CHAPTER 11

Talmud: East and West

The relations between the two Talmuds, the Babylonian and the Palestinian, have engaged scholars since the middle ages. Whereas much of pre-modern scholarship concentrated on harmonizing contradictions, usually in favor of the Babylonian recension, more recent effort has been directed to utilizing the disparate sources for purposes of historical reconstruction and for understanding the literary history of the talmudic pericope, or sugya. At the same time, much significant work has been done in providing reliable texts, and in talmudic philology and lexicography. We are now at the stage where it has become

* I am very grateful to Professor David Weiss Halivni for reading this paper and for offering extremely helpful suggestions. Abbreviations of references to rabbinic literature and relevant secondary sources follow DJPA and Melamed Millon.


2 The term may mean "course" or "lesson." See A. Goldberg, "The Babylonian Talmud," in Safrai, Sages, 337–339 (with references to earlier literature).


4 There is an excellent bibliography on lexical and philological work on PT by B. Bokser in Aufstieg, 201–208; For BT see Goodblatt, ibid., 273–281. Among the more recent significant publications are DJPA (See the review by M. Tal in Tarbiz 60 [1991], 227–287; Cf. S. Kaufman, JAOS 114 [1994], 239–248); D. Sperber, Essays on Greek and Latin in the Mishna, Talmud, and Midrashic Literature (Jerusalem: Makor, 1982); idem, A Dictionary of Greek and Latin Legal Terms in Rabbinic Literature (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1984); idem, Nautica Talmudica (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1986); idem, Material Culture in Eretz Israel During the
possible to combine philological efforts with source-critical studies\(^5\) to clarify the process of the transmission of traditions between the scholars of Palestine and Babylonia. Writing in 1990, Jacob Neusner stated: “A study of the relationship between the Talmud of the Land of Israel and the Talmud of Babylonia, particularly how the latter receives and reworks what it receives from the former will pay attention to the two kinds of Aramaic\(^6\) that were available to the writers.”\(^7\)

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5. Important work in this direction is being done by Y. Ellman. See idem, Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonia (Hoboken: Ktav, 1994).

6. In addition to the basic division into Palestinian and Babylonian Aramaic, the BT tractates Nedarim, Nazir, Keretot, Tamid, Meʾilah and the “alternative formulations” that occur frequently in Temurah, share a sub-dialect with its own characteristics. See M. Schlesinger, Satzlehre der aramäischen Sprache des babylonischen Talmuds (Leipzig: Asia Major, 1928), 1–2; Kut, SGA, 58; Z. Rabinovitz, Shaʾare Torat Eretz Yisraʾel (Jerusalem, 1939/40); J. N. Epstein, A Grammar of Babylonian Aramaic (in Hebrew; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1960), 14; idem, Prolegomena ad Litteras Amoraiticus (in Hebrew; Jerusalem, Magnes, 1962), 72–74, 131–144; Strack and Stemberger, Introduction, 214–215; S. Rybak, “The Aramaic Dialect of Nedarim.” (unpublished Ph.D. thesis New York: Yeshiva University, 1980) There is evidence for regional dialects as well as school dialects. See Epstein, Amoraiticus, 141; idem, Grammar, 14. According to BT Ketubot 54a, R. Nahman was able to discern from a certain woman’s speech that she was native of Mahoza on the Tigris rather than Nehardea on the Euphrates.