The identity, time, standing, and geographical location of the Amora R. Hamnuna have not been determined by scholarly research. Indeed, different, sometimes opposing, proposals have been raised in the Rabbinic and scholarly literatures regarding the question of how many Amoraim were named “Hamnuna” in Babylonia in the Talmudic period. A considerable percentage of these studies make assumptions that should be reconsidered, especially in light of the progress made in research on the terminology of the Babylonian Talmud and the hierarchical relationship among Babylonian Amoraim. This exploration of these questions will extend to other sages in the first generations of Amoraim in Babylonia. At the end of the discussion we will suggest the broader implications ensuing from our study.

The first and most basic question is, How many Amoraim by the name of R. Hamnuna lived in Babylonia during the Talmudic period?


2 We devoted an extensive discussion elsewhere to the problems related to R. Hamnuna’s geographical location and his standing in the academy of Sura after Rav’s death. See B. Cohen, “*Yeshivot Mekomayot be-Bavel be-Tekufat ha-Talmud (Rav Ada bar Ahawah, Rav Shebet, ve-Rav Hamnuna),*” in *Zon* 70 (2005), pp. 447–471.

R. Samuel ben Hophni Gaon, W. Bacher, and M.D. Yudelevich identify only a single Amora by this name, active in Sura during the entire course of the third and early fourth centuries. In contrast, R. Judah ben Kalonymus of Speyer, R. Abraham Zacuto, Ch. Albeck, and M. Beer all subscribe to the view that two sages by this name were active in Babylonia during this time span: one was a pupil of Rav and a member of the second generation; and the other was a young sage who was subordinate to two sages of the second generation (R. Judah and R. Huna) and two of the third generation (Ulla and R. Hisda). J.S. Zuri suggests an indecisive approach that waivers between these two opinions. Dissenting from all these views, Z. Yavetz, A. Hyman, and Z. Kaplan present a more extreme proposition, that at least four sages by this name were active during this period. Our discussion examines these differing views.

1. R. Hamnuna I

It is accepted both by the medieval authors of the Talmudic chronicles and historiography and by modern scholarship that the earliest R. Hamnuna among the Babylonian Amoraim is the one presented in the Talmud as young and subordinate to his teacher, Rav. Various testimonies in the Talmuds indicate that R. Hamnuna, a second-