנִּתְחַנַּנְתִּי 'and I implored' (13J16.17 r.7). Šolomo ben Yehuda employs two infinitive constructs with a final ה- affix in order to rhyme them: לְהַתְחַלְלֵה 'to be profaned' (10J14.8 v.20); לְהַתְחַלְלֵה 'to be praised' (13J11.5 r.5).

Polel:

The geminate גִּגֵּן is used in the *polel* and is an idiom attested many times in the corpus, e.g.: וַיִּגְוֶנְהוּ 'and may he protect him' (10G5.8 v.14); לְגִוְנָם 'to protect them' (10J32.8 v.6); יִגְוֶנָם 'may he protect them' (NSJ92 r.13), etc. Other verbs, such as לְסוֹכְכָם 'to shelter them' (24.6 r.9), are not very frequent, the letters preferring the reduplicated *pilpel* stem.

Hitpolel/Nitpolel:

A number of *hitpolels* are employed in the corpus, many of which are

¹⁰³Segal p. 87.

¹⁰⁴For the inflection of the *hifil* geminate verb see Segal pp. 88–89.

found in BH, e.g., להסתופף 'to stand guard' (J2.74 r.8), מתאונן 'lamenting' (13J23.11 r.25) and ויתרועעו '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.: ניתרושו 'they were crushed' (12.99 r.11); מהשתוגג 'from going astray' (12.733 r.8); מתכופפות 'are bowed down' (18J3.9 r.16).

Pilpel:

A great number of *pilpels* are attested in the corpus, some from BH, e.g., הרחרח 'he stirred up' (13J15.11 r.23); ויסלסל 'and may he exalt' (16.68 r.26); תעתענו 'we mocked' (Misc. 36.140 r.23), but also many form post-biblical Hebrew, e.g., לדקדק 'to investigate closely' (13J33.12 r.28); מפלפלי 'searchers' (16.62 r.2); ויגלגל 'and may he bring about' (10J25.5 r.9).

Pulpal:

The only *pulpal* attested is ומפולפל '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 גלל, for which the *nit/hitpalpel* acts as the passive, e.g.: מתגלגלות 'brought about' (16.95 r.12); תתגלגל 'it be brought' (NS 321.2 r.4); נתגלגל 'it was brought about' (13J23.19 r.4). We also find the BH verb להשתעשע 'to take delight in' (12.146 r.8) and the post-biblical נידלדלו 'and they were dispossessed of/impoverished' (18J4.4 r.20).

The quadrilateral verb

The only regularly attested quadrilateral verb in the corpus is the RH פרנס 'to provide'. It is attested in the quadrilateral *pi'el* for the active meaning, לפרנס 'to support' (Misc. 35.14 r.11), and the quadrilateral *hitpa'el* for the passive, מתפרנסים 'to be provided for' (13J26.16 r.12), לנתפרנס 'to be provided for' (13J16.14 v.4) and מלהתפרנס 'and from being provided for' (13J16.14 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 archaic 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 ך- for the plural ending of the masculine participle, in the pronunciation of the *huf'al*, the slight preference for trilateral forms of the geminate verbs, the occasional confusion of final-'*alef* and final-*he* verbs and the forms of the infinitives ליתן, ליקח, לידע, לידע and so on. A major post-biblical element picked up and exploited in the letters, however, is the RH *nitpa'al* 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 ך-. 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 kinds, 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 כִּי and אֲשֶׁר 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 *paytanim*, 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 *niṭpa'al* 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 Šəmu'el Haššliši, and there are elements in their language which demonstrate this: the variant forms of nouns and the use of וְ, -וּ, as a conjunction, and -וֹ, 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, payṭannic 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 Šʕrira 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 Šʕlomo ben Yʕhuda in Ramle and 'Efraim ben Šʕmarya in Fustāt: 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 ַ- suffix on nouns, the generalised ַ- 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 Šʕlomo ben Yʕhuda, 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.

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T-S 8

8.3*	Gil (1983) no. 178
8.13	Gil (1997) no. 237
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8.263	Bareket (1995) no. 53

T-S 12

12.14	Gil (1983) no. 151
12.16v	Gil (1983) no. 412
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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 & <i>ms</i>
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 & <i>ms</i>
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	<i>ms</i>
6J1.28	Mann (1922) p. 209
6J1.33	<i>ms</i>
6J3.1	Gil (1983) no. 338
6J3.11	<i>ms</i>
6J3.14	Mann (1922) p. 217
6J3.15	<i>ms</i>

6J3.21	<i>ms</i>
6J3.23*	Gil (1983) no. 431
6J3.31	Gil (1983) no. 431
6J4.1	<i>ms</i>
6J4.10	<i>ms</i>
6J4.17	Gil (1983) no. 260
6J4.25	<i>ms</i>
6J4.29	Mann (1922) p. 305 & <i>ms</i>
6J9.2	Gil (1983) no. 417
T-S 8J	
8J2.1-4v	Schechter pp. 107-111
8J3	Schechter pp. 147-148
8J8.15	Mann (1922) p. 295 & <i>ms</i>
8J14.7	<i>ms</i>
8J14.11	<i>ms</i>
8J14.20	Gil (1983) no. 261
8J14.21	<i>ms</i>
8J14.24	Mann (1922) p. 54
8J14.27	<i>ms</i>
8J16.12	Gil (1983) no. 410
8J18.15	Gil (1983) no. 618
8J19.33	De Lange pp. 17-19
8J20.1	Gil (1983) no. 180
8J20.3	Gil (1997) no. 17
8J21.6	Mann (1922) pp. 109-110 & <i>ms</i>
8J22.5	Gil (1997) no. 79
8J22.7	Gil (1983) no. 240
8J22.12	Gil (1997) no. 84
8J33.4	Mann (1922) pp. 304-305
8J33.5	Gil (1983) no. 194

8J33.6 *ms*
 8J33.9 *ms*
 8J36.10 Gil (1983) no. 175

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

13J14.5*	Gil (1983) no. 99
13J14.8	Gil (1983) no. 108
13J14.10	Gil (1983) no. 29
13J14.14	Mann (1922) p. 249 & <i>ms</i>
13J14.15	<i>ms</i>
13J14.20	Mann (1922) p. 87
13J14.22	<i>ms</i>
13J14.23	Gil (1983) no. 70
13J15.1	Gil (1983) no. 82
13J15.4	Mann (1922) p. 254
13J15.6	<i>ms</i>
13J15.11	Gil (1983) no. 132
13J15.3	Mann (1922) p. 103 & <i>ms</i>
13J15.14	Mann (1922) pp. 83–84
13J16.13	Gil (1983) no. 208
13J16.14	Gil (1983) no. 58
13J16.16	Gil (1983) no. 224
13J16.17	Gil (1983) no. 287
13J16.18	Gil (1983) no. 569
13J16.20*	Bareket (1995) no. 44
13J16.24	Gil (1983) no. 406
13J17.4*	Gil (1983) no. 138
13J17.17	Gil (1983) no. 64
13J18.1*	Gil (1983) no. 278
13J18.9	Mann (1922) p. 314
13J18.28	Mann (1922) p. 108
13J19.15	Gil (1983) no. 314
13J19.18	Mann (1922) p. 86
13J19.19	Gil (1983) no. 252
13J20.3	Mann (1922) pp. 301–303
13J20.7	<i>ms</i>
13J20.9*	Mann (1922) pp. 307–308
13J20.13*	Mann (1922) pp. 108–109
13J20.14	<i>ms</i>
13J20.18	Mann (1922) pp. 300–301 & <i>ms</i>
13J20.25	Mann (1922) p. 88
13J20.28	<i>ms</i>

13J21.10	Mann (1922) p. 309
13J21.19	Gil (1983) no. 113
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	<i>ms</i>
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
13J26.13*	Gil (1983) no. 285
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 *ms*

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

AS 41.26 Gil (1983) no. 97

AS 120.62	Gil (1983) no. 90
AS 145.61	Gil (1983) no. 173
AS 145.107	Gil (1983) no. 519
AS 145.350	Gil (1983) no. 134
AS 148.49	Gil (1997) no. 21
AS 148.147*	Gil (1997) no. 46
AS 149.27	Gil (1983) no. 143
AS 149.60	Gil (1983) no. 35
AS 149.223	Bareket (1995) no. 58
AS 151.20	Gil (1983) no. 68
AS 153.82*	Gil (1983) no. 296

T-S New Series

NS 92.33	Gil (1983) no. 384
NS 99.51	Gil (1983) no. 384
NS 169.11	Gil (1997) no. 32
NS 257.75	Gil (1983) no. 13
NS 298.27	Gil (1983) no. 13
NS 308.122	Gil (1997) no. 4
NS 309.10	Gil (1997) no. 10
NS 309.20	Gil (1997) no. 83
NS 320.131	Gil (1983) no. 369
NS 321.2	Gil (1983) no. 133
NS 321.22	Gil (1983) no. 226
NS 321.29v	Bareket (1995) no. 55
NS 323.21	Gil (1983) no. 156
NS 324.6	Gil (1983) no. 154
NS 324.103	Gil (1983) no. 155

NS 324.104

Gil (1983) no. 71

T-S NS J

NS J15

Gil (1983) no. 108

NS J65

Gil (1983) no. 154

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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